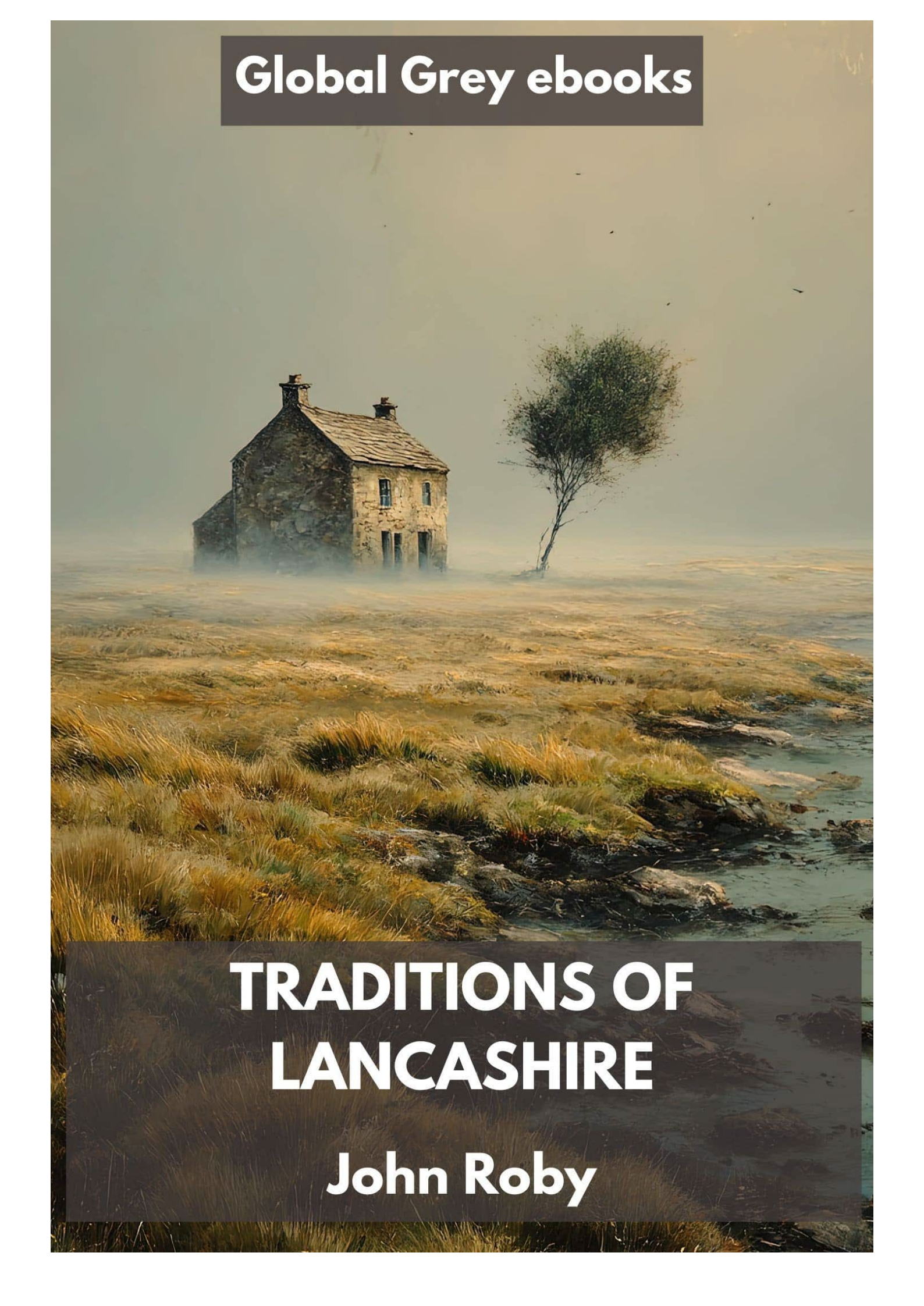


The background of the cover is a detailed landscape painting. In the middle ground, a two-story stone house with a gabled roof and two chimneys stands on a grassy hill. To its right is a single, leafy tree. The foreground is filled with tall, golden-brown grasses and some rocks. In the distance, a body of water is visible under a hazy, grey sky. The overall mood is quiet and atmospheric.

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**TRADITIONS OF
LANCASHIRE**

John Roby

TRADITIONS OF LANCASHIRE

JOHN ROBY



Traditions of Lancashire by John Roby.

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The Publishers' Preface To Fourth Edition

Roby's "TRADITIONS OF LANCASHIRE" having long been out of print—stray copies commanding high prices—it has been determined to republish the whole in a more compact and less costly form. This, the fourth and the *only complete edition*, includes the *First Series* of twenty tales, published in two volumes (1829, demy 8vo, £2, 2s.; royal 8vo, with proofs and etchings, £4, 4s.); the *Second Series*, also of twenty tales, in two volumes (1831, 8vo, £2, 2s., &c.); and three additional stories from his *Legendary and Poetical Remains*, first published after his death (1854, post 8vo, 10s. 6d.)¹ In the two volumes now presented the reader will possess not only the whole of the contents of both series, in four volumes, at one-fourth of the price of the original publication, but also three additional stories from the posthumous volume, with a memoir, a portrait, &c.

From deference to a strongly-expressed feeling that the work should be printed without any abridgment, omission, or alteration, and the text preserved in its full integrity, it has been decided to reprint it entire; and consequently various inaccuracies in the original editions have been left untouched. Two or three of the most important may be corrected here.

In the tale of "The Dead Man's Hand," Mr Roby seems to have been led by false information into some errors reflecting on the character and memory of a devout and devoted Roman Catholic priest, known as Father Arrowsmith. Mr Roby states that he was executed at Lancaster "in the reign of William III.;" that "when about to suffer he desired his right hand might be cut off, assuring the bystanders that it would have power to work miraculous cures on those who had faith to believe in its efficacy," and, denying that Father Arrowsmith suffered on account of religion, Mr Roby adds that "having been found guilty of a misdemeanour, in all probability this story of his martyrdom and miraculous attestation to the truth of the cause for which he suffered, was contrived for the purpose of preventing any scandal that might have come upon the Church through the delinquency of an unworthy member."

What, then, are the facts, as far as they have been investigated? The Father Edmund Arrowsmith who suffered death at Lancaster was born at Haydock in Lancashire² in 1585, and he suffered death in August 1628 (4th Charles I.), sixty years before William III. ascended the English throne. The mode of execution was not that of capital punishment for the offence committed, but rather that imposed by the laws for treason and for exercising the functions of a Roman Catholic priest. He was hanged, drawn, and quartered, and his head and quarters were fixed upon poles on Lancaster Castle. It was in this dismemberment that the hand became separated, and it was secretly carried away by some sorrowing member of his communion, and its supposed curative power was afterwards discovered and made known.³ Mr Roby cites no authority for this contradiction of the original tradition. The judge

¹ The First Series includes all the Traditions beginning with "Sir Tarquin" and ending with "The Haunted Manor-House;" the Second Series comprises all the Tales from "Clitheroe Castle" to "Rivington Pike," both included; and the three Tales now first incorporated are—"Mother Red-Cap, or the Rosicrucians;" "The Death Painter, or the Skeleton's Bride;" and "The Crystal Goblet."

² His mother was a daughter of the old Lancashire family of Gerard of Bryn.

³ These dates and facts will be found in the *Missionary Priests* of Bishop Challoner, who wrote about 1740 (2 vols. 8vo., Manchester, 1741-2), naming as his authority a manuscript history of the trial, and a printed account of it published in 1629. His statements are confirmed by independent testimony. See Henry More's *Historia-Provinciae Anglicanae Societatis Jesu*, book x. (sm. fol. St Omer's, 1660). Also Tanner's *Societas Jesu*, &c., p. 99

who presided at the trial was Sir Henry Yelverton of the Common Pleas, who died on the 24th January 1629.

In the Tradition of “The Dule upo’ Dun,” Mr Roby states that a public-house having that sign stood at the entrance of a small village on the right of the highway to Gisburn, and barely three miles from Clitheroe. When Mr Roby wrote the public-house had been long pulled down; it had ceased to be an inn at a period beyond living memory; though the ancient house, converted into two mean, thatched cottages, stood until about forty years ago. But the site of the house is in Clitheroe itself, little more than half a mile from the centre of the town, and on the road, not to Gisburn, but to Waddington.⁴

It only remains to add that the illustrations to the present edition comprise not only all the beautiful plates (engraved by Edward Finden, from drawings by George Pickering) of the original edition, which have been much admired as picturesque works of art, but also all the wood-engravings (by Williams, after designs by Frank Howard) which have appeared in any former edition, and which constituted the sole embellishments of the three-volume editions. To these is now first added the fine portrait of Mr Roby from the posthumous volume.

(sm. fol. Prague, 1675). Neither Challoner nor the MS. account, nor either of the authors just quoted, says one word of Father Arrowsmith’s alleged speech about the hand.

⁴ See Mr Wm. Dobson’s *Rambles by the Ribble*, 1st Series, p. 137.

Memoir Of The Author

This Memoir has been almost wholly derived from the "Sketch of the Literary Life and Character of John Roby," written by his widow, and occupying 117 pages of the posthumous volume of his Legendary and Poetical Remains.

The late John Roby was born at Wigan on the 5th January 1793. From his father, Nehemiah Roby, who was for many years Master of the Grammar-School at Haigh, near Wigan, he inherited a good constitution and unbended principles of honour and integrity. From the family of his mother, Mary Aspoll, he derived the quick, impressible temperament of genius, and the love of humour which so conspicuously marks the Lancashire character. He was the youngest child. His thirst for knowledge was early and strongly manifested. Being once told in childhood not to be so inquisitive, his appeal ever after was, "*Inquisitive* wants to know." As he grew up into boyhood, surrounded by objects to which tradition had assigned her marvellous stories, they sank silently but indelibly into his mind. In his immediate vicinity were Haigh Hall and Mab's Cross, the scenes of Lady Mabel's sufferings and penance—the subject of one of his earliest tales. Almost within sight of the windows lay the fine range of hills of which Rivington Pike is a spur. In after-life he recalled with pleasure the many sports in that district which were the haunts of his early days, and the scenes of the legends he afterwards embodied. While yet a child he regularly took the organ in a chapel at Wigan during the Sunday service. He also early excelled in drawing, and after he had commenced the avocations of a banker the use of the pencil was a favourite recreation. His first prose composition, at the age of fifteen years, took a prize in a periodical for the best essay on a prescribed subject, by young persons under a specified age. Thus encouraged, poetry, essay, tale, were all tried, and with success. In his eighteenth or nineteenth year he received a silver snuff-box, inscribed, "The gift of the Philosophic Society, Wigan, to their esteemed lecturer and worthy member."

Mr Roby first appeared before the public as a poet; publishing in 1815, "Sir Bertram, a poem in six cantos." Another poem quickly followed, entitled "Lorenzo, a tale of Redemption." In 1816, he married Ann, the youngest daughter of James and Dorothy Bealey, of Derriken, near Blackburn, by whom he had nine children, three of whom died in their infancy. His next publication was "The Duke of Mantua," a tragedy, which appeared in 1823, passed through three or four editions in a short time, and after being long out of print, was included in the posthumous volume of *Legendary Remains*. In the summer of that year he made an excursion in Scotland, visiting "the bonnie braes o' Yarrow" in company with James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. The literary leisure of the next six years was occupied in collecting materials for the *Traditions of Lancashire*, and in weaving these into tales of romantic interest. In this task he received the most courteous assistance from several representatives of noble houses connected with the traditions of the county; particularly from the late Earl and Countess of Crawford and Balcarres, and also from the late Earl of Derby.

The first series of *The Traditions of Lancashire* appeared in 1829, in two volumes (including twenty tales), illustrated by plates. The reception of the work equalled Mr Roby's most sanguine expectations; and a second edition was called for within twelve months. The late Sir Francis Palgrave, in a letter to Mr Roby, dated 26th October 1829, thus estimates the work:—

"As compositions, the extreme beauty of your style, and the skill which you have shown in working up the rude materials, must entitle them to the highest rank in the class of work to which they belong.... You have made such a valuable addition, not only to English literature,

but to English topography, by your collection—for these popular traditions form, or ought to form, an important feature in topographical history—that it is to be hoped you will not stop with the present volumes.”

The *second* series of the “Traditions,” consisting also of two volumes (including twenty tales), uniform with the first, was published in 1831, and met with similar success. Both series were reviewed in the most cordial manner by the leading periodicals of the day; while they were more than once quoted by Sir Walter Scott, who characterised the whole as an elegant work. In the production of these tales, Mr Roby’s practice was to make himself master of the historical groundwork of the story, and as far as possible of the manners and customs of the period, and then to commence composition, with Fosbroke’s *Encyclopedia of Antiquities* at hand, for accuracy of costume, &c. He always gave the credit of his style, which the *Westminster Review* termed “a very model of good Saxon,” to his native county, the force and energy of whose dialect arises mainly from the prevalence of the Teutonic element. “The thought digs out the word,” was his favourite saying, when the exact expression he wanted did not at once occur. In these “Traditions” his great creative power is conspicuous; about two hundred different characters are introduced, no one of which reminds the reader of another, while there is abundant diversity of both heroic and comic incident and adventure. A gentleman, after reading the “Traditions,” remarked that for invention he scarcely knew Mr Roby’s equal. All these characters, it should be stated, are creations: not one is an idealised portrait. The short vivid descriptions of scenery scattered throughout are admirable. Each tale is, in fact, a cabinet picture, combining history and romance with landscape. Mr Roby excelled in depicting the supernatural; and one German reviewer declared his story of Rivington Pike to be “the only authentic tale of demoniacal possession the English have.”

In 1832, Mr Roby visited the English lakes, and recorded his impressions in lively sketches both with pen and pencil. In the spring of 1837, he made a rapid tour on the Continent, the notes and illustrative sketches of which were published in two volumes, under the title of *Seven Weeks in Belgium, Switzerland, Lombardy, Piedmont, Savoy, &c.* In 1840, Mr Roby again visited the Continent by a different route, making notes and sketches of what he saw. At the close of the year, he was engaged in preparing a new edition of the “Traditions,” in a less expensive form. It was published in three volumes, as the first of a series of Popular Traditions of England; his intention being to follow up those of Lancashire with similar legends of Yorkshire, for which he wrote a few tales, which appeared in Blackwood’s and Eraser’s Magazines.

The principal literary occupation of the next four years appears to have been the preparation and delivery of lectures on various subjects in connection with literary and mechanics’ institutions. In 1844, his health gave way, and for years he suffered severely. As a last resource he tried the water-cure at Malvern in the spring of 1847, and with complete success. In the summer of 1849, he again married—the lady who survived him, and to whose “sketch of his life” we are largely indebted in this brief memoir. In the two short years following this marriage—the two last of his life—he was busily engaged in writing and delivering lectures, visiting places which form the scenes of some of his latest legends, and in the composition of a series of tales intended to illustrate the influence of Christianity in successive periods, a century apart. Deferring that for the fourth century, he wrote six, bringing the series down to the close of the seventh century; when he determined on visiting Scotland. With his wife and daughter he embarked at Liverpool on board the steamer *Orion* for Glasgow, which ill-fated vessel struck on some rocks about one o’clock in the morning of the 18th June 1850, and went down. Mrs and Miss Roby were rescued after having been some time in the water, but of the husband and father only the corpse was recovered, and his remains were laid in his

family grave in the burial-ground of the Independent Chapel, Rochdale, on Saturday, the 22d of that month.

Mr Roby was not more remarkable for his numerous and varied talents than for his warm and affectionate heart, rich imagination, great love of humour, and deep and earnest piety. He was a facile versifier, an elegant prose writer, an able botanist and physiologist. Possessing a fine ear, rich voice, and great musical taste, he not only took his vocal share in part-song, but wrote several melodies, which have been published. In one species of rapid mental calculation, or rather combination of figures—giving in an instant the sum of a double column of twenty figures in each row, or a square of six figures—he far excelled Bidder, the calculating boy. He was a skilful draughtsman, a clever mimic and ventriloquist, an excellent *raconteur*, an accomplished conversationist, ever fascinating in the select social circle, and always “tender and wise” in that of home. He was a man of genuine benevolence, a cordial friend, an affectionate husband and father, and a humble and devout Christian. His family crest was a garb or wheat-sheaf, with the motto, “I am ready;” and in his case—though his death was sudden and unexpected—illness and bereavement, mental and physical suffering—in short, the chastenings and discipline of life, had done their work. His “sheaf” was “ready for the garner.”

October 1866.

Preface To The First Series

A preface is rarely needed, generally intrusive, and always tiresome—seldom read, more seldom desiderated: a piece of egotism at best, where the author, speaking of himself, has the less chance of being listened to. Yet—and what speaker does not think he ought to be heard?—the author conceives there may be some necessity, some reason, why he should step forward for the purpose of explaining his views in connection with the character and design of the following pages.

In the northern counties, and more particularly in Lancashire, the great arena of the STANLEYS during the civil wars—where the progress and successful issue of his cause was but too confidently anticipated by CHARLES STUART, and the scene especially of those strange and unholy proceedings in which the “Lancashire witches” rendered themselves so famous—it may readily be imagined that a number of interesting legends, anecdotes, and scraps of family history, are floating about, hitherto preserved chiefly in the shape of oral tradition. The antiquary, in most instances, rejects the information that does not present itself in the form of an authentic and well-attested fact; and legendary lore, in particular, he throws aside as worthless and unprofitable. The author of the “TRADITIONS OF LANCASHIRE,” in leaving the dry and heraldic pedigrees which unfortunately constitute the great bulk of those works that bear the name of county histories, enters on the more entertaining, though sometimes apocryphal narratives, which exemplify and embellish the records of our forefathers.

A native of Lancashire, and residing there during the greater part of his life, he has been enabled to collect a mass of local traditions, now fast dying from the memories of the inhabitants. It is his object to perpetuate these interesting relics of the past, and to present them in a form that may be generally acceptable, divested of the dust and dross in which the originals are but too often disfigured, so as to appear worthless and uninviting.

Tradition is not an unacceptable source of historical inquiry; and the writer who disdains to follow these glimmerings of truth will often find himself in the dark, with nothing but his own opinions—the smouldering vapour of his own imagination—to guide him in the search.

The following extract from a German writer on the subject sufficiently exemplifies and illustrates the design the author has generally had before him in the composition and arrangement of the following legends:—

“Simple and unimportant as the subject may at first appear, it will be found, upon a nearer view, well worth the attention of philosophical and historical inquirers. All genuine, popular Tales, arranged with local and national reference, cannot fail to throw light upon contemporary events in history, upon the progressive cultivation of society, and upon the prevailing modes of thinking in every age. Though not consisting of a recital of bare facts, they are in most instances founded upon fact, and in so far connected with history, which occasionally, indeed, borrows from, and as often reflects light upon, these familiar annals, these more private and interesting casualties of human life.

“It is thus that popular tradition, connected with all that is most interesting in human history and human action, upon a national scale—a mirror reflecting the people’s past worth and wisdom—invariably possesses so deep a hold upon its affections, and offers so many instructive hints to the man of the world, to the statesman, the citizen, and the peasant.

“Signs of approaching changes, no less in manners than in states, may likewise be traced, floating down this popular current of opinions, fertilising the seeds scattered by a past generation, and marking by its ebbs and flows the state of the political atmosphere, and the distant gathering of the storm.

“National traditions further serve to throw light upon ancient and modern mythology; and in many instances they are known to preserve traces of their fabulous descent, as will clearly appear in some of the following selections. It is the same with those of all nations, whether of eastern or western origin, Greek, Scythian, or Kamtschatkan. And hence, among every people just emerged out of a state of barbarism, the same causes lead to the production of similar compositions; and a chain of connection is thus established between the fables of different nations, only varied by clime and custom, sufficient to prove, not merely a degree of harmony, but secret interchanges and communications.”

A record of the freaks of such airy beings, glancing through the mists of national superstition, would prove little inferior in poetical interest and association to the fanciful creations of the Greek mythology. The truth is, they are of one family, and we often discover allusions to the beautiful fable of Psyche or the story of Midas; sometimes with the addition, that the latter was obliged to admit his barber into his uncomfortable secret. Odin and Jupiter are brothers, if not the same person; and the northern Hercules is often represented as drawing a strong man by almost invisible threads, which pass from his tongue round the limbs of the victim, thereby symbolising the power of eloquence. Several incidents in the following tales will be recognised by those conversant with Scandinavian literature, thus adding another link to the chain of certainty which unites the human race, or at any rate that part of it from which Europe was originally peopled, in one original tribe or family.

A work of this nature, embodying the material of our own island traditions, has not yet been attempted; and the writer confidently hopes that these tales may be found fully capable of awakening and sustaining the peculiar and high-wrought interest inherent in the legends of our continental neighbours. Should they fail of producing this effect, he requests that it may be attributed rather to his want of power to conjure up the spirits of past ages, than to any want of capabilities in the subjects he has chosen to introduce.

To the local and to the general reader—to the antiquary and the uninitiated—to the admirers of the fine arts and embellishments of our literature, he hopes his labours will prove acceptable; and should the plan succeed, not Lancashire alone, but the other counties, may in their turn become the subject of similar illustrations. The tales are arranged chronologically, forming a somewhat irregular series from the earliest records to those of a comparatively modern date. They may in point of style appear at the commencement stiff and stalwart, like the chiselled warriors, whose deeds are generally enveloped in a rude narrative, hard and ponderous as their gaunt and grisly effigies. The events, however, as the author has found them, gradually assimilate with the familiar aspects and everyday affections of our nature—subsiding from the stern and repulsive character of a barbarous age into the usual forms and modes of feeling incident to humanity—as some cold and barren region, where one stunted blade of affection can scarce find shelter, gradually opens out into the quiet glades and lowly habitudes of ordinary existence.

The author disclaims all pretensions to superior knowledge. He would not even arrogate to himself the name of antiquary. Some of the incidents are perhaps well known, being merely put into a novel and more popular shape. The spectator is here placed upon an eminence where the scenes assume a new aspect, new combinations of beauty and grandeur being the result of the vantage ground he has obtained. Nothing more is attempted than what others, with the same opportunities, might have done as well—perhaps better. When Columbus

broke the egg—if we may be excused the arrogance of the simile—all that were present could have done the same; and some, no doubt, might have performed the operation more dexterously.

1st October 1829.

Preface To The Second Series

In presenting another and concluding series of Lancashire Traditions to the public, the author has to express his thanks for the indulgence he has received, and the spirit of candour and kindness with which this attempt to illustrate in a novel manner the legends of his native county has been viewed by the periodical press.

To his numerous readers, in the capacity of an author, he would say Farewell, did not the “everlasting adieus,” everlastingly repeated, warn him that he might at some future time be subject to the same infirmity, only rendered more conspicuous by weakness and irresolution.

Rochdale, *October* 1831.

Introduction To The Second Series

No method has yet been discovered for preserving the recollection of human actions and events precisely as they have occurred, whole and unimpaired, in all their truth and reality. Time is an able teacher of causes and qualities, but he setteth little store by names and persons, or the mould and fashion of their deeds. The pyramids have outlived the very names of their builders. "Oblivion," says Sir Thomas Browne, "blindly scatters her poppies. Time has spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse—confounded that of himself!"

Few things are so durable as the memory of those mischiefs and oppressions which Time has bequeathed to mankind. The names of conquerors and tyrants have been faithfully preserved, while those from whom have originated the most useful and beneficial discoveries are entirely unknown, or left to perish in darkness and uncertainty. We should not have known that Lucullus brought cherries from the banks of the Phasis but through the details of massacre and spoliation—the splendid barbarities of a Roman triumph. In some instances Time displays a fondness and a caprice in which the gloomiest tyranny is seen occasionally to indulge. The unlettered Arab cherishes the memory of his line. He traces it unerringly to a remoter origin than could be claimed or identified by the most ancient princes of Europe. In many instances he could give a clearer and a higher genealogy to his horse. But that which Time herself would spare, the critic and the historian would demolish. The northern barbarians are accused of an exterminating hostility to learning. It never was half so bitter as the warfare which learning displays against everything of which she herself is not the author. A living historian has denied that the poems of Ossian had any existence save in the conceptions of Macpherson, because he condescendingly informs us, "Before the invention or introduction of letters, human memory is incapable of any faithful record which may be transmitted from age to age."

The account which Macpherson gave may be a fiction, but it is admitted by those who know the native Scotch and Irish tongues, and have dwelt where no other language is spoken, that there are poems which have been transmitted from generation to generation (orally it must be, since letters are either entirely unknown or are comparatively of recent introduction), the machinery of which prove them to have been invented about the time when Christianity was first preached in these islands.

Tradition may well be named the eldest daughter of Time, and nursing-mother of the Muses—the fruitful parent of that very learning which would, in the cruel spirit of its pedantry and malice, make her the sacrifice while it lays claim to the inheritance. What is learning but a laborious, often ill-drawn, and almost invariably partial deduction from facts which tradition has first collected? When we consider in whose hands learning has been, almost ever since its creation; the uses which have been made of it by priests and politicians; by poets, orators, and flatterers; by controversialists and designing historians;—how commonly has it been perverted to abuse the very senses of mankind, and to give a bias to their thoughts and feelings, only to mislead and to betray! Let the evidence be well compared, and a view taken of the respective amounts of doubt and certainty which appertain to human history as it appears in written records; and it will be seen that, to verify any given fact, so as to prevent the possibility of doubt, we must throw aside our reverence for the scholar's pen and the midnight lamp, which seem, like the faculty of speech, only given to men, as the witty Frenchman observed, "to conceal their thoughts." This comparative process is precisely what has been adopted by M.L. Petit Radel in his new theory upon the origin of Greece. "Not satisfied with the mythological equivocation and contradictory statements which till now

have perplexed the question, after a residence of ten years this learned man returns with a new theory, which would destroy all our received ideas, and carry the civilisation and cradle of the Greeks much beyond the time and place that have till now been supposed. It is their very architecture that M. Petit Radel interrogates, and its passive testimony serves as a basis to his system. He has visited, compared, and meditated on the unequivocal vestiges of more than one hundred and fifty antique citadels, altogether neglected by the Greek and Roman authors. Their form and construction serve him, with the aid of ingenious reasoning, to prove that Greece was civilised a long time before the arrival of the Egyptian colonies. He does not despair of tracing back the descent of the Greeks to the Hyperborean nations, always by the analogy of their structures, which, by a singular identity, are found also among the Phoenicians. The Institute have pronounced the following judgment upon his theory:—'If the developments which remain to be given to us suffice to gain the votes of the learned, and induce them to adopt this theory as demonstrated truth, M. L. Petit Radel may flatter himself with having made in history a discovery truly worthy to occupy a place in the progress of human genius.'"

Thus the very time in which a living historian of England has chosen to inflict an impotent blow, from the leaden sceptre of Johnsonian criticism, upon all facts which claim an existence anterior to the invention of books, appears pregnant with a discovery of a method of investigating the most remote eras, which presupposes an inherent spirit of fallacy and falsehood in all written records of their existence.

About three hundred years after the era of the Olympiads, the first date of authentic history, Herodotus astonished his countrymen by the writings he brought forth. Who kept the records out of which his work was elaborated ere he was ready to stamp the facts with the only seal which our modern historians will acknowledge or allow? Tradition doubtless was his guide, which the learned themselves complain of as the source of what they term his errors and his fables. But the voice of tradition has often reinstated his claims to our belief, where it had been suspended either by ignorance or pretensions to superior knowledge. A modern traveller found, in one of the isles of the Grecian Archipelago, undoubted vestiges of a state of society similar to that of the Amazons. The order of the sexes was wholly inverted. The wife ruled the husband, and his and her kindred, with uncontrolled and unsparing rigour, sanctioned and even commanded by the laws. Yet the very existence of any such people as the Amazons of ancient history has not only been questioned, but denied. Learning has proved it to be impossible.

The Marquess of Hastings told the Rev. Mr Swan, chaplain of the Cambrian, that he had found the germ of fact from which many of the most incredible tales in ancient history had grown during his stay in India. One instance only we would relate. A Grecian author mentions a people who had only one leg. An embassy from the interior was conducted into the presence of the viceroy, and he could by no persuasion prevail upon the obsequious minister to use more than one of his legs, though he stood during the whole of a protracted audience.

But there are other forces now drawing into the field to support the long-neglected claims of tradition. Etymology, which professed to settle doubts by an appeal to the elementary sounds of words, was banished from the politer and more influential circles of English learning by a decree as arbitrary as that pronounced on the poems of Ossian. It has come back with a new commission and under a new title;—Ethnography is the name given by our continental neighbours to this new science, which, in its future developments, may bring to light some of the most obscure and important circumstances affecting the human race, from its origin through every succeeding epoch of its existence. The distinguishing object of this inquiry is

to identify the fortunes, migrations, and changes of the human family as to situation, policy, religion, agriculture, and arts, by comparing the terms supplied by or introduced into the language of any one country with the names of the same objects in every other. There would be no such thing as chance in nature could we know the laws which determine every separate accident. In like manner there will scarcely be any doubt respecting the primitive history of man when this new science shall have accumulated and revealed all the treasures which it may be enabled to appropriate. An agreement in the primitive term which any object of cultivation, physical or moral, bears among many different tribes, spread over many and far-distant regions, will be considered as the best evidence of one common origin. Disagreement in a similar case, accompanied with a great variety of terms of considerable dissonance, will be equally conclusive as to the object being indigenous or of a multifarious origin.

Already has Balbi, in his *Ethnographic Atlas*, given us a list of names and coincidences to an extent truly astonishing. Yet what is this, in fact, but a judicious use of Bacon's old but much-neglected rule of questioning nature about facts instead of theories—examining evidences ere rhetoric had made language one vast heap of implied falsehood?

In a court of inquiry we examine witnesses as to facts, not opinions. But the historian reads mankind in cities; the philosopher in the clouds. He who is anxious for the truth should look abroad on the plains or in the woods, where man's first prerogative, the giving of names, was exercised. His knowledge of nature must be wretchedly imperfect who thinks that no grand outline of truth can possibly exist in the dim records of human recollection ere the pen of the scholar was employed to depict the scenes that opinion or prejudice had created. How many pages of Clarendon's, Hume's, or even Robertson's history would be cancelled if we had access to all the recollections of each event, and the evidence of the unlettered vulgar who had witnessed the fact brought to our notice, even through the mouthpiece of tradition!

There is more truth than comes to the surface in that speech put into the lips of the father of lies by a late poet, where he says—

“The Bible's your book—history mine.”

Savigny makes the same charge against one class of historians in his own country:—

”However discordant,” says he, “their other doctrines may appear, they agree in the practice of adopting each a particular system, and in viewing all historical evidence as so many proofs of its truth.”

Were it not for that contempt we have already noticed as the offspring of pride and dogmatism, and which, in the administration of the republic of letters, has been entertained and openly proclaimed for every kind of history except that which its own acts may have originated, we should have been in possession of thousands of facts and notions now overlaid and lost irrecoverably to the philosopher and the historian.

The origin and the progress of nations, next after the school divinity of the Middle Ages, has occasioned the most copious outpouring of conjectural criticism. The simple mode of research suggested by the works of Verstegan, Camden, and Spelman would, long before this time, have made the early history of the British tribes as clear as it is now obscure. Analogies in the primary sounds of each dialect; similarity or difference in regard to objects of the first, or of a common necessity; rules or laws for the succession of property, which are as various as the tribes which overran the empire; the nature, agreement, or dissimilarity in religious worship with those vestiges of its ritual and celebration which, by the “pious frauds” and connivance of the early church, still lurk in the pastimes of our rural districts:—the new science of which we have spoken, by taking cognisance of these and all other existing sources of legitimate investigation, will settle the source and affinities of nations upon a plan as much

superior to that of Grotius and his school as fact and reason exceed the guess-work of the theorist and the historian. Meantime we would cite a few examples that illustrate and bear more particularly on the subject to which our inquiries have been directed.

Nothing seems at first sight more difficult than to establish a community of origin between the gods of Olympus and those of the Scandinavian mythology. The attempt has often been made, and each time with increased success. Observe the process adopted in this interesting inquiry.

“Every country in Europe has invested its popular fictions with the same common marvels—all acknowledge the agency of the lifeless productions of nature; the intervention of the same supernatural machinery; the existence of elves, fairies, dwarfs, giants, witches, and enchanters; the use of spells, charms, and amulets, and all those highly-gifted objects, of whatever form or name, whose attributes refute every principle of human experience, which are to conceal the possessor’s person, annihilate the bounds of space, or command a gratification of all our wishes. These are the constantly-recurring types which embellish the popular tale: which have been transferred to the more laboured pages of romance; and which, far from owing their first appearance in Europe to the Arabic conquest of Spain, or the migrations of Odin to Scandinavia, are known to have been current on its eastern verge long anterior to the era of legitimate history. The Nereids of antiquity, the daughters of the ‘sea-born seer,’ are evidently the same with the mermaids of the British and northern shores. The inhabitants of both are fixed in crystal caves or coral palaces beneath the waters of the ocean; they are alike distinguished for their partialities to the human race, and their prophetic powers in disclosing the events of futurity. The Naiads differ only in name from the Nixen of Germany and Scandinavia (Nisser), or the water-elves of our countrymen. Ælfric and the Nornæ, who wove the web of life, and sang the fortunes of the illustrious Helga, are but the same companions who attended Ilithyia at the births of Iamos and Hercules,” the venerable Parcæ of antiquity.

The Russian Rusalkis are of the same family. The man-in-the-moon has found a circulation throughout the world. “The clash of elements in the thunder-storm was ascribed in Hellas to the rolling chariot-wheels of Jove, and in the Scandinavian mythology to the ponderous waggon of the Norwegian Thor.”

To the above extract, which is taken from the excellent preface by the editor to Wharton’s *History of English Poetry*, may be added the number of high peaks bearing the name of Tor or Thor, seen more especially on both coasts of Devonshire, and which are supposed to signalise the places of his worship.⁵ From the same source may be derived affinities equally strong between the Highland Urisks, the Russian Leschies, the Pomeranian or Wendish Berstucs, and the Panes and Panisci who presided over the fields and forests of Arcadia. The mountains of Germany and Scandinavia are under the governance of a set of metallurgic divinities, who agree with the Cabiri, Hephæsti, Telchines, and Idæan Dactyli. The Brownies and Fairies are of the same kindred as the Lares of Latium. “The English Puck, the Scottish Bogle, the French Esprit Follet, or Goblin, the Gobelinus of monkish Latinity, and the German Kobold, are only varied names for the Grecian Kobalus, whose sole delight consisted in perplexing the human race, and calling up those harmless terrors that constantly hover round the minds of the timid.” “The English and Scottish terms, ‘Puck,’ ‘Bogle,’ are the same as the German ‘Spuk’ and the Danish ‘Spogelse,’ without the sibilant aspiration. These words are general names for any kind of spirit, and correspond to the ‘pouk’ of Piers Ploughman. In Danish ‘spog’ means a joke, trick, or prank, and hence the character of Robin

⁵ “They worshipped fire as the representative of the Deity, which they kept continually burning on the tops of their highest mountains.”—*Foreign Quarterly Review*, No. XV.: Art. “Popular Poetry,” p. 77.

Goodfellow. In Iceland Puki is regarded as an evil sprite; and in the language of that country, ‘at pukra’ means both to make a murmuring noise and to steal clandestinely. The names of these spirits seem to have originated in their boisterous temper—‘spuken,’ Germ. to make a noise: ‘spog,’ Dan. obstreperous mirth; ‘pukke,’ Dan. to boast, scold. The Germans use ‘pochin’ in the same figurative sense, though literally it means to strike, beat; and is the same with our *poke*.”

However varied in name, the persons and attributes of these immaterial beings have no variance which will not readily be accounted for by the difference of climate, territorial surface, and any priority that one tribe had gained over another in the march of mind. The relics of such a system were much more abundant half-a-century ago, and many a tale of love and violence, garnished with the machinery of that *mythos*, might have been gleaned from the unwritten learning of the people. Who would expect to find amongst the rudest of the Irish peasantry—whose ancestors never knew the use of letters, and by whom, even down to living generations, the English tongue has not been spoken—a number of fictions, amongst the rest the tale of Cupid and Psyche—closely corresponding to that of the Greeks?⁶ Who that has been a child does not recollect the untiring delight with which he listened to those ingenious arithmetical progressions, reduced to poetry, called “*The House that Jack built*,” and the perils of “*The Old Woman with the Pig*?” Few even of those in riper years would suspect their Eastern origin. In the *Sepher Haggadah* there is an ancient parabolical hymn, in the Chaldee language, sung by the Jews at the feast of the Passover, and commemorative of the principal events in the history of that people. For the following literal translation we are indebted to Dr Henderson, the celebrated orientalist:—

“1. *A kid, a kid* my father bought,
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

“2. Then came *the cat*, and ate the kid,
That my father bought,
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

“3. Then came *the dog*, and bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought,
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

“4. Then came *the staff*, and beat the dog,
That bit the cat,

⁶ That Ireland has not always presented so degrading and uncivilised an aspect as now exists in that unhappy country, there is abundant testimony to convince the most incredulous. Camden, an author by no means partial on this score, says:—“The Irish scholars of St. Patrick profited so notably in Christianity that, in the succeeding age, Ireland was termed ‘*Sanctorum Patria*.’” Their monks so excelled in learning and piety, that they sent whole flocks of most holy men into all parts of Europe, “who were founders of the most eminent monasteries both there and in Britain.”

“A residence in Ireland,” says a learned British writer, “like a residence now at an university, was considered as almost essential to establish a literary character.” By common consent, and as a mark of pre-eminence, Ireland obtained the title of *Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum*.

At the Council of Constance, in 1417, the ambassadors from England were not allowed to rank or take any place as the ambassadors of a nation. The point being argued and conceded, that they were tributaries only to the Germans, “they claimed their rank from Henry being monarch of Ireland only, and it was accordingly granted.”—*O’Halloran*.

That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,
 For two pieces of money.
 A kid, a kid.

“5. Then came *the fire*, and burnt the staff,
 That beat the dog,
 That bit the cat,
 That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,
 For two pieces of money.
 A kid, a kid.

“6. Then came *the water*, and quenched the fire,
 That burnt the staff,
 That beat the dog,
 That bit the cat,
 That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,
 For two pieces of money.
 A kid, a kid.

“7. Then came *the ox*, and drank the water,
 That quenched the fire,
 That burnt the staff,
 That beat the dog,
 That bit the cat,
 That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,
 For two pieces of money.
 A kid, a kid.

“8. Then came *the butcher*, and slew the ox,
 That drank the water,
 That quenched the fire,
 That burnt the staff,
 That beat the dog,
 That bit the cat,
 That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,
 For two pieces of money,
 A kid, a kid.

“9. Then came *the angel of death*, and killed the butcher,
 That slew the ox.
 That drank the water,
 That quenched the fire,
 That burnt the staff,
 That beat the dog,
 That bit the cat,
 That ate the kid,
 That my father bought,

For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.

“10. Then came *the Holy One*, blessed be He!
And killed the angel of death,
That killed the butcher,
That slew the ox,
That drank the water,
That quenched the fire,
That burnt the staff,
That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought,
For two pieces of money.
A kid, a kid.”

The following is the interpretation by P.N. Leberecht, Leipzig, 1731.

“1.—The kid, which was one of the pure animals, denotes the Hebrews.

“The father, by whom it was purchased, is Jehovah, who represents himself as sustaining this relation to the Hebrew people.

“The two pieces of money signify Moses and Aaron, through whose mediation the Hebrews were brought out of Egypt.

“2.—The cat denotes the Assyrians, by whom the ten tribes were carried into captivity.

“3.—The dog is symbolical of the Babylonians.

“4.—The staff signifies the Persians.

“5.—The fire indicates the Grecian empire under Alexander the Great.

“6.—The water betokens the Roman, or the fourth of the great monarchies to whose dominion the Jews were subjected.

“7.—The ox is a symbol of the Saracens, who subdued Palestine, and brought it under the caliphate.

“8.—The butcher that killed the ox denotes the Crusaders, by whom the Holy Land was wrested out of the hands of the Saracens.

“9.—The angel of death signifies the Turkish power, by which the land of Palestine was taken from the Franks, and to which it is still subject.

“10.—The commencement of the tenth stanza is designed to show that God will take signal vengeance on the Turks, immediately after whose overthrow the Jews are to be restored to their own land, and live under the government of their long-expected Messiah.”

To return to illustrations less remote, and of a more familiar nature:—

An ill-bred Londoner calls a shilling a *hog*, and half-a-crown a *bull*. He little knows what havoc he is making with our modern theorists, who assert that nothing is worthy of belief, or ought to be relied upon, before the era of “legitimate” or written “history.” These terms corroborate and identify themselves with the most ancient of traditionary customs, long ere princes had monopolised the surface of coined money with their own images and superscriptions. They are identical with the very name of money among the early Romans,

which was *pecunia*, from *pecus*, a flock. Among the same people, it is well known, the word *stipulatio* signified the striking of a bargain, which was done by placing two straws, *stipes*, one across the other. The same mode is practised to this day in the Isle of Man, existing, in all probability, from a period earlier than the foundation of Rome itself. Is the coincidence accidental or traditional? If the latter, what a history it tells of the migration of the species!

How much might be written of amulets, cups, and horns of magical power, from the divining cup of Genesis to the Amalthean horns, and the goblet of Oberon, which he gave to Huon of Bordeaux, the supernatural power of which, passing into an hundred shapes of fiction, may be found in our baronial halls—a pledge, to a certain extent, like the invulnerability of Achilles, of the good fortune of its possessor. It is wonderful that Shakespeare, who is so happy in the verisimilitude of his fairy lore, and so apt to embellish his plot with its mythology, should not have thought of causing the king-making Earl of Warwick to lose the horn of that prodigious cow—no doubt one of those guardian pledges bestowed upon his family—by way of presage to his fall. Deer’s antlers, there can be little doubt, were placed in the halls of our forefathers, a votive offering to the Diana of the Scandinavian Pantheon; as it was the custom in like manner to ornament the temples with the heads of sacrificial victims in the Greek and Roman worship. The eagerness of our sportsmen for the “brush,” as the first trophy in the chase, has in all probability originated from the same propitiatory notion.

Few would expect to meet with fragments of the worship of Juno in the racing of country girls for an inner garment, and the hunting of the pig with his tail greased; yet practised, but rapidly becoming obsolete, in wakes and other pastimes from Scotland to the Land’s End.

Thus far we have examined tradition by the test of positive experience. There is still a gleanings of poetry which might be culled, in some few districts, from the “lyre of the unlettered muse.” There are songs scattered up and down our own and the neighbouring counties among the population least affected by the spread of literature which are of great antiquity, and are not to be found in any books or writings now extant. A few of these might be gathered in; while to some, who love the tone and humour of the old ballads, they would be an acquisition of great value. But the intercourse between master and man, between town and country, and even amongst the learned themselves, becomes so cold and repulsive, either from increasing refinement or reserve, that there seems little hope of our finding any one who will take the trouble to collect them, or a sufficient number of real admirers of these relics who would come forward to ensure a suitable reward for the labour. We are sorely disgraced among foreigners for inattention to the course and progress of our own learning. No work exists, like those which illustrate and embellish the French, Italian, and German literature, which professes to give a summary view of its history. The knowledge of its antiquities, its customs, manners, laws, modes of feeling, and pursuits, except in the instances before mentioned, and a few other praiseworthy exceptions, have been shamefully obscured by an eagerness for supporting a system, the ridiculous rivalry of pretence, and by the discredit thrown upon such labours by modern pedantry. A new version of Camden, rectified by all the discoveries subsequent to his time;—that which is found useless or erroneous left out, and the work enlightened by new researches, entered into by a number of inquirers equal in all respects to the task, and exerted over every part of the country, would very much aid the cause of learning and the future progress of our knowledge.

The following traditions, we would fain hope, will not be found quite destitute of utility. They are some addition to our existing stock of knowledge, either as illustrating English history, manners, and customs now obsolete, or as a collection of legends, having truth for their basis, however disfigured in their transmission through various modifications of error,

the natural obscurity arising from distance, and the distorted media through which they must necessarily be viewed. Perhaps a main source of this inaccuracy arises from the many and heterogeneous uses to which the breakings up, the fragments of tradition have been subjected and applied. Like those detached yet beautiful remnants of antiquity, built up with other and absolutely worthless materials in the rude structures of the barbarian by whom they have been disfigured, traditions are generally presented to us torn from their original connection with edifices once renowned for beauty and magnificence. It is our wish, as it has been our aim, to rescue these ruins from degradation and decay. Gathered from many an uninviting heap of chaotic matter, they are now presented in a different form, and under a more popular aspect. We cannot pretend to say that we have invariably assigned to them their true origin, or that their real character and position have been ascertained. Still, we would hope, that, as relics of the past rescued from the oblivion to which they were inevitably hastening, they are not either an uninteresting or inelegant addition to the literature of our country.

I. Sir Tarquin

“Within this ancient British land,
In Lancashire I understand,
Near Manchester there lived a knight of fame,
Of a prodigious strength and might,
Who vanquished many a worthy knight;
A giant great, and Tarquin was his name.”

Ballad of Sir Tarquin.

As it is our intention to arrange these traditions in chronological order, we begin with the earliest upon record, the overthrow of the giant Tarquin, near Manchester, by Sir Lancelot of the Lake, who was supposed to bear rule over the western part of Lancashire.

An old ballad commemorates the achievement; and many other relics of this tradition still exist, one of which, a rude carving on a ceiling in the College at Manchester, represents the giant Tarquin at his morning's repast; it being fabled that he devoured a child daily at this meal. The legs of the infant are seen sprawling out of his mouth in a most unseemly fashion. Some have supposed that Tarquin was but a symbol or personification of the Roman army, and his castle the Roman station in this neighbourhood.

The following extract is from Dr Hibbert's pamphlet on the subject:—

“Upon the site of Castlefield, near Manchester, was originally erected a British fortress by the Sistuntii, the earliest possessors of Lancashire, comprising an area of twelve acres. It would possess on the south, south-east, and south-west, every advantage, from the winding of the River Medlock, and on its west, from the lofty banks which overlooked an impenetrable morass. By the artificial aid, therefore, of a ditch and a rampart on its east and north sides, this place was rendered a fortress of no inconsiderable importance. This fell afterwards into the hands of the Brigantes, the ancient inhabitants of Durham, York, and Westmoreland. Upon the invasion of the Romans, Cereales, their general, attacked the proper Brigantes of Yorkshire and Durham, and freed the Sistuntii of Lancashire from their dominion, but reserved the former to incur the Roman yoke. In A.D. 79, this British hold was changed into a Roman castrum, garrisoned by the first Frisian cohort, who erected from the old materials a new fort on the Roman construction, part of the vallum remaining to this day. New roads were made, and the British were invited to form themselves into the little communities of cities, to check the spirit of independence kept alive in the uncivilised abodes of deserted forests. The Romans possessed the fortress for nearly 300 years, when they were summoned away to form part of the army intended to repel the myriads of barbarians that threatened to overrun Europe.

“By contributing to their refinement, and protecting them from the inroads of the Picts and Scots, the Romans were regarded in a friendly light by the ancient inhabitants, and their departure was much regretted. It became necessary, however, that the Britons should elect a chief from their own nation. Their military positions were strengthened; and as the Roman model of a fortress did not suit their military taste, instead of one encircled with walls only seven or eight feet high, and furnishing merely pavilions for soldiers within, they preferred erecting, on the sites of stations, large buildings of stone, whose chambers should contain more convenient barracks for the garrison. An infinite number of these castles existed within a century after the departure of the Romans, of which our Castle at Manchester was one,

carried to a great height, erected in a good taste, secured at the entrances with gates, and flanked at the sides with towers.

“The Britons, however, unable of themselves to cope with their foes, imprudently invited the Saxons, who, after subduing the Caledonians, laid waste the country of the Britons with fire and sword. The Castle of Manchester surrendered A.D. 488.”

We have endeavoured to preserve the character and manner of the ancient chroniclers, and even their fanciful etymologies, in the following record, of which the quaint but not inelegant style, in some measure, almost unavoidably adapts itself to the subject.

Sir Lancelot of the Lake, as it is related by the older chronicles, was the son of Ban, King of Benoit, in Brittany. Flying from his castle, then straitly besieged, the fugitive king saw it in flames, and soon after expired with grief. His queen, Helen, fruitlessly attempting to save his life, abandoned for a while her infant son Lancelot. Returning, she discovered him in the arms of the nymph Vivian, the mistress of Merlin, who on her approach sprung with the child into a deep lake and disappeared. This lake is held by some to be the lake Linus, a wide insular water near the sea-coast, in the regions of Linus or “The Lake;” now called Martin Mere or *Mar-tain-moir*, “a water like the sea.”

The nymph educated the infant at her court, fabulously said to have been held in the subterranean caverns of this lake, and from hence he was styled Lancelot du Lac.

At the age of eighteen the fairy conveyed him to the camp of King Arthur, who was then waging a fierce and exterminating warfare with the Saxons. Here the young warrior was invested with the badge of knighthood. His person, accomplishments, and unparalleled bravery, having won the heart of many a fair dame in this splendid abode of chivalry and romance, his name and renown filled the land, where he was throughout acknowledged as chief of “The Knights of the Round Table.”

The name of Lancelot is derived from history, and is an appellation truly British, signifying royalty, *Lanc* being the Celtic term for a spear, and *lod* or *lot* implying a people. Hence the name of Lancelot’s shire, or Lancashire. From the foregoing it is supposed that he resided in the region of Linus, and that he was the monarch of these parts, being ruler over the whole, or the greater part, of what is now called Lancashire.

Arthur, king of the Silures, being selected by Ambrosius for the command of the army, he defeated the Saxons in twelve pitched battles. Four of these were obtained, as related by Nennius, on the river called Douglas,⁷ or Douglas, a little stream which runneth, as we are further told, in the region of Linus. On reference, it will be found that this river passes through a great portion of the western side of Lancashire, and pretty accurately fixes the position here described.

Three of these great victories were gotten near Wigan, and the other is currently reported to have been achieved near Black rod, close to a Roman station, then probably fortified, and remaining as a place of some strength, and in possession of the Saxon invaders. Here, according to rude legends, “the River Douglas ran with blood to Wigan three days.”

⁷ Du-glass, “the becoming, the seemly, green,” described by Camden as “a small brook, running with an easy and still stream;” which conveys a good idea of the word *Du*. The Du-glass empties itself into the estuary called by Ptolemy *Bellesama*, *Belless-aman-e*; pronounced Violish-anne, (Ballyshannon is evidently a very slight corruption of this term) the literal meaning of which is, that the “mouth of the river only is for ships;” *i.e.*, that the rivers which form the haven are not navigable.—*Chronicles of Eri*.—*O’Connor*.

It was during one of the brief intervals of rest that sometimes occurred in the prosecution of these achievements that the following incident is reported to have happened. Being a passage of some note, and the earliest tradition of the county upon record, we have chosen it as the commencement of a work principally derived from traditionary history.

Sir Tarquin, a cruel and treacherous knight of gigantic stature and prodigious strength, had, as the story is currently told, his dwelling in a well-fortified castle nigh to Manchester, on the site of what is yet known by the name of Castle-field. It was a place of great strength, surrounded by vast ramparts, and flanked at the corners with high and stately towers.

He had by treachery gained possession of the fortress, treating the owner, who was a British knight of no mean condition, with great cruelty and rigour. This doughty Saxon, Sir Tarquin, had, along with many of his nation, been invited over in aid of the Britons against their neighbours the Picts and Scots. These being driven back, their false allies treacherously made war upon their friends, laying waste the country with fire and sword. Then arose that noble brotherhood, "The Knights of the Round Table," who, having sworn to avenge the wrongs of their country, began to harass the intruders, and to drive them from their ill-gotten possessions.

The Saxons were no less vigilant; but many of their most puissant knights were slain or imprisoned during these encounters.

Sir Tarquin could boast of no mean success;—threescore knights and four, it is said, were held in thrall by this uncourteous chieftain.

Sir Lancelot having, as the ballad quaintly expresses it,

"A mighty giant just pulled down,
Who lived near Shrewsbury's fair town;
With his keen sword his life away did take."

This giant knight was called Sir Carados; and Sir Lancelot, when about betaking himself to these and similar recreations, did hear doleful tidings out of Lancashire, how that Sir Tarquin was playing the eagle in the hawk's eyrie, amongst his brethren and companions. From Winchester he rode in great haste, succouring not a few distressed damsels and performing many other notable exploits by the way, "until he came to a vast desert," "frequented by none save those whom ill fortune had permitted to wander therein." Sir Tarquin, like the dragon of yore, entailed a desert round his dwelling: so fierce and rapacious was he that no man durst live beside him, save that he held his life and property of too mean account, and too worthless for the taking.

The knight was pricking on his way through this almost pathless wilderness, when he espied a damsel of such inexpressible and ravishing beauty that none might behold her without the most heart-stirring delight and admiration. To this maiden did Sir Lancelot address himself, but she hid her face and fell a-weeping. He then inquired the cause of her dolour, when she bade him flee, for his life was in great jeopardy.

"Oh, Sir Knight!" uncovering her face as she spoke, "the giant Tarquin liveth hereabout, and thou wert as good as dead should he espy thee so near his castle."

"What!" said the knight, "and shall Sir Lancelot of the Lake flee before this false and cruel tyrant? To this purpose am I come, that I may slay and make an end of him at once, and deliver the captives."

"Art thou, indeed, Sir Lancelot?" said the damsel, joy suddenly starting through her tears; "then is our deliverance nearer than we hoped for. Thy fame is gone before thee into all

countries, and thy might and thy prowess, it is said, none may withstand. This evil one, Sir Tarquin, hath taken captive my true knight, who, through my cruelty, betook himself to this adventure, and now lieth in chains and foul ignominy, without hope of release, until death break off his fetters.”

“Beshrew me,” said Lancelot, “but I will deliver him presently, and cut off the foul tyrant’s head, or lose mine own by the attempt.”

Then did he follow the maiden to a river’s brink, near to where, as tradition still reports, now stand the Knott Mills. Having mounted her before him on his steed, she pointed out a path over the ford, beyond which he soon espied the castle, a vast and stately building of rugged stone, like a huge crown upon the hill-top, which presented a gentle ascent from the stream.

Now did Sir Lancelot alight, as well to assist his companion as to bethink himself what course to pursue; but the damsel showed him a high tree, about a stone’s-throw from the ditch before the castle, whereon hung a goodly array of accoutrements, with many fair and costly shields, on which were displayed a variety of gay and fanciful devices. These were the property of the knights then held in durance by Sir Tarquin. Below them all hung a copper basin, on which was carved in Latin the following inscription, translated thus—

“Who valueth not his life a whit,
Let him this magic basin hit.”

This so enraged Sir Lancelot that he drove at the vessel violently with his spear, piercing it through and through, so vigorous was the assault. The clangour was loud, and anxiously did the knight await for some reply to his summons. Yet there was no answer, nor was there any stir about the walls or outworks. It seemed as though Sir Tarquin was his own castellan, skulking here alone, like the cunning spider watching for his prey.

Silence, with her vast and unmoving wings, appeared to brood over the place; and echo, that gave back their summons from the walls, seemed to labour for utterance through the void by which they were encompassed. A stillness so appalling might needs discourage the hot and fiery purpose of Sir Lancelot, who, unused but to the rude clash of arms, and the mêlée of the battle, did marvel exceedingly at this forbearance of the enemy. But he still rode round about the fortress, expecting that some one should come forth to inquire his business, and this did he, to and fro, for a long space. As he was just minded to return from so fruitless an adventure, he saw a cloud of dust at some distance, and presently he beheld a knight galloping furiously towards him. Coming nigh, Sir Lancelot was aware that a captive knight lay before him, bound hand and foot, bleeding and sore wounded.

“Villain!” cried Sir Lancelot, “and unworthy the name of a true and loyal knight, how darest thou do this insult and contumely to an enemy, who, though fallen, is yet thine equal? I will make thee rue this foul despite, and avenge the wrongs of my brethren of the Round Table.”

“If thou be for so brave a meal,” said Tarquin, “thou shalt have thy fill, and that speedily. I will first cut off thy head, and then serve up thy carcase to the Round Table; for both that and thee I do utterly defy!”

“This is over-dainty food for thy sending,” replied Sir Lancelot hastily, and with that they couched their spears. The first rush was over, but man and horse had withstood the shock. Again they fell back, measuring the distance with an eager and impetuous glance, and again they rushed on, as if to overwhelm each other by main strength, when, as fortune would have it, their lances shivered, both of them at once, in the rebound. The end of Sir Lancelot’s spear, as it broke, struck his adversary’s steed on the shoulder, and caused him to fall suddenly, as if

sore wounded. Sir Tarquin leaped nimbly from off his back; which Sir Lancelot espying, he cried out—

“Now will I show thee the like courtesy; for, by mine honour and the faith of a true knight, I will not slay thee at this foul advantage.” Alighting with haste, they betook themselves to their swords, each guarding the opposite attack warily with his shield. That of Sir Tarquin was framed of a bull’s hide, stoutly held together with thongs, and, in truth, seemed well-nigh impenetrable; whilst the shield of his opponent, being of more brittle stuff, did seem as though it would have cloven asunder with the desperate strokes of Sir Tarquin’s sword. Nothing daunted, Sir Lancelot brake oftentimes through his adversary’s guard, and smote him once until the blood trickled down amain. At this sight, Sir Tarquin waxed ten times more fierce; and summoning all his strength for the blow, wrought so lustily on the head of Sir Lancelot that he began to reel; which Tarquin observing, by a side blow struck the sword from out his hand, with so sharp and dexterous a jerk that it shivered into a thousand fragments.

“Now yield thee, Sir Knight, or thou diest;” and with that the cruel monster sprang upon him to accomplish his end. Still Sir Lancelot would not yield, nor sue to him for quarter, but flew on his enemy like the ravening wolf to his prey. Then were they seen hurtling together like wild bulls—Sir Lancelot holding fast his adversary’s sword, so that in vain he attempted to make a thrust therewith.

“Thou discourteous churl! give me but the vantage of a weapon like thine own, and I will fight thee honestly and without flinching.”

“Nay, Sir Knight of the Round Table, but this were a merry deed withal, to help thee unto that wherewith I might perchance mount some goodly bough for the crows to peck at,” replied Tarquin. Terrible and unceasing was the struggle; but in vain the giant knight attempted to regain the use of his sword. Then Sir Lancelot, with a wary eye, finding no hope of his life save in the use or accomplishment of some notable stratagem, bethought him of the attempt to throw his adversary by a sudden feint. To this end he pressed against him heavily and with his whole might, then darting suddenly aside, Sir Tarquin fell to the ground with a loud cry; which Sir Lancelot espying, leapt joyfully upon him, thinking to overcome his enemy; but the latter, too cunning to be thus caught at unawares, kept his sword firmly holden, and his enemy was still unprovided with the means of defence. Now did Sir Lancelot begin to doubt what course he should pursue, when suddenly the damsel, who, having bound up the wounds of the captive knight as he lay, and now sat a little way off watching the event, cried out with a shrill voice—

“Sir Knight, the tree:—a goodly bough for the gathering.” Then did Sir Lancelot remember the weapons that were there, along with the shields and the body-armour of the knights Sir Tarquin had vanquished. Starting up, ere his enemy had recovered himself, he snatched a broad falchion from the bough, and again defied him to the combat. But the fight was fiercer than before; so that being sore wounded, and the day exceeding hot, they were after a season fain to pause for breath.

“Thou art the bravest knight I ever encountered,” said Sir Tarquin, “and I would crave thy country and thy name; for, by my troth and the honour of my gods, I will give thee thy request on one condition, and release thy brethren of the Round Table; for why should two knights of such pith and prowess slay each other in one day?”

“And what is thy condition?” inquired Sir Lancelot.

“There liveth but one, either in Christendom or Heathenesse, unto whom I may not grant this parley; for him have I sworn to kill,” said Sir Tarquin.

“‘Tis well,” replied the other; “but what name or cognisance hath he?”

“His name is Lancelot of the Lake!”

“Behold him!” was the reply; Sir Lancelot at the same time brandishing his weapon with a shout of defiance.

When Sir Tarquin heard this he gnashed his teeth for very rage.

“Now one of us must die,” said he. “Thou slewest my brother Sir Carados at Shrewsbury, and I have sworn to avenge his defeat. Thou diest. Not all the gods of thy fathers shall deliver thee.”

So to it they went with more heat and fury than ever; and a marvel was it to behold, for each blow did seem as it would have cleft the other in twain, so deadly was the strife and hatred between them.

Sir Lancelot pressed hard upon his foe, though himself grievously wounded, and in all likelihood would have won the fight, but, as ill-luck would have it, when dealing a blow mighty enough to fell the stoutest oak in Christendom, he missed his aim, and with that stumbled to the ground. Then did Sir Tarquin shout for joy, and would have made an end of him, but that Sir Lancelot, as he lay, aimed a deadly thrust below his enemy’s shield where he was left unguarded, and quickly turned his joy into tribulation; for Sir Tarquin, though not mortally wounded, drew back and cried out lustily for pain, the which Sir Lancelot hearing, he leapt again to his feet, still eager and impatient for the strife.

The contest was again doubtful, neither of them showing any disposition to yield, or in any wise to abate the rigour of the conflict. Night, too, was coming on apace, and seemed like enough to pitch her tent over them, ere the issue was decided. But an event now fell out which, unexpectedly enough, terminated this adventure. From some cause arising out of the haste and rapidity of the strokes, one of these so chanced, that both their swords were suddenly driven from out of their right hands; stooping together, by some subtlety or mistake, they exchanged weapons. Then did Sir Lancelot soon find his strength to increase, whilst his adversary’s vigour began to abate; and in the end Sir Lancelot slew him, and with his own sword cut off his head. He then perceived that the giant’s great strength was by virtue of his sword; and that it was through his wicked enchantments therewith he had been able to overcome, and had wrought such disgrace on the Knights of the Round Table. Sir Lancelot forthwith took the keys from the giant’s girdle, and proceeded to the release of the captive knights, first unbinding the prisoner, who yet lay in a piteous swoon hard by. But there was a great outcry and lamentation when that he saw his own brother Sir Erclos in this doleful case; for it was he whom the cruel Tarquin was leading captive when he met the just reward of his misdeeds.

After administering to his relief, Sir Lancelot rode up to the castle-gate, but found no entrance thereby. The drawbridge was raised, and he sought in vain the means of giving the appointed signal for its descent.

But the damsel showed him a secret place where hung a little horn. On this he blew a sharp and ringing blast, when the bridge presently began to lower, and instantly to adjust itself across the moat; whereon, hastening, he unlocked the gate. But here he had nigh fallen into a subtle snare, by reason of an ugly dwarf that was concealed in a side niche of the wall. He was armed with a ponderous mace; and had not the maiden drawn Sir Lancelot aside by main force, he would have been crushed in its descent, the dwarf aiming a deadly blow at him as he passed. It fell, instead, with a loud crash on the pavement, and broke into a thousand fragments. Thereupon, Sir Lancelot smote him with the giant’s sword, and hewed the

mischievous monster asunder without mercy. Turning towards the damsel, he beheld her form suddenly change, and she vanished from his sight: then was he aware that it had been the nymph Vivian who accompanied him through the enchantments he had so happily subdued. He soon released his brethren, and great was the joy at the Round Table when the Knights returned to the banquet.

Thus endeth the chronicle of Sir Tarquin, still a notable tradition in these parts, the remains of his castle being shown to this day.

II. The Goblin Builders

“By well and rills, in meadows green,
 We nightly dance our heyday guise;
 And to our fairy king and queen
 We chant our moonlight minstrelsies.
 When larks ‘gin sing,
 Away we fling,
 And babes new-born we steal as we go,
 And elf in bed
 We leave instead,
 And wend us laughing, ho, ho, ho!”—BEN JONSON.

The story which serves for the basis of the following legend will be easily recognised in the neighbourhood where the transactions are said to have occurred, though probably not known beyond its immediate locality.

The accessories are gathered from a number of sources: and the great difficulty the author has had to encounter in getting at what he conceives the real state and character of the time, together with the history of contemporary individuals and events, so as to give a natural picture of the manners and customs of that remote era, can be known by those only who have entered into pursuits of this nature. In this and in the succeeding legends he has attempted to illustrate and portray the customs of that particular epoch to which they relate, as well as to detail the events on which they are founded.

It may be interesting to notice that a similar exploit is recorded in the Scandinavian Legends, and may be traced, under many variations of circumstances and events, in the Icelandic, Danish, and Norwegian poetry, affording another intimation of the source from whence our popular mythology is derived.

Towards the latter end of the reign of William, the Norman conqueror, Gamel, the Saxon Thane, Lord of Recedham or “Rached,” being left in the quiet possession of his lands and privileges by the usurper, “minded,” as the phrase then was, “for the fear of God and the salvation of his immortal soul, to build a chapel unto St Chadde,” nigh to the banks of the Rache or Roach. For this pious use a convenient place was set apart, lying on the north bank of the river, in a low and sheltered spot now called “The Newgate.” Piles of timber and huge stones were gathered thither in the most unwonted profusion; insomuch, that the building seemed destined for some more ambitious display than the humble edifices called churches then exhibited, of which but few existed in the surrounding districts.

The foundations were laid. The loose and spongy nature of the soil required heavy stakes to be driven, upon and between which were laid several courses of rubble-stone, ready to receive the grouting or cement. Yet in one night was the whole mass conveyed, without the loss of a single stone, to the summit of a steep hill on the opposite bank, and apparently without any visible marks or signs betokening the agents or means employed for its removal. It did seem as though their pathway had been the viewless air, so silently was all track obliterated. Great was the consternation that spread among the indwellers of the four several clusters of cabins dignified by the appellation of villages, and bearing, with their appendages, the names of Castletown, Spoddenland, Honorsfield, and Buckland. With dismay and horror this profanation was witnessed. The lord, more especially, became indignant. This daring

presumption—this wilful outrage, so like bidding defiance to his power, bearding the lion even in his den, was deemed an offence calling for signal vengeance upon the perpetrators.

At the cross in Honorsfield a proclamation was recited, to the intent, that unless the offending parties were forthwith given up to meet the punishment that might be awarded to their misdeeds, a heavy mulct would follow, and the unfortunate villains and *bordarii* be subject to such further infliction as might still seem wanting to assuage their lord's displeasure. Now this was a grievous disaster to the unhappy vassals, seeing that none could safely or truly accuse his neighbour. All were agreed that human agency had no share in the work. The wiser part threw out a shrewd suspicion, that the old deities whom their forefathers had worshipped, and whose altars had been thrown down and their sacrifices forbidden, had burst the thralldom in which they were aforetime held by the Christian priests, and were now brooding a fearful revenge for the many insults they had endured. But the decree from the lord was hasty, and the command urgent; so that a council was holden for the devising of some plan for their relief.

Hugh de Chadwycke and John de Spotland were subordinate lords, or feudatories, holding fortified dwellings, castelets, or peels, in the manor of Rochdale; the former had builded his rude mansion of massive timber, for the double purpose of habitation and defence, on a bold eminence, forming a steep bank of the river, about a mile from the Thane's castle. Claiming a relationship to the lord, he was in some measure privileged above his friend De Spotland, yet was the latter a personage of considerable power and influence at the manor court. To these men when their aid was necessary, either as counsellors or intercessors, did the inhabitants generally repair.

Hugh de Chadwycke was a man of mild and grave deportment, but politic withal, and wary of counsel. John de Spotland was of a more bold and open temper. De Chadwycke suggested a submissive application to the Thane, with a pledge that all possible diligence should be used for the fulfilment of his demands. John urged the removal of the materials with all expedition to their original site, a watch being set to discover the delinquents, should they again presume to lay hands on the stuff. The wisdom and propriety of the latter precaution was undisputed; but no one seemed willing to undergo the terrible ordeal, each declining the office in deference to his more privileged neighbour. No wonder at their reluctance to so unequal a contest. To be strangled or torn limb from limb was the slightest punishment that could be expected for this daring profanation; yet, unless they had witnesses, bodily, to these diabolical exploits, it were needless to attempt excusing themselves before the haughty chieftain. He would visit with fearful severity all their endeavours to deceive, nor would he credit their belief, unless it were confirmed by the testimony of an eye-witness. How to procure this desirable source of intelligence was a question that was hourly becoming more difficult to solve.

Slow and melancholy was their return, while with fear and hesitation they communicated the result.

"Now, shame befall thee, Adam of Wills!" said a stout woman, to one of the speakers; "thou wert ever a tough fighter; and the cudgel and ragged staff were as glib in thine hands as a beggar's pouch on alms-days. Show thy mettle, man. I'll spice thee a jug of barley-drink, an' thou be for the bout this time."

"Nay," returned Adam, "I 'll fight Beelzebub if he be aught I can hit; but these same boggarts, they say, a blow falls on 'em like rain-drops on a mist, or like beating the wind with a corn-flail. I cannot fight with naught, as it were."

“Shame on thee, Hal!” said a shrill-tongued, crooked little body, arrayed in a coarse grey hood, and holding a stick, like unto a one-handed crutch, of enormous dimensions. “Shame on thee! I would watch myself, but the night-wind sits indifferently on my stomach, and I am too old now for these moonshine lifts.”

She cast her little bleared eyes, half-shut and distilling contempt, on the cowardly bystanders.

“Now, if there be not old Cicely,” first went round in a whisper; then a deep silence gradually pervaded the assembly.

She had just hobbled down to the cross, and the audience seemed to watch her looks with awe and suspicion.

“What, none o’ ye? Come, Uctred, thou shalt shame these big-tongued, wide-mouthed boasters.”

A short swarthy-looking boy, with a leering and unfavourable countenance, here stepped forward, taking his station upon one of the steps beside his mother. A notion had gone abroad that the boy was the fruit of some unhallowed intercourse with an immortal of the fairy or pixy kind, whose illicit amours the old woman had wickedly indulged. She too, was thought to bear in some degree a charmed life, and to hold communion with intelligences not of the most holy or reputable order. The boy was dumb. His lips had, however, at times a slight and tremulous movement, which strongly impressed the beholders that some discourse was then carrying on between “the dummy,” as he was generally called, and his invisible relatives. His whole aspect was singularly painful and forbidding. No wonder, in these times of debasing superstition, that his person should be looked on with abhorrence, and even a touch from him be accounted an evil of no slight import. His mother alone had the power of communicating with him, or of understanding his grimaces.

“Now what will you give me for the use of his pretty eyes this lucky night? The Thane will have regard to his testimony, though all that have free use of the tongue he holds to be liars and dishonest. Never lied this youth by sign or token!”

A buzz went through the company, and the dame and her boy again sat down to await the issue. All eyes were directed towards them, timidly and by stealth, as the consultation grew louder and more continuous.

A pause at length ensued. Some three or four of the group drew towards the crone, who sat almost double, her chin resting on the neb of her crutch.

“Now will we give thee two changes of raiment, together with a mess of barley-pottage; and every year thou shalt have a penny at Easter, and a fat hen at Shrovetide.”

“Good,” said the greedy beldame; “but I’ll have a sheep-skin cap for the boy, and a horn spoon.” This demand was also granted; after which she made signs to the lad, who swung his head to and fro, at the same time distorting his features with a wild and terrible rapidity. It was evident that he understood the nature of these proceedings. A glance, like that of mockery and derision, he cast towards the crowd; and when Mother Cicely was returning, he threw back upon them a look of scorn and malignity which made the beholders shrink aside with horror.

The people now addressed themselves to the task of replacing the heavy materials, and ere night the greater part were withdrawn, ready to begin with the foundations again on the morrow.

A sort of rude shelter was constructed, wherein Uctred was to keep watch until daylight.

The morning came, calm and beautiful over the grey hills; and the anxious inhabitants, awake betimes, did each turn his first steps towards the river's brink. With horror and amazement they again beheld the ground bare. Not a vestige remained, nor was there any trace of the boy.

"He is gone to his own," said they, as a general shudder went through the crowd; "and the fairies have gotten him at last."

Every heart seemed quailing with some hidden fear; nor could any means at that moment be suggested for their emancipation.

The stones and timber were again found, as before, on the opposite hill. Fifty stout men had with difficulty contrived to fetch them from thence the day preceding, and twice that number would hardly have sufficed to transport them thither. It was not to be gainsayed that a power superior to their own was the agent in removals so mysterious. Nothing now remained but to acquaint their lord with this second interruption; and their diligence in performing this duty, they hoped, might exculpate them from the heavy doom they had incurred. Some of the wiser and more stout-hearted were chosen to carry these tidings to the Thane, hoping to clear themselves from the ban, as well as to return with commands for their future proceedings.

Gamel de Recedham, or Rochdale, had his dwelling in the ancient castle built by the Romans on the verge of a steep hill jutting into the valley of the Roach. It was a place difficult of access, save on the southern side, where a wide ditch formed an effectual defence, and over which a narrow bridge admitted only two abreast in front of the outer gate. It was now, in some places, fast going to decay, but enough remained out of its vast bulk to form a dwelling for the Saxon and his followers. It had been once fortified throughout; the castle, or keep, being four-square, flanked at the corners with stone towers. The lower part of the walls was composed of large pebbles mixed with brick, and held together by a firm cement. Higher up, and continued to the summit, were alternate rows of brick and freestone. The corners were faced with stone, making a very formidable appearance when guarded by slingers and throwers of darts, who were stationed there only in times of great peril.

Passing the vallum, or outer defence, they ascended a narrow staircase outside the keep, where the cringing serfs were admitted by four of the lord's Norman bowmen, who ushered them into the audience-chamber. Some of the Thane's men were habited in coats of mail, made of small pieces of iron, cut round at the bottom, and set on a leathern garment, so as to fold over each other like fish-scales, the whole bending with the greatest ease, and yet affording a sufficient protection to the wearer.

The chamber of audience was situated at the uppermost part of the keep, and great was the apprehension of the intruders, whilst following their guides through the winding passages and gloomy staircases leading to the inner cell occupied by their chief. The disposition of the armed men,—their warlike habiliments, and the various and uncouth weapons which seemed to threaten terror and defiance, were all objects to them of apprehension and distrust. The walls of this gloomy apartment were lined with thin bricks, ornamentally disposed in herring-bone work, after the fashion of the time. The windows, though narrow on the outside, were broad and arched within, displaying a rude sort of taste in their construction. Round the walls were groups of weapons, ostentatiously displayed; two-edged broadswords; long spears, some barbed and others flat and broad; shields, the oldest of which were large, and had a sharp point projecting from the centre; others, of the Norman and more recent fashion, were smaller, and of an oval shape. Battle-axes, lances, and javelins, were strewn about in formidable profusion. Hauberks, or chain-mail, hung at intervals from the walls, looking grim

and stalwart from their repose, like the headless trunks of the warriors they had once encompassed.

A broad curtain, curiously embroidered, covered one end of the room, from behind which crept a page or henchman, in gay attire, his tunic glistening with his lord's device.

The serfs bowed with the most abject submission to this representative of their lord, who lived in the customary style of barbarous and feudal pomp, which the manners of their Norman invaders had rather contributed to increase than to diminish.

"Tell thy master," said their companion, "that some of the folk would speak with him, touching the matter by which they are in jeopardy."

Smoothing his locks and trimming down his garments, the boy departed. It was long ere the audience was granted; in the meantime, they stood trembling and oppressed with an evil foreboding for the result, the known hasty and impetuous temper of the Saxon rendering it a matter of some doubt, and no small hazard, as to what might be the issue of their conference. Suddenly was heard the clanking of armour, and the tramp of nailed feet, announcing his approach; the heavy arras was uplifted, and Gamel the Thane stood before them. He was richly attired in a loose coat reaching down to his ankles; over this was a long robe, fastened over both shoulders and on the breast with a silver buckle. The edges were trimmed with gold and knots of flowers interwoven with pearls and rare stones. On his head he wore a coronet, or rim of gold, enriched with jewels; and his bushy hair and grizzled beard looked still more grim and forbidding beneath these glittering ornaments. His eyes were quick and piercing; his cheeks pale and slightly furrowed. A narrow and retreating mouth, firmly drawn in, showed the bent of his disposition to be fierce and choleric, and his wrath not easily turned aside. He was accompanied by his billmen, together with some half-dozen attendants, clad in shirts of chain mail and helmets fitting close to the head. These bore lances after the Norman fashion then prevailing over the ruder customs of their Saxon predecessors.

The more polished manners of the Norman's court had early pervaded the ranks of the nobles; and even the few hereditary Saxon chiefs left in possession of their ancient sovereignties, thought their domains cheaply purchased by this obsequious show of homage to their king.

The Thane's chief henchman occupied the post of honour, whilst a little footpage stood by his master's elbow.

The villains prostrated themselves.

"How now!—Where are the caitiffs I commanded of ye? I vow to the Virgin and St Chadde, your own necks shall swing from the tower in their stead, should ye fail in that which I require at your hands."

The trembling hearers were, afraid to answer—their lips quivered, and each tongue seemed to refuse its office. Gamel proceeded:—

"What! come ye to fawn and whine out my purpose? Now will I make your chastisement ten times hotter for this intent. Lodge these knaves, Nicholas, i' the further dungeon, till they be reprieved by the rogues who are yet at large and defying our power:—they hold it somewhat cheap, methinks, when they value it less than the pampering of their own wantonness and sport."

Nicholas was herald, bedellus, or chief crier, to the lord of the manor, his office being to make proclamations at the court and the cross, where the use of his capacious lungs was oft in request. He was hangman, too, upon occasion, being never so well pleased as when employed

in the due chastisement of his master's lieges. He was, moreover, a man of infinite humour, generally consoling his dear unfortunates under their visitations by some coarse and galling jest.

"Now, Adam of Hunersfield, art thou at thy prayers already?—I'll shrive thee quick. Master, shall I give the rogues any victuals? They'll not keep else till hanging time;—best finish now—needless to waste provender."

"Give them the prison allowance. But, hark thee, no stripes, Nicholas," said the chief, well aware of his flagellant propensities.

"Eh!" replied he; "but black cake and dried beans don't mix well i' the stomach without riddling."

"Peace, sirrah!" replied the chieftain with a frown. Nicholas, though a licensed jester and in especial favour, knew there was a boundary beyond which he durst not pass; he became silent, therefore, at this command. The lamentations of the unwary hostages were loud but unavailing. Nicholas prepared his manacles, and was leading them from the chamber, when the page whispered in his master's ear.

"Stop," cried the Thane: "know ye aught of the boy who was a-watching yesternight?"

"We know nothing of the lad, as we hope for deliverance," said the terrified rustics.

"Bring in the woman!"

The command was followed by the entrance of Cicely. Leaning on her crutch, she bent lowly before the chief.

"Hast thou any suit or accusation to prefer against these men, as touching thy boy?"

"Oh, my lord!" said the dame, weeping, "I never aforetime knew him missing; and he has slept i' the Killer Dane, where the great battle was fought below the castle. He has watched i' the 'Thrutch,' where the black dog haunts from sunset till cock-crow. He has leapt over the fairies' ring and run through the old house at Gozlewood, and no harm has befallen him; but he is now ta'en from me,—cast out, maybe, into some noisome pit. The timbers and stones are leapt on to the hill again, but my boy is not there!"

She wept and wrung her withered hands.

"Hast thou any witness against these men?"

"Oh! my lord, they bribed me with their gifts that I should suffer the boy to watch; and I am poor, and I thought he wore a charmed life, and the little hoard would be a comfort and a stay in my old age."

"Thou hast done wickedly in this," said the lord. "Howbeit, I will keep them in the stocks; peradventure it may quicken the wits of their outdoor friends to find out the mover of these scurvy pranks. The post and timbers would not go up hill unless some knave had holpen to lift them."

Nicholas was departing to the indulgence of his favourite pastime, when a loud hubbub was heard without, and presently a fellow was pushed in by the pressure of the crowd upon his shoulders; but they drew back, on finding the immediate presence of their chief.

This man was accounted the most notorious idler in the neighbourhood, hight "Barnulf with the nose." His eyes looked red and swollen, and his senses had become muddled and obtuse with long steeping. Silence was immediately enforced, while the assembly anxiously awaited the interrogation of this intolerable coveter of barley-drink.

“Art thou again at thy freaks?” said the Thane, angrily: “thou hast soon forgotten the stocks and the whipping-post on Easter-day. It were well that Nicholas should refresh thy memory in this matter.”

At this dreaded name the poor wretch fell on his face.

“Please ye, my lord,” said he, hardly raising his head from the floor, “I am here but for a witness beliken. I am breeding of no broil, save an’ my gossip o’ yesternight drew me into a tussle with old Split-Foot and his company.”

He groaned, but not without considerable effort, and his face puckered in a heap at the recollection.

“What!—the foul fiend helped thee to thy liquor, I trow?” said Gamel, hastily. “Think not to foist thy fooleries upon me. Should I find thee with a lie on thy tongue, the hide were as well off thy shoulders. To thy speech—quick, what sawest thou?”

“I will give it all, withouten a word but what the blessed saints would avouch,” said the terrified suppliant, whose once fiery face was now blanched, or rather dyed of a dull and various blue.

“I was wending home from Merland, where I had been helping Dan the smith to his luckpenny, when as I took the path-road down yonder unlucky hill to the ford, not thinking of the de’il’s workmen that had flown off with the church the night before, I was whistling, or, it mayhap, singing,—or—or—I am not just particular to know how it was, for the matter of it; but at any rate I was getting up, having tumbled down the steep almost nigh to the bottom, and I thought my eyes had stricken fire, for I saw lights frisking and frolicking up and down the hill. Then I sat down to watch, and, sure enough, such a puck-fisted rabble, without cloak or hosen, I never beheld—all hurry-scurry up the hill, and some of the like were on the gallop down again. They were shouting, and mocking, and laughing, like so many stark-mad fools at a May-feast. They strid twenty paces at a jump, with burdens that two of the best oxen about the manor had not shifted the length of my thumbnail. ‘Tis some unlucky dream, said I, rubbing the corners of my eyes, and trying to pinch myself awake. Just then I saw a crowd of the busiest of ‘em running up from the river, and making directly towards the steep bank below where I sat. They were hurrying a great log of timber, which they threw down close beside me, as if to rest ere they mounted. ‘My friends,’—what should ail me to talk to ‘em I cannot tell,—‘My friends, but ye seem to have more work in your hands than wit in your noddles—ye might have spared yourselves the labour, I trow.’ With that the whole rout turned upon me with a shout and a chattering that would have dumbfounded the shrillest tongue in the whole hundred—the mill-wheel was nothing to it. I would have escaped, but my feet were holden like as they had been i’ the stocks. One, the foremost of the crew—I do think he had a long tail and gaping hoofs, but I was over frightened to see very clear—came with a mocking malicious grin, his tongue lolling out, and his eyes glaring and fiend-like.

“‘Pray, good friend,’ said he, pulling off a little black bonnet, ‘be compassionate enough to help us with our load to the hill-top.’ Now was I terrified beyond measure, insomuch that I made a desperate tug, whereby loosening myself, I ran like the wind, the wicked fiends following and roaring after me with loud and bitter curses. I jumped into the river, in my hurry having missed the ford, and I heard ‘em still shouting, and, as I thought, pursuing me; but the Virgin and St Chadde were my helpers, for when Biddy opened the door in the morning, I lay there in a great swoon, with my head bruised, and a hole in my good grey cloak.”

“And so thou comest here a-boasting of thy drunken discoveries,” said the Thane. “Thou shalt wish thou hadst not gotten thee so soon from the fiend’s clutches. A spice of old Nicholas’ vocation may not be amiss; yet, by way of relish to thy tale”——

The agony of the culprit was loud and appalling, but the chief was inexorable, until his denunciations were interrupted by a stranger, who craved a short respite for the groaning suppliant.

He was meanly clad: a coarse cloak, stained and threadbare, was thrown open, showing a close habit of the most ordinary fabric; yet a natural and graceful bearing imparted a dignity even to his poor and worthless habiliments.

“I am a stranger, and sore oppressed with long travel. Penury and misfortune have been my lot, and I am driven from place to place without a home or a morsel of bread. Last night, long after the curfew, I came hither, but no *hospitium* or religious house being near, I sat down by the hill-side yonder, until morning should enable me to crave help for my hopeless journey. The morning had not dawned ere I awoke—a loud trampling, and a rush of many voices had broken in upon my slumbers. I beheld crowds of strange-looking men, laden with terrific burdens. They seemed to be eagerly and earnestly at work, under heavier loads than I thought mortal man could sustain; the whole space too, as far as the eye might carry, seemed alive with them, the flickering of their torches forming a scene of almost unimaginable splendour. Right before me were a number of these labourers, hauling up a heavy beam from the river; others were apparently crossing, laden with materials no less bulky and intractable. All were in motion, wriggling along like so many ants on a hillock. The party just before me stayed immediately below where I sat, watching their proceedings with no little curiosity and amazement. They threw down their load,—then pausing, appeared to view with some hesitation the steep bank above them. The foremost of the group now came softly towards me. Pulling off his bonnet, with a grave and beseeching aspect he craved help to accomplish the ascent. Not then dreaming of goblins and their deceitful glamour, I put my shoulder to the work with a right good will; and truly it were a marvel to watch the tough beam, how it seemed to obey the impulse. I worked with all the might I could muster, but it appeared as though little were needful; and in a trice we scrambled to the top, when the whole party scampered off, leaving me to follow or not, as I chose. I saw something tossed towards me, which glistened as it lay at my feet. Stooping, I found a silver ring, beauteously bedecked with one glowing crystal. Round the rim is formed a quaint legend, bearing a fair device, which some learned clerk may perchance decipher.”

The stranger drew from his finger a massy ring. A little ferret-eyed monk, a transcriber of saints’ legends and Saxon chronicles, was immediately called. He pronounced the writing heathenish, and of the Runic form. A sort of free translation may be given as follows:—

“The Norman shall tread on the Saxon’s heel,
And the stranger shall rule o’er England’s weal;
Through castle and hall, by night or by day
The stranger shall thrive for ever and aye;
But in Rached, above the rest,
The stranger shall thrive best.”

Gamel was troubled and perplexed. The words were prophetic, evidently pointing to his own and his country’s fate, as well as to the destiny of the stranger. He knit his brows, and his very beard coiled upwards with the conflict. He appeared loth to allow of a supernatural agency in the affair, and yet the testimony and its witness were not to be gainsayed.

“I had not believed the tale, stranger, if this token had not confirmed thy speech:—verily thou hast a better witness than a fool’s tongue to thy story. That ill-omened losel may depart. See thou fall not hastily into the like offence, else shalt thou smart from Childermas to All-hallowtide. Hence! to thy place.” Barnulf awaited not further dismissal, glad to escape the scrutiny of Nicholas with a whole skin.

A loud shriek was heard from the court-yard.

“My boy!—Oh, my boy!” cried the almost frantic mother, as she rushed into the chamber, leading in Uctred. He had been discovered on removing some of the huge piles of timber again from the hill, where, under a curiously-supported covering of beams and other rude materials, he lay, seemingly asleep. The urchin looked as malicious and froward as ever, even when standing before his chief.

“And where hast thou been, my pretty bird?” said the old woman, as she began her vocabulary of signs. But the boy looked surly and would not answer to the signal: he drew down his black swarthy brows, looking eagerly and fiercely from behind their bushy curtains. Suddenly, and with a fearful yell, he sprang forward, snatching the ring which Gamel was then giving back to the stranger. With a wild and hideous laugh, which sent a shudder through the assembly, he drew it on his finger. At this moment the expression of his countenance began to change, and some of the bystanders, over whom fear had probably waved the wand of the enchanter, saw his form dilate, and his whole figure expand into almost gigantic proportions. A thick haze rolled through the apartment; then was heard a wild unearthly shout, and the vision had disappeared.

“Seize him!” cried Gamel.

The guards, trembling, prepared to execute his commands, but on gaining the outworks of the castle, no vestige remained of his appearance, save a slight whirlwind of dust, like a mist-wreath curling down the valley, which, to their terrified apprehensions, became the chariot of the departing demon. Nothing could shake this belief; and in after ages the boy was spoken of as a changeling, left by some fairy, whose appointed sojourn had been then accomplished, the means for his release being fulfilled. Old Cicely became nigh crazed with the loss of her son; but Gamel, seriously pondering on these events, sought counsel from the “Holy Church.” It was therein resolved that the intended site should be removed, and the “*unknown*” by such removal appeased. The chapel of St Chadde was accordingly built on the hill-top, where the church now stands, and unto which the foundations had been so marvellously conveyed. One hundred and twenty-four steps were dug to accomplish the ascent, and enable the good people to go to prayers. Connected with these, the tradition still exists; and unto this day it is here observed, that “*Strangers prosper in the town of Rochdale; but the natives are generally unfortunate in their undertakings.*”

III. Mab's Cross

“A pilgrim came from o’er the sea;
Benedicite! benedicite!
 And he brought a ring to that proud ladye.
 His grave is wide, his grave is deep;
 On that bosom cold he shall quietly sleep:
Benedicite!”

The following extract from the genealogical roll of the Bradshaighs is the principal source from whence this tale has originated:—

“Sir William Bradshaighe, second son to Sir John, was a great traveller and a souldger, and married to Mabell, daughter and sole heire of Hugh Norris de Haghe and Blackrode, and had issue,” &c.

Of this Mabel is a story by tradition of undoubted verity, “that in Sir Wm. Bradshaghe absence (beinge 10 years away in the holy wars), she married a Welsh knight. Sir William, returning from the wars, came in a palmer’s habitt amongst the poor to Haghe, who, when she saw and congetringe that he favoured her former husband, wept, for which the knight chastised her; at which Sir William went and made himself known to his tenants; in which space the knight fled, but neare to Newton Parke Sir William overtook him and sleu him. The said Dame Mabell was enjoined by her confessor to doe penances by going onest every week barefout and bare legged to a crosse ner Wigan from the Haghe, wilest she lived, and is called Mabb ++ to this day; and ther monument lyes in Wigan church, as you see them ther portry’d.”

Sir William Bradshaigh was outlawed during the space of a year and a day for this offence; but he and his lady, it is said, lived happily together afterwards until their death. Their effigies on the tomb now exist but as rude and unshapely masses; time and whitewash, the two great destroyers of our monumental relics, having almost obliterated their form, the one by diminishing, and the other by adding to, their substance.

That Sir William was at the “Holy Wars,” must, it is evident, be a corruption of the story, seeing he was born about the year 1280, ten years after the last of these unfortunate expeditions. The first croisade was undertaken by Peter the Hermit, 1095; a second, by Louis VII of France, 1145; a third, under Richard I of England, 1190; a fourth, under Philip II of France, 1204; a fifth, under Louis IX, against Egypt, 1248; and the last, under Louis IX., against Tunis, where he lost his life, 1270. Consequently, the perpetration of these “Holy” murders, which it is supposed were to the amount of two hundred millions of human beings, without the acquisition even of Jerusalem to the Church, must have ceased ere the birth of our “pilgrim.” That he was at “the wars,” however, is pretty certain, but they were nearer home. The machinations of that powerful noble, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, together with the disastrous campaign of Edward II. against the Scots, are sufficiently important events to account for the long absence of Sir William Bradshaigh, who is supposed to have been taken prisoner during these unhappy troubles.

Our engraving represents the cross as it exists at present. Some attention having been drawn to it of late, we may hope this interesting relic will be suffered to remain uninjured, and not be subjected any more to those levelling improvements for which this age is so distinguished.

In the borough of Wigan, near one of the four gates, called Standishgate—which gates are now removed, and their places occupied by some undignified-looking posts called “toll-bars”—stands a ruined stone cross; in appearance, by no means either interesting or remarkable: it would scarcely be noticed by a casual observer. Yet to this mean-looking memorial of our faith is attached an eventful story, at which

“The sad might laugh; the merry weep.”

It is a tale of which our brief limits will only allow a rapid sketch. This we have thrown together in the dramatic and narrative form, a combination more calculated than any other, we believe, to awaken attention, and bring forth the subject before the mind with truth and distinctness.

One stormy night, in the autumn of the year 1324, mine host of the Merry Maypole, a tavern of great resort by the market-cross in the good borough of Wigan, was awakened from a laborious slumber. The door which opened into a low porch projecting from the thatch, was shaken with a vehemence that threatened some fearful catastrophe. Giles, no longer able to endure these thundering appeals to his hospitality, desired his wife to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

“Gramercy! An’ I be to unlatch for every graceless unthrift that chooses to pummel at Giles Dauber’s wicket, I shall have but sorry bedding wi’ an old husband.”

“Old, quotha!—Old! I tell thee, dame, that I’m less by a good score of winters than Dan o’ the higher Wient, when he wed old Simon’s daughter.—Humph!—She was a merry and a buxom lass; but thou”—

How far this interesting dialogue between the tavern-keeper and his newly-wedded spouse might have extended it is impossible with any degree of accuracy to set forth, inasmuch as another loud and desperate lunge, extenuated to an inaudible mutter the testy rejoinder of “Giles o’ the Maypole;” this being the cognomen by which he was more familiarly designated.

“Anan!” shouted he, “what the—— Save us!” he continued in a low whisper, crossing himself, “I had nigh slipped an ugly word over my tongue; and if it should be—Dame, I say, get up, and”—

“Nay, thou hast gotten thee two as nimble legs, by thine own reckoning, as any knave i’ the borough. I shall e’en keep to my bed, goodman, though these guzzle-throats hammer till cock-crow.—They are at the right side of the door, I trow.”

Now, mine host of the Merry Maypole having taken to himself that last and worst of all possible plagues for the remnant of his days, to wit, a young and somewhat handsome-looking wife, thought it no less meet than reasonable, and no less reasonable than a duty, at all times incumbent, that the before-named helpmate should, if need were, get out of bed and unlatch the wicket whenever good customers were astir; more particularly as the first Dame Dauber, having the fear of a short but tough cudgel upon her, did, at certain times and seasons, when there was the requisite occasion, leave her liege lord to the enjoyment of his warm and luxurious couch, and spread a table for the entertainment of many a night-betrayed traveller.

It was the first exigency of the kind, since the marriage of Giles Dauber to Madge Newsome of the Deercote, in which the discussion of a point so knotty and important had occurred. Giles dreamt not of the vast difference that exists in the nature and docility of divers women. He heard with a sort of incredulous surprise the first incipient grumblings in contravention of his authority; but when these had fairly shaped themselves into open defiance, he started

agape with wonder. Recovering himself, with a stern and portentous silence, he jumped out of bed and drew on his doublet and hose. While thoughts of relentless import were brooding, he groped his way down the ladder that communicated with the lower apartment, for the purpose of ascertaining the quality and condition of the stranger. The latter still manifested a noisy impatience at being suffered, in so inhospitable a manner, to linger without. The night was rainy and tempestuous—Giles shivered to the backbone as he trod on the wheezing rushes strewn over the floor; they were yet damp and dirty, by reason of the many visitors who had that night loitered long at the Merry Maypole.

“Holloa, friend!—thy name?” shouted Giles, placing his hand on the latch.

“Open the door, for the love of mercy!” cried a strange voice. Giles drew back; he liked not this salutation—more, by token, from the adjurement being for the love of mercy, in lieu of an appeal to the tinkling angels that generally lined a traveller’s pouch.

“Some sturdy beggar or mendicant friar,” thought he, “that knocks at my door because the chantry gates are shut. I care not to open my door to every losel that knocks,” cried he aloud. “Hence! I know thee not.”

“Goodman, give me a night’s lodging, and I will reward thee”—the door flew open at this intimation—“with a palmer’s benison,” continued the stranger, advancing towards the wan embers that yet flickered on the hearth. Had Giles awaited the finishing of this sentence ere the latch was loosened, some other and more hospitable roof had enjoyed the benefit of that night’s adventure.

“Thanks are not over meet for a cool stomach,” growled the disappointed tapster; whilst his guest roused the decaying faggots into a faint and unsteady blaze.

Giles surveyed the new-comer with no very sanguine prepossessions in his behalf. The figure that met his scrutiny was clad in a dark cloak. The hood, partly thrown back, showed a somewhat “frosty poll,” though the vivacity of a wild and restless eye, peering from under his dark and luxuriant brow, would scarcely have betokened an age at which the coming winter of life usually scatters these chill warnings of its approach. His features were finely moulded. A weather-beaten cheek, mingling with a complexion evidently sallow, gave a rich autumnal hue to his visage: a slight furrow, extending from the outer angle of the nostril around each corner of a narrow and retreating mouth, gave a careless expression of scorn to the countenance when at rest; but, as he smiled, this sinister aspect disappeared, and the soft gleam of benevolence which succeeded looked the brighter from the portentous scowl that had just passed. His beard was grey, and of a most reverent equipment, well calculated to excite veneration and respect. He was above the middle size: his humble garb but ill concealed a majesty of deportment indicating a disposition rather to command than to solicit favours. He seated himself on a low stool, and honest Giles, whose courage did not feel sufficiently invigorated, in the presence of this proud palmer, to dare an open warfare, began hostilities covertly, in manner as follows:—

“What ails ye, to disturb honest folks i’ their beds at these hours? You might ha’ tarried in your last baiting-place—at any rate till the kye were astir. I wonder the guard let you pass at the gate. But since these evil days have o’ershadowed the land, every braggart has licence to do as he list; and the monks and the friars, with their whole crew of dubs and deputies, are the worst of all. Old Cliderhow here, the parson, thought to have waged war with his betters; but he was a slight matter mistaken: we whipt him up by the heels for his treason.”

“Is Cliderhow alive?” inquired the stranger.

“Save us, pilgrim! where had you knowledge of the traitor?”

“Our good king Edward,” continued the guest, apparently not attending to Giles’s question in reply, “is still sorely beset with his enemies. Had a score of knaves such as Master Cliderhow been hanged long ago, his reign had been less burdensome both to prince and people.”

“It’s twelve years—ay, twelve,” said Giles, reckoning the lapse on his fingers; “I know it by the great wind that beat down Master Markland’s barn wall at the Meadows, since Cliderhow’s sermon, inciting the whole parish to rebellion.”

“I know it,” replied the palmer: “he was in prison when I last knew of the matter.”

“Ay, ay,” returned Giles knowingly; “but threescore marks, disbursed discreetly to our good and loyal burgesses, made the doors as easy to open as my wicket—that is, at timely hours, ye understand.”

“Is he at large?” inquired the other.

“They say he bides at Haigh,” answered Boniface, “roistering it with that Welsh knight there, Sir Osmund Neville. I warrant Sir William’s substance runs gaily down the old parson’s throat.”

Here the palmer threw the hood over his brows. Suddenly he arose: striding across the chamber with considerable speed, he twice repeated the name of Sir Osmund Neville in a subdued tone, but with a bitterness of spirit that ill accorded with the outward habit of meekness which he had assumed.

“Giles Dauber! what keeps ye so long there a-gossiping?” shouted a shrill voice from above. It was the vocal substitute of Mistress Dauber, who, resolutely determined not to budge at her husband’s bidding, had, as she lay, listened, but to little purpose. Finding it was no everyday guest, she crept to the ladder-head and gave ear for a while; but soon discovering it to be an unthrifty sort of intercourse that was going on, not likely to bring either gain or good-will to the house, and fearing that Giles might fall into some snare from his ready-mouthed opinions regarding the unsettled temper and aspect of the time, she thought fit to break abruptly on the discourse ere it should lead to some dangerous or forbidden subject. He had, however, hit upon a favourite topic, in addition to which, he was now evidently loth to leave his guest ere he had learnt the nature of his errand to these parts. An “o’er-sea pilgrim,” as they were generally styled, was too choice an arrival for a petty hostel—especially in those times, when newspapers and posts were not circulating daily and hourly through the land—to let slip an opportunity of inquiring about the king of Scotland, as Robert Bruce was then called, or about his majesty, the Sultan Solymán—two personages who were very frequently confounded with each other in mine host’s political hemisphere, and whose realms formed the great pandemonium whence issued all that was dire and disastrous to plague and perplex unhappy England.

“To bed! to bed!—Thou art ready enough to rise when thou art not bidden. To bed, I say!” angrily shouted the disturbed Benedict.

“Hast *thou* a wife?” sternly inquired the pilgrim.

“A wife!—marry have I!” exclaimed Giles; “and here she comes.”

Finding there was no likelihood of a speedy termination to this interview, our hostess of the Maypole conceived it to be a matter of duty that she should at least take her full share in the discussions and disclosures that might ensue. For this purpose she descended, making a deep acknowledgment to the generally supposed sanctity of the pilgrim’s vocation. So much occupied, however, did he appear by other concerns that he scarcely noticed her approach, but continued to pass with hasty and irregular steps across the chamber.

“By what quality or appearance may Sir Osmund Neville be distinguished?” he abruptly inquired.

“A right goodly person, and a brave gentleman! He gave me a sousing kiss, and a pair of mittens to boot, the last choosing of knights to the parliament,” said the Dame.

“Hold thy tongue, Madge!” angrily exclaimed Giles. “Good father, heed not a woman; they are caught by the lip and the fist, like my lord’s trencher-man. This Sir Osmund is both lean and ill-favoured. I wonder what the Lady Mabel saw above his shoe to wed with an ugly toad spawned i’ the Welsh marshes. Had ye seen her first husband, Sir William Bradshaigh—rest his soul! he was killed in the wars—you would have marvelled that she drunk the scum after the broth.”

“Lady Mabel and Sir Osmund are now at Haigh?” cautiously inquired the palmer.

“You have business there, belike?” sharply interrogated the indefatigable host.

“I have slight matters that require my presence at the hall. Does the knight go much abroad, or keeps he close house?”

“Why, look ye, it is some three months or so since I smelt the fat from her ladyship’s kitchen. Dan Hardseg smutted my face, and rubbed a platterful of barley-dough into my poll, the last peep I had through the buttery. I’ll bide about my own hearth-flag whilst that limb o’ the old spit is chief servitor. I do bethink me though, it is long sin’ Sir Osmund was seen i’ the borough. Belike he may have come at the knowledge of my misadventure, and careth not to meet the wrath of a patient man.”

Here the malicious dame burst into a giddy laugh.

“Thee! why Sir Osmund knoweth not thy crop from thy crupper, nor careth he if thy whole carcase were crammed into the dumpling-bag. I’feck, it were a rare pastime to see Sir Osmund, the brave Welsh knight, give the gutter to Giles of the Merry Maypole.”

Giles was speechless with dismay at this aggravating insult; but the dame continued:—

“I think, good stranger, the knight does keep house of late. Grim told me that last week he was a-sporting once only by way of the higher park; and he appears something more soured and moody than usual. If thou crave speech with him though, to-morrow being almonsday at the hall, the poor have free admission, and thou mayest have a sight of him there: peradventure, as thou art strange in these parts, it will be needful thou hadst a guide.”

“And just ready for the job thyself, I’sè warrant,” bitterly snarled the exasperated husband. The storm, long threatening, was about to burst forth; but the palmer, with holy and beseeching words, soothed for awhile the angry disputants, at the same time intimating that a guide was unnecessary, the situation of the house being sufficiently obvious from whatever quarter he might direct his steps.

The stranger seemed not solicitous of repose, and Giles was too sulky to inquire his wants. The dame, however, drew a bundle of clean straw from a huge heap, and threw it beside the hearth. A coarse and heavy rug, over which was thrown a sheep-skin with the wool innermost, constituted a warm but homely couch. A horn cup filled with cider and a burnt barley-cake were next exhibited, of which the palmer made a healthful, if not a sumptuous repast. Giles growled off to the loft above; and the dame, caring little for the sequel of her husband’s humours, soon found a resting-place by his side.

Morning shone brightly and cheerfully through the chinks and crevices of both door and lattice; but the pilgrim’s couch was yet unsought. His vigils had been undisturbed, save when

the baying of some vagrant and ill-disciplined dogs, or the lusty carol of some valiant yeoman, reeling home after a noisy debauch, startled him from a painfully-recurring thought, to which, however, the mind involuntarily turned when the interruption had ceased.

It was late ere Giles awoke. Breathless with expectation, he hastened below, anticipating a rich budget of news from his guest; but he had departed.

It was one of those fresh and glittering mornings which autumn alone can produce. Keen, pure, and exhilarating, the air seemed all buoyant and elastic, tinging the cheeks with ruddy health, and animating the whole frame with renewed vigour.

A slight hoar-frost yet lay on the thatched roofs. Calm and undisturbed, a gem-like brightness twinkled from every object; whilst the vapours that covered them looked not as the shroud, but rather as a pure mantle of eider, hiding the fair bosom to which it clung.

The pilgrim entered a narrow street leading to the postern or gate, called Standish-gate. In those days it was not, as now, a wide and free thoroughfare for man and beast. At the accustomed fairs, toll is, to this time, demanded on all cattle changing owners at the several outlets, where formerly stood four gates; to wit, Wall-gate, Hall-gate, Mill-gate, and Standish-gate. Each gate where the toll-bars now stand was once, in good sooth, a heavy barrier of stout beams, thickly studded with iron. Through the night they were generally bolted and guarded by a company of the mayor's halberdiers. An irregular wall encompassed the town, save on the eastern side, where the river Douglas seemed, in the eyes of the burghers, to constitute a sufficient defence, a low abbatis only screening its banks. The walls were covered, or rather uncovered, by a broad ditch: a bridge of rough-hewn planks, at three of the entrances before named, allowed a free communication with the suburbs, except during seasons of hostility, which unhappily were not rare in those days of rapine and rebellion. Before the Mill-gate a wider and more substantial structure, mounted on huge wooden props, facilitated a passage over the river. This edifice could be raised in cases of siege, effectually separating the inhabitants from their enemies.

The first beams of the sun began to peep through the angles of the wooden gable fronts, projecting nearly midway across the street, streaming athwart the frosty air, and giving a beautifully variegated and picturesque appearance to the grotesque vista bounded by the Standish-gate.

The stranger paused not; mounting the hill with an alertness and agility that scarcely seemed compatible with his age and appearance. On arriving at the gate, his garb was a sufficient passport, without the necessity of a challenge. Three or four of the guards were loitering and laughing on a couple of benches built in a sort of arched recess on each side of the gateway. As the pilgrim passed they became silent, bowing reverently as he pronounced the accustomed benison.

Outside the barriers, the road lay through an open and uninclosed country. It was a matter of but slight moment what line of direction the narrow and uneven pathways might describe, provided their termination was tolerably accurate; all traffic and intercourse, being necessarily limited, was mostly carried on through the medium of saddles and horse-furniture.

The most inaccessible part of a hill was the site generally chosen; the road ascending and descending in a meandering sort of zig-zig on its side. Rarely did our timid ancestors tempt the valley, often preferring a roundabout course over a line of hills, if by so doing the perils of the lower ground could be avoided.

The pilgrim followed a narrow and beaten track: it was bordered on each side by a deep ditch, nearly overgrown with weeds and brambles. He traversed the intricate windings of the road with considerable facility; but an hour had nearly elapsed ere he gained the brow of an eminence of no very conspicuous height, though it commanded a pretty extensive view of the country adjacent. From the east, a rich flood of glory blended the whole into one broad mass of light, melting away the beauteous frost-work, as the rays of morning dissipate the unreal visions that have their existence only in darkness and repose. Southward lay the borough, distinguishable only by the broad tower of All-Saints rising from the mist, as if baseless and suspended. A bell boomed heavily through the quiet atmosphere: its long and lingering echoes came on the pilgrim's soul like the voice of other years—of hopes and anticipations that had for ever departed.

Westward might be seen a curl of blue smoke from the newly-dignified priory at Upholland, recently invested with that honour through the grants and intercessions of Sir Robert de Holland, a proud knight in the train of Thomas Earl of Lancaster. It was northward that the pilgrim turned, with a look of more intense anxiety. The mansion of Haigh stood at the extremity of a broad slope, surmounted by shady woods, now fading into the warm and luxuriant tints of autumn. Dark and cumbrous turrets, projecting from the wings, grimly caught the first gleam of the morning; whilst a tower of considerable strength and elevation rose above what could only be surmised as the principal gateway. It was apparently designed to overlook the whole fabric, serving as a refuge to the besieged, and a stronghold in case of attack. Narrow loopholes might be traced, irregularly disposed in the heavy masonry; and at the summit stood a small turret resembling a large chair, from which, at stated occasions, waved the richly-emblazoned escutcheon of the Norris and the Bradshaigh. The staff was just visible, but unaccompanied by its glittering adjunct. It was this circumstance principally that seemed to engage the attention of the stranger. He broke into a loud and involuntary exclamation:—

“Sir William's birthday is forgotten!—That staff opened a rich blossom to the breeze ten years ago. It is the day—the very hour of Sir William's birth!”

He smote his forehead, scarcely able to contain the violence of his emotion.

“Let that day darken!—let it be cursed with storms and tempest!—let the shadows of death brood over it, and the teeming night bring tenfold horrors!—Yet how calm, how peacefully yonder sun approaches in his strength! Nature is the same—bright, joyous, and unchanging!—Man, man alone, is mutable—his days are full of mourning and bitterness!”

He bowed his head, crouching almost to the dust, in that overwhelming agony.

Suddenly he was aroused, and in a manner as uncereemonious as unexpected. A smart blow on the back announced a somewhat uncourteous intruder, whilst a loud and discordant laugh struck shrilly on his ear. Starting, he beheld a figure of a low and unshapely stature, clothed in a light dress, fantastically wrought. A round cap, slouched in front, fitted closely to his head, from which depended what the wearer no doubt looked upon as a goodly aggregate of ornaments. These consisted of ear-tassels and rings of various dimensions, that jingled oddly as he twisted his head from side to side with a knowing and important grin. A pair of large leathern boots, slipped on for travelling purposes, with ample flaps turning down from the knee, formed the lower costume of this strange being. Round his neck he wore an iron collar: its import, whether in the shape of punishment or decoration, is at this time doubtful. A visage of more than ordinary size projected from between a pair of shoulders that nearly overlooked the lower rim of his cap. A sort of dubious leer was its predominant expression, heightened ever and anon by a broad laugh, the eldritch shout of which first announced itself

to the ear of the pilgrim. Matted and shaggy, the twisted locks hung wildly about his brow, whilst a short and frizzled beard served as a scanty covering to his chin. A “Sheffield whittle” stuck in his baldric; and in a pouch was deposited the remnant of a magnificent pasty. From oft and over replenishment this receptacle gaped in a most unseemly manner, showing the shattered remains, the crumbling fragments, of many a huge mountain of crust.

With arms akimbo stood this prepossessing personage before the pilgrim, in all his native rudeness and disorder. The latter tightened his cloak about him, and withdrew some three or four paces from his companion.

“Nuncle,” said the jester—for such was in fact his vocation—“I wonder for what property master keeps a fool?—I bethink me ‘tis for his wit: more wit and less honesty, though.” The palmer was silent.

“Art going to the hall?” continued he. “The fool is whipt there for being honest. Have a care, nuncle; if Sir Osmund catch thee, thou hadst as good bequeath thy bones to the Pope to make into saint’s gear.—I’m very sad, nuncle!”

“Sad!” said the pilgrim; “in good troth, an’ thou be sad, the cock of the hall yonder is but in sorry plight.”

“‘Tis more wholesome to cry to-day,” said the dolorous knave, “knowing ye shall laugh to-morrow, than to laugh to-day, and to-morrow’s dool somehow making your mirth asthmatic:

“Be merry to-morrow; to-day, to-day,

Your belly-full fill of grief;

When sorrow hath supp’d, go play, go play,

For mirth I wot is brief.

“Ay, grandam, ye are wise; and an old woman’s wit best becomes a fool:

“When sorrow hath supp’d, go play, go play,

For mirth I wot is brief.”

He drew out the last notes into one of those querulous cadences, much in vogue as an *ad libitum* on all fitting occasions: even the sad features of the pilgrim were provoked into a smile.

“Art bound for the hall?” again inquired the inquisitive hunchback.

“Yes, friend—whither else? Is it not almous-day, and thinkest thou the houseless and wandering pilgrim will not share of the largess?”

“Beggars and friars thrive—treason and corruption wed, and these be their children belike. Hast brought the Lady Mabel her old husband’s bones from heathenrie?—her new one is like to leave her nought else, poor soul, for her comfort. She’ll make her up a saint out o’them.”

“If she has gotten another husband,” said the pilgrim, “the old one’s bones would have a rare chance of her worship.”

The facetious impertinent here gave a sort of incredulous whistle. He eyed the palmer with a keen and scrutinising glance, but suddenly relapsing into his accustomed manner, he burst into a wild and portentous laugh.

“I tell thee, if Sir Osmund catch thee carrying so much as a thumb-nail of Sir William’s carcase, he ‘ll wring thy neck as wry as the chapel weathercock. My lady goes nigh crazed with his ill humours. I warrant thee, Sir William’s ghost gaily snuffs up the sport. I have

watched him up and down the old stairs, and once i' the chapel; and he told me"—whispering close to the pilgrim's ear—"a great secret, nuncle!"

"Ay—what was that, Motley?"

"Why, said he, if so be Sir William comes home again, he'll find his wife has got a cuckoo in her nest." Here he burst from the stranger with a malicious shout, and descending a by-path, was soon lost amidst the intricacies of a deep wood, skirting the verge of an extensive forest.

The traveller's brow gathered a heavier gloom. With unconscious haste he soon gained a gentle ascent, which led by a narrow and deep path to the mansion. Nigh to the bridge over the moat stood a blacksmith's hovel, conveniently situated for all job-work emanating from the armoury and the kitchen, which at that time afforded full exercise for the musical propensities of Darby Grimshaw's great anvil. This hut was a general resort to all the idlers in the vicinity; Grim, as he was generally styled for the sake of abbreviation, discharging the office of "preses," or chief moderator, in all debates held therein. He was a shrewd fellow and a bold one. A humorous and inquisitive cunning lurked in the corner of his grey and restless eye. His curiosity was insatiable; and as a cross-questioner, when fairly at work, for worming out a secret he had not his fellow. His brain was a general deposit for odd scraps, and a reservoir in which flowed all stray news about the country. He was an abstract and chronicle of the time; and could tell you where the Earl of Lancaster mustered his forces, the day of their march, and the very purposes and projects of that turbulent noble. Even the secrets of my lady's bower did not elude the prying of this indefatigable artist; at any rate, he had the credit of knowing all that he assumed, which amounted very much to the same thing as though his knowledge were unlimited: a nod and a wink supplying the place of intelligence, when his wondering neophytes grew disagreeably minute in their inquiries.

Towards this abode did the pilgrim bend his steps. A thick smoke hovered about the thatch, that appeared very ingeniously adapted for the reception and nurture of any stray spark that might happen to find there a temporary lodgment. Several times had this Vulcan been burnt out, yet the materials were easily replaced; and again and again the hovel arose in all its pristine ugliness and disorder.

Darby was just kindling his fire: a merry-making overnight had trenched upon morning duties, and daylight found him still stretched on his pallet. Subsequent to this a noisy troop from the hall had roused him from a profound slumber.

"St George and the Virgin protect thee, honest friend!" said the pilgrim, as he stood by an opening, just then performing the functions of both door and chimney. Darby's perceptions being much impeded by the smoke, he hastily approached the door. His surprise manifested itself aloud, yet did he not forget a becoming reverence to the stranger, as he invited him into the only apartment, besides his workshop, of which the roof could boast. It served for parlour, bedchamber, and kitchen; where the presiding deity, Grim's helpmate, carried on her multifarious operations.

The officious housewife fetched a joint-stool, first clearing it from dust, whilst her husband added a billet to the heap. She was just preparing breakfast. A wooden porringer, filled to the brim with new milk, in which oatmeal was stirred, a rasher of salted mutton, and a large cake of coarse bread, comprised the delicacies of their morning repast. To this, however, was added a snatch of cold venison from the hall. "But this, you see," said the old woman, "is not of our own killing; St Gregory forbid!—it comes from Dan there, who has the care of the knight's buttery."

“Rot him for a churl!” said the smith; “Sir Osmund grudges every mouth about him; but”—and here he looked wondrous knowing—he may happen to be ousted yet, if Earl Thomas should come by the worst in this cabal.”

“Sir Osmund, I find, is no favourite with his neighbours.”

“Hang him!” replied Grim, first looking cautiously into the shop; “there’s not a man of us but would like to see him and his countrymen packed off to-morrow upon ass-panniers. They were spawned from the Welsh ditches to help that overgrown Earl against his master. If Sir William had been alive I had spoken out without fear. He was a loyal knight and a true—he ever served his country and his king. But I bethink me that peradventure ye may have heard of our late master’s death, and who knows but ye bring some token, pilgrim, to his lady?”

“Thou hast shrewdly guessed—I bear the last message that Sir William sent to his lady; thinkest thou it may be delivered without the knight’s privity?”

“Save thee, father! peril betides him who would hazard a message to my lady without her husband’s leave.”

“Is the Lady Mabel in health?—and the children?” inquired the stranger.

“Sorely did she grieve when tidings came of Sir William’s death in the great battle; but sorer still rues she her wedding with Sir Osmund Neville. Poor soul! It would melt the nails out of a rusty horse-shoe to see how she moans herself, when she can steal privily to her chamber. They say the knight caught her weeping once over some token that belonged to Sir William, and he burnt it before her face, ill-treating her into the bargain.”

“How came she to wed this churl?”

“Oh, it’s a sorry history!”—The speaker paused, and it was at the pilgrim’s entreaty that he thus continued:—

“Parson Cliderhow had his paw in the mischief. She was in a manner forced either to wed, or, in the end, to have found herself and her children with never a roof-tree above their heads.”

“How?—Sir William did not leave her portionless?”

“I know not; but Sir Osmund had, or pretended he had, got a grant from the Earl of Lancaster for possession of all that belonged to Sir William, as a reward for his great services; and unless she wed him—why, you may guess what follows, when a lone woman is left in a wooer’s clutches. I shall never forget their wedding-day; it should rather have been her burying, by the look on’t. Her long veil was more like a winding-sheet than a bride’s wimple.”

During this recital the palmer drew his seat closer to the hearth. He leant him over his staff, absorbed in that conscious stupor which seems at once shut out from all connection with external objects, and yet intensely alive to their impressions. Suddenly he rose, tightened his sandals, and looking round, appeared as if about to depart.

“It is our late master’s birthday,” said the loquacious informant: “ten years ago there was free commons at the hall for man and beast. Now, save on almous-days, when some half-dozen doitering old bodies get a snatch at the broken meat, not a man of us thrusts his nose into the knight’s buttery but by stealth. Sir William’s banner has not been hoisted, as it was wont on this day, since he left, with fifty armed men in his train, to help the king, then hard pressed in the Scottish wars. Ye may get an alms among the poor to-day, but have an eye to the Welsh bowmen: these be the knight’s privy guard, and hold not the quality of his guests in much respect.”

Here the smith's angry garrulity was interrupted by Daniel Hardseg, a sort of deputy house-steward, whose duty it was to look after all business not immediately connecting itself with any other department in the household. He was prime executive in most of the out-door duty, and a particular crony at the hovel. His "Hilloa!" was terrific.

"Why, a murrain to thee, goodman Grim, thy fire is colder than my halidome; the sun is so high it puts it out, I reckon. Here have I two iron pots, a plate from my master's best greaves, and a pair of spurs that want piecing, and I'm like to tinker them as I list on a cold stithy. Get out, thou"—Here he became aware of an additional inmate to Grim's dwelling; and this discovery for a while checked the copious torrent of Dan's eloquence. Shortly, Darby drew him aside, and from their looks it might be gathered that some scheme was negotiating for the pilgrim's safe admission at the hall. To an entreaty, more strenuously urged on the part of our diplomatist, Dan replied, in a louder tone—

"Why, look thee, gossip, it were as much as my lugs were worth—but—I'll e'en try."

"We shall hear some news about Sir William, depend on't, an' thou get him a word with my lady."

"And what the better shall I be of that?—dead men make no porridge hot," simply retorted Dan.

"Go to," replied the other; "it's but setting Maude on the scent—I warrant thee, she'll sharpen her wits for the work. It will be a grievous pity should he depart, and whisper not his message to her ladyship. Maude's thin ears, as thou knowest, can catch a whisper, and thou wilt soon squeeze the secret out of her; then comes Darby's turn—by to-morrow, at the latest."

The news-doting artisan rubbed his dark fists with ecstasy. "Go, knave," said he; "thou art a teasing little varlet."

Here Grim seemed ready to hug his comrade in the extremity of his delight; but Dan was rather sullen, evidently ruminating on peril and mischance, wherein the tempter had no share, though participating in the profits of the adventure. Eventually, the stranger was placed under the patronage of Daniel Hardseg, who, to do him justice, was well affected towards the enterprise he had undertaken.

Passing by a low wall to the north-east of the mansion, they were soon hidden by a projecting terrace or platform, which, in cases of siege, could be converted into a sort of breastwork to cover the sallies of the besieged. At the salient angle of this curtain stood a small postern, to which Dan applied a heavy key, and beckoning to his companion, they ascended a narrow staircase. A succession of dark passages led to the great hall, from which a small arched doorway communicated by a private entrance to the chapel. As they passed the half-closed door, a gruff voice was heard reciting the appointed service for the day. Dan slept cautiously by, and motioned the stranger to tread softly. The latter paused, listening with a look of anxiety, and pressed his staff across his bosom;—soon, drawing his hood closer over his brow, he quickly followed the retreating footsteps of his companion.

"Praised be old Cliderhow's tough pipe!" said Dan, when fairly out of hearing. "Ha, ha!—sit down, sit down, good father," opening a half-door, as he laughed, and thrusting in the pilgrim; "nobody can hear aught besides, when he's fairly agoing."

The apartment into which this unceremonious conductor ushered his guest was Dan's store-room.

A most whimsical assemblage of materials were here huddled together. Pans, wooden bowls, and matters of meaner import, entered into close familiarity with broadswords and helmets;

boots of home manufacture in their primitive clothing; saddles with their housings; knives, and brown bottles of coarse pottery, were intermingled with many a grim-looking weapon of bloodthirsty aspect. From the walls depended a heterogeneous mass of apparel—cloaks, hats, and body-gear of unimaginable shape and appearance. Dan was steward of the wardrobe, or furniture-keeper to most of the retainers and other idle appendages to the hall; and as, in those days, the sciences dependent on order and classification had not spread their beneficial influence through society at large, it frequently happened that more time was consumed in rummaging amidst this unexplored chaos than would have sufficed to transact the whole affair for which any article was required. A round stool in the middle of this “*Thesaurus*”—the only unoccupied place except the ceiling—was the throne of our friend, Dan Hardseg, when dispensing out his treasures with stately munificence;—on this scanty perch was the stranger duly installed, and favoured with a benignant and knowing wink from Dan as he departed.

Waiting for the return of his patron, the pilgrim was roused from a fit of reverie by the well-remembered greeting of the jester, Humphry Lathom, or “Daft Humpy,” as he was mostly called.

“Eh, nuncle! But if Dan catch thee, he’ll be sure to give thee a lift i’ the stocks.”

This strange creature cautiously opened the door, and was speedily engulfed in all that fearful accumulation of sloth and disorder. By his manner, it did not seem to be his first irruption into this vast magazine; whilst, from the cautious and fearful glances he from time to time cast through the door, it would appear that he had been detected in his expeditions, and in all probability punished for the offence. He was evidently in search of some object from amidst the various heaps of lumber he overthrew; an inarticulate mutter, accompanying every fresh attack, indicated impatience and disappointment. Suddenly he exclaimed, drawing forth a large roll, with ludicrous expressions of delight—

“I have thee, now! The buck’s horns shall soon butt this great Welsh goat from his pen.”

He opened the banner. It was the pennon of the Bradshaigh, thrown aside to rot in dust and decay.

“Don’t tell Dan, nuncle, and thou shall see rare sport.”

He said this with his usual familiarity of tone; but suddenly putting his mouth to the stranger’s ear, he whispered. The words were inaudible, save to him for whom they were meant; and in an instant he darted from the spot, concealing the spoil amidst the folds of his apparel. Shortly afterwards Dan made his appearance. With wonder and dismay did he behold the ravages committed in his treasure-house—“confusion worse confounded.”

“Beshrew me, but thou art a restless tenant. I did not tell thee to tumble my wardrobe into haycocks.”

“I was long a-watching,” said the pilgrim; “and, in good troth, I became over curious to know the capacity of thy sty. What tidings from my lady’s chamber?”

“A plague on her husband’s humours! Maude says it were as much as a Jew’s thumb were worth to get thee privily to an audience, but she hath urged my lady to distribute the alms herself to-day; so betake thee to the kitchen; Maude will contrive thou shalt have some token of approach. St Anthony! but thou hast bestirred thee bravely; such another guest, and I might as well set fire to the whole budget. If thou be’st bent on such another rummage in the kitchen, the cook will whack thy pate with the spit, holy and hooded though it be.”

Dan led the way to this arena of gigantic gastronomy. It was a vast and smoky den, such as could only exist in those days of feudal magnificence. An immense furnace was fed by huge blocks of wood, which the ravening flame seized and in a moment enveloped in its embrace. Forms, grisly and indistinct, flitted past this devouring blaze, by the sputtering and crackling of which, mingled with the hissing delicacies before it, and the shrill scream of the presiding fury, a stranger might be warned of his approach to this pandemonium some time ere its wonders were visible. The pilgrim seated himself in an accessible corner, anxiously awaiting the promised signal.

On a long stone bench lay heaps of broken meat, ready for distribution to the groups of mendicants who were now clamouring without the gate. From the low and ponderous rafters hung dried mutton, bacon, and deer's tongues, wreathed in curls of smoke, that might seem to render an introduction to the chimney unnecessary for completing their flavour.

It was not long ere a pert waiting-maid approached. She drew up her short linsey-woolsey garments from the contaminations beneath her feet. Raising her chin, she thus addressed the servitors:—

“My lady bids ye bring the dole quickly into the great hall—She attends to-day in person. When the bell rings,” looking towards the pilgrim as she spoke, “my lady leaves her chamber.”

Maude departed with the same supercilious deportment. The bell was immediately heard, and the stranger, making the best of his way into the hall, found the doors wide open, and an indiscriminate assemblage of supplicants, displaying to the best advantage a variety of modes and manifestations of distress, unhappily not confined to those unhallowed days of wretchedness and misrule. Their chief attention seemed to be directed towards a side wicket, in the upper part of which was a slide for the more convenient distribution of the accustomed largess, when the Lady Mabel did not superintend the apportioning of her beneficence.

It was soon whispered amongst the crowd that she, who had for a considerable time kept aloof from all intercourse, would that day distribute her own bounty.

The tinkling of the bell ceased, and suddenly the door flew open. Lady Mabel and her maidens entered. The crowd fell back as she approached. Of a commanding form and deportment, she seemed a being of some superior creation; whilst, with slow and majestic steps, she passed on to the upper division of the hall, where the dais raised her slightly above the multitude.

She was habited in deep mourning: her heavy train swept gracefully over the dark pavement; her veil, in cumbrous folds, reached almost to her feet, effectually concealing her face from the eyes of the spectators. A number of servitors, now entered, bearing the allotted viands, together with sundry articles of winter apparel. The upper table was filled, and a profound silence showed the awe and respect which her presence inspired. She raised her veil. Grief, long subdued, yet deep and irremediable, hung heavily on her pallid features, but their form and character was untouched by the destroyer. Not a ringlet was visible. Her brow, bare and unornamented, threw an air of severe grandeur on her whole countenance. Around the lip fell a deeper shade of sorrow; but sweet, inexpressibly sweet and touching, was the expression. Though the rose had faded, yet, lovelier in decay, it seemed to mingle more gracefully with the soft hues by which it was surrounded.

She waved her hand: singly the mendicants approached, proffering their simple tale of suffering and privation. To every one she administered comfort; consoling the wretched and reproving the careless; but each had a share of her bounty ere he withdrew.

The hall was nearly cleared; yet the palmer sat, as if still awaiting audience, behind a distant pillar, and deeply pondering, as it might seem, the transactions he had witnessed. The last of their suppliants had departed ere he rose, bending lowly as he approached. The eye of the noble dame suddenly became rivetted on him. She was leaning in front of her maidens, beside a richly-carved canopy of state, underneath which, on days of feudal hospitality and pomp, presided the master of the banquet. Behind, a long and richly-variegated window poured down a chequered halo of glory around her form. She seemed an angel of light, issuing from that fountain of splendour, and irradiating the whole group with her presence.

“Reverend pilgrim, thy behest?” She said this with a shudder of apprehension, as if dreading an answer to her inquiry. The pilgrim spoke not, but advanced.

The attendants drew aside. A silence, chill and unbroken as the grave, pervaded the assembly. He took from his vest a silver ring. The Lady Mabel grasped the well-known signet. With agony the most heartrending and intense she exclaimed—

“My husband’s signet!—Where?—Whence came this pledge?—Speak!”

A pause ensued. It was one of those short ages of almost insupportable suspense, when the mind, wound up to the keenest susceptibility of endurance, seems vibrating on the verge of annihilation,—as if the next pulse would snap its connection with the world for ever.

“Lady,” the pilgrim answered, in a low sepulchral tone, “it is a bequest from thy husband. It was his wife’s last pledge—a seal of unchanging fidelity. He bade me seek his dame, and say, ‘His last sigh was to her—his last wish to heaven.’”

Lady Mabel listened—every tone sunk like a barbed arrow to her heart. The voice resembled not that of her deceased husband, yet such was the deceptive influence arising from the painful irritation which her spirits had undergone, that, if reason had not forbidden, her fancy would have invested it with supernatural attributes—listening to it as though it were a voice from the tomb.

“For the love I bore and yet bear to his most honoured name, tell me—I conjure thee, tell me—his earthly resting-place. My last pilgrimage shall be thither. I will enshrine his hallowed relics, and they shall be a pledge of our union where we shall no more part.”

The last words were spoken with a solemnity of expression awful and thrilling beyond the power of language to convey:

“What recks it, lady? thou hast gotten thee another,” said the pilgrim.

“Another!—Oh name him not. Never, never!—most base, most cruel. He took advantage of my bereavement—a moment of weakness and maternal terror. By what long ages of suffering and wretchedness has it been repaid! Better I had beheld my babes wasting with hunger, than have mated with this un pitying husband for a home and a morsel of bread!”

A flush of proud scorn at her own weakness overspread her features. It was but momentary. She bade the attendants withdraw. Looking round for this purpose, she was aware, for the first time, of the hated presence of Roger de Cliderhow, watching, with considerable surprise, for the result of this unexpected interview. He departed with the retinue, leaving Lady Mabel and the pilgrim for a while unobserved.

“Thou art a holy and a heaven-destined man, yet surely thou hast been taught to share another’s sorrows—to pour the oil of compassion over the wounds of the penitent and broken-hearted.” The lady turned aside her head—she leaned over the chair for support, whilst one hand pressed her throbbing temples.

“Mabel Bradshaigh!” It was the voice of Sir William. She started as at a summons from the tomb. No other form was visible but that of the pilgrim bending over his staff. Her eye wandered wildly around the hall, as if she expected some phantom to start from its recesses. A richly-fretted screen, behind which the minstrels and lookers-on occasionally sat at the festival, stood at the lower end of the apartment. A slight rustling was heard; she was about to rush towards the spot, when the voice was again audible, and apparently at her side. Slowly the hood of the pilgrim was uplifted. He threw off his disguise; but oh, how changed was the once athletic form of Sir William Bradshaigh! With a wild and piercing shriek she flew towards the outstretched arms of her husband; but ere they met, a figure stepped between, barring their approach. It was the ungainly person of Sir Osmund Neville.

“Nay, nay, seek thy leman elsewhere, thou gay palmer. It were a brave honour, truly, to graft me with thy favours.” With this brutish speech he was proceeding to lay hands on the lady, who stood stupefied in amaze, and bereft of power to offer the least resistance.

“To me this insult! I’ll chase thee from thy lair!” exclaimed the incensed Sir William.

Roger de Cliderhow at this moment suddenly approached, and in great alarm. He whispered Sir Osmund.

“‘Tis Sir William!—Thou hast no time for parley. If his coming get abroad we are undone. Call thy men hither, and let him be conveyed away privily. The dungeon will tell no tales. I’ll summon them. If the servants get a whisper of the matter, I’ll give out he is an impostor.”

Fearful of encountering the glance of his injured lord, this worthy withdrew in great precipitation.

It was but the work of a moment. Sir Osmund had taken the precaution to prevent all egress, so that Sir William and his lady were, in fact, prisoners, at the mercy and discretion of a cruel and cowardly foe.

Sir William had thrown off his cloak and the remainder of his disguise. He now stood proudly erect before the supplanter, who was somewhat stunned by this unexpected issue.

“I defy thee to the combat; hast thou the grace to give me a weapon, or art thou as cowardly as thou art presuming?” tauntingly inquired Sir William.

“Impostor! wouldst have me believe every wish that folly genders? To the proof!” sullenly replied Sir Osmund.

“What says the Lady Mabel? Let her decide,” returned the other.

“She!” cried the ingrate, with a contemptuous sneer; “her wits are so set upon it, that she would worship any ill-favoured lout that should call himself her husband.”

“‘Tis false! unblushing as thou art.” The lightning kindled in the lady’s eye as she spoke. Sir Osmund quailed beneath her glance.

“Am I mad?” she continued; “ay, if thy wish could have goaded me to it. Thou hast heaped on me tortures, indignities, cruel as thy relentless nature could devise; but I have been spared for this!” Her lips quivered. Shuddering, she spoke with amazing energy and distinctness.

“I *have* repented, day and night, but they were unavailing tears. Oh, if I have wronged thee”—she covered her face with her hands—“it was not even in thought that I grew unfaithful to thy trust. My babes, in a moment of weakness I looked on them, smiling as they lay. I could not dash the cup from their lips ere they had well nigh tasted. I could not behold them so soon doomed to misery and want.”

She made a convulsive effort to repress her sobs.

“Can years of suffering atone for my crime?”

She drew back as she continued, “I abhor, I loathe the very existence I am forced to prolong. The cloister alone can hide my wretchedness and my shame.”

“I forgive thee: nay, shrink not from my embrace,” cried the distracted Sir William; “I blame thee not in my regret. Pure, and as free from guilt as when first I knew thee, do I now receive thee to my arms.”

Sir Osmund smiled in contempt; at the same time casting a furtive glance towards the side entrance, where, true to his word, Roger De Cliderhow had summoned a guard of Welsh bowmen, their master’s accomplices in many a deed of violence and rapine.

Sir Osmund heard their approach. He cautiously undrew the bolts, and, pointing to his foe with a signal they but too well understood, the latter was immediately seized, and with such rapidity, that almost before Sir William was aware of their design, he found himself a prisoner and incapable of resistance.

“Traitor, thou wilt rue this foul despite! I here proclaim thee a craven knight and a dastard!” exclaimed Sir William.

“False pilgrim,” growled his adversary, “didst think to foist thy fooleries upon me! The dungeon walls will give thee a patient hearing. Boast to them of thy descent, and when they acknowledge thee, so will I. Guards, to your duty.”

Lady Mabel, with a loud and appalling shriek, fell senseless on the pavement.

In vain did Sir William endeavour to free himself from the rude grasp of his conductors. He was hurried along, nor did there appear the remotest possibility of escape. Just as they turned into a sort of corridor, leading to the passages more immediately connected with the place of their destination, they encountered Humphry Lathom. The same half-stupid, half-knavish expression of face was now lighted up by a grin of apparently inexplicable amazement.

“Eh, nuncle,” said he, stroking his beard, “but you’re in mighty grace. The Welshman always mounts his he-goats for guard on them he delighteth to honour.” With one of his more than ordinarily elvish and malicious shouts he scampered past the enraged sentinels, and was heard rapidly ascending the steps of the great tower, beneath the massive foundations of which lay the dark and cheerless abode so unexpectedly destined for the reception of its owner.

Whilst these occurrences were passing within the walls Grim’s curiosity was in prodigious exercise without. His anxiety increased in a compound ratio with the time elapsed, and inversely as the hope of intelligence was decreasing. Every spare moment his eye was directed towards the hall; but no tidings came, no scout, no messenger from the scene of action, from whom the slightest inkling of the result could be gathered. It seemed as though all intercourse had ceased, all transit and communication were cut off. It was mighty strange! some rare doings were afloat, no doubt, and not a soul would remember honest Grim in his thrall. He tied and untied his apron, beat the iron when it was cool, and let it cool when it was hot. “It will be noon presently.” He looked at the sun; it seemed to have crept backward for the last half-hour: at any rate, he was morally certain that useful appendage to this great and troublesome world had stood still, if not retrograded. The mendicants were all gone—no tidings to be gained from them—matters were more than usually contrary and provoking—and if it had not been for some recent disgrace which his prying disposition had occasioned at the hall, he would long ago have satisfied himself by a personal inquiry into the present posture of affairs.

“Hope deferred” was just on the point of being attended with the usual consequences, when, taking another peep through a crevice, constructed for putting into effect a more efficient system of examination, he beheld a phenomenon as unlooked for as it was incomprehensible. He rubbed his eyes, strongly persuaded that some rigorous discipline was necessary. He pinched his fingers, shook himself—was he really awake? or—he took another peep, still it was there; nor crossings, ejaculations, nor other established contrivances had any effect. The vision that caused all this disturbance was the great banner of the Bradshaigh on the tower, curling full and stately in the breeze. Wonders and misfortunes rarely come unattended. Grim’s appetite for the marvellous was now in danger of suffering as much from repletion as before from inanity, and he had just summoned his dame for a special council, when his ears were assailed by a furious ding-dong. Stroke upon stroke, huge, heavy, and unceasing, followed each other in rapid succession. It was the great bell, used only on occasions of emergency and importance, the hoarse tongue of which had been silent since the day of Sir William’s departure. There was no time to waste in conjecture. Grim rushed from his dwelling. Convinced that some catastrophe was at hand, his intention was to climb the hill behind his little hovel, in order to reconnoitre the premises with greater facility. Sallying forth, he saw numbers of the peasantry on the same errand. All was bustle and inquiry; each giving his neighbour credit for the possession of some intelligence whereby the mystery might be unravelled.

“Sir William cannot have returned!” said one.

“No,” replied another, “or the buck would soon butt the Welshman out of his stall.”

“Ha, ha!” said a neighbouring gossip, “those horns are big enough,” pointing to the device upon the banner—a buck *passant*.

As they drew nearer to the great gate the bell had ceased, when suddenly appeared, perched on a corner of the tower, the well-known form of “Daft Humpy.” He threw up his cap, caught it, and whirled it round his head with every demonstration of joyous extravagance. “Hurrah!” shouted he, with a distinct and shrill enunciation, which might be heard to the very extremities of the crowd. “Hurrah for Sir William Bradshaigh!—he is come again!—hurrah, neighbours!—in, in!”

He ran round the battlements with unceasing vociferation. On hearing this news, numbers entered the gate pell-mell, carrying with them some who would fain have acted with more discretion, by watching the issue warily and out of harm’s way. Of this class was our stout-fisted friend Darby Grim, who, though of a well-composed valour when fairly tested, was yet slow to move, and cared not to thrust his fingers uselessly into a broil.

The first party that entered was met by Humphry.

“Pick-axes and spades!” cried he, flourishing a stout staff. “To the dungeon!—come along, come along!” So far from accelerating their speed, this address seemed at once to suspend all further progress. They gazed at each other; none wist what to do, naturally not overburdened with confidence in the discretion of their guide. Suddenly checking himself, he stood as erect as the nature of his form would admit, before the astonished auditors.

“Ye lazy caterpillars! ye cowardly scum of humanity! if ye follow me not, I’ll rouse the Welsh bull-dogs. Sir Osmund hath ta’en him to the dungeon, I tell ye; and who is there that will not lend a hand to the rescue of Sir William Bradshaigh?”

Grim was among the foremost of the invading army; on hearing this news, a latent spark enkindled his courage most opportunely into a blaze. Seizing a cudgel, he brandished it in

front of his comrades, like one half-frantic, crying, "It is, it is; I have seen him this blessed day!—Hurrah for Sir William!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the crowd, whose courage, augmenting with their numbers, soon manifested itself in an immediate attack on the cell, whence they speedily extricated their lord. Intoxicated with joy, they vowed a summary vengeance on the discourteous knight who had so vilely entreated him.

Sir William's first care was for the rescue of his lady. She almost forgot her own sorrows on witnessing his joy when once more folding the children to his embrace. A short interval elapsed ere he sought his adversary; but he had fled, along with his unworthy followers. Such was the wrong Sir William had suffered, that his yet untamed spirit deemed it an offence too foul to be expiated by aught but the blood of his merciless foe. Armed, and with but few attendants, he hotly pursued him, and, as old chronicles tell, at a place called Newton, he overtook and slew him in single combat. Returning in safety, he lived happily with his lady to a good old age. They lie buried in the chancel of All Saints, Wigan, where, carved on the tomb, their effigies still exist, the rarest of the monumental antiquities in that ancient edifice.

The Lady Mabel's spirit had been too sorely wounded to recover its tranquillity. For the purpose of what was then deemed an expiation to her unintentional offence, she performed a weekly penance, going barefooted from Haigh to a place outside the walls at Wigan, where a stone cross was erected, which bears to this day the name of "MAB'S CROSS."

IV. The Prior Of Burscough

“Quhere are ye boun, ye bold prior,
With that ladye on your knee?”

“I’m boun to the hills, I’m boun to the dales,
I’m boun to the grey priory.”

Old Ballad. M.S.

Of the once renowned priory of Burscough, only two pillars, belonging to the centre arch of the church, are now remaining. It is situated about two miles from Ormskirk, on the Preston road, in a level district of great compass renowned for its fertility. The extensive manor and living of Ormskirk formerly belonged to this priory. The charter of King Edward II., “reciting and confirming the grants of the donors,” with a confirmation of the charter by which “the prior and convent of Burscough, and their successors for ever, shall have one market every week on Thursday, at their manor of Ormskirk, and likewise one fair every year, of five days’ continuance,” is still preserved in the office of the Duchy of Lancaster.

This religious house was founded for Black Canons by Robert Fitzhenry, Lord of Latham of Lathom, in the reign of Richard I. It was formerly the burial-place of the Earls of Derby; but many of the coffins have been removed to their vault in the church at Ormskirk, built by Edward, the third Earl, great grandson of Thomas, first Earl of Derby, who had the honour of crowning Henry VII. at Bosworth Field with the coronet torn from the brows of the slain tyrant.

The main fact of the following tradition may be found in the Calend. Rotulo. Patents, fol. 155, art. 13, containing the free pardon granted by Edward III. to the atrocious murderer of Michael de Poininges and Thomas le Clarke, after the rape he had committed on Margaret de la Bech.

At the Dissolution, this priory had a superior, five monks, and forty servants. The last prior was John Barton, who surrendered the living, and subscribed to the King’s supremacy. He was surviving as late as the year 1553.

That curious structure, the church at Ormskirk, having two steeples, a tower and spire, contiguous to each other, is briefly glanced at in the tradition. This circumstance, according to some accounts, was occasioned by the removal of part of the bells from Burscough at the dissolution of the monasteries, when the existing spire steeple was found to be not sufficiently capacious. The tenor bell, said to have been the third bell, at Burscough, bears some apparent proof of its translation. Round the circle, below the ear, is the following inscription in black letter, except the initials of the founder:—

“J. S. * de Burscough * Armig. * et * e * vr. * me fecerunt in honorem Trinitatis * R.B.
1497.”

About half-way down the bell is another date, 1576.

Where each asterisk is marked are the *rose*, *portcullis*, and *fleur de lis*. Beneath the inscription a neat border is cast, filled up in the centre with the *rose*, *portcullis*, and *fleur de lis*, repeated so as to occupy the whole circumference of the bell. We have been thus particular in our description, as it may not be uninteresting to pursue this inquiry, connected as it is with some important historical facts, not irrelevant to the subject.

The following remarks may preclude any further observations of our own:—

“The *red rose* is well known to have been the favourite emblem of the house of Lancaster, from whom Henry VII. was descended, and through whom he gloried in claiming his title to the throne.

“His mother, Margaret Countess of Richmond, then Countess of Derby, was sole daughter and heiress of the Duke of Somerset,⁸ who bore the *portcullis* as an heraldic distinction. This nobleman was descended from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Henry had a right to the honourable bearings of his royal ancestors. Hence the ‘*rose and portcullis*’ were favourite badges of this monarch, as peculiarly belonging to the house of Lancaster. The ‘*fleur de lis*’ is the emblem of France; and, independently of the arms of that kingdom being quartered at that time, and till very lately, with the royal arms of England, Henry had a right to assume this distinction also, as being the grandson of Sir Owen Tudor and Catherine of France, relict of Henry V.

“The first date, also 1497, refers to a very important period in history, as connected with the Derby family. Two short years before, the great, the brave Sir William Stanley, who, of his own power and interest, raised and brought 3000 horse and foot to the rescue of his prince, when his life, his honour, and his hopes of a throne were at stake; who contributed to his victory, and helped to crown him ‘King’ in the field; had, by that very sovereign, been sent to the block, merely on account of a doubtful and unguarded expression, reported by a rebel, a traitor, and an ungenerous friend. The unhappy monarch, learning too late the dire effects of groundless suspicion, paid a visit in the following year to his deeply-wounded stepfather, the brother of the dauntless hero whom he had so lately sacrificed.

“It is stated that the King arrived at Knowsley on or about the 24th June 1496, and then went to Lathom; whence, after remaining a month with his mother the Countess, and the Earl her husband, he returned to London.

“This brings us within one year of the date on the tenor bell, and I cannot help thinking that its emblems have some allusion to the royal visit to Knowsley and Lathom. It becomes, however, necessary to attempt to account for the second date, 1576, on the same bell. And here we can again only conjecture. It is not improbable that the original bell was injured; that, prior to breaking up, its inscription and emblems were carefully moulded, and a new one cast, with the old metal, in the year 1576, care being taken that a copy of the inscription, &c., should fill the same situation in the present bell, which the originals occupied in the former.”⁹

It may not be deemed irrelevant to mention here a tradition which exists relative to the visit of King Henry VII. at Lathom, particularly as it does not appear to be generally known.

After the execution of Sir William Stanley, when the King visited Lathom, the Earl, when his royal guest had viewed the whole house, conducted him up to the leads for a prospect of the country. The Earl’s fool, who was among the company, observing the King draw near to the edge of the leads not guarded with a balustrade, stepped up to the Earl, and pointing down to the precipice, said, “*Tom, remember Will.*” The King understood the meaning, and made all haste down stairs, and out of the house; and the fool long after seemed mightily concerned

⁸ *Beaufort*, Duke of Somerset. Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, now bears the *portcullis* for his crest. There is an engraving by Vertue, from a painting in the royal collection at Kensington Palace by Maubeugius in 1496, of the three children of Henry VII. and Elizabeth his queen, *Prince Henry*, *Prince Arthur*, and *Princess Margaret*, which is ornamented at the top with the *portcullis* surmounted with roses.

⁹ Glazebrook’s Southport.

that his lord had not had courage to take that opportunity of avenging himself for the death of his brother.—*Kennett's MSS.* 1033. fol. 47.

It was on a still and sultry evening, about the close of summer, in the year of grace one thousand three hundred and forty-seven, that a solitary traveller was seen hastily descending, by a woodland path, into the gloomy thickets that surrounded the neighbouring priory of Burscough. The rain-drops were just pattering on the dark leaves above him, and the birds were fast hastening to some deeper shelter. The timid rabbit, as the stranger passed by, darted into its burrow, and many a quiet face gazed on him from beneath a pair of ragged antlers, peeping over the fences that guarded the demesne. Here and there a narrow glade opened beautifully into the woods, through which might be seen green lawns and pastures, with herds of dappled deer stealing silently to their covert. The low growl of the distant thunder seemed to come upon each living thing like the voice of some invisible spirit, subduing with its mysterious speech every power and faculty, with an authority superior to all human control.

The traveller hastened on. The pinnacles and stately turrets of the priory were just visible through the arched boughs, when, turning into a more sequestered path, he observed a female of a wild and uncouth aspect standing in the way. She showed no disposition to move as he approached, nor did she seem to notice his presence. He stopped, but sufficiently near to distinguish the motion of her lips. An unintelligible mutter accompanied it. She looked darkly towards the south, beckoning to the coming thunder, and pointing, as though she would guide its course, towards the grey walls of the priory.

She was dressed in a dark-coloured corset fitting close to the body, and a hood of the same materials. Her hair was a deep jet, and fantastically twisted about her face. She was of low stature, but not bowed by decrepitude or age. Her cheek was hollow, and her complexion swarthy, but her eye grew unnaturally bright, blazing out with a fierceness, intense as though the fire within were visible through these chinks and crevices of the soul's tenement.

Though the storm was rapidly approaching she still kept her place, unawed by the rude elements, and seeming to suffer but little inconvenience from the shower, now descending with great vigour. The path was narrow, and a thick underwood skirted the road, so that for the stranger to pass was impossible, unless his opponent chose to take up a more favourable position. But the sudden burst of a terrific thunder-clap, which seemed to roll in a continuous peal above them, made him less ceremonious on this head than the laws of gallantry might warrant. He drew nearer to the female, with the intention of seeking a passage on that side where the least disturbance would be given.

"Go not. 'Tis accursed!" said she, as if preparing to dispute the attempt.

"I am a stranger, and hastening for shelter. In troth, 'tis a narrow goit that will not let a drowning man through. Prythee, dame, let me not, in some wise, seem uncourteous. Yet"—

Here he attempted to pass; but she seized him, and with so powerful a grasp that for a moment his intention was foiled, so sudden and unexpected was the attack. Though of a stout and muscular shape, yet was he holden tightly, as if she were exulting in her strength. Either malice or madness had given her a vigour of body beyond that of her sex.

"Michael de Poininges!"

The stranger started at this recognition.

"I warn thee! Thinkest thou yon fiend will forward thy mission. Wilt thou tear the prey from the jaws of the famished and ravening wolf? Beware!"

Some score of years had elapsed since De Poininges was a visitor in these parts; and he was now upon some sacred mission to the Prior of Burscough, Thomas de Litherland, whose great power and reckless intrepidity of guilt had won for him a name of no common note, even in those ages of privileged injustice and oppression. No bosom but his own, at least in that neighbourhood, could have been privy to the business which brought him hither; and yet he found a woman casually crossing his path, whose knowledge of his errand was but too evident, and whose appearance and deportment might well excuse the suspicions he entertained as to her familiarity with the EVIL ONE.

“Go, poor beast! Thou art but fattened for the slaughter!” She said this, apparently addressing a stout buck that was sheltering in the thicket. De Poininges shuddered, as she looked on him askance, with some dubious meaning.

“I’ll meet thee at supper-time.”

This was said with a slow and solemn enunciation, as though some terrible warning was intended, yet durst he not question her further; and ere he could reply she had disappeared in the recesses of the forest.

The rain now poured down in torrents, and De Poininges was fain to hasten with all possible expedition towards the porter’s gate.

The priory of Burscough had been founded the century preceding, for a brotherhood of Black Canons, by Robert Fitzhenry, Lord of Lathom. He endowed it with considerable property, emoluments, and alms, and, according to the weak superstition of the age, thought thereby to obtain pardon and rest for the souls of Henry the Second, John, Earl of Moreton, himself, his wife, and all his ancestors; at the same time wishing the kingdom of heaven to all persons who would increase the gifts, and consigning to the devil and his angels all who should impiously infringe on his bequests.

It was dedicated to St Nicholas, and a rude effigy of the saint was carved over the south porch of the chapel, with two or three naked children at his feet. The building was not large, but the architecture was chaste and beautiful, a noble specimen of the early Gothic, then superseding the ponderous forms and proportions of the Norman, or rather Saxon era. The arches were sharply pointed. The windows, narrow and lancet-shaped, were deeply recessed; the slender shafts of the columns were carried in clusters to a vast height, surmounted by pinnacles of rich and elegant tracery; these gave a light and airy character to the whole, highly significant of the buoyant feelings that accompanied so wonderful an escape from the heavy trammels of their predecessors.

Craving shelter, De Poininges was admitted without any question, as all travellers partook indiscriminately of the general bounty. The religious houses in those days were the constituted almonries of the rich and great; and through these overflowing channels, for the most part, proceeded their liberality and beneficence.

He was ushered into one of the *locutories*, or parlours, where, his business being with the prior, he was desired to wait until an audience could be granted.

Prior Thomas, from some cause or other not assigned, held himself at that season much estranged and secluded from his brethren. He had seldom been seen from his lodgings, except when performing his accustomed office in the church. He had not taken his place in the refectory of late, the duties of the day being performed by one of the elder canons.

De Poininges, after a short space, was summoned to the prior’s chamber. In his progress, he passed the door of the refectory where the brethren were at supper. It was large and

wainscoted, and furnished with an ample dresser. Cupboards were let into the wall, and windows opened into the kitchen, through which their meal was served.

One of the monks was reading the appointed service from a low pulpit or desk. The prior's seat was still vacant. Their way now led through the cloisters, and at the opposite side of the quadrangle a portal communicated by a long and dark passage with the prior's lodging. This was a sort of inferior castellated mansion, with a spacious hall, and a smaller dining-chamber immediately adjoining. At the end was a fair chapel or oratory. Ascending a flight of stone steps, they came to a low door. The conductor knocked, and De Poininges soon found himself in the presence of the proud Prior of Burscough. He wore a square cap of black stuff, after the fashion of his order. His cloak, or upper garment, was of the same colour, trimmed round the bottom with a double edging. He reposed on a couch, or oaken settle, and seemed, in some measure, either indisposed or unwilling to notice the homage he received. His figure was strong and muscular, his complexion dull, and almost swarthy. His lips were full, and his aspect rather coarse than sensual. His brows were high, and unusually arched; but his eyes were downcast, and seldom raised towards the speaker. In speech he was brief and interrogative, but impatient under a tardy or inefficient answer.

"Thy name, stranger?"

"Michael de Poininges."

"From whence?"

"My business concerns you in private. I await your reverence's pleasure."

The prior motioned the attendants to withdraw.

"Proceed. Thy message?" He spoke this with precipitancy, at the same time abruptly changing his position.

"Mine errand is touching one Margaret de la Bech," said De Poininges, seating himself opposite to the prior; "and I am directed to crave your help for the clearing away of some loose suspicions regarding her concealment."

"Her concealment!" replied De Litherland, starting up angrily from the couch. "Her concealment! They who hide may find. I know not aught of the wench, save that she was mad, and drowned herself. But why not inquire of Sir Thomas? The maiden was not in my keeping." He paced the chamber haughtily, but with a disturbed and lurid aspect.

"Yet," replied the other, "it is well and currently reported, and witnesses there be who have already testified as to a fact, that some of your men were seen the night of her withdrawal lurking in her path, and that screams and other manifestations of the outrage then perpetrated were heard in this direction. Not that we deem any blemish can attach to your reverence in this matter. Still"—

"Why dost thou hesitate in thy speech?" said the prior, in a voice almost inarticulate with choler.

"I would say," answered De Poininges, "that it is our wish, and your duty, to search into this dark question, without favour or prejudice; and, further, we do reckon that the Prior of Burscough is not without the means to discover, and the power to punish, his offending vassals."

"And whose evil star guided thee hither with this insolent message?" inquired the prior, pale and trembling with rage.

“Those whom your reverence may not lightly condemn. I have here a warrant from the Council to procure all fitting help and suppliance for the bringing up the body of Margaret de la Bech, who is suspected of being detained in this neighbourhood, by persons hitherto unknown, against her own proper will and consent.”

The prior paused for a space. A somewhat more placid expression and demeanour was the result.

“I am no stranger,” said he, “to this idle and mischievous rumour. Means have been used to discover its likelihood or credibility, but we find it to be utterly false and unworthy of our notice. The inventor of these tales shall not long escape.”

“Yet hath she been a-missing ever since,” said De Poininges, warily; “and in vain hath search been made for the body. And furthermore, we have her own expressed apprehension, as it regards one she durst not name, and a perilous foreboding of the evil that awaited her. It is to this source, yet obscure, I must own, that our inquiries are to be directed.”

“Tarry here until the morning, and I will then give thee some further discourse on the matter.”

“Nay, Sir Prior,” answered De Poininges. “I thank your grace’s courtesy, but this night I must away to the village or town hereabout, Ormschurch I think it be, and there, in all likelihood, I may abide for some days.”

The prior bit his lips, but sought not to oppose his intent, further than by giving a hint that foul weather was abroad, and of the good cheer and dry lodging the priory afforded. De Poininges, however, took his way afoot, returning to the town, where his horse and two trusty attendants awaited him at the tavern or hostel.

The evening was fair, and the sky clear, save a broad and mountainous ridge of clouds piled up towards the north-east, from whence hung a black and heavy curtain stretching behind the hills in that direction. The sparkling of the sea was visible at intervals behind the low sand-hills skirting the coast, giving out, in irregular flashes, the rich and glowing radiance it received. A lucid brightness yet lingered over the waves, which De Poininges stood for a moment to observe, as he gained the brow of the hill near the church. To this edifice was then appended a low spire, not exhibiting, as now, the strange anomaly of a huge tower by its side, seated there apparently for no other purpose than to excite wonder, and to afford the clerk an opportunity of illustrating its origin by the following tradition:—

Long time ago, two maiden sisters of the name of Orme, the founders of this church, disagreed as to the shape of this most important appendage. Tower against spire was, in the end, likely to leave the parties without a church in answer to their prayers, had not the happy suggestion offered itself in the shape of a pair of these campanile structures suited to the taste of each.

That the foregoing is an idle and impertinent invention there is little need to show, inasmuch as both tower and spire might still have been built to satisfy the whim of the old ladies, though placed in the usual manner, one serving as a substratum to the other. A more probable solution is the following, though it may be as far from the truth:—At the dissolution of the priory of Burscough in the time of our great reformer Henry the Eighth—who, like many modern pretenders to this name, was more careful to reform the inaccuracies of others than his own—the bells were removed to Ormskirk; but the small tower beneath the spire not being sufficiently capacious, the present square steeple was added, and the wonder perpetuated to this day.

De Poininges, on crossing the churchyard, met there a personage of no less note than Thomas the Clerk, or Thomas le Clerke, retiring from some official duties, arrayed in his white

surplice and little quaint skull-cap. He was a merry wight, and in great favour with the parish wives. He could bleed and shave the sconce; draw out bonds and quittances; thus uniting three of the professions in his own proper person. He was prime mover in the May games, and the feast of fools. Morris, Moriscoe, or Moorish dancers, there is good reason for supposing, were not then introduced, though by some said to have been brought into England in the sixth year of Edward III., when John of Gaunt returned from Spain; but few traces of it are found earlier than Henry VII., so that it is more probable we had them from our Gallic neighbours, or even from the Flemings.

He could dance, too, and play on the rebeck and citerne, this being a common amusement with the customers during the time they were in waiting at the barbers' shops, as newspapers were not then at hand to sustain this difficult office. He was of a dainty person; clad mostly in a kirtle of light watchet-colour, thick set with loose points. His hosen were grey, mingled with black, and his shoes were belayed with knots and ornaments, of which, and his other stray gear, he was not a little proud.

This Thomas was used to go about with a censer, on a Sunday, as Chaucer hath it,—

“Censing the wives of the parish feast.”

Absalom, that pink of clerkly portraiture, seemed but a fair prototype of this individual, Geoffrey Chaucer at this time being a setter forth of rhymes and other matters for the ticklish ears of sundry well-fed and frolicksome idlers about the court of King Edward.

The merry knave of whom we speak was, however, in happy ignorance of all courtly fashions. Provided he obtained his Sunday contributions, and his Christmas loaf, and his eggs at Easter, little wot he how the world went round. He was a frequent visitor at the tavern, and De Poininges had already been distinguished by his especial notice.

From his character, and the means of information arising out of his multifarious occupations, De Poininges expected that some of the intelligence he was in search of might be gathered from this source.

The petty hostelry was now in sight, a projecting bush denoting the vintner's residence. The house was but thinly attended, though clean rushes and a blazing billet bespoke comfort and good cheer. De Poininges and his companion turned aside into a smaller chamber, where mine host was speedily summoned for a flagon of stout liquor. This being supplied, they addressed themselves to the wooden utensil with right goodwill; and as the draughts began to quicken, so did the clerk's tongue not fail to wag the faster. De Poininges adroitly shifted the discourse upon the business of which he was in quest, whenever there was a tendency to diverge, no rare occurrence, Thomas being somewhat loth for a while to converse on the subject. The liquor, however, and his own garrulous propensities, soon slipped open the budget, and scraps of intelligence tumbled out which De Poininges did not fail to lay hold of as hints for another line of examination.

“I reckon so, at any rate, and so said Geoffrey,” replied the clerk, after a pause, subsequent to some close question.

“Sir Thomas, the Lord of Lathom, as you may have heard, he is a good-hearted soul, and this Margaret de la Bech was companion to his daughter Isabel. She was ever held as a dame of good family and descent, though a stranger in these parts. Then she was passing fair, so that both squire and gentleman, as they looked on her, were nigh devoured with love. They say, too, her conditions were gentle and winsome as a child; and”—

“Good,” said De Poininges, who found he was slipping away from the main subject. “But hath not Sir Thomas made some apparent search since her disappearance from the hall?”

“Save the mark—she was drowned in the moat. So say the gossips,” said the clerk, looking askance. “Her hood and mantle were on the brink—but her body! why, it never jumped out again to look for them—that’s all.”

“But did no one look for the body?” carelessly inquired De Poininges.

“The knight groped diligently in the castle ditch for many days; but light fishes make light nets, as we say. There was no corpse to be found, and many an Ave Maria has been said for her soul.”

“What cause was then assigned for this fearful deed?”

“‘Tis said she was in love, and went mad! I wot she was ever sighing and rambling about the house, and would seldom venture out alone, looking as though she were in jeopardy, and dreaded some hidden danger.”

“Thinkest thou, friend, that some hidden danger might not be the cause; and this show of her drowning but a feint or device that should turn aside the current of their inquiry?”

The clerk looked anxious and uneasy, sore puzzled, as it might seem, to shape out an answer. At length, finding that the question could not be evaded, he proceeded with much hesitation as follows:—

“Safe as my Lord Cardinal at his prayers—she is dead though; for I heard her wraith wailing and shrieking up the woods that night as I stood in the priory close. It seemed like, as it were, making its way through the air from Lathom, for the smell of consecration, I reckon.”

“Go on,” said De Poininges, whose wits were shrewdly beginning to gather intelligence from these furtive attempts at concealment.

“Well-a-day,” continued the clerk, draining an ample potation, “I’ve heard strange noises thereabout; and the big building there, men say, is haunted by the ghost.”

“Where is the building thou speakest of?”

“The large granary beyond the postern leading from the prior’s house towards the mill. I have not passed thereby since St Mark’s vigil, and then it came.” Here he looked round, stealing a whisper across the bench—“I heard it: there was a moaning and a singing by turns; but the wind was loud, so that I could scarcely hear, though when I spake of it to old Geoffrey the gardener, he said the prior had laid a ghost, and it was kept there upon prayer and penance for a long season. Now, stranger, thou mayest guess it was no fault of mine if from this hour I passed the granary after sunset. The ghost and I have ever kept ourselves pretty far apart.”

“Canst show me this same ghostly dungeon?”

“Ay, can I, in broad daylight; but”—

“Peradventure thou canst show me the path, or the clue to it; and I warrant me the right scent will lie at the end on’t.”

“And pray, good master, wherefore may your curious nose be so mightily set upon this same adventure?” said the clerk, his little red and ferrety eyes peering very provokingly into those of his opposite neighbour. Now, De Poininges was not for the moment prepared to satisfy this unexpected inquiry, but his presence of mind did not forsake him. Rightly guessing his friend’s character—a compound in universal esteem, to wit, fool and knave—he drew from his pouch a couple of bright ship nobles, then but newly coined, which effectually diverted the prying looks of Thomas le Clerke.

“Why, look ye,” said the latter, as the coin jingled in his bag, “I was ever held in good repute as a guide, and can make my way blindfold over the bogs and mosses hereabout; and I would pilot thee to the place yonder, if my fealty to the prior—that is—if—I mean—though I was never a groat the richer for his bounty; yet he may not like strangers to pry into his garners and store-houses, especially in these evil times, when every cur begins to yelp at the heels of our bountiful mother; and every beast to bray out its reproaches at her great wealth and possessions.”

De Poininges was more and more convinced that his neighbour knew more of the matter than he durst tell; but it seemed expedient to conceal his suspicions for the present. In the end it was agreed that the cunning clerk should accompany him so far as to point out the situation; but on no account would he consent to keep watch during the absence of De Poininges. The latter assented to this arrangement, secretly resolving to dictate other terms where his will should both command and be obeyed.

They immediately set out on horseback, followed by the servants, to whom De Poininges had given a private signal.

The moon had risen. One bright star hung like a “jewel in an Ethiop’s ear” in the dark sky above the sun’s track, which at this season sweeps like a lucid zone, dividing day from night, round the northern horizon. Such a time of purity and brightness often succeeds the sultry and oppressive languor of the day, especially when refreshed by the passing storm; the air so clear that objects press, as it were, upon the eyeballs, affecting the sight as though they were almost palpable to the touch. The dews had not descended, but the leaves were still wet. Big drops glittered in the moonlight, pouring a copious shower on the travellers as they passed. The clerk began a low chant, humming and whistling by turns: this gradually grew more audible, until the full burst of the “*Miserere*” commenced, richly adorned with his own original quavers. So enamoured was he of his qualifications in this respect that he was fairly getting through high mass, when, midway in a ravishing “*Benedictus*” he made a sudden halt.

“What is that creeping behind the bushes there?” inquired he, in a sort of half-whisper to his companion. De Poininges looked in the direction pointed out, and thought he saw something, dark and mysterious, moving between the boughs on his left. He stopped, but the object, whatever its nature, had disappeared.

Sore alarmed was the timid chorister; but though his melodies had ceased, a plentiful supply of credos and paternosters were at hand to supply their place. Crossing himself with a great show of sanctity, he moved on with much caution, his deep hoarse voice having subsided into a husky and abrupt whisper, often interrupted when objects the most trivial arrested his glance and aroused his suspicions.

They arrived without molestation at an enclosure about a mile distant from the priory. Here they alighted, leaving the horses to the care of their attendants. Turning the angle made by a low wall, they observed a footpath, which the clerk pointed out as the shortest and most convenient course to their destination. Soon the east end of the priory chapel was visible, basking in the broad light of the harvest moon, then riding up full and unclouded towards her zenith. Buttress and oriel were weltering in her beam, and the feathery pinnacles sprang out sharp and clear into the blue sky. The shadows were thrown back in masses deep and unbroken, more huge in proportion to the unknown depths through which the eye could not penetrate.

“There—again! ‘Tis a footstep on our track!” said the clerk, abruptly breaking upon the reverie of his companion.

“‘Tis but the tread of the roused deer; man’s bolder footstep falls not so lightly,” was the reply; but this did not quiet the apprehensions of the querist, whose terrors were again stealing upon him. Their path was up a little glen, down which the mill-stream, now released from its daily toil, brawled happily along, as if rejoicing in its freedom. Near the mill, on a point of land formed by an abrupt bend of the stream, stood the storehouse or grange. It was an ample structure, serving at times for purposes not immediately connected with its original design. A small chamber was devoted to the poorer sort of travellers, who craved a night’s lodging on their journey. Beneath was a place of confinement, for the refractory vassals and serfs, when labouring under their master’s displeasure. It was here the garrulous clerk said he had been scared by the ghost, and his reluctance to proceed evidently increased as he drew nearer. He did not fail to point out the spot, but resolutely refused to budge a step farther.

“We had best return,” said he; “I have told thee what I know of the matter.”

“And what should scare thee so mightily, friend,” said De Poininges, “from out the prior’s grange? Methinks, these ghosts of thine had a provident eye to their bellies. These haunters to the granary had less objection to the victuals than to a snuff of the wind before cock-crow.”

“I know not,” replied Amen, rather doggedly; “‘tis all I heard, though there be more that live hereabout than the prior and his monks, I trow.”

“Thou hast been here oftentimes o’ nights?” carelessly inquired the other.

“I have, upon some chance occasion it may be; but since that ugly noise got wind, to which my own ears bear testimony, I was not over-curious to pass within hearing, though it were only the rogues, some said, that were mulcting the flour-sacks.”

“But thou knowest there was a hint dropped a while ago at the hostel, that the maiden, whom thou hast now forgotten, methinks, had some connection with this marvellous tale of thine; and now, it seems, I am to believe ‘tis but the knaves or the rats purloining the prior’s corn! Hark thee, friend,” said De Poininges, in a stern tone, “no more evasion: no turn or equivocation shall serve thee: out with it, and lead on, or”—

A bright flash from his falchion here revealed the peril that he threatened.

“*Miserere mei—Oh,—Salve et!*”—

“Silence, knave, and pass quickly; but remember, if I catch thee devising any sleight or shuffle, this sharp point shall quicken thee to thy work. It may prove mighty efficacious, too, as a restorative for a lapsed memory.”

“I’ll tell thee all!—but—hold that weapon a little back, I prithee. Nay—nay, thou wouldest not compass a poor man’s death in such haste.”

“Lead on, then, but be discreet,” said De Poininges, softly, at the same time pushing him forward at his sword’s point.

“Here is some help to mine errand, or my craft fails me this bout.”

After many qualms and wry faces, De Poininges, by piecemeal, acquired the following intelligence:—

One night, this honest clerk being with a friend on a predatory excursion to the prior’s storehouse, they heard a muffled shriek and a sharp scuffle at some distance. Being outside the building, and fearing detection, they ran to hide themselves under a detached shed, used as a depository for firewood and stray lumber. Towards this spot, however, the other parties were evidently approaching. Presently three or four men, whom they judged to be the prior’s servants, came nigh, bearing a female. They entered into the shed, and proceeded to remove a

large heap of turf. Underneath seemed to be one of those subterranean communications generally contrived as a retreat in times of peril; at any rate, they disappeared through the opening, and the clerk and his worthy associate effected their escape unobserved.

Fear of detection, and of the terrible retribution that would follow, hitherto kept the secret undivulged. There could be little doubt that this female was Margaret de la Bech; and her person, whether living or dead, had become a victim to the well-known lawless disposition of the prior.

They were now at the entrance to a low gateway, from which a short path to the left led them directly towards the spot. Entering the shed, they commenced a diligent search; but the terror and confusion of the clerk had prevented such accuracy of observation as could enable him to discover the opening, which they in vain attempted to find, groping their way suspiciously in the dark.

“Softly, softly!” said the clerk, listening. A low murmur came from the opposite corner, like the muttering of one holding audible communion with his own spirit. De Poininges listened too, and he fancied it was a female voice. Presently he heard one of those wild and uncouth ditties, a sort of chant or monotonous song, which, to the terrified psalm-singer, sounded like the death-wail of some unfortunate ghost.

The following words only became sufficiently distinct:—

“The sunbeam came on a billow of flame,
But its light, like thine, is done:
Life’s tangled coil, with all its toil,
Is broken ere ‘tis run.

“The kite may love the timid dove,
The hawk be the raven’s guest;
But none shall dare that hawk to scare
From his dark and cloud-wreathed nest!

“Wail on, ye fond maidens,
Death lurks in the cloud;
The storm and the billow
Are weaving a shroud:

“There’s a wail on the wind;
Ere its track on the main,
A light shall be quenched,
Ne’er to kindle again!”

“Surely I have heard that voice aforetime,” thought De Poininges. It was too peculiar for him to mistake. The woman had loitered in his path a few hours before. It seemed her brain was somewhat disturbed: a wanderer and an outcast in consequence, she had here taken shelter oftentimes for the night. He determined to accost her; a feeling of deference prompted him, a superstitious notion, arising from an idea then prevalent, that a superior light was granted to those individuals in whom the light of reason was extinct. He approached with caution, much to the terror and distress of his companion.

“It is crazy Isabel,” said he, “and the dark spirit is upon her!” But De Poininges was not in a mood to feel scared with this intimation. The way was intricate, and he stumbled over a heap of dried fuel. The noise seemed to arrest her attention for a moment; but she again commenced her song, paying little heed to this interruption. On recovering his position, he was about to speak, when, to his great surprise, she thus accosted him:—

“I have tarried long for thee. Haste—equip for the battle,—and then,

“My merry men all,
Round the greenwood tree,
How gallant to ride
With a gay ladye.’

“I am crazed, belike. Good wot; but I can ride o’er the neck of a proud prior.

“And the moon shone clear
In the blue heavens, where
The stars twinkle through her veil of light:—
There they gave me a merry shooting star,
And I rolled round the wain with my golden car,
But I leapt on the lightning’s flash, beside
The queen of this murky night!”

“Crazed, indeed!” thought De Poininges.

“Hush,” said she: “I’ll tell thee a secret.” She drew a light from some concealed recess, and flashing it full in the face of the intruder, seemed to enjoy the effect wonderfully. On a sudden her brow wrinkled, and the dark billows came over her spirit as she exclaimed—

“But,

“Thou hast work to do,
Or we may rue
The thieving trade.’

“Go to—I must be calm. The spirit goeth forth, and I may not wander again. But my poor head: it burns here—here!” And she put her hand tenderly on that of De Poininges, raising it to her brow, which throbbed violently. She started back, as from some sudden recollection, gazing intently on his countenance.

“I know it—the vision tarrieth not. Now,” she said—crossing herself with great solemnity, and with apparent composure, as if all trace of her malady had disappeared—“we must away. Follow; yet will I first set yon rogue to watch.” She sought the terrified man of canticles, and, speaking in a low tone, raised her hand as though with some terrible denunciation in case of disobedience. Immediately she returned, and, pointing to a heap of loose stuff, began to throw it aside.

“Here—here!”

But De Poininges hesitated, thinking it a somewhat dubious adventure to follow a mad woman, it might be, in quest of her wits. Seeing his unwillingness to proceed, she whispered something in his ear which wrought a marvellous change. He looked as if petrified with wonder, but he followed now without shrinking. They entered by a narrow door, curiously concealed. On its closing after them, De Poininges and his companion seemed shut out from the world,—as if the link were suddenly broken which bound them to earth and its connections.

The first sensation was that of dullness and damp, accompanied by a mouldering vapour, like that from the charnel-house or the grave. Their way was down a winding and broken staircase; at the bottom a straight passage led them on to a considerable distance. Damps oozing from the walls made the path more and more tiresome and slippery as they proceeded. Shortly it became channelled with slime, and absolutely loathsome. The bloated reptile crawled across their path; and De Poininges beheld stone coffins piled on each side of the

vault. Passing these, another flight of steps brought them to a low archway, at the extremity of which a grated door, now unbarred, led into a cell seemingly contrived as a place of punishment for the refractory or sinning brethren, who might be doomed to darkness and solitude as an expiation of their offence. The only furniture it contained was a wretched pallet, on which, as the light flashed doubtfully, De Poininges thought he beheld a female. He snatched the light, and eagerly bent over the couch. With a shout of joy he exclaimed—

“Be praised, ye saints, ‘tis she!”

It was the wasted and squalid form of Margaret de la Bech. She raised her eyes towards him, but they were vacant and wandering. It was soon evident that her reason was impaired, and the spirit still inhabiting that lovely tenement was irrevocably obscured. Cruel had been her sufferings. Crimes too foul to name—but we draw a veil over the harrowing recital! When the last horrible act was consummated the light of her soul was put out, and her consciousness extinguished.

To meet thus! A living inhumation, where the body exists but as the spirit’s sepulchre! It were better they had been consigned to oblivion, shut up and perishing in the dark womb of the grave. The cry of vengeance had gone up, but was offered in vain for a season. The present period of existence was not allotted for its fulfilment. It was permitted to this monster that he should yet triumph unpunished—his measure of iniquity was not yet full.

The limbs of the unconscious sufferer were pinioned:—the fiend-like mercy of her tormentors prevented her own hands from becoming the instruments of her release. De Poininges restored her to freedom; but alas! she knew it not. The thick veil which Heaven’s mercy drew upon her spirit rendered her insensible to outward impressions. He raised her in his arms, bearing her forth from that loathed scene of darkness and disgrace; and when the pure breath of the skies once more blew upon her, it seemed as though it awakened up a faint glimmer in the dying lamp. She looked round with eagerness, and De Poininges thought some ray of intelligence began to brighten, as objects again appeared to develop their hidden trains of association on the memory; but the light was mercifully extinguished ere she could discover the fearful realities of her despair, and she again relapsed into hopeless and utter inanity.

They were still loitering in the little shed, the clerk groaning out a sad and mournful chant. De Poininges appeared unable to arouse himself to the exigencies of the moment, when Isabel, wildly waving her torch towards the entrance, cried—

“To horse—to horse! They will be here presently. Already has the raven snuffed your carcase—

““But the bolt whistled through
The heavens blue,
And Sir Lionel lay on the battle-field.””

She seemed to hearken, as though in apprehension of approaching footsteps. De Poininges, roused from this dangerous stupor, prepared to escape ere the prior’s emissaries had intelligence of her removal.

They had passed the rivulet in safety, and had just gained the wood near to where the attendants lay in wait with the horses, when an arrow whizzed past De Poininges. For him the shaft was intended, but its destiny was otherwise—the unfortunate chanter lay stretched on the ground in his last agony. De Poininges flew on with redoubled speed.

“Treachery!” he cried. His men knew the signal, and galloped towards him; but their aid was too late. A shack-bolt, aimed with a sure hand, pierced him at this moment.

“Take her—Margaret de la Bech! The prior—a murderer—ravisher! Fly to”—

The remaining words fell unuttered. His faithful attendants bore off the lifeless body, together with the hapless Margaret, who was soon placed in safety, far from the relentless fangs of the Prior of Burscough.

Fearful and undeniable was the testimony and accusation they brought, but in vain. No effort was spared to bring upon this monster the just recompense of his crime; yet, from the great scandal which a public execution must have drawn upon the Church, but more especially from the great influence he possessed amongst the nobles and chief dignitaries of the land, not only did he escape unpunished, but he received the king’s most gracious pardon, in the twenty-first year of Edward the Third: so true are the following words from an historian of that reign:—

“These men had so entrenched themselves in privileges and immunities, and so openly challenged an exemption from all secular jurisdiction, that no civil penalty could be inflicted on them for any malversation in office, and even treason itself was declared to be no canonical offence.”

V. The Eagle And Child

“She’s over the muir,
An’ over the border,
An’ ower the blue hills far awa’:
With her callant, I trow,—
On his saddle-bow,
While the mist-wreaths around them fa’.”

The main facts of the following narrative, lying scattered through a wide field of barren inquiry, the author has been at considerable pains to collect and arrange in a continuous narrative.

Little needs be said by way of introduction, the traditions here interwoven with the general history being mostly of a trivial nature, and not at all interfering with the facts developed by the historians and rhymers who have illustrated the annals of the house of Stanley. These accounts, exaggerated and distorted as they inevitably must have been, may yet, in the absence of more authentic testimony, afford a pretty accurate glimpse at the real nature of those events, however they may have been disguised by fiction and misstatement. Where tradition is our only guide we must follow implicitly, satisfied that her taper was lighted at the torch of Truth, though it may gleam doubtfully and partially through the mists and errors of succeeding ages.

One source from whence we have derived some information, though well known to the comparative few who have explored these by-paths of history, may not be thought uninteresting to the general reader, especially as it is connected with the most eventful portion of our narrative.

An ancient metrical account of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, is contained in some uncouth rhymes, written about the year 1562, by Thomas Stanley, Bishop of Sodor and Man,¹⁰ and son of that Sir Edward Stanley, who, for his valour at Flodden, was created Lord Monteagle. There are two copies of these verses in the British Museum: one amongst Cole’s papers (vol. xxix. page 104), and the other in the Harleian MSS. (541). Mr Cole prefaces his transcript with the following notice:—”The History of the family of Stanley, Earls of Derby, wrote in verse about the reign of King Henry the Eighth from a MS. now in possession of Lady Margaret Stanley, copied for me by a person who has made many mistakes, and sent to me by my friend Mr Allen, Rector of Tarporley, in 1758.—W. Cole.”

The MS. formerly belonged to Sir John Crewe, of Utkinton, and was given by Mr Ardern, in 1757, to Lady Margaret Stanley.

The commencement of this metrical history is occupied in dilating upon the pleasure resulting from such an undertaking; and although the flow of the verse is not of remarkable smoothness, yet it hardly furnishes an apology for Seacome’s mistake, who, in his “History

¹⁰ “Thomas Stanley, Bishop of Man, was a cadet of the noble family of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby; and, after he had spent some time in this and another university abroad, returned to his native country (Lancashire), became rector of Winwick and Wigan therein; as also of Badsworth, in the diocese of York, and dignified in the church. At length, upon the vacancy of the see of the Isle of Man, he was made bishop thereof, but when, I cannot justly say; because he seems to have been bishop in the beginning of King Edward VI., and was really bishop of that place before the death of Dr Man, whom I have before mentioned under the year 1556. This Thomas Stanley paid his last debt to nature in the latter end of 1570, having had the character when young of a tolerable poet of his time.”—Wood’s *Athenæ Oxonienses*.

of the House of Stanley,” printed the first fifty lines as prose. The reverend versifier rehearses how Stanley sprang from Audley, and then shows the manner in which his ancestors became possessors of Stourton and Hooton. He dwells upon the joust betwixt the Admiral of Hainault and Sir John Stanley, the second brother of the house of Stanley of Hooton.¹¹ Then follows the account, more particularly developed in our own story, of the adventures and moving accidents which have been liberally used to adorn the “Garland” of his descendant William, Earl of Derby. “For many generations this was the recognised chronicle of the family, until, in the time of James the First, a clergyman of Chester translated the rhymes of the Bishop into English, carefully retaining the mistakes of the original, and adding long and dull disquisitions of his own.”

In the days of our valiant King Edward, while the fame of Cressy and Poitiers was fresh and stirring in all true and loyal hearts, while the monarchs of two powerful kingdoms were held captive in these realms, lived a worthy knight, of whom we had a brief notice in the preceding narrative. Sir Thomas Lathom of Lathom was a nobleman of great wealth and possessions. According to the *Calendarium Rotulorum* from the Charter Rolls in the Tower, he held lands, besides, in Knouselegh, Childewall, Roby, and Aulusargh. In Liverpool, he was proprietor of the tower, a structure of but little note until rebuilt and fortified by Sir John Stanley during his government in Ireland, of which we shall have more to say anon.

Sir Thomas married, in the year 1343, the youngest daughter of Sir Hamon Massey of Dunham Massey, in the adjoining county of Chester. Twelve years had since that period elapsed at the time when our story begins; and though earnestly desiring male issue, that his name and race might be perpetuated, yet was the sole fruit of their union hitherto a daughter, named Isabel, then just entering on her tenth year. Her winning and surpassing comeliness proved no solace to his disappointment. He grew moodish and melancholy in the midst of his vast wealth; apprehending the utter extinction of his name, and the intrusion of a stranger on his birthright. Hopeless of other issue by his own lady, he had recourse to unlawful means for this purpose, which procured for him a sore chastisement in the end, as our narrative will show.

In that neighbourhood dwelt a comely maiden, the only daughter of a substantial yeoman, of the name of Oskatell. This damsel, pleasing the amorous fancy of Sir Thomas, fell an easy prey to his arts and persuasions. Though concealed from her friends, their too frequent intercourse at length became visible in the birth of a son, greatly to the joy of the father, who meditated nothing less than to adopt this illegitimate babe for the perpetuation of his name. Yet were there preliminaries of no mean importance to be adjusted, as all men who have wives may well conceive. The lady of Lathom must first be consulted; but probabilities were strongly against the supposition that she would tamely submit to this infringement on the rights of her child by the interposition of a bastard. Nay, she had beforetime hinted that some individual of the name, of moderate wealth and good breeding, might in time be found for a suitable alliance. Still, the success of his scheme was an object that lay deeply at his heart, and he grew more and more anxious and perplexed. One evening, as he wandered out disconsolately in the company of an old and trusty servant, to whom he had imparted the secret, they came to a desert place in the park, nigh to where a pair of eagles had from time immemorial built their nests. A project struck him which promised fair to realise his wishes. After a multitude of schemes subservient to the main purpose had been thrown out and abandoned, the whole plot was finally unfolded in the following manner:—

¹¹ This extract is from an interesting pamphlet, printed for private circulation only, by Thomas Heywood, Esq. of Manchester, entitled, “The Earls of Derby, and the Verse Writers and Poets of the 16th and 17th Centuries.” 1825.

A message was conveyed to the mother overnight, that betimes on the following morning the babe, richly clad, should be held in readiness, and a trusty servant would forthwith convey him to the hall. She was peremptorily forbidden to follow; and in her great joy at this announcement, naturally supposing that a more favourable posture of affairs had arisen between Sir Thomas and his lady on the subject, she cheerfully consented to this unexpected deprivation, confident that it was to the furthering of her child's welfare and advancement. The infant, smiling, and unconscious of the change, was taken from his mother's lap, his swaddling clothes carefully folded together, and committed to the care of the aged domestic.

Little was the anxious mother aware of the great peril he had to undergo ere the goal which bounded her anticipations was won.

It was the soft twilight of a summer's morning, and the little birds had begun to chirp their matins, and the lark to brush the dew from her speckled breast, waiting for the first gaze of the sun. The old man pressed the infant closer to his bosom as he drew nigh to the steep acclivity, the solitary dwelling of the eagle. He kissed the babe; then looking round, fearful of intruders, he laid the wicker cradle at the foot of the precipice, and sprang into a dark thicket close by, as if to watch for the descent of the rapacious bird.

Leaving the child, we turn to Sir Thomas, who on that morning, as was his wont, together with his dame, awoke betimes, but he was sooner astir and more anxious and bustling than usual. Their custom was, awaking with the sun, to begin the day with a quiet stroll about the grounds; and on this eventful morning their walk chanced happily towards the eagle's nest. Being something farther and more out of their common track, it was noticed good-humouredly by the lady, who seemed to possess a more than ordinary portion of hilarity on the occasion. Evidently under some exciting influence, their walk was unconsciously protracted.

In a gloomy dell, not far from the eyrie, Sir Thomas stood still, in the attitude of listening. The lady, too, was silent and alarmed, but no intimation of danger was visible. Her own senses, though, seemed to gather acuteness,—a circumstance by no means rare in the vicinity of an unusually timid and listening companion, who braces our perceptions to the tension of his own. Soon, however, the short and feeble cry of the babe was heard, when the knight sprang forward, feigning great astonishment at the discovery. Evidently dropped from the talons of the bird, it was looked upon as a special gift of Providence, a deposit direct from the skies; to have rejected which would have been a heinous offence, and an unlawful contravention of the designs of the Giver. Accordingly, the infant was taken home and carefully nursed, being baptized by the name of Oskatell.

The good lady became surprisingly enamoured of the little foundling, believing his adoption was dictated by the will of Heaven; and to this decision its father readily acceded. Sir Thomas, to give the greater sanction to this supposed miracle, as well as to remove all suspicion of fraud from the prying eyes of a censorious world, assumed for his crest an eagle on the wing, proper, looking round as though for something she had lost.

The child grew in years and stature, being liberally furnished in all things according with the dignity he was destined to receive. Sir Thomas purposed the sharing of his wealth equally between his children, a measure which had the entire concurrence of Lady de Lathom. Though younger by some years, Oskatell was generally considered by the world as the future husband of Isabella; but Sir Thomas, aware of danger on this head, early impressed them with some notion of consanguinity, and intimated the impossibility of their union. This prohibition, settling on a womanish fancy, might naturally have been expected to operate in a

manner the reverse of his intention. Yet we do not find from history that Isabella ever cherished for him any other sentiments than those arising from a sisterly regard.

Growing up to man's estate, he sought the court of King Edward, where, though of a peaceable temper, his soul was stirred to participate in the gallant feats incident to that scene of martial enterprise.

Isabella was now in the full summer, or, it might be, ripening into the rich autumn of her beauty. Her father would by no means have permitted her union save with one of the highest rank, to which her gentle blood and princely inheritance entitled her. And though not a few hitherto, of noble birth and endowments, had sought the honour of her alliance, yet her heart was untouched, and in the end her suitors forbore their homage.

All the country was now mightily roused with the news of the French champion who, together with sundry of his companions in arms, had challenged the English nation to match them with the like number at a solemn joust and tourney, and of the great gallantry and personal accomplishments of Sir John, then Captain Stanley, who had first taken up the gauntlet in his country's behalf. The lists were prepared. The meeting, by the king's command, was appointed to be holden at Winchester, where the royal court was expected to witness this splendid achievement. Oskatell, returning home, strongly importuned his sister to accompany him to the show, it being then deemed a pleasant recreation for many a fair and delicate maiden to view their champions hack and hew each other without mercy. Isabella, unceasingly urged to this excursion, at length set out for the city of Winchester, followed by a numerous train of attendants, where, in due time, they arrived, mingling in the bustle and dissipation incident to these festivities.

Young Stanley was the second son of Sir William Stanley, Lord of Stanley and Stourton. As a younger branch of the house, he commenced his career, it is said, under the command of his relative Lord Audley; but this appears something doubtful. The battle of Poitiers, in which Captain Stanley is said to have been, was fought in 1357; and here he must have battled in petticoats, seeing that his father was but married 26 Edward III., and, consequently, making due allowance for accidents and irregularities, young Stanley, as the second son, could not then have proceeded beyond his third year! a precocity unprecedented, we believe, even in the annals of that fighting era. The conflicting statements we meet with about this time, both traditionary and recorded, we cannot attempt to reconcile. Sufficient information happily exists, however, on which no doubt arises; and by the aid of that we proceed with our narrative.

Stanley, according to some, having been a great traveller, had improved himself diligently in the art of war; and, as the old chronicles quaintly relate, "he visited most of the courts of Europe, even as far as Constantinople; wherein he made such advances in the school of Mars, that his superior skill in arms was generally applauded in every country he passed through." So distinguished and widely-extended a reputation for bravery could not fail to provoke the pride and envy of all Christendom, whereupon the young Admiral of Hainault, one of the bravest men of his time, together with divers gentlemen of the French court, defied the whole kingdom to a passage of arms, the result of which challenge has been shown.

Great was the confluence and resort to the city of Winchester, it being noised abroad as though the king would distinguish the affray by his presence; wondrous the stir and bustle of the soldiers, guards, and attendants, with hordes of idlers and hangers-on, from the vast array of knights and nobles, who came either to see or to share in the approaching trial. The splendid banners, the heraldic pomp and barbaric grandeur of their retinues, augmenting with every fresh arrival, made the streets one ever-moving pageant for many days before the

conflict began. Isabella had full leisure to observe, from her own lattice, the gay and costly garniture, and the glittering appointments of the warriors, with the pageants and puerile diversions suited to the taste and capacity of the ignorant crowds by which they were followed. The king's mummers were arrived, together with many other marvels in the shape of puppet-shows and "motions" enacting the "old vice;" Jonas and the whale, Nineveh, the Creation, and a thousand unintelligible but equally gratifying and instructive devices; one of which, we are told, was "four giants, a unicorn, a camel, an ass, a dragon, a hobby-horse, and sixteen naked boys!"

The crowds attracted by these spectacles were immense, and the city nigh choked with the torrents that set in from every quarter.

From the windows of the houses, where lodged the knights appointed to the encounter, hung their several coats, richly emblazoned, rousing forth many a shout and hurrah, as one and another symbol was recognised to be the badge of some favourite chief; but more than all, was the young Stanley's escutcheon favoured by the fickle breath of popular opinion, which made it needful that a double guard should be mounted near his dwelling,—a precaution, moreover, rendered needful by the many tumults among the different partisans and retainers, not always ending without bloodshed. The arrival of the king, however, soon changed the current of the wondering multitude. Edward was now in his sixty-fourth year, and the fiftieth of his reign. Though the decline of his life did not correspond with the splendid and noisy scenes which had illustrated the earlier periods of his history, yet he still manifested the same restless and undaunted spirit, ever considered as the prevailing attribute of his character. Towards the close of his career he had the mortification to endure the loss of his foreign possessions, having been baffled in every attempt to defend them. He felt, too, the decay of his authority at home, from the inconstancy and discontents of his subjects. Though his earlier years had been spent amid the din and tumult of war and the business of the camp, yet was he, at this period, almost wholly given up to pleasure and the grossest of sensual indulgences. Alice Pierce, to whom he was immoderately attached, had gained an ascendancy over him so dangerous that the parliament remonstrated, with a courage and firmness worthy of a more enlightened era, and in the end he was obliged to remove her from court. Sometimes the spirit of his youth awoke; the glory of past ages was stirred up within him; and, like the aged war-horse neighing to the shrill note of the trumpet, he greeted the approaching tournament with something of his wonted ardour,—though now but an expiring flash, brightening a moment ere it was extinguished.

The day rose calm and unclouded. The thin haze of the morning had disappeared, and an atmosphere of more than common brilliancy succeeded. Through a great part of the preceding night the armourers had been busily employed altering and refitting the equipments, and the dawn had already commenced ere their labours were suspended. The lists were carefully scrutinised, and all chance of foul play averted. The priests, too, had blessed the armour and weapons from magic spells and "foul negromancie."

The barriers were built of stout boards, firmly riveted together; the royal pavilion being on the southern side, richly canopied and embroidered with costly devices. Galleries were provided for the nobles, not a few of whom, with their courtly dames, were expected to be present.

The lists were sixty paces in length and forty in breadth between the platforms on which the knights' tents were erected. The ground within was made hard and level, the loose stones and other impediments being carefully removed. There were two entrances, east and west, well guarded and strongly fenced with wooden-bars about seven feet high, so that a horse might not leap over. The tents of the warriors were fancifully decorated, every one having his shield

newly emblazoned and hung out in front, where the pages and esquires watched, guarding vigilantly these sacred treasures. Nothing was heard but the hoarse call of the trumpet, the clank of mail, and the prancing of horses, pawing and eager for the battle.

Long before the appointed hour the whole city was in motion. Isabella, too, whose bright eyes had not closed since the first gleam had visited her chamber, was early astir. An ugly dream, it is said, troubled her. Though of ripe years, yet, as we have noticed before, love had not yet aimed his malicious shafts at her bosom, nor even tightened his bowstring as she tripped by, defying his power; so that the dream, which in others would appear but as the overflowing of a youthful and ardent imagination, seemed to her altogether novel and unaccountable, raising up new faculties, and endowing her with a train of feelings heretofore unknown. No wonder that her looks were betrayers: her whole deportment manifested some hidden power controlling her high spirit, insomuch that her favourite maiden was fain to abate her morning gossip; yet Isabella was not averse to speech, though the words seemed to linger heavily on her tongue, losing that lightness and exuberance which betokens the mind free from care and oppression.

She had dreamed that in her own wild woods a knight accosted her: she attempted to fly, but was withheld by some secret influence. He raised his visor, smiling as he bent his knee in token of homage. He was a stranger. Grasping her hand, she felt the cold hard pressure of his gauntlet. She awoke, and sure enough there was the impression as of some mailed hand upon her delicate fingers! While marvelling at this strange adventure, a deep slumber again overpowered her, when a graceful cavalier, unarmed, was at her side. He raised her hand to his lips, and her whole soul responded to the touch. He was about to speak, when her father suddenly appeared, with a dark and forbidding aspect. He began to chide, and the stranger, with a glance she could not erase from her recollection, disappeared. It was this glance which subdued her proud spirit to its influence. Her maidenly apprehensions became aroused; she attempted, but in vain, to drive away the intruder: the vision haunted her deeply—too deeply for her repose! Marks of some outward impression were yet visible on her hand, whether from causes less occult than the moving phantasma of the mind, is a question that would resist all our powers of solution. In a mood thus admirably fitted for the encountering of some marvellous adventure, did she mount her little white palfrey, all pranked out and caparisoned for the occasion.

Followed by a train of some length, with Oskatell by her side, the daughter of the house of Lathom allured the eyes of not a few as she passed on. Many a stately knight bent his head, and many an inquiry was directed to the esquires and attendants as she drew near.

The scene of this renowned combat was a spacious plain below the city, on the opposite side of the river Itchen. The chalky cliffs, which obtained for it the name of *Caer Gwint*, or the White City, were studded with gay and anxious multitudes, whose hopes and fears have long been swept off by the waves of passing generations.

Winchester being one of the fixed markets or staples for wool appointed by King Edward, the city had risen in power and affluence above its neighbours. Yet the plague, by which it was almost depopulated some years before, had considerably abated its magnificence. But the favour of royalty still clung to it, and Arthur's "Round Table" attested its early claims to this distinguishing character—a monarch's residence. The castle, where the Round Table is still shown, was then a building of great strength, and, enlivened by the king's presence, displayed many a staff and pennon from its stately battlements.

Isabella passed by the fortress just as the trumpets announced the near approach of the king down the covered way. The chains of the drawbridge were lowered, and presently issued

forth the armed retinue of the monarch. Isabella and her train were obliged to remain awhile as idle spectators.

The king, though old and infirm, yet retained his lofty and commanding appearance. His charger was armed with the *chanfrons* and gamboised housings, having thereon the royal arms, and proudly did the conscious beast paw and champ, as if rejoicing under his burden.

Edward was dressed in a glittering surcoat of crimson silk, worked with lions and *fleurs-de-lis*. His helmet was cylindrical, surmounted by a lion as its crest. Round the rim was a coronet of gold, worked with *fleurs-de-lis* and oak leaves. A gorget and tippet covering the shoulders was fastened beneath the chin, giving the head a stiff but imposing air of command. He carried a short truncheon, which he wielded with great dexterity; yet his armour, though light and of the finest temper, seemed more cumbersome to him now than in former days.

The royal standard of England, thus described, was borne before him:—It was from eight to nine yards in length, the ground blue and red, containing, in the first division, the lion of England imperially crowned. In chief, a coronet of *crosses pater* and *fleurs-de-lis*, between two clouds irradiated. In base, a cloud between two coronets. In the next division the charges were, in chief a coronet, in base an irradiated cloud. In the third, the dexter chief and sinister base was likewise an irradiated cloud; the sinister and dexter chief a coronet, as before.

Motto, “Dieu et mon droyt.” The whole of this procession was one vast masquerade of pomp, little betokening the frailty and folly which it enveloped. Though to all outward show fair and glistening, yet was there a heavy gloom brooding over the nation. Prince Edward, the flower of chivalry, usually called the Black Prince, from the colour of his armour, lay then grievously sick, and the whole hope and welfare of the land seemed to hang on his recovery. The known ambition of John of Gaunt was a main source of alarm and anxiety. “Edward had, however,” says the historian, “declared his grandson heir and successor to the crown, and thereby cut off all the hopes of the Duke of Lancaster, if he ever had the temerity to entertain any.”

Not forgetting his former homage to the sex, the king’s eye lingered on the form of Isabella, but she drew back, daunted by the ardour of his gaze. Oskatell saw the impression she had made, in nowise displeased, hoping some ray of royal favour would be reflected to him from the beam that already dawned on his companion.

We now pass on to the field, where everything was in readiness for the combat. The knights had heard mass and made confession, these being the requisite preparatives to the noble deeds they had that day vowed to perform. The heralds had made the usual proclamation against the use of magic, unlawful charms, and other like devices of the devil, when a loud flourish of trumpets announced the approach of Stanley, who first entered the lists mounted on a grey charger furnished with the chevron, or war-saddle, then of great use in withstanding the terrific shock of the assailant, being high up in front, and furnished at the back like an arm-chair. He was equipped in a full suit of Italian armour, displaying a steel cuirass of exquisite workmanship, deemed at that time a novel but elegant style of defence, and destined soon to supersede the purpoint or gamboised work called mail. If well tempered, it was found to resist the stroke of the lance without being either pierced or bent, nor was it liable to be pushed through into the body, as was sometimes the case with the “*mailles*” when the wambas or hoketon was wanting underneath. His shield was thus marshalled: argent; on a bend azure, three stags’ heads cabossed. In the sinister chief, a crescent denoted his filiation; underneath was the motto “Augmenter.” The shield itself or pavise was large, made of wood covered with skin, and surrounded with a broad rim of iron.

He looked gracefully round, first lowering his lance in front of the king's pavilion, and afterwards to the fair dames who crowded the galleries on each side. Whether from accident or design his eyes rested on Isabella with a strong expression of earnestness rather than curiosity. Doubtless, the noble representatives of the house of Lathom excited no slight interest among the spectators, and the young hero might have formed some yet undeveloped anticipations on this head.

She blushed deeply at this public and unexpected notice. The recollection of her dream made the full tide of feeling set in at once in this direction, much to her consternation and dismay; but when, happening to turn hastily round, a silken bandage, loosened by the sudden movement from some part of her dress, was carried off by the wind and deposited within the lists, she was greatly embarrassed; and her confusion was not a little increased as the young gallant with great dexterity transferred it to the point of his lance. At this choice of his "lady love," a loud shout arose from the multitude; and Isabella, now the object of universal regard, would have retired, but that the density of the crowd, and the inconvenient structure of the building, rendered it impossible.

Another flourish of trumpets announced the approach of the young Admiral of Hainault. His armour was blue and white, beautifully wrought and inlaid with silver. His steed was black, having the suit and furniture of the war-horse complete. The *crouptière* and *estival*, together with the *chanfron*, were of the most costly description. A plume of white feathers decorated his casque, extending his athletic form into almost gigantic proportions.

The needful ceremonies were gone through; a deep and almost breathless silence succeeded, like the stillness that precedes the first swing of the storm. The trumpets sounded; the sharp click of the lances was heard falling into the rest; and the first rush was over. The noise of the shock was like the burst of the tempest on the forest boughs. Through the dust, the horses were seen to recoil upon their haunches; but as it blew heavily away, the warriors had regained their upright position, having sustained no injury, save by the shivering of their lances with the stroke. A loud shout of applause ensued; and the esquires being at hand with fresh weapons, each knight was too eager for the fray to lose a moment in requesting the usual signal. Again their coursers' feet seemed to spurn the earth. At this onset the French knight bent back in his saddle, whether from subtlety or accident was not known, but there was a loud clamour; and the Frenchman, recovering himself, spurred on his steed with great vigour, perhaps hoping to take his adversary at unawares; but the latter, darting aside with agility, the other's lance ran full against the boards, and in deep vexation he came back to the charge.

Trembling with choler, he hardly restrained himself until the prescribed signal; then, as if he would make an end of his opponent, he aimed his weapon with a direct thrust towards the heart; but Stanley, confident in his own might, was fully prepared for the blow, as the event sufficiently proved; for the French knight was seen to reel from his saddle, the point of his enemy's lance being driven completely through his armour. He rolled backwards on the ground, and so vigorous had been the attack, that his horse's back was broken, and they lay together, groaning piteously, besmeared with blood and dust, to the sore dismay of his companions. Stanley suddenly alighted, and helped the pages to undo his armour; but ere his beaver could be unclasped he had fainted by loss of blood, and being borne off the field, he shortly afterwards expired.

The king was mightily pleased with this great prowess of the victor, insomuch that he knighted him on the spot, and, according to the old ballad, gave him goodly manors—

"For his hire,

Wing, Tring, and Iving, in Buckinghamshire.”

He had so won, likewise, on the hitherto impenetrable disposition of Isabella, that when he came to render his homage at her feet, she trembled and could scarcely give the customary reply.

Raising his visor, and uncovering his helmet from the grand guard—a plate protecting the left side of the face, shoulder, and breast—he made a lowly obeisance at the gate of his mistress’s pavilion, at the same time presenting the stolen favour he had now so nobly won. With a tremulous hand she bound it round his arm.

“Nay, thy chaplet, lady,” shouted a score of tongues from the inquisitive spectators. Isabella untied a rich chaplet of goldsmith’s work, ornamented with rose-garlands, from her hair, and threw it over his helmet. Still armed with the gauntlets, which, either through hurry or inadvertence, he had neglected to throw aside, as was the general courtesy for the occasion, the knight seized her hand, and with a grasp gentle for any other occasion, pressed it to his lips. The lady uttered a subdued shriek, whether from pain or surprise, it boots not now to inquire; mayhap, it was the remembrance of the mailed hand she had felt in her dream, and to which her fingers, yet tingling with the pressure, bore a sufficient testimony. Sir John bent lowlier than before, with one hand on his breast, in token of contrition. A thousand strange fancies, shapeless and undefined, rushed by, as the maiden looked on the warrior. It was the very crisis of her dream; her heart seemed as though it would have leapt the walls of its tenement,—and she was fain to hide her face under the folds of her mantle.

“Now, on my halidome,” said the king, “there be two doves whose cooing would be the better for a little honest speech. Poor hearts! it were a pity their tongues had bewrayed their desire. Fitz-Walter, summon them hither.”

The blushing Isabella was conducted to the royal presence, where the king was graciously pleased to impress a salute on her rich and glowing cheek—no mean honour from so gracious and gallant a monarch, who, though old, was yet accounted a mighty adept in the discernment of female beauty, he never being known to suffer contact of the royal lip with aught but the fairest and most comely of the sex.

“Sir John, I commend thee to thy mistress. A dainty choice. She is ‘The Queen of Beauty’ for the day, and to-night we command your presence at the banquet.”

“My gracious liege,” said Isabella, pointing to Oskatell, “I have a brother; unto his care it is but meet that I entrust myself; and he”——

“His person and endowments,” interrupted the king, “are not unknown to us. I do honour thee by ennobling him; for though our ladies’ brightness be all too dazzling to receive a glory from us, yet peradventure for their sakes our courtesy is vouchsafed. Rise, Sir Oskatell de Lathom.”

Again a flourish of trumpets proclaimed the king’s favour, who with many more gracious speeches won the affection of all who heard him that day.

Several other jousts and “gentle passages” were held, the success of which falling principally with the English combatants, the boasting pride of France was again humbled before the king, who seemed to renew his former victories at this memorable “*Tourney of Winchester*.”

But Isabella had bartered years of repose for this brief season of intoxicating splendour. The barbed arrow was in her heart, and the more she struggled, the more irreclaimable it grew. Doubtless that unlucky dream had rendered her more susceptible to the wound.

Dreams have this operation; and whether good or evil, they leave an impression that no simple act of the will can efface. It seems to be the work of a power superior to our own, for “the less begetteth not the greater;” how, then, can the mind originate a train of conceptions, or rather creations, superior to itself—above its own power to control?

But Isabella was too much engrossed by her feelings to attempt their solution. She lay restless on her couch, but there was no escape. An unquenchable flame was kindled in her soul, that not all the cool appliances of reason could subdue. Tomorrow she must depart, and that gay pageant vanish as a dream; and yet not like her own dream, for that was abiding and indelible. To-morrow the brave knight must withdraw, and the “Queen of Beauty,” homaged for a day, give place to another whose reign should be as brief and as unenduring. In this distempered mood, with a heart all moved to sadness, did the Lady Isabel pass the first hours of the following night.

Suddenly the sharp twang of a citerne was heard in the street below her window,—nothing new in these piping times of love and minstrelsy; but so sensitive was the ear now become to exterior impressions, that she started, as though expecting a salutation from the midnight rambler. Her anticipations were in some measure realised, the minstrel pausing beneath her lattice. A wooden balcony projected from it, concealing the musician. Isabella threw a light mantle around her, and rousing one of her maidens, she opened the window. The rich melody came upon her senses through the balmy odour of myrtle boughs and leaves of honeysuckle. The chords were touched with a skilful hand, and the prelude, a wild and extempore commentary on the ballad, was succeeded by the following ditty:—

“My ladye love, my ladye love,
The moon through the lift is breaking;
The sky is bright, and through the night
The queen of love is waking.
Yon little star that twinkleth so,
Fluttering her bright eyes to and fro,
How doth she chide,
That thou shouldest hide,
All joyance thus forsaking.
My ladye love, my ladye love,
The moon through the lift is breaking;
The sky is bright, and through the night
The queen of love is waking.”

The singer withdrew; and Isabella was convinced, or her eyes were befooled by her fancy, that, as he emerged from his concealment, his form could be none other than the one her imagination was too familiar with to mistake. He, too, had caught a glance of the listeners, for presently a folded paper was thrown over the balusters, and the minstrel departed. The first light that came through the long low casements revealed all that her hopes anticipated. The billet was from Sir John Stanley, whose regrets, mingled with vows and protestations of love, were to this purport, that he must needs be away before daybreak, on urgent business from the king. He sent a sigh and a love-token, commending himself to her best thoughts, until he should gain his acquittance so far as to visit Lathom.

Passing over the departure, the bustle, and the weariness of a twelve days' journey, let us behold the maiden once more in her pretty bower at Lathom. How changed! The whole assumed a fresh aspect, thus viewed from a different state of the mind. Her favourite spaniel licked her hand, but she did not notice his caresses; all about her was as if the wand of the enchanter had been there, changing its image, each object calling forth a train of sensations

heretofore unknown. Even the hangings and figured draperies wore a grim and perturbed expression; and Jephtha's daughter and the Queen of Sheba looked more dismal and profuse than ever from the dusky arras.

She strayed out, as beforetime, into the woods; but their gloom was more intense, and the very birds seemed to grow sad with her melancholy musings. Their song, that used to be so sprightly, was now subdued and mournful, and all their gay and bubbling hilarity was gone. If she wandered forth towards evening, the owl hooted in her path, and the raven croaked above her. She heard not the light matin of the lark. Fancy, stimulated alone by gloomy impressions, laid hold on them only, failing to recognise aught but its own image.

Sir Oskatell and her father had often taken counsel together since his return. Shortly afterwards, Isabella received a summons to attend Sir Thomas in private. What was the precise nature of that interview does not appear, save that the lady withdrew to her chamber, and the brow of Sir Thomas was for a long space moody and disturbed. Sir John Stanley, though of gentle descent, was not endowed with an adequate inheritance, at least for the heiress of Lathom, whose extensive possessions, though shared by Oskatell, were deemed by Sir Thomas of sufficient magnitude to command a connection of higher rank and importance. As a younger brother he could have slight pretensions to patrimony, and save the manors, then but a slender endowment, just granted by King Edward, his profession as a soldier supplied his chief revenue. His exclusive notice of the Lady Isabella at the tournament was quickly conveyed to the ear of Sir Thomas; and, it was said, the latter had vowed that no portion of wealth should descend to his daughter if wedded to Sir John, but that the whole should be settled on Sir Oskatell. "The course of true love never did run smooth." That Sir John Stanley had a watchful eye at the time to the fortune as well as to the person of Isabella, is by some rather freely hinted. This, however, turns out to be an unfounded calumny, as the events hereafter unfolded will abundantly demonstrate.

Sir John, after vainly endeavouring to avert this cruel purpose, and to win the old man's favour, entered into the service of the king. He hoped that some lucky adventure would enable him to appear with more certainty of success the next time he played the suitor at Lathom.

Isabella, though sorely importuned to the contrary, remained true to her first and only attachment; and Sir Oskatell was likely, in the end, to gather to himself the whole of these vast possessions. A disposition to this effect she had for some time suspected. His conduct, too, was less kindly of late, and he took upon himself an authority more direct and unconditional. Indeed, it seemed but too evident that Sir Oskatell was looked upon as the ultimate possessor. The maiden pined sorely at her lot, and lack of perpetuity in the inheritance. But woman's wits have compassed a sea of impossibilities, and will ever continue irresistible until their beautiful forms shall no longer irradiate these dull mortalities with their presence.

One day an aged minstrel craved admission. Sir Thomas had just retired from the banquet. Isabella and the lady of Lathom were at their usual employment in their private chamber, plying the needle in "Antres vast," and wildernesses of embroidery, along with the maids. The request was granted; soon after which an old man, bending apparently under an accumulation of years and infirmities, entered the apartment. There was a keen scrutinising restlessness of the eye, stealing through the silvery locks about his brow, that but ill accorded with his apparent decrepitude.

After a very profound obeisance, which the lady-mother scarcely recognised, he addressed himself to his vocation. A mighty indifferent prelude succeeded the arrangement of the

strings, then a sort of jig, accented by the toe and head of the performer. Afterwards he broke into a wild and singular extempore, which gradually shaped itself into measure and rhythm, at times beautifully varied, and accompanied by the voice. We shall attempt a more modern and intelligible version of the sentiments he expressed:—

Song.

1. "Rich round thy brow are the clusters bright,
And thy tresses are like the plume—
The plume of the raven, glossy with light,
Or the ray on the spirit's deep gloom.
2. "As I gaze, the dim echoes of years that are past
Bring their joys to my bosom in vain;
For the chords, which their spell once o'er memory cast,
Ne'er shall waken to gladness again!"

"I hold these minstrels now no better than the croaking of your carrion crow," said the elder lady: "these are not like the songs we used to hear in hall and bower at Dunham Massey. Then—"the old lady forgetting that her own ears had played her false, and her relish for these dainties had departed—"Then," raising her voice and gazing round, as past scenes recurred to her fancy, "how my young heart would leap at the sound of their ditties! and how I long to hear again '*Sir Armoric*' and the '*Golden-Legend*,' and all about the lady with the swine's snout and the silver trough!"

But Isabella heard not her mother's reminiscences. The minstrel engrossed her attention, absorbing her whole thoughts, it might seem, with the display of his cunning. Her cheek was flushed, and her lip trembled. Some mysterious faculty there was either in the song or the performer.

Again he poured forth a strain more touching, and of ravishing sweetness:—

Song.

1. "Smile on, my love; that sunny smile
Is light and life and joy to thee;
But, oh, its glance of witchery the while,
Is maddening, hopeless misery to me.
2. "Another bosom thou mayest bless,
Whose chords shall wake with ecstasy;
On mine, each thrilling thought thy looks impress
Wakes but the pang of hopeless destiny.
3. "Smile on, my love; that sunny smile
Is light and life and joy to thee;
But, oh, its glance of witchery the while,
Is hopeless, maddening misery to me."

These were burning thoughts from the bosom of age; and had not the old lady's perceptions been somewhat obtuse, she might have guessed the minstrel's purpose. His despair was not so utterly hopeless and without remedy as the purport of his song seemed to forebode—for the morning light saw the bower of Isabella vacant, and her bed undisturbed. She was then far over the blue hills into Staffordshire, where another sun saw her the wife of Sir John Stanley; immediately after which they departed into Ireland.

Sir Thomas threw the reins on the neck of his choler, and, as tradition reports, did then disinherit her for ever in favour of Sir Oskatell. How far the latter might be privy to this

resolve, or whether Sir Thomas, goaded on aforetime to the aggrandisement of his name, seized the present opportunity only as it served his purpose, both history and tradition leave us without the means of deciding. There does, however, seem reason to suspect some unfair solicitations practised on Sir Thomas, which subsequent occurrences strongly corroborate; but particularly the fact, that on his deathbed he solemnly revoked this injustice, appointing Sir John Stanley his lawful heir, disinheriting Sir Oskatell, save a slight provision hereafter named, and declaring his illegitimacy. We would not lightly throw out an accusation of this nature; but surely an act of retribution so unsparingly administered would not have been put in force, had not past circumstances in some measure rendered it just.

Let us now resume our narrative from the date of the tournament; soon after which King Edward died, and Sir John Stanley, in the first year of his successor, Richard II., was honoured by him with a commission to Ireland, for the purpose of assisting in the total reduction of that unfortunate kingdom. By his great prudence and success he brought under submission the great rebel chiefs, to wit, O'Neal, King of Ulster; Rotherick O'Connor, King of Connaught; O'Caral, King of Uriel; O'Rurick, King of Meath; Arthur M'Kier, King of Leinster; and O'Brien, King of Thomond. In the year 1379, Richard coming in person to Ireland, these chieftains did homage to him as their sovereign prince. For his great and eminent services on this occasion Sir John had granted to him, by patent for life, the manor and lands of Black Castle in that country.

Ten years did Sir John sojourn, by the king's order, in this unquiet and troublesome appendage to the English crown. And it may be conceived that if true love had any hold on his affections, they were oft communing with Isabella, forsaken, as she then thought, by him whom she had once too surely trusted. In the tumult of war, and in the administration of his high office, no doubt her gentle form would visit his spirit, and, like the star of future promise, guide him on to his achievements.

About the year 1390, when the return of Henry Duke of Lancaster from his banishment, without leave of the king, had caused a sore dismay throughout the land, Richard, harassed with the apprehension of danger, appointed Sir John Stanley Lord Justice of Ireland for six years. He was now able, in some measure, to confer a sufficient dignity on his beloved, though not yet equal, in point of wealth, to the wishes of Sir Thomas. But feeling desirous to know the state of her disposition towards him, he set out in disguise for Lathom, where, as we have before stated, he so far prevailed that she became Lady Stanley in spite of all the opposition she had endured. Aware of the determination of her father, he deemed her love a sufficient recompense, thus fully refuting the insinuations that her dower had more charm for him than her person.

Returning to Ireland with his lady, they lived there happily for some years.

When Henry of Lancaster was crowned by the title of Henry the Fourth, Sir John being still Lord Justice of Ireland, and holding the government there in favour of the deposed king, the new monarch, well knowing the knight's power, together with his skill and experience, as well in the senate as in the field, found means to attach him to the reigning interest, and, as a mark of signal favour, granted to him and his heirs for ever, by letters patent, many lands there named, lying in the westerly part of the county of Chester. Soon afterwards occurred that memorable rebellion, when the Welsh blood, boiling to a ferment by the hot appliances of one Owen Glendower, an esquire of Wales, and in his youth a resident at the Inns of Court in London, kindled the flames of intestine war. After he had conspired with the Percies and their adherents, together with a large body of the Scotch, these malcontents threatened to overthrow the now tottering dominion of King Henry.

The most prompt measures were, however, taken to meet this exigency,—and Sir John Stanley was suddenly called out of Ireland; Sir William Stanley, then Lord of Stanley and Stourton, being appointed his deputy. Sir John soon applied himself in such earnest to the service of the king, his master, that a large and powerful army, headed by Henry himself, together with “Prince Harry,” his son, marched against the rebels. Near to Shrewsbury the latter were overthrown; Sir John, by his great bravery and address, mainly contributing to the success of the engagement. His presence was now become of essential service to the king, who in consequence appointed his second son, the Duke of Clarence—who claimed the title of Earl of Ulster in right of his wife—Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in his stead, the new governor landing at Carlingford on the 2d August 1405.

Sir John obtained, as a favour granted but to few, and those of the highest rank, licence from the king to fortify a spacious house he was then building at Liverpool, the site whereof was given by Sir Thomas Lathom, who, we may now suppose, had in some measure swerved from his most unjust purpose, possibly on apprehending the great honours and influence that Sir John had already acquired without his aid or furtherance. This plot of land, it was said, contained 650 square yards, which he held together with several burgage houses and lands in that town.

He had full licence to build a castle or house of strength, embattled and machicolated, with *tenellare*, or loop-holes in the walls, and other warlike devices, which no subject could undertake without special leave from the king.

The Isle of Man was at this time, by Northumberland’s rebellion, forfeit to the crown. Sir John the same year obtained a grant of it for life, and in the year following a re-grant to himself and his heirs for ever, with the style and title of “King of Man.”

It were needless to enumerate all the honours and distinctions heaped in such unwonted profusion upon our illustrious hero. It has rarely happened that so rapid a career has met with no reverse, for the fickle goddess mostly exalts her votaries only to make their downfall the more terrible.

Henry dying in 1413, was succeeded by his son Henry V., with whom Sir John was held in equal esteem, being again appointed to the government of Ireland; but, landing in Dublin, his health was now visibly on the wane. Four months afterwards he died at Ardee, to the great grief of his family, and the irreparable loss of the nation. He was a rare instance wherein a courtier, through four successive reigns, carried himself unimpeached, and unsullied by the political vices which were then too general to excite reproach. He was truly a knight “*sans peur et sans reproche*.”

He left two sons, John and Thomas, and one daughter, whose fortunes, at this time, we shall not attempt to follow.

Lady Stanley, his widow, returned to Liverpool with her children, and lived there until her death, in the house built by her husband.

Now did the beam of Sir Oskatell’s favour, like an April day, suddenly change its gaudy and suspicious brightness. Sir Thomas, waning in years and ready to depart, began to consider his former misdoings. His daughter and her offspring were, by the laws of nature, justly entitled to his possessions, which he, reflecting on the great impiety and injustice of withholding, bequeathed, with some exceptions, to Lady Stanley and her heirs, revealing at the same time the fraud which he had practised, and extinguishing for ever the hopes and expectations of Sir Oskatell. Yet was he not left entirely destitute: to him and to his descendants were reserved, by due process of law, the manors of Irlam and Urmston, near Manchester, with divers other valuable inheritances. At the same time was given to him the signet of his arms, with the crest

assumed for his sake, *an eagle regardant, proper*. It was only subsequent to the supplanting of Sir Oskatell that his rivals took the present crest, “*The Eagle and Child*” where the eagle is represented as having secured his prey, in token of their triumph over the foundling, whom he is preparing to devour. This crest, with the motto “SANS CHANGER,” the descendants of Sir John Stanley, the present Earls of Derby, continue to hold: the foregoing narrative showing faithfully the origin of that singular device.

VI. The Black Knight Of Ashton

“O Jesu I for Thy mercies’ sake,
And for Thy bitter passion,
Save us from the axe of the Tower,
And from Sir Ralph of Assheton!”

It would be a curious inquiry to trace the origin of services and other customs, paid by tenants to their feudal sovereign. Connected as the subject is with the following tradition, it may be worth while if we attempt to throw together a few notices on that head. A rose was not a very unfrequent acknowledgment. Near to the scene of our story, the tenant of a certain farm called Lime Hurst was compelled to bring a rose at the feast of St John Baptist. He held other lands; but they were subject only to the customary rules of the lordship, such as ploughing, harrowing, carting turves from Ashton-moss to the lord’s house, leading his corn in harvest, &c. This species of service was called boon-work; and hence the old adage, “I am served like a boon-shearer.” It, however, seems that some trifling present was made in return. In a MS. of receipts and disbursements belonging to the Cheethams, kept in the time of Charles II., there is an item for moneys paid for gloves to the boon-shearers at Clayton Hall, where Humphrey Cheetham, founder of the college at Manchester, then resided. The acknowledgment of a rose before mentioned might seem to have some allusion to the Knights Hospitallers. The estate of Lime Hurst was called John of Jerusalem’s land, and the tithes and rent, in all probability, once went to the support of that order.

In the Ashton pedigree we find a Nicholas Assheton, as it was then spelt, who enrolled himself amongst these warrior-monks. It seems not improbable that the profits of this estate belonged to him.

The custom of heriotship, however, was the most oppressive, being paid and exacted from the parties at a time when they were least able to render it. Our tradition will best illustrate this remnant of barbarism, to which, even in the customs of the most savage tribes, we should scarcely find a parallel.

In the early records of the Ashton family we find that Thomas Stavely, or Stayley, held a place called the Bestal by paying one penny at Christmas. This Bestal was, perhaps, a place of security or confinement. Adjoining the hall yard, the ancient residence of the Ashtons, is an old stone building facing the south, now called the Dungeon. It is flanked at the east and west corners by small towers with conical stone roofs. The wall is pierced by two pointed windows. Judging from its appearance, it must have been a place of strength; the name Bestal being probably a corruption of Bastile, basilion, or bastilion—all of which we find appropriated to places of this description. Tradition, indeed, says the ancient lords of Ashton made this a place of confinement, when the power of life and death were at their command. A field near the old hall, still called Gallows Meadow, was then used as a place of execution.

Sir John Assheton, in the fifth year of Henry VI., became possessed of the manor on payment of one penny annually. He is generally supposed to have founded the church about the year 1420. We find him assigning the forms or benches to his tenants: the names for whose uses they are appointed are all females. From this it may seem that seats in our churches were first put up for their convenience. Eighteen forms or benches are mentioned for the occupation of one hundred wives and widows, who are named, besides their daughters and servant wenches. Their husbands had not this privilege, being forced to stand or kneel in the aisles, as the service required. In the windows there yet remains a considerable quantity of painted

glass, but very much mutilated. Three or four figures on the north side represent a king, saints, &c. In the chancel are the coats and effigies of the Asshetons in armour, kneeling. In one part seems to have been portrayed the invention of the Holy Cross by St Helen. At whatever period the church was built, the steeple must either have been erected afterwards, or have undergone a considerable repair in the time of the last Sir Thomas Assheton; for upon the south side are the arms of Ashton impaling Stayley. There is a tradition, that while the workmen were one day amusing themselves at cards, a female unexpectedly presented herself. She asked them to turn up an ace, promising, in case of compliance, that she would build several yards of the steeple; upon which they fortunately turned up the ace of spades. This tale may owe its origin to the following circumstances:—Upon the marriage of Sir Thomas Assheton with the daughter of Ralph Stayley, a considerable accumulation of property was the consequence. This might induce him to repair the church, and perform sundry other acts of charity and beneficence. Whilst the work was going on, Lady Elizabeth Assheton, it is not improbable, surprised the builders at their pastime; and giving a broad hint that a part of her money was being employed in the erection, might desire that her arms should be fixed in the steeple, impaled with those of her husband. The shape of an escutcheon, having a considerable resemblance to a spade-ace, in all likelihood was the origin of the fable.

Sir John Assheton, the founder of the church, is the reputed father of Ralph, whom the following tradition commemorates. The origin of "*Riding the Black Lad*" is involved in great obscurity—some ascribing it to the tyranny of Sir Ralph, and others to the following circumstance, which may have been fabricated merely to throw off the odium attached to his name:—In the reign of Edward III., one Thomas Assheton fought under Queen Philippa in the battle of Neville's Cross. Riding through the ranks of the enemy, he bore away the royal standard from the Scotch King's tent, who himself was afterwards taken prisoner. King Edward, on his return from France, conferred on Thomas the honour of knighthood, with the title of Sir Thomas Assheton of Ashton-under-Line. To commemorate this singular display of valour, he instituted the custom of "*Riding the Black Lad*" upon Easter Monday at Ashton; leaving the sum of ten shillings yearly to support it, together with his own suit of black velvet and a coat of mail. Which of these accounts is correct we cannot presume to determine. There is, however, sufficient testimony upon record to account for the dislike entertained towards the memory of Sir Ralph Assheton.

In the town of Ashton-under-Line, or Lime, called in the ancient rent-rolls Ashton-sub-Lima, a singular custom prevails. On Easter Monday in every year, the ceremony of "*Riding the Black Lad*" takes place. According to some, it is a popular expression of abhorrence towards the memory of Sir Ralph Assheton, commonly called *The Black Knight*, whose character and conduct would seem to warrant the odium thus attached to his name. The following is a brief account of the ceremony;—An effigy is made of a man in black armour, and this image is deridingly emblazoned with some emblem of the occupation of the first couple that are married in the course of the year. The Black Boy is then fixed on horseback, and after being led in procession round the town, is dismounted, made to supply the place of a shooting-butt, and all sorts of fire-arms being in requisition for the occasion, he is put to an ignominious death. Five shillings per annum are reserved from some neighbouring estate for the perpetuation of this absurd custom.

Sir Ralph Assheton was sheriff of York in the reign of Edward IV., and knight marshal and lieutenant of the Tower under Richard III., being in great esteem with the latter monarch. In the Harleian MSS. annuities are mentioned as being granted to him, with divers lordships, and a tun of wine yearly. So powerful was his jurisdiction, that a grant was made him to the effect, that if in cases of emergency suitable persons could not be procured for the trial of

delinquents, his own authority should be a sufficient warrant for the purpose. Hence, from the nature of his office, and the powers that were intrusted to him by the king, and probably too from the natural bent of his disposition, arose the popular dislike which vented itself in the well-known traditionary distich we have taken as our motto.

In those days, when the gentry went little from home, set times of mirth and recreation were constantly observed in their spacious and hospitable mansions. Yule, or Christmas, was a feast of especial note and observance. The great hall was mostly the scene of these boisterous festivities; where, from the gallery, the lord of the mansion and his family might witness the sports, without being incommoded by the uncouth and rustic manners of their guests. It was the custom to invite all who were in any way dependent on the proprietor, and who owed him suit and service.

The mansion of Sir Ralph had, like those of the neighbouring gentry, its lofty and capacious hall. At one end was a gallery resting on the heads of three or four gigantic figures carved in oak, perhaps originally intended as rude representations of the ancient Caryatides.

The Christmas but one following the elevation of Richard to the throne, in the year of our redemption 1483, was a season of unusual severity. Many tenants of Sir Ralph were prevented from assembling at the Yule feast. A storm had rendered the roads almost impassable, keeping most of the aged and infirm from sharing in this glorious pastime.

The Yule-log was larger than ever, and the blaze kept continually on the roar. No ordinary scale of consumption could withstand the attacks of the enemy, and thaw the icicles from his beard.

The wassail-bowl had gone freely about, and the company—Hobbe Adamson, Hobbe of the Leghes, William the Arrowsmith, Jack the Woodman, Jack the Hind, John the Slater, Roger the Baxter, with many others, together with divers widows of those who owed service to their lord, clad in their holiday costume—black hoods and brown jackets and petticoats—were all intent upon their pastimes, well charged with fun and frolic. Their mirth was, however, generally kept within the bounds of decency and moderation by a personage of great importance, called the Lord of Misrule, who, though not intolerant of a few coarse and practical jokes upon occasion, was yet, in some measure, bound to preserve order and decorum on pain of being degraded from his office. To punish the refractory, a pair of stone hand-stocks was commonly used, having digit-holes for every size, from the paws of the ploughman to the taper fingers of my lady's maiden. This instrument was in the especial keeping of the dread marshal of these festivities.

The custom of heriotship, or a fine payable on the death of the landholder to the feudal lord, was then in most cases rigorously exacted. This claim fell with great severity upon widows in poor circumstances, who were, in too many instances, thus deprived of their only means of subsistence. Then came fees and fines to the holy Church, so that the bereaved and disconsolate creature had need to wish herself in the dark dwelling beside her husband. Sir David Lindsay may not be unaptly quoted in illustration of this subject. His poem called "The Monarch" contains the following frightful picture of the exactions and enormities committed on these defenceless and unoffending victims of their rapacity:—

"And also the vicar, as I trow,
Will not fail to take a cow,
And uppermost cloths, though babes them an,
From a poor seely husbandman,
When he lyes ready to dy,
Having small children two or three,

And his three kine withouten mo,—
 The vicar must have one of tho,
 With the gray cloke that covers the bed,
 Howbeit that they be poorly cled;
 And if the wife die on the morn,
 And all the babes should be forlorn,
 The other cow he takes away,
 With her poor cote and petycote gray:
 And if within two days or three
 The eldest child shall happen to dy,
 Of the third cow he shall be sure,
 When he hath under his cure;
 And father and mother both dead be,
 Beg must the babes without remedy.
 They hold the corse at the church style,
 And thare it must remain awhile,
 Till they get sufficient surety
 For the church right and duty.
 Then comes the landlord perforce,
 And takes to him the fattest horse;
 Poor labourers would that law were down,
 Which never was founded by reason.
 I heard them say, under confession,
 That this law was brother to oppression.”

As it drew on towards eventide, the mirth increased. The rude legendary ballads of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, Beavois of Southampton, Robin Hood, The Pindar of Wakefield, and the Friar of Fountain’s Abbey, Clim of the Clough, Ranulph of Chester, his Exploits in the Holy Land, together with the wondrous deeds of war and love performed by Sir Roger of Calverly, had been sung and recited to strange and uncouth music. Carols, too, were chanted between whiles in a most unreverend fashion. A huge Christmas pie, made in the shape of a cratch or cradle, was placed on the board. This being accounted a great test of orthodoxy, every one was obliged to eat a slice, lest he should be suspected of favouring the heretical tenets then spreading widely throughout the land. Blind-man’s-buff and hot-cockles had each their turn; but the sport that seemed to afford the most merriment was a pendulous stick having an apple at one end, and on the other a lighted candle, so that the unfortunate and liquorish wight who bit at this tempting bait generally burnt his nose on the rebound, as the stick bounced to and fro on its pivot. The hall was now cleared for the masks. In this play, the Black Knight himself generally joined, laughing heartily at and hurrying on the mis-haps of the revellers. Many horrible and grotesque-looking shapes and disguises soon made their appearance; but one, more especially than the rest, excited no slight degree of distress and alarm. His antics proved a continual source of annoyance to the rest of the company. He singed Will the Arrowsmith’s beard, poured a whole flagon of hot liquor in the wide hosen of Hobbe Adamson; but the enactor of St George in a more especial manner attracted his notice; he crept between his legs, and bore him right into the middle of the pig-sty, before he could be stayed; from whence the heroic champion of England issued, sorely shent with the admixtures and impurities of the place.

This termagant was a little broad-set figure wearing a mask, intended as a representation of his Satanic majesty, adorned with a huge pair of horns. From it hung a black cloak or shirt, out of which protruded a goodly and substantial tail. No one could discover this ruthless

disturber of their sports. Every attempt was unavailing; he shot through their fingers as though they had been greased, and a loud and contumelious laugh was the only reward of their exertions.

In the end, a shrewd conjecture went abroad that he was none other than some malicious imp of darkness let loose upon their frolics, to disquiet and perplex their commemoration of the Blessed Nativity. Yet was it an unusual occurrence upon Yule night, when these disturbers were supposed to be prevented from walking the earth, being confined for a space to their own kingdom. But the desperate character of their lord, who was thought to fear neither man nor devil, might in some sort account for this unwelcome intrusion.

The guests grew cautious. Whispers and unquiet looks went round, while the little devil would ever and anon frisk about, to the great detriment and dismay of his companions.

Their lord's presence was anxiously looked for. The ruddy glow of their mirth had become dim. Sir Ralph, they hoped, would either unmask this mischievous intruder, or eject him from the premises; he having the credit of being able to master aught in the shape of either mortal or immortal intelligences.

At length he came, clad in his usual suit of black velvet. A swarthy and ill-favoured wight he was, with a beard, as the story goes, that would have swept off the prickly gorse-bush in its progress. He was received with a great show of humility, and all made their best obeisance. But this deputy, representative, or vicegerent of "Old Hornie," he stood erect, among the obsequious guests, in a posture not at all either respectful or becoming.

"Now, knaves, to your sport. Ye be as doleful as a pack of pedlars with a full basket after the fair. I'll make ye play, and be merry too; or, e' lady, ye shall taste of the mittens. Dan, give these grim-faced varlets a twinge of the gloves there just to make 'em laugh."

His tyrannous and overbearing temper would even make them merry by compulsion. But the terrified hearers did not manifest that intense feeling of gratification which this threat was intended to produce. Each looked on the face of his neighbour, hoping to find there some indication of the felicity which his own had failed to exhibit.

The countenance of their chief grew more dark and portentous. Just as they were expecting the full burst of his fury, up trotted the merry imp, and irreverently crept behind Sir Ralph. Before their almost incredulous eyes did he lay hold on the tail of the knight's cloak, and twisting it round his arm, by a sudden jerk he brought this dignified personage backwards upon the floor. The oaken beams trembled at this unlooked-for invasion of their repose. Deep, deadly, and abominable curses, rang through the hall. Livid and ghastly by turns, the knight's features wore that ludicrous expression of rage and astonishment more easy to conceive than to portray. Volleys of oaths and inarticulate sounds burst out from his wrath, almost too big for utterance. When reinstated in that posture which is the distinctive characteristic of man, he did not attempt to administer his vindictive retribution by proxy. Laying hold on a tough cudgel, he gave it one ominous swing, describing an arc of sufficient magnitude to have laid an army prostrate. He then pursued the luckless emissary of the Evil One, roaring and foaming with this unusual exertion. There was now no lack of activity. A hawk among the chickens, or a fox in a farm-yard, were nothing to it. Sometimes was seen the doughty Sir Ralph driving the whole herd before him like a flock of sheep; but the original cause of the mischief generally contrived to mingle with the rabble rout, who in vain attempted to rid themselves of his company. The knight was not over-nice in the just administration of his discipline. Often, when he thought himself near enough for its accomplishment, he aimed a terrific blow, but shot wide of the mark, bringing down the innocent and unoffending victims, who strewed the floor like swaths behind the mower.

Whenever a lucky individual could disentangle himself from his comrades, he darted through the door, and in spite of the storm and pitchy darkness without, thought himself too happy in escaping with a few holes in his skin. Yet he of the horns and tail, by some chance or another, always passed unhurt; a hideous laugh accompanying the adroit contrivances by which he eluded the cudgel.

The hall was now but scantily supplied with guests; the runaways and wounded having diminished the numbers to some half-score. A parley was now sounded by the victorious and pursuing enemy.

“Hold, ye lubberly rascals! Ye scum—ye recrement—why do ye run?” said the knight, puffing with great vigour. “I say, why run ye!” brandishing his club. “Bring hither that limb of Satan, and ye shall depart every one to his home. Lay hold of him, I tell ye, and begone.”

But these terms of capitulation were by no means so easy to accept as the proposer imagined.

The first mover of the mischief had gotten himself perched on a projecting ledge by the gallery, from whence they were either unable or unwilling to dislodge him.

“How!” said the knight. “Ye are afraid, cowards, I trow. Now will I have at thee, for once. I’ll spoil thy capering!” This threat was followed by a blow aimed at the devoted representative from the infernal court; but it failed to dismount him, for he merely shrunk aside, and it was rendered harmless. Another and a more contumelious laugh announced this failure. Even the Black Knight grew alarmed. The being was surely invulnerable. He stayed a moment ere he repeated the attack, when, to his unspeakable horror and astonishment, there issued a thin squeaking voice from underneath the disguise.

“The heriot, Sir Ralph—the heriot! We’ll have a heriot at Easter!”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, the knight could not have been more terrified. He let the weapon fall. His hands dropped powerless at his side. His countenance was like the darkly rolling sea, strangely tossed by some invisible tempest. The cause of this sudden and unexpected termination of the assault we will now proceed briefly to unfold.

The morning of this day, being the eve of the Blessed Nativity, had been employed by the Black Knight in the laudable occupation of visiting a poor widow; who, though recently bereaved of her husband, had not rendered the customary heriot. Unfortunately, the only valuable she possessed was a cow, the produce of which formed the chief support of the family; four young children, and a boy of about fourteen, whose brains were generally supposed more or less oddly constructed than those of his neighbours, depended on this supply for their daily support. Cold, bitter cold, was the season, and it had set in with more than common severity. Day after day the payment was delayed. Every morning the widow and her son fondled the poor beast, as though it were the last; but another morning and evening succeeded. Supper could not supply the place of breakfast, nor breakfast contend against the wants of supper; and how could the already half-famished ones be sustained, when their only resource should be taken away?

“Go down upon your knees, Will, and thank God for another morning’s meal. It is the eve of our blessed Lord’s incarnation, and I think He will not leave us to perish in this world, who has made such a bountiful provision for our well-being in the next. The knight has not sent for the heriot, and I think that He alone who succours the widow and the fatherless can have inclined his heart to mercy.”

Scarcely were the thanksgivings finished, when they were alarmed by the rapid approach of their persecutor. The door flew open, and in thundering accents the Black Knight himself came to make his demand.

"I'll have thee to the dungeon, hag, for lack of service. How comes it to pass the heriot is not paid!"

The widow made no reply. Her heart was full.

"See to it," continued the pitiless churl; "for if thy quittance be not forthcoming, and that in haste, I'll turn thee and thy brats into the moor-dikes, where ye may live upon turf and ditch-water if it so please ye."

"Oh, ha' pity!" But the widow's prayer was vain. The Black Knight was never known to hearken either to pity or persuasion.

"Thy cow—thy cow! This night let it be rendered. Sir Ralph Assheton never uttered a threat that fell to the ground."

"Mother," said the boy, "is this Sir Ralph, our liege lord?"

"Ay, fool," angrily replied the knight. "And what may thy wits gather by the asking?"

"And will *he* ever die, mother?"

"Hush, Willy," said the terrified woman.

"Nay," returned the leering half-wit, "I was but a-thinking, that if he does, may be *his* master too will want a heriot."

"And what may be the name of my master?" said Sir Ralph, with a furious oath.

"The devil," replied the boy, with apparent unconcern.

"Ay,—and what will they give him, dost think?"

"*Thee!*"

Whether the peculiar expression of the lad's face, or the fearless indifference of his address, so unusual to that of the crouching slaves he generally met with, contributed to the result, we know not; but, instead of correcting the boy for his audacity, he hastily departed, finally repeating his threat of punishment in case of disobedience.

When Sir Ralph got home, his ill-humour vented itself with more severity than usual. On joining the sports, he was at the first somewhat startled, on perceiving a representation of the personage which the morning's conversation had by no means prepared him to recognise either with admiration or respect. Still, as it was nothing out of the common usage, he took no apparent notice, farther than by remarking the general gloom that prevailed, contrary to the usual course of these festivities. Then came the unlooked-for aggression upon his person, provoking his already irritated feelings into vehement action. But, when the last unfortunate blow had failed in its purpose, appearing to the furious knight to have been warded off by a charm, a sudden misgiving came across him, which, with the speech of this supposed imp of darkness, so strangely alluding to his adventure with the boy, wrought powerfully upon his now excited imagination, so that he stood aghast, unable to grapple with its terrors. He hastily departed from the hall, leaving the enemy in undisputed possession of the field.

What occurred subsequently we are not told, save that on the following morning the widow's heriot was sent back, with an ungracious message from the knight, showing his unwillingness to restore what terror only had wrung from him.

The person who adventured this dangerous personification of the Evil One was never known. Whether some bold and benevolent individual, interposing on behalf of the fatherless and famishing little ones, or some being of a less substantial nature,—whether one of those immortal intelligences of a middle order between earth and heaven, who at that time were

supposed to take pleasure in tormenting the vicious and unworthy,—is more than our limited capacities can disclose.

It is said that on Easter Monday following the Black Knight died; and though probably it had no connection with the circumstances we have related, yet was his decease a sufficiently strange event in the mysterious chapter of coincidences to warrant this memorial.

VII. Fair Ellen Of Radcliffe

In Percy's Relics, this ballad is called "The Lady Isabella's Tragedy," and is thus introduced:—

"This ballad is given from an old black-letter copy in the Pepys Collection, collated with another in the British Museum, H. 263, folio. It is there entitled, 'The Lady Isabella's Tragedy, or the Step-Mother's Cruelty; being a relation of a lamentable and cruel murder, committed on the body of the Lady Isabella, the only daughter to a noble Duke, etc. To the tune of "The Lady's Fall."' To some copies are annexed eight more modern stanzas, entitled, 'The Duchess' and Cook's Lamentation.'"

Dr Whitaker says, "The remains of Radcliffe Tower prove it to have been a manor-house of the first rank. It has been quadrangular; but two sides only remain." A licence to kernel and embattle shows the date of its erection, or rather rebuilding, to be in the fourth year of Henry IV., by James Radcliffe, who, we find by the pedigree, was the eldest son of William Radcliffe. He married Joan, daughter to Sir John Tempest of Bracewell, in the county of York.

"The noble old hall is forty-three feet two inches in length, and in one part twenty-six feet, in another twenty-eight feet in width. The two massy principals which support the roof are the most curious specimens of ancient wood-work I have ever seen. The broadest piece of timber is two feet seven inches by ten inches. A wall-plate on the outside of one beam, from end to end, measures two feet by ten inches. The walls are finished at the square with a moulded cornice of oak.

"At the bottom of the room is a door opening into one of the towers, the lower part of which only remains, of massy grout-work, and with three arches, each furnished with a funnel or aperture like a chimney. On the left side of the hall are the remains of a very curious window-frame of oak, wrought in Gothic tracery, but square at top. Near the top of the hall, on the right, are the remains of a doorway, opening into what was once a staircase, and leading to a large chamber above the kitchen, the approach to which was by a door of massy oak, pointed at the top.

"Over the high tables of ancient halls (as is the case in some college halls at present) it was common to have a small aperture, through which the lord or master could inspect, unseen, what was going on below. But in this situation at Radcliffe is a ramified window of oaken work, opening from the apartment above mentioned, but now closed up."

This consists of eight arches, with trefoil-pointed tops, four and four, with two narrower apertures above.

"To this place and family are attached the tradition and ballad given by Dr Percy, under the name of Isabella, but here applied to a Lord Thomas and faire Ellenor, father and daughter, whose figures are supposed to be graven on a slab in the church, which the common people, concluding, I suppose, from its whiteness, that it was meant as an emblem of the innocence it is said to cover, have mutilated by breaking off small fragments, as amulets for the prevention or cure of disorders. Traditions, always erroneous in their circumstances, are yet rarely devoid of foundation; and though the pedigrees of Radcliffe exhibit no failure of the family by the premature death of an heiress; though the last Richard de Radcliffe, who had daughters only, certainly did not make 'a scullion-boy the heir of all his land,' when he settled it on Radcliffe Baron Fitzwalter; though the blood actually pointed out on the kitchen

floor, where this Thyestsean banquet is said to have been prepared, deserves no more regard than many other stories and appearances of the same kind; yet we are not to discard as incredible the tradition of a barbarous age, merely because it asserts the sacrifice of a young and beautiful heiress to the jealousy or the avarice of a stepmother. When this is granted, the story of the pie with all its horrors may safely be ascribed to the inventive genius of a minstrel. On the whole, Radcliffe is a place which, not only from its antiquity and splendour, but from the great families which have branched out from it, and the romantic tradition attached to it, can scarcely be surveyed without enthusiasm, or quitted without regret.”

There is a story of its being haunted by a black dog; but as this apparition has never been seen by two persons in company, it may safely be ascribed to the genius of fear, quite as creative a power as any other faculty of the imagination.

We have thought it best to give the ballad entire, without any embellishments of our own. Though not in the best style of these metrical romances, it is still of sufficient interest, from its connection, to claim a place in the “Traditions” of the county.

There was a lord of worthy fame,
 And a hunting he would ride,
 Attended by a noble traine
 Of gentry by his side.
 And while he did in chase remaine,
 To see both sport and playe,
 His ladye went, as she did feigne,
 Unto the church to praye.
 This lord he had a daughter deare,
 Whose beauty shone so bright,
 She was beloved both far and neare
 Of many a lord and knight.
 Fair Ellen was this damsel call'd,
 A creature faire was she;
 She was her father's only joye,
 As you shall after see.
 Therefore her cruel stepmother
 Did envye her so much,
 That daye by daye she sought her life,
 Her malice it was such.
 She bargain'd with the master-cook,
 To take her life awaye;
 And, taking of her daughter's book,
 She thus to her did saye:—
 Go home, sweet daughter, I thee praye,
 Go hasten presentlie;
 And tell unto the master-cook
 These wordes that I tell thee:
 And bid him dresse to dinner straight
 That fair and milk-white doe,
 That in the parke doth shine so bright
 There's none so faire to showe.
 This ladye, fearing of no harme,
 Obey'd her mother's will;
 And presently she hasted home,

Her pleasure to fulfil.
 She streight into the kitchen went,
 Her message for to tell;
 And there she spied the master-cook,
 Who did with malice swell.
 Nowe, master-cook, it must be soe,
 Do that which I thee tell:
 You needes must dresse the milk-white doe
 Which you do knowe full well.
 Then streight his cruell bloodye hands
 He on the ladye layd,
 Who quivering and shaking stands,
 While thus to her he sayd:—
 Thou art the doe that I must dresse,
 See here, behold my knife;
 For it is pointed, presently
 To ridd thee of thy life.
 Oh then, cried out the scullion-boye,
 As loud as loud might bee,
 Oh save her life, good master-cook,
 And make your pyes of mee!
 For pitye's sake, do not destroye
 My ladye with your knife;
 You know shee is her father's joye,
 For Christe's sake, save her life.
 I will not save her life, he sayd,
 Nor make my pyes of thee;
 Yet, if thou dost this deed bewraye,
 Thy butcher I will bee.
 Now when this lord he did come home
 For to'sit downe and eat,
 He called for his daughter deare
 To come and carve his meat.
 Now sit you downe, his ladye say'd,
 Oh sit you down to meat;
 Into some nunnery she is gone,
 Your daughter deare forget.
 Then solemnllye he made a vowe
 Before the companie,
 That he would neither eat nor drinke
 Until he did her see.
 Oh then bespake the scullion-boye,
 With a loud voice so hye—If
 now you will your daughter see,
 My lord, cut up that pye:
 Wherein her flesh is minced small,
 And parched with the fire;
 All caused by her stepmother,
 Who did her death desire.
 And cursed bee the master-cook,

Oh cursed may he bee!
I proffer'd him my own heart's blood,
From death to set her free.
Then all in blacke this lord did mourne,
And, for his daughter's sake,
He judged her cruell stepmother
To be burnt at a stake.
Likewise he judged the master-cook
In boiling lead to stand;
And made the simple scullion-boye
The heire of all his land.

VIII. The Abbot Of Whalley

“Earl Percy there his ancyent spread,
The half moone shining all soe faire;
The Norton’s ancyent had the crosse,
And the five wounds our Lord did beare.”

—*The Rising in the North.*

The Cistercian Abbey of Whalley was founded by Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, who, having given the advowson of the parish to the abbey of Stanlaw in Cheshire, the monks procured an appropriation, and removed hither in 1296, increasing their number to sixty. The parish church is nearly coeval with the introduction of Christianity into the north of England. This foundation now became the nucleus of a flourishing establishment, “continuing,” as Dr Whitaker informs us, “for two centuries and a half, to exercise unbounded charity and hospitality; to adorn the site thus chosen with a succession of magnificent buildings; to protect the tenants of its ample domains in the enjoyment of independence and plenty; to educate and provide for their children; to employ, clothe, feed, and pay many labourers, herdsmen, and shepherds; to exercise the arts and cultivate the learning of the times; yet unfortunately at the expense of the secular incumbents, whose endowments they had swallowed up, and whose functions they had degraded into those of pensionary vicars or mendicant chaplains.”

The ruins of Whalley Abbey are situated in a beautifully-sequestered spot on the banks of the Calder, presenting some of the most extensive and picturesque remains of antiquity in the county; and the site sufficiently exemplifies that peculiar instinct, if it may be so called, which guided the monks in their choice of situations. “Though the Cistercians affected to plant themselves in the solitude of woods, which were to be gradually essarted by the labour of their own hands, and though they obtained an exemption from the payment of tithes on that specific plea, yet they were excellent judges of the quality of land, however concealed, and never set about their laborious task without the assurance of an ample recompense.”

The following minute account of these ruins is from the pen of the historian of Whalley:—“A copious stream to the south, a moderate expanse of rich meadow and pasture around, and an amphitheatre of sheltering hills, clad in the verdant covering of their native woods, beyond; these were features in the face of Nature which the earlier Cistercians courted with instinctive fondness. Where these combined, it does not appear that they ever abandoned a situation which they had once chosen; and where these were wanting, it is certain they never long or willingly remained.”

“We now proceed to a particular survey of the remains of Whalley Abbey as they exist at present. First, then, the whole area of the close, containing thirty-six acres, three roods, fourteen poles, is still defined by the remains of a broad and deep trench, which surrounded it; over this were two approaches to the house, through two strong and stately gateways yet remaining. They are constructed in that plain and substantial style which characterised the Cistercian houses; a style which approximates to that of fortification, and shows that the monks did not obtain a licence to kernel and embattle without an end in view. Within this area, and on the verge of the Calder, which formed the south-west boundary of the close, was the house itself, consisting of three quadrangles, besides stables and offices. The first and most westerly of these was the cloister-court, of which the nave of the conventual church formed the north side; the chapter-house and vestry, yet remaining, the east; the dormitory,

also remaining, the west; and the refectory and kitchens the south. The cloister was of wood, supported, as usual, upon corbels, still remaining: the area within was the monks' cemetery, and some of the ancient gravestones here are still remembered. Against the wall, on the south side of this quadrangle, is a wide surbased arch, apparently of Henry the Seventh's time, which has evidently contained the lavatory. The groove of the lead pipe which conveyed the water is still conspicuous, as is also another for the reception of a wooden rail, on which the towels hung. Beyond this court, to the east, is another quadrangle area, formed by the choir of the church, on one side, the opposite side of the chapter-house, &c., on another, a line of ruinous buildings on the third, and a large distinct building, itself surrounding a small quadrangle, on the fourth. This appears evidently to have been the abbot's lodgings; for which reason, as being best adapted to the habits of an ordinary family, it immediately became the residence of the Asshetons, and after many alterations, and a demolition of its best apartments, particularly a gallery nearly one hundred and fifty feet in length, has still several good and habitable rooms, and is now preserved with due care by its owner. The ancient kitchen, the *coquina abbatis* of the *compotus*, whence such hecatombs were served up, remains, though roofless, with two huge fire-places. On the southern side of this building is a small but very picturesque and beautiful rain mantled with ivy, which appears to have been a chapel, and was probably the abbot's private oratory. But the conventual church itself, which exceeded many cathedrals in extent, has been levelled nearly to the foundation. This work of havoc was probably an effect of that general panic which seized the lay-owners of abbeys, on the attempt made by Queen Mary to restore the monks to their cloisters.—'For now,' says Fuller, 'the edifices of abbeys, which were still entire, looked lovingly again on their ancient owners; in prevention whereof, such as possessed them for the present plucked out their eyes by levelling them to the ground and shaving from them, as much as they could, all abbey characters.'

"However, in the month of August 1798, permission having been obtained from the guardian of the present owner to investigate the foundation by digging, a very successful attempt was made to retrieve the whole ichnography of the church, of which there were no remains above the surface to assist conjecture, or to guide research, but one jamb of the west window against the wall of the dormitory, a small portion of the south wall of the nave, a fragment of the south transept, and another jamb of one of the side chapels eastward from the last. An inequality in the ground, eastward from the transept, in an adjoining orchard, showed the half-pace into the choir, of which the outline to the north and east was also defined in the same manner. Upon these slender data we proceeded, first, to investigate the foundations of the columns towards the west end; and having ascertained the distance of one from the south wall, the width of the south aisle, and consequently of the north, followed of course; another digging immediately to the north ascertained the width of the middle aisle, and a third, from east to west, gave one intercolumnation; the length of the nave being already given by the remains of the transept, the number of columns was now proved. A right line drawn along the remnant of the south wall, and continued to the intersection of the nave and transept, proved the length of the latter on the south side, and, consequently, also on the north. The choir evidently appeared to have consisted of a presbytery, with two side aisles, and four other chapels; two to the north, and as many to the south.

"The site of the choir being determined, it remained to investigate its contents beneath the surface: accordingly, under the high altar, nothing appeared but a bed of undisturbed and native sand; but beneath the second half-pace, immediately leading up to it, were turned up many broken remains of a painted pavement, consisting of small glazed floor-tiles, adorned with various devices, and of different forms and dimensions. At the foot of the stalls, a

narrow rectilinear filleting of the same material had bounded the whole. On some was inscribed the word MARIE, in Longobardic characters.

“This pavement had been deeply bedded in mortar, but was altogether displaced, and turned down from one to three feet beneath the surface, where several skeletons were found very entire, and in their original position, but without any remains of coffins, vestments, or other ornaments, as appeared upon a most minute investigation. These, however, were, beyond a doubt, the Abbots of Whalley. From the confused state of the original pavement, the whole floor of the presbytery, from the foot of the stalls, appeared to have been successively covered with grave-stones, all of which, however, had been removed, excepting fragments of two: one of these had a groove, once inlaid with a filleting of brass, and the other, beneath which lay the skeleton of a tall and robust man, had deeply cut upon it the stump of a tree regulated. This I conjecture to have been a thorn, intended as a rebus upon the name of Christopher Thornber, the fifteenth abbot, who died in 1486. In this search we narrowly missed the fragments of the grave-stone of Abbot Lindley, which were casually turned up on this very spot, A.D. 1813. On one, in the Longobardic character of Edward the Third’s time, were the letters IOP, and on the other AJ PVIV.

“From these data, slender as they may seem, I arrive at my conclusion, thus:—First, None but abbots were interred in the high choir; secondly, The characters cannot be later than the latter end of Edward the Third, when the old English black letter was substituted in its place. From the foundation to this time three Johns had been Abbots of Whalley; Belfield, Topcliffe, and Lindley. The termination of the surname must have immediately preceded the word *hujus*, but the letters AJ can only have formed the termination of Lindelai, the old orthography of the word.

“The remains of the Lacies, wherever deposited, after their removal from Stanlaw, had undoubtedly been preserved with religious reverence, and enclosed in magnificent tombs. But in these researches there were no appearances which justified even a conjecture that we had discovered them.”¹²

John Paslew, the last Abbot of Whalley, appears, by a reference to his arms, to have been of the Paslews of Wiswall. The first twenty years after his election were passed, like those of his predecessors, in the duties of his choir, in the exercise of hospitality, in attention to the extensive possessions of his house, or in the improvement of his buildings; but a storm was approaching, before which either his conscience or his bigotry prevented him from bending, and which precipitated his ruin and that of the abbey. The religious houses in general were now greatly relaxed in discipline, and many of them dreadfully corrupted in morals. What was the state of Whalley must now be left to conjecture, though charity should incline us to think no evil to those against whom no specific evidence appears. The Pilgrimage of Grace was now commenced, and Paslew seems to have been pushed into the foremost ranks of the rebellion; when this expedition ended in the discomfiture and disgrace of its promoters, every art of submission and corruption was vainly employed to ward off the blow. Paslew was arraigned for high treason, tried, and condemned, and is supposed to have been interred in the north aisle of the parish church, under a stone yet remaining; the ignominious part of his sentence being remitted, out of respect to his order.

“The attainder of an abbot was understood, however rightly, by the crown lawyers of that time, to infer a forfeiture of the house; and accordingly, without the form of a surrender, the abbey of Whalley, with all its appurtenances, was instantly seized into the king’s hands; and thus fell this ancient foundation.

¹² Whitaker’s Hist. Whalley.

“Fr. Thomas Holden, younger son of Gilbert Holden, of Holden, gent., was, in all probability, the last surviving monk. On the Dissolution he appears to have returned to his native place. In 1550 we meet with his name as Sir Thomas Holden, curate of Haslingden; and in 1574 he was licensed to the same cure at the metropolitical visitation of Archbishop Grindall, held at Preston, by the style of Thomas Holden, clerk, of sober life and competent learning. Strange as it may seem, we find the last surviving monk of Whalley a Protestant minister, thirty-seven years after its dissolution!”

It was in the dark month of November, when the brown leaves are fluttering on the ground, when the wind comes mournfully through the bare woods, and the hollow nooks and quiet caves respond with their mystic voice, that two travellers were seen loitering up the grand avenue that swept nobly through the western embattled gateway of Whalley Abbey. The foremost of them wore a low-crowned cap, simply decorated with a heron’s plume, and a doublet of mulberry-coloured velvet, puffed out capaciously at the shoulders. Trunk-hose of a goodly diameter, and wide-flapped boots, decorated the lower extremity of his person. On his left hand he bore a hooded falcon. The jesses were of crimson and yellow silk, its legs fancifully adorned with little bells fastened by rings of leather. These made a jingling and dissonant music as it flew, being generally tuned one semitone below another, that they might be the more sonorous considering their small size. The bearer wore a pair of stout leathern mittens, and he carried a long pole to aid him, as it might seem, in the chase. His manner bespoke him above the ordinary rank; and his garb, from the minute regulations then existing in regard to dress, showed at any rate his pretensions to nobility. This proud cavalier was followed by one servant only, who carried a capacious wallet, not over-well replenished with provision, as was apparent from its long lank shape and attenuated proportions. His master’s cloak was slung on the other shoulder; and his belt displayed some implements that appeared alike formidable as means of offence or defence.

Eventide was then drawing on, but it did not appear that the falcon had been loosed to the game; the usual tokens of success were wanting—the torn and bloody carcasses that marked an abundant sport. Two or three of the brethren were sitting on a bench in the gateway. In passing by, the foremost of the strangers hastily addressed his follower.

“Ralph Newcome, plague on thee! hast thou had a call again at the wallet? Thou guzzling tinder-throat, thy drouth is never slaked!”

Now Ralph, having felt sore oppressed with the weight of sundry leathern bottles, loaves, and wedges of cold meat, had taken especial care to lighten his back and load his stomach whenever the occasion was urgent. His endeavours had not been without success, for the wallet, as we have seen, hung from his shoulders, long, narrow, and unfurnished, save with the scraps and relics of many a savoury junket.

“Coming, master,” was the reply, sufficiently audible for his master’s ear; the remainder escaped in a sort of grumble, the dregs of his ill humour at the interruption.

The sportsman, if such he was, gained a ready admittance into the abbey enclosure. Passing round the north transept of the church, he made the best of his way to the abbot’s house, where Paslew dwelt in great state, keeping a separate establishment and a numerous train of domestics and officials.

Paslew was in some respects a man of parsimonious habits; and though his bounty might now be the better excused, yet in the more prosperous days of his dominion he had the character of a selfish and greedy priest, whose charity was less than that of his predecessor, and his personal expenses double.

Encouraged by the “Pilgrimage of Grace,” as it was then called, headed by one Aske, a gentleman of but mean pretensions, who yet possessed the art of making himself popular with the vulgar, Paslew, though apparently taking no open part in the rebellion, had with his monks repossessed their ancient seat, from which they had been driven by the decrees of Henry VIII.

The rebel army had their camp at Doncaster, where the Archbishop of York and the Lord D’Arcy openly espoused their cause, receiving in great state a herald from the king’s army, who came to negotiate with these dangerous malcontents. They had formed high notions of their own power and importance, and entertained sanguine hopes of success, especially since the Duke of Norfolk, a supporter of the ancient religion, was appointed to the command of the royal forces along with the Earl of Shrewsbury. The monks made themselves certain that the result would be a complete purification of heresy from the land, or at least that measures would be adopted for the purpose of forcing Henry to a restitution of their rights. So fully established were they in this opinion, that, as we have just seen, some of them took possession of their ancient inheritances without the tedious formality of awaiting a fresh grant from the king.

The rebel army, being allured by Norfolk with vain promises of satisfaction, were now dispersed, though with the understanding that another assemblage should take place at a given notice, for which purpose beacons were erected at convenient distances throughout the north. By these means their forces could again be mustered with the greatest security and despatch.

Within this interval our narrative begins. Paslew had received some communication from the leaders of the pilgrimage; but he seemed wishful to procrastinate, hoping, perhaps, he should be spared the necessity of any more direct treasonable demonstrations, by the timely submission of the king; yet his aid was of too much importance to be neglected.

The stranger, on his introduction, was received with some ostentation, and not a little ceremony. They were evidently unknown to each other; but the keen glance of the abbot instantly detected the signal for some secret message. Paslew was habited in the Cistercian gown, and scapulary of white cloth. His eye was dark, but restless; his lips, drawn in, were narrow and compressed, showing the curbed impetuosity of his spirit. Either as a churchman or a warrior, he seemed fitted for daring enterprise; yet was he of a wary and cautious bearing, a characteristic which his monkish education had in all probability thrown over his natural temperament. The attendants having departed, the stranger drew an unsealed letter from his bosom.’

“A written message, my lord abbot, from the Abbot of Kirkstall. ‘Tis now for your reverence’s private regard, afterwards at your discretion.” The abbot hastily glanced over this piece of quaint and formal latinity, occasionally darting a rapid and penetrating look at his visitor.

“He says not aught regarding so goodly a messenger,” said Paslew, carelessly.

“I should have marvelled if he had,” returned the other, with a contemptuous smile. “He knew not of so important a personage when that epistle was elaborated from his pen.”

“How?” said the abbot, his features gathering into a portentous scowl.

“Nay, I beseech your reverence’s grace, that you throw off all such disturbed apprehensions; for in troth a messenger of my bearing and capacity were worth a knight’s ransom in these evil days, when the monks may not abroad with safety.”

“Speak out. Remember I have yet the power to punish both insolence and treachery.”

The abbot's lip curled upwards, pale and quivering with rage, not unmixed with apprehension.

"Grammercy," said the stranger, with a provokingly careless expression of cool and contemptuous defiance—"I cry you none—I am at present nameless. To work, to work, lord abbot. Thou hast holden back too long; and there is a shrewd suspicion abroad of thine integrity in the good cause. Hold!" said he, rising, as the reverend prelate was on the point of summoning his attendants; "I am not thy prisoner! Impotent, I would crook my finger thus, and thou shouldest crouch at my bidding. Nay, these be evil days, I say again; and more strange things may come to pass than bearding a lordly abbot in his den!"

Great was the astonishment of Paslew. The stranger stood proudly erect; his arms were folded, and a withering glance shot from beneath his brows. Even John Paslew, unused to a sense of inferiority before his fellow-men, felt cowed before him. For the first time, in all likelihood, he knew not how or what to answer. The stranger interrupted this painful silence.

"Since the monks are forbidden to be out a-gadding, the cowl and scapulary might have found some hindrance over the moors from Kirkstall. With my hawk and bearing-pole, I can follow on to the sport without let or question." The latter part of this speech seemed to throw some light on the purpose for which this messenger had been selected. Paslew was preparing for a further inquiry, when he was again interrupted.

"I tell thee, a courier of my condition may go free, though nameless. But to business—Norfolk is tampering with our credulity. He thinks to gain our time to his advantage: but the work must again be urged forward. Yet lack we thy aid. May we depend on its being faithfully rendered? We must have no lukewarm allies in the rear of our camp."

The stranger drew from beneath his inner vest a crucifix, with the representation of a chalice and of the five wounds of Christ.

Paslew kissed the token, and his suspicions were at rest. But still, there was a dubiety and hesitation in his manner displeasing to the stranger. He would bind himself to no distinct pledge respecting the time of his appearance at the rebel camp; and altogether seemed to display either cowardice or a want of cordiality. His guest refusing to stay the night, on a pretext of urgent business farther north, departed soon after the termination of their interview.

The night was fast closing when the strangers left the abbey. One by one the pale stars seemed to start out, as if just lighted up in the blue vault. The dark woods threw their giant arms around the sacred domain, as though to guard it against unhallowed intrusion. The travellers had gained the steep ascent towards the south-east, from whence the river, winding down the narrow valley, seemed as if here and there a spark was floating on its quiet surface—the lights, gliding on the opposite brink, fell distinct and unbroken upon the stream. The soft voice of the current grew strangely audible, in contrast with the deep silence; the wind rolling it round to the ear at intervals startling and abrupt.

Preceded by a guide, they had taken the rough mountain road, leading from the abbey into the forest of Pendle, the stranger and his servant still walking, or rather climbing, for their journey could only be accomplished on foot. Having proceeded about two miles on this rugged path, they diverged to the left, where the only indication to assist their guide was the turf-cutters' track and a few heaps of stones, scarcely distinguishable from the common mass, but by an eye accustomed to these land-marks. Carefully were they sought for at times, the blazing torch carried by their leader being often requisite for the search.

They now descended by a narrow and steep ravine, the termination of which brought them to a small brook. This they crossed, and again commenced a sharp and troublesome ascent. The

mighty Pendle rose up before them, huge and dark, engrossing half the hemisphere. To this point, it seemed, their path was directed. The guide now trimmed his torch, the smoke from which had for some time been rather an accompaniment than an assistance to their toil, as it caused them to loiter at an inconvenient distance, thereby enhancing the difficulties they had to encounter. Slow and toilsome was their progress, yet a patient continuance in any path will sooner or later lead to the end. The brow of the hill seemed rapidly diminishing; the abrupt steep was at length gained, when the whole glorious garniture of the heavens, uninterrupted, from that majestic height, was suddenly revealed. True, it was a November night, but unusually clear and vivid; the stars seemed to burn rather than shine, so piercing was their effulgence. The vast track of the milky way appeared to span the dark and level platform, like the bow of some triumphal arch. They seemed to stand on a huge circle, black, bare,—its verge unapproachable, contrasting deeply with the encompassing splendour. Proceeding onwards, a dark speck was visible, springing out abruptly from the verge of the horizon. Its bulk rapidly increased, their path evidently tending in that direction. A shrill whistle from the guide was now answered by a corresponding signal. Presently they were challenged by a sentinel.

“*Vale*” growled out the rough voice of their conductor.

“Is it thou, Will?” said the guard. “And what neck art thou fitting for the noose; breeding occupation for the hangman, I trow.”

“Not half so ripe as thine own, gossip. Here be two gentles that have commission, I guess, to look at the beacons, to see they are in trim and properly watched. ‘Tis well the guard is set. Holloa, Nicholas Dewhurst, bring the flagon. I am wheezing like an old wife’s bellows, nigh disinherited of my birthright, the free quaffing o’ the air. I shall die and be canonised.”

Will, in his eagerness to attain this glorious end, left his companions with the sentinel, who speedily conducted them into a rude hut, erected as a temporary shelter to those on the look-out for signals. In this narrow shed a lamp was burning. Two of the abbot’s servants, stretched before a smouldering heap of turf, were scarcely roused by the vociferations of Will, as he strode over them in his way to the provender. A long pull, and a loud smack, announced the satisfactory relish that ensued.

“Hoa, ye lozel knaves!—who sleeps when Will’s awake?” This reflection was accompanied by a smart blow on that part of the recumbent’s person where it was most conveniently administered.

“Begone, sot!” was the abrupt reply, not over-abundantly expressive of good humour at this disturbance. Will looked again towards the flagon; but great was his dismay on beholding it in the very act of disemboguing its precious contents into another gulf as insatiable as his own. Ralph Newcome, incited thereto by his own discrimination, together with the resistless relish of their guide, as soon as the latter had partially concluded, took up the subject, and long, powerful, and undeviating were the requisitions that he made.

“Plague on thy civility!—A fly will drink from anybody’s cup, and so will a Yorkshireman,” growled the uncourteous churl.

Ralph had, however, braced himself tightly to the task, and stood with an air of dogged defiance, stoutly confronting his accuser,—though, being a man of few words, the principal weight of the argument rested upon Will, whose eloquence was with difficulty interrupted on any subject.

“Peace,” said one of the sleepers, raising himself half-way,—“I think we be like to bide here till our bones rot. There’s nought but the same dun sky,—black, black, and unchanging. I should like to see a stiff blaze from some quarter. Our bundle, here, would soon be in a low.”

“Hark!” said the other, “‘tis something creaking amongst the faggots.”

The sentinel rushed out, but the beacon was undisturbed.

“St Mary protect us!—’Tis the same noise I heard last night, and about the same hour.”

The stranger here entered the hut. Enveloped in a huge cloak, he sate silent, and apparently inattentive; but the conversation was now abrupt, and broken down into short and interrupted whispers.

“I wish old Hal and his wives were here, with all my heart,” said one: “we’d have a rare bonfire. How his fat paunch would swell! But for him and his unlucky women, we had been snug in the chimney-corner, snoring out psalmody, or helping old Barn’by off with the tit-bits in the kitchen.”

“Hush!” said his neighbour: “there be the faggots talking again. I think they are bewitched.—Dan, look to them.”

“Nay,” said Dan, “they may bide awhile for me.”

The words were scarcely uttered when the building seemed in a blaze. Crash upon crash followed. The inmates, stupified with terror, were well nigh suffocated ere their astonishment left them the power to escape. In the full conviction that the foul fiend had taken him at his word, Dan was dragged from the hut, wan, speechless, and gasping with affright. Nothing less, too, than a visit from his Satanic majesty in person was expected by the terrified rustics.

On gaining the outside, the whole burning mass was before them, one vast pyramid of flame. Flakes of blazing matter were hurled into the sky, with short and rapid explosions. The roar of the wind through the glowing furnace was awful and appalling. Huge and ignited fragments were borne away with frightful rapidity. They rode on the rolling volumes of smoke like fire-fiends armed with destruction; but the vast reservoir of flame still glowed on, apparently undiminished. The curtain of night seemed to be suddenly undrawn. Objects the most minute were visible as in the broad view of day. The brown heath, the grey and the mossy stone, were each distinguishable, but clad alike in one bright and unvarying colour, red as the roaring furnace. Soon the great magazine of inflammable matter in the interior caught fire, and rolled out in a wide mass of light, like the first burst of a volcano.

The stranger stood with apparent unconcern, his back to the flames, looking from the brink of the mountain northward, as if on the watch for corresponding signals. Soon a bright star hung on the heights above Sawley. Increasing in splendour, another broke out on the verge of the horizon, marking the site of the camp near Romald’s Moor.

Turning towards the south-west, and looking to the right, beyond the chain of successive heights that form the vale of Todmorden, he beheld a dim spark in the distance, from the summit of Hades Hill, scarcely penetrating the mist which hung like a dense cloud in that direction; this place and Thieveley Pike forming the connecting-links between Pendle Hill and Buckton Castle.

The terrified attendants knew too well the results which would follow this unaccountable and irreparable mistake. The whole country would be in commotion. Hordes of zealous and fanatic idlers and malcontents would repair to the appointed rendezvous, and this premature, and perhaps fatal movement, would be attributed to their carelessness. Paslew, not over-nice

in discriminating their several deserts, would doubtless subject them to immediate and condign punishment.

These were thoughts common to each, unquestionable and conclusive; but what answer to give, or what excuse to make, was far from being decided upon with the same degree of certainty.

“We shall be hanged without mercy,” was the dread sum of these uncomfortable reflections.

“I know not what you may be,” said Will; “but I intend to run for it. I’ve an old dame would make a sore disturbance at my death, more especially if dangling from the gallows-tree, which of all the trees in the wood hath been my aversion ever since I saw Long Tom of the Nab make so uncomfortable a shriving from thence.”

“Run, then,” said Nicholas, rather stoutly, and in a tone of more confidence than heretofore. “I’ll stay my ground this bout; and, further, I do propose to commit yon knaves into the holy keeping of our four-cornered crib, where they may be indulged in recreations of another sort than setting the whole country by the ears. ‘Twill save our necks to slip theirs into the noose.”

This happy suggestion, the whole of these honest and conscientious servants of the church were prepared to obey. They might with safety accuse the strangers; indeed, it was more than probable they had hit out the right source of the mischief; so, marching up boldly to the execution of this Christian purpose, they were proceeding to lay hands on the foremost of the culprits. At this critical moment he turned suddenly round. Perhaps from a prior suspicion of their intentions, or from the knavish cast of their countenances, he saw that hostilities were in contemplation: at any rate, he seemed to be prepared for the event. Will, being the mouthpiece of the party, and accustomed, moreover, at times to a precise and methodical manner of delivery, was the chief speaker.

“Sir, we arrest you for high treason. You are charged with firing off beacons without our privy or consent, thereby endangering the safety of the lord abbot, and the peaceable governing of this realm.” He paused, quaking even at his own eloquence; but the stranger made no reply, till, throwing aside his cloak, he drew out a hagbut or demi-hague as it was sometimes called, being a sort of small harquebuss, with its match ready kindled.

“Tell the Abbot of Whalley that neither ye nor the whole horde of drones and drivellers about his hive, shall take me against my own liberty and consent. Hold back! Your first step, is your last, save to your grave! I will see the abbot shortly, but not by your grace or assistance.” Saying this, he bounded down the steep like the roused deer, in its first pride of flight, scorning the chase. The light flashing from his weapons marked his form rapidly receding from their grasp.

But Ralph, who, as we may suppose, was minded to imitate the evolutions of his master, being it seemed of a more heavy and considerate demeanour, paused for a space ere he leapt.

This deliberation was fatal to his enterprise. The enemy, recovering from their confusion, seized him in default of his master, and without further ado bore him away as a visible acquittance of themselves to the abbot. There could be no great harm in throwing the blame of this unlucky affair on the companion of the escaped incendiary: besides, it would be an effective lesson to him on the danger of keeping bad company.

Through bog and brake, over moor and mountain, they hurried on with their prisoner, who, dooming them all to “cloodie” and his imps, and commending himself to Michael, Mary, and a number of his especial patrons in the Romish calendar, was urged forward with more than their usual speed.

The blaze had ceased to be visible when they came to the last descent towards the village. Far and wide the alarm had spread; consternation and inquiry were on every countenance. The guards were besieged with anxious faces, supplicating intelligence, and much impeded thereby in their progress to the abbey.

Outside the gates they found a dense crowd waiting for the news. The abbot and his brethren were in close council, expecting every moment the arrival of warders from the beacon.

They were hurried into the chapter-house, together with their prisoner, who had now taken to the sulks, refusing any reply to the numerous inquiries made by the servants who followed, eager for the final disclosure.

The room was lighted by a single lamp. Little of the interior was visible, save the grim and ascetic faces of the monks who sat nearest to the centre of illumination. Their features, in deep masses of alternate light and shadow, looked as if carved out, hard and immovable, from the oak wainscot. Occasionally, a dull roll of the eye relieved the oppressive stillness, and the gazer would look out from the mystic world he inhabited, through these loop-holes of sense, into the world of sympathies and affections, with which he had long ceased to hold communion.

Paslew was standing when they entered. His bushy grey eyebrows threw a strange and almost unnatural shade over the deep recesses beneath, across which, at times, like the foam swept over the dark billows of the spirit, a light and glowing track was visible, marking the powerful conflict within.

“Nicholas Dewhurst and Daniel Haydock.”

He shaded his eyes from the light, as he thus addressed the foremost of the party who had just entered.

“From what quarter was the signal first visible?”

“My lord,” said Dan, “we are but unworthy of your highness’ grace, did we not answer truly.”

“Quick!—Thou art slower to thine answers than thy words. Why tarriest thou?”

“If your highness will pardon”—

“What?” said Paslew, in a voice that made the culprits quake. “I pardon nothing. What means this silence?”

“Please your reverence,” said Will, now advancing from the rear, his rhetorical flourishes somewhat curtailed, and his confidence thereby wonderfully abated, “the first signal was our own, lighted by an incendiary, to wit, and here we bring him to your highness’ reverence for judgment. We ordered the rope and the broad beam to be ready by daybreak.”

It were idle to paint the astonishment and dismay which this short narrative produced. Paslew immediately saw the dangers by which he was involved. He was, by this desperate and unfortunate act, at once committed to the measures from which he had hitherto kept aloof, and he must now stand foremost in the cause, or tamely submit to the infuriate vengeance which this overt act of rebellion would inevitably hasten. He had hoped that, sheltered in this quiet nook, he should escape without being made a party in the contest, and rest secure until hotter heads and lighter brains had fought the battles that would leave him in possession of the spoil. If the king’s party were triumphant, he fancied that, by seeming to take little or no part in the hostilities then abroad, his house might be spared in the general wreck that would ensue; but all these schemes of deep-laid policy and ambition were in a moment dissipated.

No time was to be lost. The whole country would instantly be in array, and the beacon-light of Pendle proclaim Paslew as the source and instigator of this second rebellion. It would be in vain to stay the rising. Some enemy of his house, or some desperate adventurer, wishful to further his own schemes at another's expense, was doubtless the author of this mischief. The whole was but the discovery of a moment. Almost before the dark thought was visible on the brow he cried out—

“Bring forward the traitor!”

But Ralph, on the first hearing of this accusation, strode forward, even to the table, where sat the awful conclave astonished at his temerity. He stood calmly erect, surveying his judges with a countenance scarcely moved from its usually hard and stolid expression.

“If it be true,” cried he, “as these idlers do aver, I am here to answer. If it be false, they must look to it.”

The abbot frowned at this presumptuous speech.

“Who art thou?”

“Marry, an ass ridden by fools.”

“Knave, see thou be discreet and respectful in thine answers. There be whipping-posts for knaves, and stocks for the correction of fools.”

“Why, if it be for the matter of my name, I trow, ‘tis of an honest Christian-like and well-conditioned flavour; comes out of the mouth sharp as a beer-spigot. Men call me Ralph.”

“And from whence?” said the abbot, impatiently.

“These knaves of thy breeding can tell best. ‘Tis a road I never before travelled; and, by your grace’s favour, I do not mean to jog on it again.”

“He is servant to the stranger yeoman whom your worship entertained a few hours back, on some private errand,” said one of the auditors.

A sharp guess at the truth raised a slight quiver on the abbot’s lip. The conversation of the stranger, the anxiety he displayed, with that of his brother of Kirkstall, seemed to point out the source and cause of his disaster.

“Now, varlet, answer truly, or thou diest,” said Paslew, with a significant shake of the finger. “At whose instigation hast thou committed this foul treason against our house, and the good prospering of this realm?”

“The deed was not mine.”

“Believe him not, my lord,—we are upon our testimony,” said the accusers.

Ralph, turning aside, met them face to face. He commenced a short but shrewd examination, as follows:—

“You were a-watching, I suppose?” said he, carelessly.

“Ay, were we,” sharply replied three or four ready tongues.

“Then, how could I fire the beacon without your leave?” A short pause evinced their dislike to this question; but Will, more ready than discreet, soon summoned assurance to meet the inquiry, thus—

“My lord, we had just taken them into the hut, thinking to show them a courtesy; but that knave’s throat holds more liquor than his mother’s kneading-trough, or”—

“If in the hut, how could I set the beacon in a low?”

“But thou hadst a companion,” hastily shouted Nicholas, finding their first position untenable.

“And how comes it to pass that ye be taking or guiding thither any person, and more particularly wayfarers, whom we know not? How comes it, I say, that ye suffer this without my permission?” said the abbot, sternly.

“Will was their guide; and we cared not to refuse your reverence’s messenger.”

“My messenger!” returned Paslew, with a glance that almost bent them to the ground.

“Please your highness,” said Will, falling on his knees, “the stranger was a-visiting of the beacons, so said he, to know if they were carefully watched. He came to me, as with an authority from your reverence, and I mounted them up to the guard-house, unwillingly enough. ‘Tis a sore pull for a pair of shanks like mine.”

The abbot now saw plainly into the machinations by which he had been betrayed, and reprimanding his men for their negligence, and so careless an observance of his commands, ordered them off severally to the stocks. Their lamentations were loud but unavailing, especially when they found that Ralph was simply dismissed, for a space, to solitary confinement.

Yet was Paslew still at a loss to determine whence this subtle device originated, unless from his brother of Kirkstall, and he resolved to question Ralph secretly. It was owing to this purpose probably that the usual summary process of executive justice was not more speedily administered.

A great marvel and gossip, as may readily be supposed, now arose throughout the whole country. Rumour, with her hundred tongues, flew fast, and her wide wings overspread the land. From all quarters, conformably to the signal, the levies marched with great rapidity to Doncaster, where they found Lord D’Arcy, who seemed to feel, or to feign, astonishment at this sudden rising without his orders. One and all proclaimed that the appointed signal was from the Abbot of Whalley, at whose war-inciting torch the whole line of beacons had been kindled. A messenger, however, was soon forwarded to the camp, from Paslew, with an explanation of the affair, while at the same time he demanded their aid for the discovery and punishment of the offenders. But D’Arcy and Aske were too well pleased to see Paslew’s crafty and selfish plans frustrated, whilst he was irretrievably committed to their cause. Tired of waiting the tardy result of negotiations with their sovereign, these ambitious spirits were glad to behold their army once more menacing the royalist position, hoping it would either quicken or terminate these dilatory proceedings. But the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Shrewsbury, at the news of this unexpected rising, were mightily amazed. Their plans were at once terminated. Their emissaries had failed to bring intelligence previously of the intended gathering. In the midst of their dilemma word was brought that the Abbot of Whalley had first lighted up the blaze of insurrection. Secretly resolving that this meddling priest should sorely rue his mischievous exploit, they again found themselves unwillingly obliged to enter into fresh stipulations with their adversaries, though determining on delay, if possible, in the hope of dividing their leaders, and of extinguishing the rebellion in detail.

But we would crave the reader’s return to the abbey, where Ralph was left in strict durance, and possibly in some danger from the vindictive purposes of the abbot.

Early on the following morning he was aroused from a deeptoned and laborious stertoration, by a figure that shook him as he lay, in a somewhat unceremonious fashion. The intruder was

wrapped in a thick cloak or tunic, and he stood gruffly erect by the straw couch, whereon the prisoner's night-dreams had nestled in their first existence.

"I marvel thou sleepest so soundly! Thou art the first knave, I trow, that hast welcomed these walls with so loud a clarion."

"And what should ail the well-earned slumbers of Ralph Newcome? His sleep may be as sound as some of those, mayhap, that have softer beds and gayer clothing."

"But the gallows, man!—Hast had no glimpse of the noose in thy night visions?"

"Peradventure the hemp is not sown that shall make my collar. When the hangman comes, 'tis time enough to wake; so, I pray thee, bereave not a poor man of the only solace the rich cannot purchase from him."

"Thou art a plain-spoken varlet, and I would but ask thy master's name and condition. Answer me straight—no equivocation, no shuffling or evasion shall serve thee; 'tis a stale device now, and will not avail."

"And who art thou, friend, that hast such a greedy appetite for men's names, thou canst not rest a-bed for the craving of thy stomach?"

"I am the abbot, and thou a prisoner in this good house. Fearful odds, methinks, for the strife."

"Now hark thee, most reverend abbot, my name thou knowest at a peradventure: but for the name of my master, as thou callest him, seeing it be a notable secret, thou mightest as well go ask his goshawk yonder, who, I guess, continues an unworthy prisoner as well as myself."

"I'll have the truth wrung from thy tongue. Thumbscrews and iron mittens will not be denied so easily."

"Humph!" said Ralph; "these be rare things for cracking the shell; but, for all that, I wot they'll not get at the kernel."

"What! defiest thou my power?—in my own custody too?" Paslew grew pale with anger; but the impolicy of this proceeding soon suggested itself to his wary, though at times impetuous, temper. Yet the stubborn disposition of his prisoner resisted alike his cajolements and his threats.

In vain were offers of reward multiplied; nor bribe nor entreaty could avail. Paslew then left him, threatening to extract by force what milder measures had failed to elicit. He had that morning despatched a messenger to the rebel chiefs at Doncaster with an explanation of the accident, likewise with an assurance of his good wishes to the cause; but still he delayed to go in person, or to send his quota of levies.

True, however, to his threats, if not to his promises, towards the close of the day he again visited the dungeon. He was accompanied by two grim attendants, whom he ordered to wait outside until their services should be required.

Ralph was striding lustily, and with evident impatience, over the damp floor; yet he scarcely seemed to notice the entrance of the abbot.

"How now!—Hast had aught, by way of special discovery, touching the name thou hadst forgotten this morning?"

"Yes, I have had a notable discovery therein," said Ralph, still holding on his pace diagonally, as heretofore.

“And may we graciously participate in the result? Doubtless ‘tis a comfortable and happy revelation,” said the abbot.

“‘Tis to beware of three most unlucky things, persons, or properties, I trow,—to wit, a parson’s maid, a prior’s sow, and an abbot’s dinner.”

“And what lack they in thy honest esteem?”

“A parson’s maid lacks honesty,—a prior’s sow a litter,—and an abbot’s dinner lacks me!”

“Or, rather, thou lackest it.”

“Why, troth, I am not over-nice in the disposition of vain words; nor should I be over-nice in the disposal of some light scraps from your reverence’s buttry.”

“Thou hast not dined?”

“Peradventure not at thy cost.”

“Perchance an empty stomach may be the more apt to yield. A full belly makes a stout heart.”

“I know not. But hasten, I beseech thee. Thy questions over, we may make merry together. Nothing less than a full flagon and a prime haunch will suffice.”

Ralph rubbed his hands at the bare idea of these prospective dainties.

“Wilt thou now disclose the name of thy master?”

“No,” said Ralph; “and now for dinner.”

“Prythee, in what haste?” returned Paslew, with a grin of cruel and malicious irony. “There be some slight preliminaries to adjust,—something to season thy haunch and whet thine appetite.” He stamped with his foot, and the two attendants entered, bearing instruments of uncouth and horrid appearance.

“Thou mayest spare my bones and thy gimcracks. With all thy screwing, thou canst not yet squeeze raindrops from the rock.”

“I cry thee favour. Thou hast dared the stroke,—thou hast courted the vengeance thou wouldest withstand, but thou shalt yield or break. Seize him.”

“Stand back, caitiffs!” said Ralph, with a look of deep and unutterable scorn. “But to thee!—words would fail to express my contempt, my derision, my defiance of thy puny power! Read, and skulk back to thy cell!”

He drew from his doublet a small roll of parchment, which Paslew, with unfeigned astonishment and vexation, recognised as a safe warranty from the Archbishop of York, wherein the bearer, under whatever manner or distinction he might choose to adopt, was charged with a secret mission from the leaders of the “*Pilgrimage*” touching the success and wellbeing of the Catholic faith, and the prosperity of the Holy Church. All abbots, priests, and others, being true sons of the Church, were called on to aid and comfort him in the due exercise of his mission, to furnish him with a safe passage, and to obey his bidding without let or question.

“Herein fail not at your peril!” said Ralph, eyeing the abbot with a glance of cool and deliberate scorn.

“Why was not this protection from his grace given to me before?” inquired Paslew, beseechingly.

“That thy deceit and double-dealing-might be the more manifest. Yesternight thou didst refuse thine aid until the beacon of insurrection should be kindled. When kindled, and upon thine own ground, too, still thou holdest back! But think not to escape!—Think not to watch in safety whilst others work. Whoever wins in this perilous game, thou wilt lose. Marked out for destruction, thine own policy will betray thee. Choose thee one party, and thou hast yet one chance of safety. But double-dealers, such as thou, do ever tumble into the trap baited by their own cunning.”

“Will his Grace of York expect my presence at the camp?”

“It is needful thou make thy peace either with him or with the king,” said Ralph: “yet am I bold to tell thee, that with Harry thine hope of reconciliation is past. The news, ere this, hath reached Norfolk’s ear, and the beacon-light of Pendle, the first blaze and signal of the insurrection, denounces the Abbot of Whalley as a ringleader, and as having first kindled the torch of rebellion.”

With a malicious smile, cruel as the triumph of the fiend at the torments of his victim, did this mysterious foe exhibit to him the toils that had been, during his unsuspecting security, wound about him.

“Thine only hope is from his grace; go with me, and thou mayest yet dwell in safety, and thine house be established.”

Paslew saw with dismay the dark gulf which yawned on either hand, and the net so craftily prepared to entangle him. His only hope of security, however, was a prompt acquiescence in the plan pointed out by the stranger, who accordingly engaged to conduct him without delay to the appointed rendezvous.

Passing over the difficulties of the journey, the accidents by the way, the slips and damages of sumpter-horses, and their often trackless march over the hills, let us behold Paslew, after some narrow escapes from the royalist forces, taking up his quarters at an obscure lodging hard by the town of Doncaster, and nigh to the cantonments of the rebel chiefs, whose forces were once more in formidable array, occupying a conspicuous position on the left bank of the river Don.

The left wing of the royalist troops was flanked by a deep morass, called Potterie Car; and their right protected by the walls of the town.

The morning that followed Paslew’s arrival was the time appointed for a general attack by the rebels, who considerably outnumbered the more disciplined but less zealous army of their sovereign, D’Arcy and his associates intending to cross the river by daybreak, with the utmost secrecy, hoping to take the royalist forces by surprise.

Paslew arrived alone, just as the consultation of the chiefs was breaking up. His companion, Ralph, had left him some hours before, and galloped on at full speed, first giving directions as to the course he should take, and the measures he was to adopt on his arrival. Conducted in due form to the archbishop’s presence, Paslew found his grace at supper. The repast was sumptuous, and served up in great state. This high dignitary seldom stirred but with his kitchen-furniture and service for the table, which last was of massy silver, beautifully wrought and embellished. His servants were apparelled in all the pomp and insignia of office; but he affected great plainness and simplicity, both of dress and demeanour. At his right hand sat a stout, muscular figure, whom Paslew immediately recognised, with unequivocal demonstrations of surprise, to be his umquhile prisoner Ralph Newcome, now habited in a plain suit of velvet, and looking like a country gentleman of some rank and importance. His manner was, however, coarse and abrupt; and he still seemed nothing loth to sustain his full

complement of liquor. On the left of the archbishop sat his nameless visitor at the abbey, whose personal accomplishments he had good cause to remember. Below them sat several chiefs of the confederacy, apparently of an inferior rank.

“Abbot Paslew,” said his grace, “thou art a tardy, and it may be undutiful son. Thine homage to the Church has not been either freely or faithfully rendered; yet does she now welcome thee to her embrace, with the promise of a free and unconditional forgiveness.”

“Ay,” said he of his grace’s right hand, “Abbot Paslew was of too great weight in the scale of events to be left to choose his own side of the balance. I am right fain of his company, and in troth he can use the persuasions well,—the thumbscrews and tight boots upon occasion.”

“Master Aske,” replied the archbishop, “if the sons that our mother hath suckled and nourished from her own grace and bounty were every of them as true as thou art, who yet receivest not of her temporal favours, then would her kingdom be enlarged, and her arms should outstretch to the utmost verge and compass of all visible things. But there be evil men and seducers abroad, traitors to their altar and their faith.” Here he paused, but presently continued, “My friends, though our religion be meek and lowly, yet does it not deny to us the comforts but sparingly scattered through this vain and perishing world.”

His grace here filled a cup of spiced sack, inviting Paslew to partake of their humble entertainment. Bewildered and intimidated, he yet obeyed with all due reverence and courtesy.

“Confusion to the heretic king!” cried he on the left of the archbishop, filling his glass, and at the same time taking especial note that the guests should repeat this bold and startling treason.

“Lord D’Arcy,” said one of the guests, “thou hast imbibed that wish so oft in thy drink, that should the king catch thee he may find it branded in thy four quarters, when they are cut up to ornament his majesty’s posterns.”

“And what might he find on thine, Norton?” said the fiery leader.

“A cook’s rolling-pin and a mutton pasty.” A loud laugh here announced the hit, of which this sally was the bearer, it being levelled directly at the well-known propensities of the personage to whom it was addressed.

“Come, friends all,” said the archbishop; “let not the gibe and jest go round; there be matters of graver import that should occupy us this night. To-morrow, let the elements be propitious, and the day is won.”

“Od’s life,” said Aske; “surely the rain will not again prevent us from passing the river, as it did in our last campaign.”

“If it do,” cried a deep and melancholy voice from the lower end of the table, “then will I say this Pilgrimage of Grace is the device of man, and not of God, and the work will not prosper.”

This ominous anticipation seemed to strike terror into the most stout-hearted. “Foul fa’ the croaking raven!” said Aske. “No good comes on’t, when the Lord of Ravenswood breaks from his usual silence. Mischief follows, safe as the bolt after the flash.”

“Hush! my son,” said the archbishop to this bird of ill-omen; “thou speakest unwisely. ‘Tis not for us to adjudge the displeasure of Heaven upon slight testimonies. He trieth our faith, when the dark cloud overshadoweth His mercy. But let us not dishonour this good cause, and weaken our hands by indulging in such gloomy anticipations. The night showeth little token

of a change, and when I was last abroad, the river passed on, shallow and murmuring, over the ford.”

The guests were fully occupied to a late hour in discussing the plan of attack, the occupation of the town, together with subsequent arrangements; after which, with mutual anticipations of success, the company departed.

Paslew, on retiring to his chamber, though much fatigued, found himself unable to sleep. The dark chaos of events brooded heavily upon his brain. Feverish and excited, the dread to-morrow seemed already pressing on the past, mingling its deep and unseen flood with the full tide of existence. The whirl and eddy, created by the conflict, lashed his thoughts almost to madness. He grew appalled. The billows blackened as they rose. He seemed sinking, overwhelmed in the struggle, and the spirit quivered as they passed. He arose, darting an anxious glance through the low casement. The moon was riding on the top of a huge mountain of clouds towards the north-west. As he gazed they came rapidly athwart the heavens, like the wings of some terrible demon visibly unfolding. On a sudden the door of his chamber flew open. He started forward to meet the intruder, but there was no footstep—no sound save the hurrying gusts that foreran the approaching tempest. Soon like a mighty deluge it burst on at once in its full vigour, as though it would overwhelm creation once more in immediate ruin. The roll of the river answered swiftly to the tempest’s voice, now swollen to a huge and foaming torrent, rising rapidly over its level banks, and threatening devastation on every side. Paslew quaked. Gloomy forebodings crept upon him. He beheld in this strange visitation another and a manifest interposition of Heaven, fighting against the cause he had unhappily espoused. Rest was out of the question, his whole thoughts being occupied in the contrivance of measures for his own immediate safety.

In the morning consternation had seized the whole camp. They beheld the muddy and turbulent waters before them, again frustrating their hopes, levelling their proud schemes, and fighting visibly and irresistibly against them, in front of their adversaries. So intimidated were the troops, and so convinced that their cause was now hopeless, that not all the persuasions and threatenings of their leaders, nor the archbishop’s promises of an eternal reward, could prevent the breaking up of this vast multitude, and the hasty dispersion of the rebel host.

Ere morning Paslew was gone. He liked not the dust from a falling house. Weary and alone he came back to his dwelling on the tenth day after his departure.

From this time danger and misfortune crowded fast upon that devoted house. The dark course of events unfolded with frightful rapidity, and Paslew, by many a vain contrivance, sought to avert the king’s displeasure and his own doom. A relaxation of some measures more than ordinarily severe was attempted; and we find, from existing records, that a pension of ten marks per annum was granted to Thomas Cromwell, the king’s secretary and principal visitor,—whether in the way of bribe or fee is not certain.

It shows, however, the humiliating and submissive circumstances to which the monks were now reduced. They were indeed fallen from that high estate, when kings were their tributaries, and empires too narrow for the wide grasp of their ambition. The following is a copy of Thomas Cromwell’s indulgence, taken from the Townley MSS.:—

“To all estates due honour and reverence, and to all other commendacioun in our Lord everlastyng. Know ye that we John, abbot of ye monasterie of our blessed Ladie of Whalley, in Com. Lanc., by ye assente and consente of ye convente, have freely granted untoe ye right honourable Mr Tho. Cromwell, secretarie, general visitor, and principal official to our most sovereign Lord Kyng Hen. VIII., an annual rent or fee of vi: xiii: iv: yerele, to be paide at ye

nativitie of St John Baptist unto ye saide Maister Thomas Cromwell. Wee, ye saide abbot and convent have put to ye same our handes and common seale. Yeven at Whalley 1st Jan. 28 Hen. VIII.”

But every act of submission, every stratagem and advice, had failed to ward off the blow. Within ten weeks from the date of this document there was neither abbot nor abbey of Whalley.

After the dispersion, imprisonment, and execution of the principal leaders of the rebellion, the day of reckoning and retribution was at hand. Shrewsbury, by the king’s orders, sent a herald with a troop of horse, who, taking Paslew, Eastgate, Haydock, and some others of the monks prisoners, they were arraigned at Lancaster, and convicted of high treason. On the 12th March 1537, Paslew was conveyed back to Whalley for execution, where, in a field called the Holehouses, immediately facing the house of his birth, a gallows was erected, on which Paslew and Eastgate suffered punishment or martyrdom, for the story varies according to the bias of the party by whom it is told. Haydock was carried to Padiham, and died there the same ignominious death on the day following. The monks, driven from their asylum, escaped into France, with the exception of a few, who lingered near the scenes of their former enjoyments, hovering like departed hopes round the ruin to which they clung.

IX. Sir Edward Stanley

“Why, then, the world’s mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open!”

“God never wrought *miracles* to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it.”—*Bacon*.

“No man doubts of a Supreme Being, until, from the consciousness of his provocations, it becomes his interest there should be none.”—*Government of the Tongue*.

“Men are atheistical because they are first vicious, and question the *truth* of Christianity because they hate the *practice*.”—*South*.

The following will, perhaps, be thought misplaced as a polemical subject. But in relating what may be conceived as the true motive that incited Sir Edward Stanley to the founding of that beautiful structure Hornby Chapel, we may be allowed to show the operation as well as the effect—to trace the steps by which his conversion from an awful and demoralising infidelity was accomplished.

We have borrowed some of the arguments from “Leslie’s Short Method with the Deists,” condensing and illustrating them as the subject seemed to require. We hope to be pardoned this freedom; the nature of the question would necessarily refer to a range of argument and reply in frequent use; and all that we could expect to accomplish was to place the main arguments in such a position as to receive the light of some well-known and self-evident truth.

The dark transactions to which the “Parson of Slaidburn” obscurely refers may be found in Whitaker’s “Whalley,” pp. 475, 476.

The same historian remarks in another work,—“From several hints obliquely thrown out by friends as well as enemies, this man appears to have been a very wicked person, of a cast and character very uncommon in those unreflecting times.” “There certainly was something very extraordinary about the man, which, amidst the feudal and knightly habits in which young persons of his high rank were then bred, prompted him to speculate, however unhappily, on any metaphysical subject. Now, whether this abominable persuasion were the cause or the effect of his actual guilt,—whether he had reasoned himself into materialism in order to drown the voice of conscience, or fell into the sin of murder because he had previously reasoned himself out of all ideas of responsibility, does not appear; but his practice, as might have been expected, was suited to his principles, and Hornby was too rich a bait to a man who hoped for no enjoyment but in the present life, and feared no retribution in another. Accordingly, we find him loudly accused of having poisoned his brother-in-law, John Harrington, by the agency of a servant; and he is suspected also of having, through subornation of perjury, proved, or attempted to prove, himself tenant of the honour of Hornby.”

Sir Edward Stanley, the fifth son of Thomas, first Earl of Derby, early received the notice and favour of his sovereign King Henry the Eighth. It is said of him, “The camp was his school, and his learning the pike and sword.” The king’s greeting, when they met, was “*Ho! my soldier*.” Honour floated in his veins, and valour danced in his spirits. At the battle of Flodden he commanded the rear of the English army, and was attacked by the Earls of Lennox and Argyle, both of whom were slain, together with the King of Scots, on that

memorable day. Through his great bravery and skill he mainly contributed to its success. A sudden feint inducing the Scots to descend a hill, their stronghold, an opening was caused in their ranks, which Sir Edward Stanley espying, he attacked them on the sudden with his Lancashire bowmen. So unexpected an assault put them into great disorder, which gave the first hopes of success, and kindled fresh courage through the English ranks, ending in the complete overthrow and discomfiture of their enemies.

Upon this signal achievement, Sir Edward Stanley, being much advanced thereby in the king's favour, received from the hand of his royal master a letter of thanks, together with an assurance of some future reward. Accordingly, we are told, the year ensuing, the king keeping Whitsuntide at Eltham in Kent, Sir Edward being in his train, he commanded that, for his valiant acts against the Scots, when he won the hill, and relieved the English from their distress, an achievement worthy of his ancestors, who bore an eagle on their crest, he should be created Lord Monteagle; whereupon he had a special summons to parliament in the same year by the title of Baron Stanley, Lord Monteagle.

"Twice did he and Sir John Wallop penetrate, with only eight hundred men, into the very heart of France, and four times did he and Sir Thomas Lovell save Calais,—the first time by intelligence, the second by stratagem, the third by their valour and undaunted courage, and the fourth by their unwearied patience and assiduity." "In the dangerous insurrection by Aske and Captain Cobler, his zeal for the prince's service and the welfare of his country caused him to outstrip his sovereign's commands by putting himself at the head of his troops without the king's commission, for which dangerous piece of loyalty he asked pardon, and received thanks." By stirring up jealousy and sedition, too, amongst the rebels, he gave his majesty time, by pretended treaties, to draw off the most eminent of the faction, and to overcome and dissipate the rest. Yet, with all this outward show of prosperity, and the bruit of noble deeds so various and multiplied, that Fame herself seemed weary of rehearsing them, there were not wanting evil reports and dark insinuations against his honour. Foul surmises prevailed, especially in the latter part of his life, as to the means by which he possessed himself of the estates he then held in right of his lady, and those too that he enjoyed through the attainder of her uncle, Sir James Harrington. He acknowledged himself a freethinker and a materialist, a character of rare occurrence in those ages, showing him to be as daring in his opinions as in his pursuits. That the soul of man was like the winding up of a watch, and that when the spring was run down the man died, and the soul was extinct, are still recorded as his expressions. In those days of demoralising ignorance, this open and unhesitating opinion might be the means of creating him many dangerous and deadly enemies, especially amongst the priesthood, whose office, though tending to higher and nobler ends than the mere thralling of man's spirit to creeds and systems of secular ambition, was yet but too often devoted to this purpose. Every power that human cruelty and ingenuity could compass was tried, but happily in vain, to confine the free and unfettered spirit for ever in the dark cells of ignorance and superstition.

From a number of unconnected accounts respecting this great, if not good man, whose virtues even would have been the vices of our own age, we find as the most prominent parts of his disposition a thorough contempt for the maxims and opinions of the world, and an utter recklessness of its censure or esteem. Marrying into the family of the Harringtons, he resided the latter part of his life at the Castle of Hornby, where we find him engaged in schemes for the most part tending to his own wealth and aggrandisement.

The chapel which he built is said to have been vowed at Flodden, but this statement is evidently untrue, having no foundation but the averments of those who content not themselves with a plain narrative of facts, but assume a licence to invent motives agreeable to

their own folly or caprice. That Sir Edward Stanley made any such vow we cannot imagine, much less would he put it into execution. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," was the governing principle of his life, and the mainspring of his actions. It would be a strange anomaly in the records of human opinions to find an edifice reared to perpetuate a belief which the founder thought a delusion, a mere system of priestcraft and superstition. To this prominent feature in his history our attention has been directed, and we think the following tradition assigns a better and more plausible motive for the founding of that beautiful structure, the chapel at Hornby.

It was by the still light of a cloudless harvest-moon that two men appeared to be sauntering up the stream that winds through the vale near Hornby. One of them wore a clerical habit, and the other, from his dress, seemed to attend in the capacity of a menial. They rested at the foot of a steep cliff overhung with firs and copse-wood. The castle, upon the summit, with its tall and narrow tower, like a feather stuck in its crown, was not visible from where they sat. The moon threw an unclouded lustre from her broad full face far away over the wide and heavy woods by which they were surrounded. A shallow bend of the stream towards the left glittered over its bed like molten silver, issuing from a dark and deep pool shaded by the jutting boughs and grim-visaged rocks from whence they hung.

The travellers now ascended by a narrow and precipitous path. Their task was continued with no little difficulty, by reason of the looseness of the soil, and the huge rocks that obstructed their progress. By dint of scrambling, rather than walking, they, however, approached to the summit, when a light became visible over the hill, growing brighter as they ascended. It was the castle turret, where Lord Monteagle generally spent the greater part of the night in study. Whatever might be the precise nature of his pursuits, they were not supposed to be of the most reputable sort.

"Wizard spells and rites unholy"

were said to occupy these midnight vigils. Often, as that lonely watch-tower caught the eye of the benighted peasant, did he cross himself, and fancy that shadows were flitting to and fro on the trembling and distant beam.

"There it is," said the hindmost person, who was none other than the parson of Slaidburn.

"That lantern, I think, is unquenchable. Does thy master never quit yon burning pinnacle?"

"May be," replied the servant, "he careth not to be oft abroad; and who dare thwart his will? 'Troth he had need be of a tough temper that should give him speech unquestioned."

"They who hold a higher communion reckon but little of this frail and pitiful dust," returned the clergyman, after a solemn pause. "It is enough that he hath sent for me. I would fain warn him ere he depart, else yon walls had not again echoed my footstep."

This confidential domestic spoke not; he was either too much attached to his master, or implicated with him, to hazard a remark.

The path was now wider and less difficult of access, leading over a pretty knoll, glittering like lode-stars in the dew, beyond which arose the huge and cumbrous pile then distinguished as the castle of Hornby.

The barking of some half-dozen hoarse-mouthed dogs announced their approach. Passing over the drawbridge, they entered the court-yard, from whence a side postern at that time opened a communication to the turret-chamber without passing through the main building. A winding staircase led them directly to the summit. Soft gleams of moonlight came at intervals through the narrow loopholes, being the only help or direction whereby to accomplish their ascent. After a tedious gyration, which more than once made the hindmost party pause to

obtain a respite, the guide opened a low door. It swung heavily aside, disclosing a small ante-room, destitute of all furniture save a large oaken chest, that seemed to be the depository, or “ark,” as it was usually called, for the safe keeping of the family archives.

The conductor approaching an opposite door gave a private signal. It flew open as if by its own impulse, displaying a chamber of no mean dimensions, in which, by the light from a gigantic lamp, was seen a figure seated before a table absolutely groaning with piles of books, and various apparatus of unknown and wondrous import. Instruments of unimaginable shape lay in heaps round the apartment; their use it were impossible to conjecture. Furnaces, alembics, jars, glass urinals, and bottles of all sizes, rendered the chamber perilous of access, save to those who were acquainted with the intricacies of this labyrinth. “Sir Edward,” as he was yet generally styled, looked full at his visitors as they entered. His eye was large and dark, the expression fierce and commanding. He was clad in a gown of black silk, covering an inner vest of sables. From a broad belt, glittering with costly stones, hung a short sword and a pair of pistols richly embossed.

The upper portion of his head was bald; the hair on its sides short and frizzly. His beard was of a reddish tinge, trimmed square and bushy, beneath which his white ruff seemed to glisten from the sudden contrast. His forehead was high and retreating; his face pale, and his cheek hollow and slightly wrinkled. His nose was small, looking ill suited to the other features, which were large and strongly-marked. His mouth was full, but compressed; and his teeth beautifully white and well shaped. When he spoke, they were much exposed, projecting slightly, and tending to give an air of ferocity to his countenance.

In stature he was tall and well formed. Proudly upright in his gait and attitude, he appeared like one born to be obeyed,—to rule in whatsoever station he occupied.

“Sir Hugh Parker. The parson of Slaidburn is welcome to Hornby,” said Lord Monteagle, rising. “It is long since we have met. I claim the privilege of old fellowship: give me thy hand.”

“My lord, I am here at your request. Your wishes are commands with my poor endeavours.”

“Thou mayest retire, Maudsley,” said the baron to his servant, motioning him to depart. The minister was accommodated with a low stool, made vacant for the occasion. Lord Monteagle, closing the book, abruptly addressed his visitor.

“I knew thou wast in the neighbourhood, and I would unravel a few arguments with thee; a few quiddities about thy profession. I know thou art skilful at thy trade, which, though a vocation having its basis in fraud, finding countenance through the weakness and credulity of mankind, doth yet hold the commonalty in thrall and terror—a restraint which none other scheme might peradventure impose.”

“You are too harsh, my lord. I minister not to aught that, my conscience disapproves. Being of the Reformed Church, I do not mightily affect creeds and opinions. The Bible is the fountain, pure and undefiled; its waters fertilise and invigorate the seed of the faith, but choke and rot the rampant weeds of error and superstition.”

“The Bible! A forgery: the invention of a cunning priesthood to mask and perpetuate their delusions. Prove its falsehoods to be the truth. Distinguish me thy revelation from the impostures of Mahomet, the dreams of the Sibyls, and the lying oracles of Heathenrie. Oblige me either to renounce my reason and the common principles which distinguish truth from error, or to admit the proof thou shalt allege, which proof, look thee, must be such as no imposture can lay claim to, otherwise it proves thy doctrine to be an imposture. If thy religion be true, there *must* be such a proof. For if the Being who gave this revelation which He

requires all men to receive, have left His own truth destitute of the only proof which can distinguish it from an imposture, this will be an impeaching of His wisdom, an error in the very outset of the case, proving Him not the Allwise, but liable to infirmity and error. This, thou seest, will bring our debate within a narrow compass.”

“Nevertheless, I must own the task is hard,” replied the clergyman, “because of the blindness and impotency of that same reason of which thou vauntest, and the feebleness of our mental sight; for we cannot come at any abstract truth whatsoever but by many inferences hanging together as by a chain, one link of which, not fully apprehended or made fast, loosens the whole, and the argument falls to the ground.”

“Does the reformed doctrine, too, require a belief in what the hearer may not comprehend?” said the baron, scornfully.

“Nay, there is a sufficiency in the evidence, and a fulness in this testimony, of which none other history can boast. What book is that, my lord?”

“The Anabasis.”

“By whom?”

“Surely thou art in j’est. ‘Tis Xenophon’s.”

“How? Xenophon!” said the divine; “methinks thou speakest unadvisedly. My reason or apprehension knoweth not of such a man, or that he writ this book, and yet thou boldly affirmest the history to be true!”

“I know not that it was ever doubted,” replied the other. “The common consent and belief of mankind, the transmission of the record from remote ages, are of themselves no mean evidence of its truth. But there must have been a time when it was first written, and as he appeals in it to facts, to matters which were then of recent occurrence, and to the public knowledge and belief of those facts, surely every of these statements would have insured detection, especially if put forth at or about the time when the events took place. Would it not have been madness to appeal to eye-witnesses of transactions which never happened, which witnesses were then alive, and could easily have belied such an impudent and furtive attempt at imposture? The idea seems almost too absurd to refute.”

“Thou judgest well. It would be madness and absurdity in the extreme to deny the existence of thy historian, or the events to which he refers; and yet a record which to thee is of the greatest moment, wherein thine own interests are for ever involved, and to the truth of which there is much more clear and irrefragable testimony, thou rejectest as a fraud and an imposture.”

“What proof can its promulgers give me of the infallibility of their doctrines, even supposing these events to be true?”

“Miracles, acknowledged to be such, contravening and transcending the common course of nature,—these, I reckon, will be a sufficient warranty that the message is from the great Author of all things Himself.”

“I own these are the strongest evidences that I could require, and I would admit them if I had witnessed their performance.”

“Good. Now to the proof. It is impossible that any simple fact could be imposed, or that a number of persons could be made to believe they had witnessed such fact, unless it had actually taken place. For instance, if I were to assert that I had divided the waters of this river here, in the presence of the inhabitants, and that I had once led the whole of them over

dryshod, the waters standing like a wall on each side, to guard their path, appealing to them at the same time in proof of my testimony; it would be impossible, I say, to convince those people it were true, provided the event had not happened. Every person would be at hand to contradict me, and consequently it would be impossible that such an imposition could be put upon them against the direct evidence of their senses.”

“Granted,” replied the baron. “But this tale I am not too bold to infer might be invented when that generation had passed, when the credulity of coming ages might lead men to believe in such foolish and monstrous imaginings, like the labours of Hercules, the amours of Jove, and the cannibal exploits of Saturn.”

“Nay, but hear me. Whenever such a story was first promulged, were it then stated that not only public monuments remained to attest the event, but that public rites and ceremonies were kept up for its express commemoration, which rites were to that day continual, and to which those writings appealed as evidence attesting the performance of such miracles, then must the deceit have been rendered but the more glaring and easy of detection, as no such monuments could exist, no rites, no ceremonies demonstrating the truth of this appeal could be in observance. Thus, if I should now invent the tale about something done two thousand odd years ago, a few might, peradventure, be credulous enough to believe me; but if I were to say that ever after, even to this day, every male had his nose slit and his ears bored in memory of this event, it would be absolutely impossible that I should gain credit for my story, because the universality of the falsehood being manifest, and the attestation thereof visibly untrue, would prove the whole history to be false. Such were the rites and customs of the Jews.”

“But still, rites and observances were practised by the heathen, which ceremonies ye acknowledge to have been false and impious, yet their followers worshipped and slid their neck into the yoke as readily as thy favourite Hebrews, who are proverbially rogues and cheats in the estimation even of infidels themselves.”

“Ay, but impostors appeal not to facts, to eye-witnesses of some event, confirming and attesting the authority of their mission. Moses could not have persuaded half-a-million of persons that he had brought them through the Red Sea, fed them forty years with manna in the wilderness, and performed many other miracles during their journey, had not the facts been well known; and down to this day the rites and ceremonies of the Jews are, in consequence, linked to these main facts as securely as though we ourselves had formed the first series of the chain, eye-witnesses to the miracles they attest. Again, the books of Moses expressly represent that they are the great history and transcript of the Jewish law, and speak of their being delivered by him and kept in the ark from his time; likewise they are commanded to be read at stated periods, and to be taught from father to son throughout all generations, to the end that no imposition might be practised. In whatever age, therefore, after Moses, these forgeries were committed, it were impossible they should have been believed—every one must have known they had not even heard of them aforetime, much less been taught all these burdensome precepts by their forefathers.”

“Still the cunning and wily priests might have prepared men’s minds for the discovery, having themselves deposited these writings in the ark.”

“A manifest impossibility, my lord, and for this plain reason: those writings profess to be a book of statutes, the standing law of the land, a code of ordinances by which the people had all along been governed. Could any person invent a body of statutes for this good realm of England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of laws which they had ever known or observed? Could any man, could any priest, or conspiracy of priests, have

persuaded the Jews they had owned and obeyed these ordinances from the time of Moses, when they had not even so much as heard of them in times past?"

"These rites, it is most likely, having their origin in the simplest occurrences, might still have been practised prior to the forgeries; and these books, by allusions to them, deceived the nation, causing it to believe they were performed in memory of some miraculous events which never happened."

"What! Is it possible to persuade men they have kept laws which they have not even heard of? If I were to frame some idle story of things done a long while ago, and say that our Sabbath was kept holy in commemoration of these events—this I think, my lord, will answer to the terms of your assertion. Suppose I made an attempt to persuade the people this day was kept holy in memory of Julius Cæsar or Mahomet, and that everybody had been circumcised or baptized in their names; that in the courts of judicature oaths had been taken on these very writings I had fabricated, and which, of necessity, they could not have seen prior to my attempt; and that these books likewise contained their laws and religion—ordinances which they had always acknowledged—is it possible, I ask, that such a cheat could for one moment have existed? An impostor would not have dared to make any such references, knowing they must inevitably have led to the rejection of his testimony."

"But surely if this great transaction, the passage of the Red Sea, had really happened, and in the way thou hast pointed out, the evidence would not have been suffered to rest solely on the frail and uncertain records to which thou hast referred. Books of laws, for instance, the writings of Mahomet, we know have been forged, as even thou wilt acknowledge."

"True, but those books refer not to miracles and the testimony of eye-witnesses, nor to laws and ordinances handed down from generation to generation, even to that time. That Mahomet pretended not to the working of miracles, he tells us in the Koran. The ridiculous legends related by his followers are rejected as spurious by the scholars and expounders of the prophet; and even his converse with the moon, his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and from thence to heaven, were not performed before witnesses. The same may be said of the absurd exploits related of the heathen deities."

"But had not the heathen their priests, their public rites and sacrifices, equally with the Jews?"

"They had. But it was not even pretended that these rites commenced at the time when the things which they commemorate were said to have happened. The Bacchanalia, for example, and other festivals, were established long after the fabulous events to which they refer. The priests of Juno and Venus were not appointed by those imaginary deities, but arose in some after-age, and are therefore no evidence whatever to the truth of their worship."

"But where is thy proof in the unwritten evidence—monuments which cannot lie, bearing silent but convincing testimony to the truth of these miracles?"

"Twelve stones" it is said, were set up at Gilgal to commemorate the passage over Jordan."

"Ay, in thy book we read it."

"But mark the intention, to which no lying imposture durst have referred,—to the end, it is written, that when the children of those who had witnessed this miracle, and their children's children, should ask their meaning, it should be told them. Now the miracle for which these stones were set up as a memorial by the eye-witnesses themselves, could not, as before proved, have been imposed upon the people at the time it happened, had it not really occurred."

“All this I can safely grant. Yet thou lackest wherewith to conclude thine argument.”

“Bear with me, my lord, until I have made an end. Let us suppose, for one moment, there was no such miracle wrought as this same passage over Jordan.”

“Which supposition of thine I do hold to be the truth as firmly as I believe your revelation is an imposture.”

“And yet if it *should* be true, my lord?” The minister said this in a tone that made the listener start. He bit his lips. But the feeling had subsided, as, with a sharp and hurried accent, he exclaimed—

“Why this pause? I am prepared to listen.”

“These stones,” continued the divine, “were, of necessity, well known as public monuments existing at the time when these writings were first rehearsed in the ears of all the people, because they are here referred to as testimonials of the event. But supposing them to have been set up on some unknown occasion, as you say, and that designing men in after-ages invented the book of Joshua, affirming it was written at the time of that imaginary event by Joshua himself, adducing this pile of stones in evidence of its truth, what is the answer which every one who heard it must have made to this witless falsehood? ‘We know this pile of stones,’ they would say; ‘but of such an origin as thou hast related we have, not heard, nor even of this book of Joshua. Where has it been concealed, and from whence was it brought forth? Besides, it solemnly inculcates that this miraculous event, our fathers’ passage over Jordan, should be taught their children and children’s children from that day forward, who were to be shown and carefully instructed as to the meaning and design of this very monument; but of this we have not so much as heard, nor has thy history been handed down to us from our forefathers. It is a lying testimony, therefore, and we cannot receive it.’ Yet do we find the children of Israel commemorating, handing down, and instructing their children from age to age into the meaning and design of these memorials, which instruction must at some time or another have had a beginning, having its commencement with the very events to which they refer, which events it would then have been impossible to make the people believe against the plain evidence of their senses. Is the chain complete, my lord?”

“But what has all this to do with thy religion?—a system far different, methinks, from the primitive institutions of these remote ages.”

“The self-same reasoning will apply, and in precisely the same mode, to the miracles of our Lord and His apostles, together with their transmission by records from their times. The histories of the Old and New Testaments could not have been received at the time they were written, if they had not been true, because the priesthoods of Levi and of Christ,—the observance of the Sabbath, the passover, and circumcision,—the ordinances of baptism and the eucharist, are there represented as descending by uninterrupted succession from the time of their respective institution. It would have been as impossible to persuade men in after-ages that they had been circumcised or baptized, had celebrated passovers and Sabbaths under the ministration of a certain order of priests, if it were not so, as to make them believe they had gone through the seas dryshod, seen the dead raised, and so forth. But without such a persuasion neither the law nor gospel could have been received.”

“Yet, methinks, if I were the founder of a new religion, and had all the stores of Nature and Omnipotence at my command—those boasted attributes of thy Law-giver—I would not have left it liable to doubt, to the sneers and cavils of any one who might question my pretensions, or my right to control their belief. The truths of Omnipotence should be clear as the sun’s beam, and unquestioned as his existence.”

“‘If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe though one should rise from the dead.’ ‘Tis not for lack of proof; ‘tis for lack of will. ‘Tis not for lack of testimony, one tithe of which would have gained a ready assent to any of the drivelling absurdities of heathen mythology,—’tis for lack of inclination; ‘tis a wish that these revelations may not be true; and where the heart inclines, the judgment is easily biassed.”

“True, ‘as the fool thinks.’ The proverb is somewhat stale. I marvel thou findest not its application to thine own bias, perdie!”

“At any rate, if I am fooled, I am none the worse for my belief, if my creed be not true; but if man, as thou wouldest fain hope, is like the beasts that perish, I am still at quits with thee. And if this dream of thine should prove but a dream, and thou shouldst awake—to the horrors of the pit, and the torments of the worm that dieth not!”

“Peace, thou croaker! I did not send for thee to prophesy, but to prove; I would break a lance and hold a tilt at thine argument. Now, I have a weapon in reserve which shall break down thy defences—the web of thy reasoning shall vanish. The fear of punishment, and the hope of future reward, held out as a bait to the cowardly and the selfish, shall be of no avail when the object of my research is accomplished. Hast thou not heard of the supreme elixir—the pabulum of life, which, if a man find, he may renew his years, and bid defiance alike to time and the destroyer? Then what will become of thy boasted system of opinions, begotten by priesthood and nurtured by folly?”

“And this phantasma, which man has never seen; which exists not upon the least shadow of evidence—which has not even the lowest dictates of sense and plausibility in its favour—on this *Ignis fatuus*, eluding the grasp, and for ever mocking the folly of its pursuers, thou canst build thine hopes, because it flatters thy wishes and thy fears?”

“My fears!” said the Baron, rising: “and who speaks of my *fears*? I would chastise thee, thou insolent priest, wert thou not protected by the laws of courtesy.”

“Yes, *thy* fears, Baron Monteaule,” said this undaunted minister of the truth. “Thou wouldest not care to face thy lady’s cousin! His blood yet crieth from the ground!”

“And who dares whisper, even to the walls, that I murdered John Harrington?” cried the astonished adept, trembling with ill-suppressed rage. “Methinks he holdeth his life too cheap who doth let this foul suspicion even rest upon his thoughts.” He drew his sword as he spoke; but the minister stood undaunted, surveying his adversary with a look of pity and commiseration.

“Put up thy sword. Thou hast enow of sins to repent thee of without an old man’s blood added to the number.”

“How hast thou dared this insult? By my “——

“Nay, spare your oaths, my lord; they are better unspoken than unkept.”

“Have I sent for thee to make sport? To gibe and taunt me even to my face?”

“I’ll tell thee for what cause thou didst crave my presence,” replied the other, firmly. “Thou hast misgivings lest thine own hopes should not be true; lest thou shouldst perchance depart with a lie in thy right hand. Thou didst send for me, an unworthy minister to the faith which I profess, that by thy subtlety thou mightest deceive thyself; that by overthrowing my arguments thine own might be strengthened, for truly ‘tis a comfortable thing to have our opinions confirmed through the weakness of an opponent.”

“And daredst thou, with such apprehensions upon thy stomach, to commit thyself alone to my mercy and my keeping? Suppose I should reward thee according to thine own base suspicions. Understandest thou me?”

“Yes, proud and guilty man, too well! But I fear thee not!”

“What! holdest thou a charmed life? Thou mayest fall into a broil as well as other men. And who shall require thy blood at my hands?”

“Ere I left,” said the divine, warily, “I whispered a word in your cousin Beaumont’s ear. Should I not return, he will be here anon. Peradventure I am not misunderstood. Thou hadst need be careful of my life, otherwise thine own may be in jeopardy!”

A fierce and terrible brightness, like the lurid flashes from his own torment, burst from his eye. The very anger and malice he strove to quell made it burn still hotter. His visage gathered blackness, cloud hurrying on cloud, like the grim billows of the storm across a glowing atmosphere. Rapid was the transition. Rage, apprehension, abhorrence,—all that hate and malignity could express, threw their appalling shadows over his features. Still the dark hints uttered by his visitor seemed to hold him in check. Chafed, maddened, yet not daring to execute the vengeance he desired, he strode through the apartment with an uneasy and perturbed gait. He paused at times, darting a look at the minister as if about to address him. Suddenly he stood still, nerving his spirit to some awful question.

“My cousin John Harrington died in his own chamber. In this house, God wot. Thou didst shrive him at his last shift, and how sayest thou he was poisoned?”

“I said not aught so plainly; but thou hast spoken out. Behold him!—There!”—The divine pointed his finger slowly round the apartment. “Within a short space he cites thee to that bar where his presence will be a swift witness to thy doom!”

Had the spirit of the unfortunate heir of Hornby suddenly appeared, the Baron could not have followed the movement of the minister’s hand with greater dismay and astonishment. The strong barrier of guilt seemed breaking down. Conscience aroused, as if at once the veil that concealed his iniquities had been withdrawn, they rose in all their unmitigated horror and enormity. An arrow, drawn at a venture, had pierced the joints of the harness. He stood powerless and without defence—motionless as the image of despair. By a strange coincidence a thick white cloud seemed to coil itself heavily round the room. Whether to the heated imaginations of the disputants this appearance might not present an image of the form then visible to their minds, it would be impossible to determine. Suffice it to say, the effect was memorable, from whatever cause it was produced.

An altered man was the Baron Monteagle. The arguments of this champion of the truth had in some measure prepared his mind for its reception. Under his ministrations he felt gradually more enlightened. His terrors were calmed. Soon afterwards rose that noble structure, the chapel of Hornby, bearing on its front the following legend:—

EDWARDUS STANLEY MILES, DNS. MONTEAGLE, ME FIERI FECIT.

It is recorded that Sir Edward Stanley, Baron Monteagle, died in the faith he had once despised; and we trust he has found a place at the footstool of that Mercy whose interposition was not solicited in vain.

X. George Marsh, The Martyr

“Heavy persecution shall arise
Of all who in the worship persevere
Of spirit and truth.”

—*Milton*.

Smithills or Smethells Hall is situated in a wood, above a small glen, two miles and a half from Bolton. The court-gate exhibits nothing remarkable in its construction. On the left hand was the principal entrance, and a flight of stairs leading from the court. The glass casements, and greater part of the ancient front, have been removed, giving place to a more comfortable, if not a more pleasing style of architecture. The wainscot once displayed a profuse assemblage of ornaments, some of which now remain. Amongst them was formerly shown a likeness, said to be of King Egbert, though from what cause it should be assigned more particularly to that illustrious monarch, it would be difficult to conjecture.

In a room called the Green Chamber, it is said that George Marsh, the subject of the following history, was examined before Sir Roger Barton. In a passage near the door of the dining-room is a cavity, in a flag, bearing some resemblance to the print of a man's foot, which is supposed to be the place where the holy martyr stamped, to confirm his testimony, and which is shown to this day as a memorial of his good confession.

The stone was once removed for a frolic by two or three young men who lived in the house. Taking advantage of their parents' absence, they cast it into the glen behind the hall. That same night, on retiring to rest, the inhabitants were disturbed by many strange and hideous noises. Much alarm and inquiry being excited, the offenders confessed, and the stone was restored to its place with great reverence and solemnity. Some fragments that were broken off upon its removal were carefully replaced; after which, according to common report, the noises ceased.

Another story current in *the* neighbourhood is as follows:—

About the latter end of the year 1732, one Saturday night, a stranger sleeping alone in the Green Chamber was much terrified by an apparition. He stated that about ten o'clock, as he was preparing for bed, there appeared a person before him dressed like a minister, in a white robe and bands, with a book in his hand. The stranger getting into bed, saw it stand by his bedside for a short time. It then slowly retired out of the door, as if going down-stairs, and he saw it no more. This person invariably persisted in the same story; and the owner of the estate immediately ordered divine service at the chapel on a Sunday, which had long been discontinued.

The vaults seem to have been strongly walled and fortified, and were most probably used as burying places, many bones having been found when digging. There is a tradition that King Egbert founded this place, and kept his court here; but no corresponding trace of it occurs in history: and we may suppose, from the order of his conquests, that his residence would be in the more southern parts of the kingdom.

The situation is secluded, and well calculated for concealment, favouring the general opinion that it was the retreat of the famous pirate, Sir Andrew Barton, whose exploits and defeat are so beautifully told in the old ballad of that name in Percy's *Reliques*. It is surprising that so little should be known of this great and bold man, whose conduct had nearly occasioned a

war between England and Scotland, and whose death, it is supposed, was one of the grievances which led to the battle of Flodden.

“Up to the time of Henry the Seventh, it appears, the Radcliffes were lords of Smethells; but Joan, daughter and sole heir of Sir Ralph Radcliffe, having married Robert Barton of Holme, he became in that reign seised of the manor and lordship, where his posterity continued, until Grace, sole daughter and heir of Thomas Barton, the last male heir, was married to Henry, eldest son of the first Lord Fauconberg, whose descendant Thomas, in the year 1721, sold the manor, which afterwards passed into the hands of the Byrons of Manchester, by whom it was sold to Mr Peter Ainsworth of Halliwell, a descendant of the Ainsworths of Pleasington, in this county¹³, the present owner.

“Smethells is dependent upon the superior manor of Sharpies, the lord of which claims from the owner of this place a pair of gilt spurs annually; and, by a very singular and inconvenient custom, the unlimited use of the cellars at Smethells for a week in every year.”¹⁴

At the close of a cold, keen day, about the early part of spring, in the year 1554, there came two men across a bleak and barren tract of land called Dean Moor, near to Bolton-in-the-Moors. When at some distance from the main path, and far from the many by-roads intersecting this dreary common, they—first looking cautiously around, as though fearing intruders—fell on each other’s neck and wept. The sun’s light beamed suddenly through a cleft in the heavy clouds near the horizon, along the stunted grass and rushes, stretching far away to many a green knoll in the distance, behind which the dark hills and lowering sky looked in wild and terrific blackness over the scene. The sun, descending fast below the hills towards Blackrode, beamed forth as if to cast one short ray of gladness on the world of sorrow he was just quitting. Rivington Pike, and the dark chill moors stretching from it eastward, were bathed in a wide and stormy burst, of light, like the wild and unnatural brightness that sometimes irradiates even the dim shadows of despair. A heavy mist lay at their feet, hiding most of the intermediate space from the eye of the observer, so that the long line of barren hills seemed to start out at once from a sea of vapour, like the grim barriers of some gigantic lake. The clouds were following hard upon the sun’s flight, so that by the time he had disappeared the sky was covered with a dense and impervious curtain, rendered darker by the rapidity of the change. Chill and eddying gusts rustled over the dreary heath; the voice of nature only responding to the chords of sadness and of sorrow. The hollow roar of the wind was like the moaning of a troubled ocean; a few big drops from the hurrying scud seeming to presage an approaching tempest.

The two friends had crept behind a stone wall, built up in a hollow, by a stagnant pool, taking but little heed of the darkness and the storm, so intent were they upon the subject which engrossed their thoughts.

“I might flee, Ralph, but it would straightway be said, not that I had left my country and my kin alone, but rather that I had deserted the faith and doctrine I profess, after having unworthily ministered hereabout for a season, which might be an occasion of much scandal, a weakening of the faith of my poor flock, and a grievous discouragement to those that remain.”

“‘A living dog is better than a dead lion,’ says the wise man. Besides, it is apresumington His providence, when He opens away for our escape, and we, of our own wilfulness and folly, neglect the blessing. ‘Do thyself no harm.’ Provide for thine own life, and run not as the

¹³ Baines’ “Lancashire,” p. 540.

¹⁴ Whitaker’s “Whalley,” p. 424.

horse and mule, that have no understanding, into the very throat of thine enemies, and them that seek thine hurt.”

The first speaker was a man of plain but comely appearance, habited in a coarse doublet buckled about the waist with a leathern girdle. A round woollen cap, from beneath which a few straight-combed locks hung about his face, gave a quaint and precise aspect to his figure. His features, though slightly wrinkled, did not betoken either age or infirmity: but his whole appearance indicated a robust and vigorous frame, capable both of exertion and endurance. The other individual exhibited a more ungainly form and deportment. He had not the same look of benevolence and good-will to man which irradiated the features of the first, of whom it might be truly said, that his inward affections did mould and constrain his outward image into their resemblance, so that meekness and benignity shone through his countenance from the ever-glowing spirit of love and Christian charity within. There was a sharp and shrewd intelligence in the eye of the latter speaker which showed that some considerations of selfish and worldly wisdom might, by possibility, mingle with his unerring notions of duty. Yet was he a man of great piety and worth, and well fitted as a counsellor in times of peril and distress.

“Ralph Bradshaw,” replied the other, “thou hast been my tried friend and my stay in this waste and howling wilderness, and I have found thy counsel hitherto wholesome and pleasant; but,” continued Marsh, with a heavy sigh, “I have not told thee how Sir Roger Barton’s servants have made diligent search for me in Bolton, and have given strict charge to my brother Robert that he should, by to-morrow at the latest, appear with me at Smethells, else shall he and my poor mother answer before him at their peril. By God’s grace, I would not leave these weaklings of the flock to suffer for my sake.”

“Leave this matter until thou depart; I will devise some means for their relief. I would not have thy life needlessly put in hazard, seeing how few men have been raised up like unto thyself, privileged as thou art to minister the bread of life to the hungry and famishing poor in this barren corner of God’s spiritual vineyard.”

“And yet,” replied Marsh, “I ought with all boldness to confess the truth, fearing not to answer for the hope that is in me; and why should I refuse to obey the commands of those who are in authority? for the magistrate beareth not the sword in vain.”

“Truly, obedience were his right, if so be this were some righteous judge raised up of God for the punishment of evil-doers. But, as thou well knowest, the justice thou shalt demand will not be rendered: the summons thou hast received to answer on doctrinal and disputed points, and to argue them before these wicked and crafty men, as touching thy belief, are but manifest excuses to get thee into their power, from which they mean not to liberate thee but by the fire that shall consume thy body, and free it for ever from their murderous gripe. Thou knowest, too, that Sir Roger beareth thee a malice, and hath used all subtlety that he might have wherewith to seek occasion against thee. Didst thou not rebuke him openly for his irreverence, when that he must needs play with his puppy, that had its collar full of bells, during God’s holy service—that comfortable form of worship established and publicly taught in the lifetime of our last good King Edward, and not this papistical, idolatrous mass which they now use, to the eternal ruin of both soul and body? No mercy shalt thou have at their hands. And doth our blessed Master require of us that we give our bodies up to these wicked and malignant deceivers, that their devilish pleasure may be glutted in torturing and spitefully using us, while they go about putting innocent men to cruel and shameful deaths? As soon would He require that we should yield our bodies up to Satan and his angels.”

“I know not how to answer thee, Bradshaw, in this matter; but my mind misgives me in taking so hasty a departure from our suffering and afflicted realm. Yet will we ask counsel of Him who guideth the weak, and will not suffer us to be tempted beyond measure.”

Whereat these persecuted disciples did unite in prayer to that throne before which, having finished their earthly warfare, they now stand with crowns of victory on their foreheads, purified from this gross mortality. Marsh, much comforted by the exercise, doubted not that, according to his faith, wisdom and direction would be granted in the way he should take.

Hereupon they separated, wishing each other “God speed.”

Through the darkness and tempest of that fearful night George Marsh approached the town, where, in a narrow lane leading from the brow of the hill by the church, abode his mother and her youngest son. Raising the latch, he saw the old woman alone, seated by the fire, weeping.

“Praised be His mercy, thou art yet safe!” said she, clasping her withered hands together. “They have again been here to seek for thee, and I was fearful thou hadst not escaped their power.”

“Who has been here, and from whence?”

“Divers of Justice Barton’s servants were here again, not an hour ago, who have charged thy brother Robert and thy cousin William Marsh to seek for thee, and by to-morrow, ere noon, to render thee up at Smethells. They are now gone to Atherton, and elsewhere, for aught I know.”

“Then may I not tarry here to-night?”

“Nay, I beseech thee, flee for thy life. In tarrying here shall thou not escape; for a man’s enemies are now truly those of his own household.”

Marsh, after a pause, determined to listen to her advice, and departed.

Cold and weary, he retraced his steps, going beyond Dean Church, where, at a friend’s house, he staid for the night, “taking ill rest,” as he quaintly expresses it in his journal, “and consulting much with myself of my trouble.” He expected, or at least hoped, that some intimation would be vouchsafed from his Master as touching the way he should pursue, but none was granted; and he lay there, full of tossing and unquiet, the greater part of the night. On the following morning, at his first awaking, which was early, being still in heaviness, and not knowing what to do, came another friend to his bedside, who advised him that he should in no wise depart, but abide boldly, and confess the faith. At these words he felt so convinced, and, as it were, suddenly established in his conscience, that he doubted not, as he says, but the message was from God. He thenceforth consulted not with flesh and blood, but resolved on immediately presenting himself before his persecutors, and patiently bearing such cross as it might please Heaven to lay upon him.

He arose betimes, and as his custom was, recited the English Litany, with other prayers, kneeling by his bedside; after which he prepared to go towards Smethells, calling, as he went, at the dwellings of several whom he knew, desiring them to pray for him, to commend him to all his friends, and to comfort his mother and his little children, for, as he then said, he felt assured that they should not see his face any more. Taking leave, with many tears and much, sorrow of heart, he came nigh to the residence of Sir Roger Barton, a bigoted persecutor, and an avowed enemy of the reformed church.

It was about nine o’clock, on a cold and bitter morning, when he came in sight of the court-gate. Then surrounded with trees, the mansion itself was not visible but within a short distance. This house, now ancient and decayed, then existed in all its pomp and magnificence,

having only been erected, as tradition informs us, some fifty years before, by Sir Andrew Barton, a famous pirate or free rover, who was knighted by James III. of Scotland for his great bravery. In the third year of Henry the Eighth, with two stout vessels called the *Lion* and The *Jenny Perwin*, he considerably interrupted the navigation on the English coasts. His pretence was letters of reprisals granted him against the Portuguese by James III. Under colour of this grant, he took ships of all nations, alleging that they had Portuguese goods on board. Complaint being made to the Privy Council of England, the Earl of Surrey said, "The narrow seas should not be infested while he had estate enough to furnish a ship, or a son capable of commanding it." Upon this, two ships were immediately fitted out, and commanded by Sir Thomas and Sir Edward Howard, sons to the Earl of Surrey, at their own expense, when, having been some days at sea, they were separated by a storm, which gave Sir Thomas Howard an opportunity of coming up with Sir Andrew Barton in the *Lion*, whom he immediately engaged. The fight was long and doubtful, for Barton, being an experienced seaman, and having under him a determined crew, made a desperate defence, himself cheering them with a boatswain's whistle to his last breath. The loss of their commander, however, caused them to submit, on which they received fair quarter and good usage. In the meantime, Sir Edward attacked and captured the *Jenny Perwin*, after an obstinate resistance. Both these ships, with as many of their crew as were left alive, about one hundred and fifty, were brought into the river Thames, on the 2nd of August 1511, as trophies of the victory. The prisoners were sent to the Archbishop of York's palace, now Whitehall, where they remained for some time, but were afterwards dismissed and sent into Scotland.

James the Fourth having then ascended the Scottish throne, after the murder of his predecessor, exceedingly resented this action, and instantly sent ambassadors to Henry demanding satisfaction, on which the king gave this memorable answer, "That the punishment of pirates was never held a breach of peace among princes." King James, however, was still dissatisfied, and from that time was never thoroughly reconciled to the English nation.

Sir Andrew was descended from a good family in Scotland, and adopted a seafaring life when very young. A motive of concealment might be the cause of his erecting a mansion here, the roads being then almost impassable; and the extensive woods, which lay in almost every direction from this spot, together with its great distance from the sea-side, might be additional recommendations in its favour. An opinion exists, though now involved in much doubt and obscurity, that his immediate descendant was the Sir Roger Barton whom we have already named, and unto whom this pious servant of the truth was about to commit himself.

On venturing through the gate, Marsh observed several men standing by a door on the left hand, being the principal entrance.

"What, ho!" said one, "art come to morning prayers?"

"Nay," replied another, "his cap cleaves to a heretic's sconce."

"'Tis Marsh," said the foremost of the group, who proved to be Roger Wrinstone, the knight's prime minister, constable, and entrapper of heretics. "Now, by my faith," he continued, "if this wily fox do not think, by his coming, to take Justice by the nose, and outface her through his impudence. But he will be sore mistaken if he think to outwit our master by his cunning. Good friend, thy business?" said Wrinstone, cap in hand, addressing the minister scornfully, and thrusting his tongue into his cheek, to the great diversion of his companions, who, with shouts of laughter, began to ape the buffoonery of their leader.

"I would fain speak with the Justice," said the stranger, meekly.

“And suppose I were he,” said Wrinstone, putting himself into an attitude of great authority and importance, setting out his paunch, at the same time, something like unto the knight himself. Another laugh, or rather titter, went through the courtyard at this exploit; a suspicious glance, however, was directed towards the casement above, some apprehensions evidently existing lest Sir Roger should have been eye-witness to the ceremony.

“Roger Wrinstone, thy mocking is ill-timed,” said Marsh, with a severe and steadfast gaze, which seemed to awe even this unblushing minion of intolerance. “If thy master be not arisen, I will tarry awhile his worship’s leisure.”

“Sir Roger is with his priest at confession,” said one, with a shout of derision. “Art come to confess him too, Father Marsh?” and with that they plucked him by the beard, mocking and ill-treating him. But, filled with joy that he was accounted worthy to suffer, he passed from them into the great hall, at that period a large and lofty room, which, as tradition reports, would have “dined all the monarchs of Europe, and all their trains.” It has since been much curtailed of its proportions, modern improvements having appropriated it to more useful purposes. The wainscots were enriched with choice and beautiful carvings, representing bucks’ heads, flowers, and portraits of the most distinguished ancestors of the family. So numerous and varied were these ornaments, that, it is commonly reported, the artist wrought out his apprenticeship in executing this grand work, which for minuteness and the astonishing number and ingenuity of the devices, perhaps exceeded most of the like nature throughout the realm. Amongst other whimsical fancies was a ton crossed with a bar, having the cyphers A and B above and below, which worthless and absurd pun, a sort of emblematic wit much cultivated by our forefathers, indicated the name of the founder, Sir Andrew Barton.

Marsh, on his first entrance, inquired of a servitor if the Justice might be spoken with. The menial was bearing off the remains of a substantial breakfast, and having a flagon of beer at hand, invited the stranger to a hearty draught, saying that he looked tired and in need of refreshment; but he meekly put it aside, with due courtesy, still standing as he repeated his question. The man departed to make the inquiry, when presently followed the constable and his gang, who, seeing that the hall was cleared, strode in, rudely seizing Marsh by the shoulder.

“Thou art my prisoner,” said Wrinstone; “I arrest thee in the Queen’s name.”

At this moment came running in a little girl, bounding and frolicsome as a young fawn from its covert, who, hearing the word prisoner, and seeing a man of such a prepossessing and benign aspect in custody, immediately came up to Wrinstone, and laid hold of the skirts of his doublet, saying,—

“You shan’t, Wrinstone. If he has done amiss, let him go, and I’ll give thee some plums out of my midlent pasty.”

The meekness and peaceable demeanour of this unoffending servant of the Church had in a moment won the heart of the child, and she pulled him by the hand, as if to convey him from the grasp of his persecutor.

“May Heaven bless thee, my child, and make thee a blessing!” He lifted up his eyes while he thus spake. “Thy nature hath not yet learnt the cruel disposition of these tormentors.”

It is said that his prayer was heard; and a passage in the subsequent history of this little girl may, in all likelihood, find a place in another series of our Traditions.

A tear for the first time trembled in the poor man’s eye as he looked on this tender and compassionate babe. He thought upon his own sufferings, and the hard fate of his own little ones. But he soon repressed the rising murmur, calmly awaiting the result.

The child still clung to him; nor would she depart, though threatened with Sir Roger's displeasure by his deputy. Indeed, she cared little for the issue, being fully indulged in all her caprices by the knight, her grandfather, who was mightily entertained with her humours. But threats and cajolements failing in their effect, they were glad to let this wilful creature accompany them to the presence of Sir Roger as the dispenser of justice, or rather of his own vindictive will; and to his private chamber they were shortly summoned.

Now this distinguished knight was heavy and well-fed, and of a rich and rubicund countenance. From over-indulgence he had become unwieldy, being propped up in a well-stuffed chair, one leg resting on a low stool, his whole frame bloated by indolence and sensuality. He was short-necked and full-chested. His eyes, gray and fiery, were almost starting from his head, by reason of some obstruction to the free current of the blood in that direction. This was accompanied by a wheezing and phlethoric cough, which oft troubled him. At his side sat a priest, who had a fair smooth face, and a shining head sprinkled over with a few pale-coloured locks close cut and combed back with becoming care from his temples. His eyes were small and restless, scarcely for an instant keeping to one position. He seemed to pay a silent deference to his patron, allowing Sir Roger to begin the examination as follows:—

“So thy relatives have ferreted thee forth at last. Nothing like making their kindred in some sort answer for the bodies of these heretics.”

“I came of my own free consent, and alone, your worship,” replied Marsh; “and hope to be honestly dealt with. If I have offended the laws, I am here to answer; if not, I claim your protection.”

“Peace! Will none o’ ye stop that fellow’s prating? Justice thou shalt have, and that speedily, as thou sayest, but not in the way thou couldst desire. Look thee!” He fumbled in his pouch as he spake. Drawing out a letter, he continued—“My Lord Derby hath commanded that thou be sent to Lathom along with some others who do mightily trouble us, and sow evil seed and dissension among the people.”

“This, please your grace, I deny; and I would know mine accusers, and what they allege against me.”

“Now this is a brave answer, truly,” replied the Justice. “These rogues be all of one tale, pretending that they have done nothing amiss, and desiring to know, poor innocents! of what they are accused, as though they were ignorant of their own lives and conversation hitherto. Tush! it were a needless and an unthrifty throwing out of words to argue the matter—for they are wiser in their own eyes than seven men who can render a reason. Do thou question him, and urge him to the test,” said Sir Roger, turning to his conscience-keeper.

“What art thou?” said the priest, leaning forward for the purpose of a more strict examination.

“I am a minister,” said Marsh. “It is but a short time ago since I served a cure hereabouts.”

“Who gave thee orders? Or hast thou indeed received any?”

“The Bishops of London and Lincoln, after that I had diligently studied and kept terms aforetime at Cambridge.”

“Humph!” said Sir Roger. “These bishops be of the reformed sect; and, I have a notion, will some day or another answer for it before the Queen’s council.”

“What knowledge hast thou of these men?”

“I never saw them but at the time I received ordination.”

After a few more questions of little moment, the priest threw out the usual net with which his fraternity were wont to entangle those of heretical opinions.¹⁵

“What is thy belief respecting the sacrament?”

“That is a question of too general and multifarious a nature for a plain and faithful answer.”

“Are the bread and wine, by virtue of the words pronounced by the priest, changed into the body and blood of Christ? And is the sacrament, whether reserved or received, the very body and blood of Christ?”

“I am not careful to answer such inquiries, seeing that I am but unskilled and unlearned in scholastic disputes. Why do ye ask me these hard and unprofitable questions, to bring my body in danger of death, and to suck my blood?”

“We are not blood-suckers, and intend none other than to make thee a better man and a good Christian,” said the priest, mightily offended. Whereat Roger Wrinstone, in his great zeal and affection for the Holy Church, smote Marsh a lusty blow on the mouth, saying—

“Answerest thou the priest so? By your worship’s leave I will mend his ill manners.”

The little girl at this rebuke fell a-crying, and her grief became so loud that Sir Roger was fain to pacify her by ordering Wrinstone to stand farther apart. With red and glistening eyes she looked up and smiled at the suffering martyr, who, remembering his own dear babes, could scarce refrain from embracing her as she clung about him, to the great displeasure of Sir Roger.

“Answer this reverend and spiritual admonisher, to the true purport and bearing of his question,” said Sir Roger, with a mighty affectation of sagacity.

“I do believe Christ to be present with His sacrament, inasmuch as He is alway with His people to the end of time. But as I am not skilful in matters of such nicety, I would ask of this reverend casuist, who is more able to answer in questions of such weight than I; who am, as I said before, unlearned in disputed points; and truly I am in nothing more wishful than to come at a right knowledge and understanding of the truth.”

“Say on,” said the priest, something flattered by this modest appeal to his opinion.

“Our Lord took the cup and blessed it, of which He then drank, and afterwards His disciples?”

“Yes. But this doth not sanction its being sent round to the laity,” replied the priest, not aware of the drift and true bearing of the inquiry.

“Then He took the bread and brake, and did eat likewise with His disciples?”

¹⁵ “The common net at that time,” says Sir Richard Baker, “for catching of Protestants was the real presence; and this net was used to catch the Lady Elizabeth. That princess showed great prudence in concealing her sentiments of religion, in complying with the present modes of worship, and in eluding all questions with regard to a subject so momentous. Being asked at one time, what she thought of the words of Christ, ‘*This is my Body*,’—whether she thought it the true body of Christ that was in the sacrament,—it is said that after some pausing she thus answered:—

“‘Christ was the Word that spake it,
He took the bread and brake it;
And what the Word did make it,
That I believe, and take it;’

“which, though it may seem but a slight expression, yet hath in it more solidness than at first sight appears; at least, it served her turn at that time to escape the net, which by a direct answer she could not have done.”—Baker’s *Chronicle*, p. 320.

“Of a truth,” replied the unwary disputant. “For these questions need but a plain and simple answer.”

“Then,” said Marsh, “of a surety He must have ate and drank Himself!—Nay,” continued he, seeing the priest turn pale with rage and vexation, “I can find none other alternative. For, unlearned and unpractised as I am; the absurdity of your belief is manifest.”

“Thou art a child of perdition—an impious and pestilent heretic! Thou eatest and drinkest damnation to thyself; and the Holy Church consigns all such to the flames, and to the fire of eternal wrath hereafter!” roared the infuriate priest, whose choler waxed hotter in proportion as he felt unable to withstand the conclusion of his opponent.

“For,” as it has been observed, even by some of the most enlightened Catholics themselves,¹⁶ “theological animosity, so far from being an argument of men’s conviction in their opposite sects, is a certain proof that they have never reached any serious persuasion with regard to these sublime subjects. Even those who are most impatient of contradiction in other controversies, are mild and moderate in comparison of polemical divines; and whenever a man’s knowledge and experience give him a perfect assurance in his own opinion, he regards with contempt rather than anger the opposition and mistakes of others. But while men zealously maintain what they neither clearly comprehend nor entirely believe, they are shaken in their imagined faith by the opposite persuasion, or even doubts of other men, and vent on their antagonists that anger and impatience which is the natural result of this state of the understanding.”

“Master,” cried Wrinstone, “shall I fetch the bridle that we so oft use for scolds and ill women?”

“Ay, do, prithee run, Roger,” said the child, hastily, and looking towards him, “for my grandfather’s priest is like to need it soon.”

At this the worthy professor of Christian charity and good-will, darting a furious look at the girl, exclaimed—

“Sir Roger, beware lest this viper thou art hatching be suffered to sting us. Look to it! This minion of thine is not too young either to work mischief or to escape its punishment!”

Whereupon Sir Roger, mightily afraid of his spiritual guide and granter of indulgences, rebuked the offending little one, and ordered her out of the room. With some difficulty this command was executed; but the disturbance at the door became so loud, that they were fain again to admit her, upon a sullen promise that she would behave in a more reverent manner to the priest, and refrain from interruption.

“Answer me no more with thy deep and devilish subtlety,” continued this champion of the Catholic faith; “for of a truth the devil doth wonderfully aid and abet ye in all disputes touching this holy sacrament; but show me thy belief in regard to so wholesome and comfortable a doctrine.”

“I have answered before, as far as my weak understanding will permit, and by God’s grace I will not swerve from my profession. A doctrine pushed to an absurdity is its own refutation.”

Then spake one that was standing by, but who had hitherto taken no part in the debate.

“Truly ‘tis a pity that one so proper and well-gifted, and who might doubtless gain some profitable appointment, should so foolishly cast himself away by holding these dangerous and heretical opinions. Thou wilt bring both body and soul into jeopardy thereby. If not for

¹⁶ Cardinal Pole and others.

thyself, yet for thy children's sake, and for thy kindred, who must needs suffer from thy contumacy, return to the communion from which thou hast cast thyself out, and to the arms of that compassionate mother who is ever ready to receive back her erring but repentant children."

"Verily," replied the martyr, "life, children, brethren, and friends, with all the other delights and comforts of this present state, are as dear and sweet unto me as unto any other man, and I would be as loath to lose them if I might hold them with a good conscience. But seeing I cannot do that, I trust God will strengthen me with His Holy Spirit so that I may lose all for His sake. For I now hold myself but as a sheep appointed to be slain, and patiently to suffer whatsoever cross it may please my most merciful Father to lay upon me. But, as God is my witness!"—he seemed to speak with a prophetic denunciation, "from these vile ashes shall a fire-brand come that shall consume and destroy utterly these bloody men and persecutors of God's inheritance!"

So astonished were the bystanders at his audacity, that they did not so much as attempt to stay his tongue or to lay hands upon him, whilst he continued, raising his arm in a threatening attitude—

"Ye killers of the prophets, and destroyers of them whom God hath sent unto you!—Because we reproach you with your evil deeds, and"—

"Blasphemy?" cried out Sir Roger, who was the first to recover his speech: "we will have thy tongue bored for its offence."

"Away with him!" cried the priest, who seemed nothing loath to begin his torments. "Thou shalt to my Lord Derby, and he will know how to deal with such a bitter and foul-mouthed heretic."

All was uproar and confusion. The Justice was even moved from his chair, and swore out lustily that by ten o'clock the day following, unless this blasphemer were delivered at Lathom, he would imprison the whole family of them: such a pestilent fellow being fit, as he said, to infect all the parish with the plague of heresy.

Roger Wrinstone and his crew were preparing to drag him down-stairs; but the Justice, hobbling on his crutch, preceded them, leaning on the arm of his priest. The party, on their entrance into the hall, found Marsh's two kinsmen awaiting the event. They soon found that no favour was intended.

"See to it, knaves," bellowed the knight, "that this fellow is delivered up to my lord at Lathom by to-morrow, or your own carcasses shall answer for his."

Then did these poor men pray and beseech their kinsman that he would in some wise conform to the religion of his superiors, or find some way of escape from a cruel and ignominious death.

But Marsh, standing steadfast before them all, cried out with a loud voice—"Between me and them let God witness!" Looking up to heaven, he exclaimed, as if with a sudden inspiration—"If my cause be just, let this prayer of thine unworthy servant be heard!"

He stamped violently with his foot, and the impression of it, as the general notion is, yet remains, to attest the purity of his cause and the cruelty and injustice of his persecutors. To this day may be seen the print of a man's foot in the stone, which by many is believed to exist as a memorial of this good confession.

In shape it is much like that of a human foot, except its being rather longer than common. In that part where the sole may have rested is a small dent, as though a man had stamped

vehemently on the soft earth, and the weight of his body had borne principally on that place. The impression is of a dark-brown or rather reddish hue, and is very perceptible when damp or moistened by cleaning.

Marsh's subsequent history is soon told. From Lathom, where he was examined before Lord Derby and his council, and found guilty of heretical opinions, he was committed to Lancaster, and from thence to the ecclesiastical court at Chester, where, after several examinations before Dr Cotes, then bishop of this diocese, he was adjudged to the stake, and burnt in pursuance of his sentence, at the place of public execution near that city, on the 24th April 1555.

XI. Dr Dee, The Astrologer

“Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye
To which the wizard led the gallant knight,
Save that before a mirror huge and high
A hallowed taper shed a glimmering light
On mystic implements of magic might;
On cross, and character, and talisman,
And almagest and altar, nothing bright;
For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,
As watch-light by the bed of some departing man.”

—*Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

The character of Dee, our English “Faust,” as he is not inaptly called, has both been misrepresented and misunderstood. An enthusiast he undoubtedly was, but not the drivelling dotard that some of his biographers imagine. A man of profound learning, distinguished for attainments far beyond the general range of his contemporaries, he, like Faustus, and the wisest of human kind, had found out how little he knew; had perceived that the great ocean of truth yet lay unexplored before him. Pursuing his inquiries to the bound and limit, as he thought, of human knowledge, and finding it altogether “vanity,” he had recourse to forbidden practices, to experiments through which the occult and hidden qualities of nature and spirit should be unveiled and subdued to his own will.

Evidently prompted to unhallowed intercourse by pride and ambition, he deluded himself with the vain and wicked hope that the God who spurned his impious requests would vouchsafe to him a new and peculiar revelation. He would not bow to the plain and humbling tenets already revealed, but sought another “sign,”—a miraculous testimony to himself alone. Fancying that he was entrusted with a divine mission, he was given up to strong delusions that he should believe a lie. He aimed at universal knowledge and exhaustless riches; but he died imbecile and a beggar!

That he was deceived by Kelly, there is no doubt; and that he was sincere, at least in seeking his own promotion and aggrandisement, is equally certain; but we would rescue his character from the ridicule with which it has been invested. His grasp was greater than his power, and he fell, like heroes and conquerors in all ages, unable to execute, and overwhelmed with the vastness of his own conceptions.

John Dee was born July 13, 1527, in London. His parents were in good circumstances. At an early age (fifteen years) he studied at St John’s College, Cambridge. His application was intense. For three years, by his own account, he only slept four hours every night. Two hours were allowed for meals and recreation, and the rest was spent in learning and devotion. Five years afterwards he went into the Low Countries, for the purpose of conversing with Frisius, Mercator, and others. Returning to Cambridge, he was chosen a fellow of Trinity College, then founded by Henry the Eighth. His reputation stood very high, and his astronomical pursuits, in those days generally connected with astrology, drew upon him the imputation of being a conjuror, which character clung to him through life. This opinion was much strengthened by an accident which, he says, happened soon after his removal from St John’s College, and his being chosen a fellow of Trinity. “Hereupon,” he continues, “I did set forth a Greek comedy of Aristophanes, named in Greek *Ἐιρηνὴ* with the performance of the Scarabæus, or beetle—his flying up to Jupiter’s palace with a man and his basket of victuals

on her back; whereat was great wondering, and many vain reports spread abroad of the means how that was effected.”

He left England again soon afterwards, distinguishing himself at several foreign universities, and attracting the notice of many persons of high rank, amongst which were the Duke of Mantua and Don Lewis de la Cerda (afterwards Duke of Medina Celi). In 1551 he returned to England, being well received by King Edward and his court. A pension of one hundred crowns per annum was granted him, which he afterwards exchanged for the rectory of Upton-upon-Severn.

In Queen Mary’s reign he was accused of some correspondence with the Lady Elizabeth’s servants, and of practising against the Queen’s life by enchantments. He was seized and confined, but acquitted of the charge. He was then turned over to Bonner, to see if heresy might not be found in him. After a tedious prosecution he was set at liberty, August 19, 1555, by an order of the council.

Upon Queen Elizabeth’s accession he was consulted as to a fit day for the coronation, and received many splendid promises of preferment, which were never realised.

In the spring of the year 1564, he made another journey abroad, when he presented to the Emperor Maximilian his book, entitled “*Monas Hieroglyphica*,” printed at Antwerp the same year. He returned to England in the summer, producing several learned works, which showed his extraordinary skill in the mathematics.

In 1571 he went to Lorraine, where, falling very ill, he was honoured with the solicitude of the Queen, who sent two of her physicians, and gave him many other proofs of her regard. Upon his return to England he now settled himself in his own house at Mortlake in Surrey, where he collected a noble library, and prosecuted his studies with great diligence. His collection is said to have consisted of more than four thousand books, nearly a fourth part of them manuscripts, which were afterwards dispersed and lost. This library, and a great number of mathematical and mechanical instruments, were destroyed by the fury of the populace in 1583, who, believing him to be a conjuror, and one that dealt with the devil, broke into his house, and tore and destroyed the fruit of his labours during the forty years preceding.

On the 16th March 1575, Queen Elizabeth, attended by many of her court, visited Dr Dee’s house to see his library; but having buried his wife only a few hours before, he could not entertain her Majesty in the way he wished. However, he brought out a glass, the properties of which he explained to his royal mistress, hoping to wipe off the aspersion, under which he had long laboured, of being a magician.

In 1578 her Majesty being indisposed, Dee was sent abroad to consult with some German physicians about the nature of her complaint. But that part of his life in which he was most known to the world commenced in 1581, when his intercourse began with Edward Kelly. This man pretended to instruct him how to obtain, by means of certain invocations, an intercourse with spirits. Soon afterwards there came to England a Polish lord, Albert Laski, palatine of Siradia, a person of great learning. He was introduced to Dee by the Earl of Leicester, who was now the doctor’s chief patron. Becoming acquainted, Laski prevailed with Dee and Kelly to accompany him to his own country. They went privately from Mortlake, embarking for Holland, from whence they travelled by land through Germany into Poland. On the 3d February 1584, they arrived at the castle of their patron, where they remained for some time.

They afterwards visited the Emperor Rodolphe at Prague. On the 17th April 1585, Laski introduced them to Stephen, king of Poland, at Cracow; but this prince treating them very

coolly, they returned to the emperor's court at Prague, from whence they were banished at the instigation of the Pope's nuncio, who represented them as magicians.

The doctor and his companion afterwards found an asylum in the Castle of Trebona, belonging to Count William, of Rosenberg, where they lived in great splendour for a considerable time. It was said that Kelly had succeeded in procuring the powder of projection, by which they were furnished with money in profusion; but on referring to the doctor's diary, we find the miserable tricks and shifts they resorted to for the purpose of keeping up appearances. Kelly, however, it seems, learned many secrets from the German chemists, which he did not communicate to his patron; and the heart-burnings and jealousies that arose between them at length ended in an absolute rupture.

The fame of their adventures was noised through Europe, and Elizabeth, in consequence, invited Dee home. He was now separated from Kelly, and on the 1st of May 1589, he set out on his return to England. He travelled with great pomp, was attended by a guard of horse, and besides waggons for his goods, had no less than three coaches for the use of his family. He landed at Gravesend on the 23d of November, and on the 9th of December was graciously received at Richmond by the Queen. He found his house at Mortlake had been pillaged, but he collected the scattered remains of his library, and was so successful, by the assistance of his friends, as to recover about three-fourths of his books, estimating his loss at about £400. He had many friends, and received great presents, but was always craving and in want. The Queen sent him money from time to time, promising him two hundred angels at Christmas. One-half he received, but he gave a broad hint that the Queen and himself were defrauded of the rest. He now resolved to apply for some settled subsistence, and sent a memorial by the Countess of Warwick to her Majesty, earnestly requesting that commissioners might be appointed to hear his pretensions and decide upon his claims. Two commissioners were accordingly sent to Mortlake, where Dee showed them a book containing a distinct account of all the memorable transactions of his life, except those which occurred in his last journey abroad. He detailed to them the injuries, damages, and indignities which he had suffered, and humbly supplicated reparation at their hands. The Queen, in consequence, sent 100 marks to Mrs Dee, and promises to her husband. At length, on December 8th, 1594, he obtained a grant of the chancellorship of St Paul's. But this did not answer his expectations, upon which he applied to Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, giving an account of all the books he had either written or published. This, with other applications, led to his being presented with the wardenship of Manchester College, vacant by the removal of Dr William Chaderton to the see of Chester. On the 14th of February 1596, he arrived with his family in that town, and on the 20th he was installed in his new charge. He continued here about seven years, passing his time in a very turbulent and unquiet manner. On the 5th of June 1604, he presented a petition to King James, earnestly desiring that he might be brought to trial and delivered, by a judicial sentence, from those suspicions which his astrological and other inquiries had brought upon him. But the King, knowing the nature of his studies, was very far from showing him any mark of his favour. In November, the same year, he quitted Manchester, returning to his house at Mortlake, where he died, old, infirm, and forsaken of his friends, being very often obliged to sell some book or other to procure a dinner. The following account of Dr Dee's expenses from Trebona to London, copied from a statement in his own handwriting,¹⁷ we have thought too curious to omit:—

“The charges of my last return from beyond seas, A. 1589, being favourably called home by her Majestie from Trebon Castle in Bohemia.

¹⁷ “Johan Glaston,” vol. ii. fol. 535.

600 lib.

“My journey of remove homeward from Trebon Castle to Staden cost me more than 3000 dollars, which we account

120 lib.

“Besides the cost of 15 horses wherewith I travelled all that journey; of which the 12 which drew my 3 coaches were very good and young Hungarian horses, and the other three were Wallachies for the saddles: which 15 cost with one another

60 lib.

“The three new coaches made purposely for my aforesaid journey, with the furniture for the 12 coach-horses, and with the saddles and bridles for the rest, cost more than 3 score pounds

“The charge of wains to carry my goods from Trebon to Staden, they being two and sometimes three (for more easy and light passage in some places), cost above an hundred and ten pounds, which I account (for an hundred of it) under my former sum of 600 lib. Under which 600 lib. also I do account for the charges of the 24 soldiers, well appointed, which, by virtue of the emperor’s passport, I took up in my way from Diepholt, and again from Oldenburgh; the charges of the six harquebusiers and musqueteers, which the Earl of Oldenburgh lent me out of his own garrison there: I gave to one with another a dollar a man for the day, and their meat and drink full. For at the first, 18 enemies, horsemen, well appointed, from Lingen and Wilstrusen, had lain five days attending thereabout, to have sett upon me and mine; and at Oldeborch, a Scot (one of the garrison) gave me warning of an ill-minded company lying and hovering for me in the way which I was to pass, as by a letter may appear here present. Of the former danger, the Landgrave of Hesse his letters unto me may give some evidence.

“The charges of the four Swart Ruiters, very well mounted, and appointed to attend on me at Staden, from Breme, being honourably and very carefully sent unto me by the noble consuls and senators of Breme, and that with a friendly farewell (delivered unto me by the speech of one of their secretaries at my lodgings) need not be specified here what it was. For their going with me in two days to Staden, their abode there, and as much homeward, being in all five days’ charges, 30 dollars.

“This was a very dangerous time to ride abroad in thereabouts, as the merchants of Staden can well remember. The excellent learned theologian, the superintendent of Breme, Mr D. Chrystopher Berzelius his verses, printed the night before that of my going from Breme, and the morning of my departure, openly delivered to me partly, and partly distributed to the company of students and others attending about to see us set forth, and to bid us farewell, may be a memorial of some of my good credit grown in that city, and of the day of my coming from it.

“I will not enlarge my lines to specific what other charges I was at to further some of her Majestie’s servants at my lying at Breme; as 70 dollars given or lent to one Conradus Justus Newbrenner; and about 40 given to gett some letters of great importance brought to our sovereign’s honorable privy council in due time.

10 lib.

“The charge of my freight and passage from Staden to London for my goods, myself, my wife, children, and servants

796 lib.

“So that the sum total of money, spent and laid out, in and for my remove from Trebon to London doth amount to

1510 lib.

“Whereby the whole sum of the former damages and losses

796 lib.

“And the removing charges doth amount (with the least) to

2306 lib.

“Besides the 100 dollars disbursed at Breme for dutiful love to Queen and country.”

One minor occurrence in the following tradition—viz., the loss of the horse—is related by Lilly as happening to another of the fraternity; but we claim it—upon grounds too trivial it might be deemed by some—for the “Doctor.” It is not our intention to spoil a good story by rejecting what we cannot verify. Sufficient for us that the tale exists; though we take the liberty of telling it in our own way.

There came a thin spare man one evening to Dr Dee’s residence in the college at Manchester, where he then dwelt by permission only from the Earl of Derby, though living there in the capacity of warden to the church.

The college being dissolved in the first of Edward VI. (1547), the possessions fell into the hands of that nobleman, who, however, kept ministers at his own charge to officiate in the church. Mary refounded the establishment, restoring the greater part of the lands, but Lord Derby still kept the college house. In 1578 Elizabeth granted a new foundation to the college, appointing her own wardens. Dr Dee, being the third on the new establishment, was installed with great solemnity on the 20th February 1596.

The visitor we have just noticed was muffled in a dark cloak, having a wide and ample collar, which he threw over his head, as though anxious for concealment. The Doctor, having retired into his study, was not to be disturbed; but the stranger was urgent for admission, while Lettice Gostwich, Dee’s help-at-all-work, a pert ungracious slattern, was fully resolved not to permit his access to her master.

“Then since nothing else will do,” said the pertinacious intruder, “convey me this message—to wit, a stranger comes to him on business of great moment regarding his own welfare and that of the matter or event whose *corollarium* he is now studying.”

Lettice, wearied through his importunity, and hoping by compliance to rid herself from these solicitations, went to the Doctor’s private chamber, where, having delivered her message through the thumb-hole of the latch—for on no account would he allow of personal intrusion—to her great surprise, he bade her be gone.

“Show the stranger up-stairs,” said he. “Why hast thou kept him so long tarrying?”

Lettice, with little speed and less good-will, obeyed the Doctor’s behest, grumbling loud at the capricious and uncertain humours of her master.

The visitor was at length ushered into the presence of this celebrated scholar and professor of the celestial sciences, whose predictions at one period astonished Europe; his presence, like some portentous comet, threatening war and disaster, perplexing even emperors and princes, and filling them with apprehension and dismay. But Dee was somewhat fallen from this high and dangerous celebrity. He was become querulous and ill-tempered. Never satisfied with his present condition, but always aiming at some greater thing, he generally contrived to lose what he already possessed. At one time, to control the destinies and acquire the supreme

direction of affairs, either as the High Priest or the Grand Lama of Europe, was not beyond the compass of his thoughts or the scope of his ambition. Now, he was petitioning the Queen for a small increase to his worldly pittance, and an opportunity of clearing himself before her Majesty's council from the foul and slanderous accusations by which he was continually assailed. Yet he had not abandoned his former projects. Though failing in his mission aforesaid to the Emperor of Germany, the King of Poland, and others, to whom he evidently went for political purposes, and with offers of his aid, through the foreknowledge and spiritual intercourse by which he thought himself favoured, yet he still cherished the hope of promotion by such visionary follies. That chimera of the imagination, the invention of the philosopher's stone, still haunted him, and he did not yet despair of one day becoming a ruler among princes, the supreme arbiter and depositary of the fate of nations.

The delusions imposed on him by Kelly, his seer and confederate, had so impressed him with this belief, that he still purposed going abroad on a divine mission, as he called it, and only awaited the auspicious time when his spiritual instructors should point out another seer in Kelly's room, from whom he had been long separated. Though now in his seventy-first year, he was not deterred from making another attempt to reach the goal of his ambition. Such is the folly and madness of these enthusiasts, that, let them be never so often foiled in their inordinate expectations, yet does it in no wise hinder, but, on the contrary, sets them more fully on their desire. Casaubon, in his preface to the account of Dee's intercourse with spirits, gives a strange instance of their infatuation. He says:—

“In the days of Martin Luther, there lived one Michael Stifelius, who applying to himself some place of the Apocalypse, took upon himself to prophesy. He foretold that in the year of the Lord 1533, before the 29th of September, the end of the world and Christ's coming to judgment would be. He did show so much confidence that, some write, Luther himself was somewhat startled at the first. But that day past, he came a second time to Luther, with new calculations, and had digested the whole business into twenty-two articles, the effect of which was to demonstrate that the end of the world would be in October following. But now Luther thought that he had had trial enough, and gave so little credit to him, that he (though he loved the man) silenced him for a time, which our apocalyptic prophet took very ill at his hands, and wondered much at his incredulity. Well, that month and some after that over, our prophet (who had made no little stir in the country by his prophesying) was cast into prison for his obstinacy. After a while Luther visited him, thinking by that time to find him of another mind; but so far was he from acknowledging his error, that he downright railed at Luther for giving him good counsel. And some write, that to his dying day (having lived to the age of eighty years) he never recanted.”

These air-built hopes and projects may in some sort account for the readiness with which Dee admitted the stranger after hearing his message. It seemed to be the very echo of his own thoughts, floating on their dark current, which it quickened by some unknown and mysterious impulse.

The Doctor was sitting in a high and curiously-wrought chair, cushioned with black leather, gilt and ornamented after the antique fashion. His upper garment was of black serge, the neck and breast furred with sables. A cap of the same materials concealed his bald and shining head, giving his pale shrivelled features a peculiar look of learning and hard study. His face was long, and his beard pointed. Age and anxiety were indelibly marked upon his lank visage; but his eye was yet undimmed; small, keen, and restless, it seemed the image of his own insatiable desire, consuming soul and body in the fire and fervour of its inordinate and uncontrolled appetite.

“Thy name?” said Dee sharply, as the stranger bowed himself before the reputed magician.

“Bartholomew Hickman.”

“And thy business?” inquired the Doctor, with an inquisitive glance.

“Since your reverence hath dismissed Kelly, you have been but indifferently served in the capacity of seer; mine errand is to this purport:—If we agree for wages, I will serve you; and I doubt not but my faculty of seeing will equal that of Master Kelly, provided you have a glass whose quality and virtue shall be equivalent.”

“My glass,” replied the Doctor, “is not to be matched throughout the world. Even Cornelius Agrippa had not its like; nor was his famous mirror fit to compare with it. Hast heard aught of its history?”

“I would listen, Master Dee, for my knowledge thereof is but gathered from the vulgar report.”

“Know then,” said Dee, with an air of great pride and complacency, “that my stone was brought by the ministration of angels, in answer to fervent and oft-repeated prayer. One night, as I sate with Kelly, discoursing on the rise and fall of empires, the setting up and the downfall of estates, and many other matters of grave and weighty import, he looked uneasy for a while, saying that he felt a strange sensation, and, as it were, a heavy weight on his right shoulder, as though something sat there. He said a spirit, invisible at that time, was in all likelihood hearkening to our discourse, and wished to communicate with us. He then spake as though to some one behind him, and listened—‘Sayest thou so’ said he; ‘then will I speedily apprise the Doctor.’ He then told me it was the angel Uriel, who would bring us a wonderful glass or crystal, whereby a seer, properly gifted, would be enabled to see many wonderful things; but this surprising faculty I do not possess, by reason of a fiery sign not occupying the cusp of my ascendant and medium cosli. Edward Kelly was, however, permitted to supply this defect, and I might confidently rely, he said, on the truth of those revelations, which I was to note down for the benefit of mankind, and the establishing of a new dispensation upon the earth. None but good angels could enter into this glass, and they would teach me, as he then foretold, many things, whereby, gaining great honour and renown, kings and princes should be reprov’d of me, who was raised up for their sakes. At this revelation I was exceeding glad, and more so on finding the day following in my study this precious gem, which, as I once told the Emperor Rodolph, is of such value that no earthly kingdom is worthy to be ‘compared to the virtue or dignity thereof. I well remember the time,” said Dee, delighting to dwell on these recollections: “I was at Prague, the emperor having sent for me; I went up to the castle, where, in the *Ritterstove*, or guard chamber, I stayed a little; Octavius Spinola, that was the chamberlain, saluted me very courteously, having understood that I was he whom the emperor waited for. Returning to the privy-chamber, he came out again, leading me by the skirt through the dining-chamber and the privy-chamber, where the emperor sat at a table with a great chest and standish of silver, and my book and letters before him. Then craved I pardon, at his Majesty’s hand, for my boldness in sending him my ‘*Monas Hieroglyphica*,’ dedicated to his father; but I did it of the sincere and entire good-will that I bare to his father Maximilian, and also unto his Majesty. He then thanked me very kindly, saying that he knew of my great endowments, and the esteem I had gotten of the learned; of this he had been informed by the Spanish ambassador. He said my book was rather too hard for his capacity; but he heard I had something to say to him, *Quod esset pro sua utilitate*. ‘And so I have,’ I replied, looking back to see first that we were alone. Hereupon, I began to declare how all my lifetime had been spent in learning, and with great pains and cost I had come to the best knowledge that man might attain to in this world. I had found, too, that no man living, neither any book, was able to teach me those truths that I desired and longed for. Therefore I concluded within myself to make intercession and prayer to the Giver of all

wisdom to send unto me knowledge, whereby I might know the nature of His creatures, and also enjoy means to use them to His honour and glory. At length it pleased God to send me His light—the angel Uriel, whereby I was assured of His merciful and gracious answer. For the space of two years and a half, as I told his Majesty, angels had not ceased to minister unto me through this wonderful stone, whose history I related. Furthermore, I said that I had a message from them unto his, Majesty. ‘The angel of the Lord hath appeared unto me,’ I cried, ‘and hath rebuked you for your sins; if you will hear, and believe me, you shall triumph; if you will not hear, the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, under whom you breathe and have your being, putteth His foot against your breast, and will throw you headlong from your seat.’ Moreover, I said that if he would listen to me, and take me for his counsellor, his kingdom should be established, so that there would be none like unto it throughout the world. I was commanded, likewise, to show him the nature of the holy vision, and the manner thereof, which he might witness, and hear the words, though he could not see the fashion of the creatures in the glass. He thanked me, and said that he would thenceforward take me to his recommendation and care. Some more promises he used, though I could not well understand them, he spake so low. Perceiving, now, that he wished to make an end for this time, I made my obeisance and departed. But mark the favour of princes!—through the cabals of some, and the intrigues of his favourite and physician, one Doctor Curtz, who was fearful of my displacing him,—in the end I was not only prevented from further access to his Majesty, but banished the empire! Go to, go to,” said Dee, much troubled at these thoughts, “I am something too much affected of these vain impressions, and the pomp of these earthly ones.”

He arose, lifting an ebony cabinet on the table, which he unlocked with great solemnity. During this operation he fell to muttering many prayers; and with an air of great reverence he took out a richly-embossed casket, which being opened, there was displayed a fair crystal of an egg-shaped form, on which he gazed with a long and silent delight.

“A treasure beyond all price,” said Bartholomew, eyeing it with rapture.

“Even so,” said Dee, “and, by the grace of the Giver, I do hope to profit by it. Once it was removed from me. Listen. It was in the little chapel, or oratory, next the chambers which Lord William of Rosenberg had allotted us in his castle at Trebona. I had set the stone in its wonted place upon the table, or altar as we called it, when Kelly saw a great flame in the stone, which thing though he told me, I made no end of my usual prayer. But suddenly one seemed to come in at the south window of the chapel, right opposite to Kelly, while the stone was heaved up without hands, and set down again; wonderful to behold. After which I saw the man who came in at the window; he had his lower parts in a cloud, and, with open arms, flew towards Kelly; at which sight he shrunk back, and the creature took up between both hands the stone with its frame of gold, and mounted up the way he came. Kelly caught at it, but could not touch it; thereupon he was grievously alarmed, and had the *tremor cordis* for a good while after.¹⁸ This my angelical stone being taken away, I was mightily troubled, for the other stones in my possession being made through man’s skill and device, I had not a safe warranty of their virtue, so that I might confidently trust in what they should disclose. I was afraid, too, of the intrusion of wicked spirits into them, who might impose on me with their delusions. This happened on a Friday, being the 24th of April 1587, as I find it recorded in my diary. But mark the manner of its return! The following month, on the 22d day, and on the same day of the week, about four hours post meridian, as I and Kelly were walking out through the orchard, down the river-side, he saw two little men fighting there furiously with swords; and one said to the other, ‘*Thou hast beguiled me.*’ As I drew near they did not abate their heat, but the fray seemed to wax even hotter than before. I at length said, ‘*Good friends,*

¹⁸ Vide Casaubon’s folio concerning Dee’s intercourse with spirits.

let me take up the matter between you;’ whereupon they stayed, the elder of them saying, ‘*I sent a present to thy wife, and this fellow hath taken it away,*’ With this, they again fought until the other was wounded in his thigh, which seemed to bleed. Being in great pain, he took out of his bosom something that I guessed to be the very treasure that I had lost. ‘*Now will I make thee return it,*’ said the first speaker; with that the other, who was wounded, seemed to go suddenly out of sight, but came again ere I could answer a word. The elder of them then asked him, saying, ‘*Hast thou laid it under the right pillow of the bed where he lay yesternight?*’ With these words they both went towards a willow-tree on the right, by the new stairs, which tree seemed to cleave open, and as they went in it closed, and I never saw them more. With great haste I returned to my chamber, where, lifting up the right pillow, I found my precious stone; being greatly rejoiced, together with my wife, who joined me in thanking God for its return.”¹⁹

“An exceeding comfortable and gracious providence: being preserved, I doubt not, from the evil ones,” said Bartholomew Hickman. “But I would fain give you a sample of my skill, if so be that you will prepare the crystal, charging it with due care and attention.”

Then did the Doctor betake himself to the performance of sundry strange rites, consisting of many absurd forms and hard speeches, ever and anon ejaculating a fervent prayer for success, and a petition against doubt and deception. He spread a fair carpet on the table, disposing the candlesticks on each side, and a little behind the crystal. This was placed upon a cushion of black silk, a crucifix near, and the psalter before it, open at the service for the departed. After a profound silence for about the space of half an hour, Dee looked towards his visitor as if expecting that he should begin. The seer threw off his upper garment, and kneeling down, clad only in a short tunic of gray cloth, without ruff or belt, he betook himself, though with some agitation, to the repeating of a few short Latin prayers, intermingled with cabalistical jargon, and scraps of some unknown and uncouth tongue. The Doctor gave special heed thereto, hearkening as though not over-credulous in the boasted skill of his visitor. Presently the latter put his face close to the stone, binding it before his eyes with a white napkin, his head still resting on the table. Dee asked him softly, “What seest thou?”

“Nothing,” said Bartholomew.

“Is the curtain not yet visible in the stone?”

“I cannot even see the curtain,” replied the seer; “for all is dark.”

Then Dee began to pray earnestly that some of his former friends might appear, whom he called by many outlandish names, such as *Ave*, *Nalvage*, *Madini*, and others. Immediately Bartholomew cried out—

“I see a glimmer!—Soft!”

The Doctor scarcely durst breathe, fearing to interrupt the opening of the vision.

“I see a golden curtain, partly drawn aside.”

“The charge beginneth to work,” said Dee. “‘Tis the very appearance that was always vouchsafed to Kelly ere the spirits showed themselves in the glass. Note well what thou seest.”

“There appeareth a white cloud, as a curdly vapour wreathing itself about a pillar of burning brass, but no creature is visible.—I hear a voice!”

¹⁹ Casaubon.

“Mark the words and repeat them steadily,” said the Doctor, who drew nearer that he might hear the purport of the revelation.

“*Sanctum signatum et ad tempus*,” said the voice.

“The sense of this may be understood diversely. By which sense may we be guided?” said Dee, as though speaking to some invisible thing within the glass. Presently the seer again repeated—

“‘*Sanctum, quia hoc velle suum; sigillatum, quid determinatum ad tempus*,’ the voice ceaseth:—but these be hard speeches, Master Dee. I hear again, ‘*Ad tempus et ad tempus (inquam) quia rerum consummatio—All things are at hand—*

“‘*The seat is prepared
Justice hath determined.
The time is short.*’”

“Seest thou no creature?” anxiously inquired the Doctor.

“None. But the pillar openeth as though it were cleft. Now a woman cometh forth out of the pedestal, covered with a cloud. I can see her face dimly at times through this veil, which seemeth to pass over as a thin cloud before the dazzling sun. She standeth as though in a hollow shell, glistening with such fair colours that no earthly brightness may be comparable to it. She now seemeth to wrap the air about her as a garment. She entereth into a thick cloud and disappears. There now cometh one like unto a little girl, her hair turned up before, and flowing behind in long and bright curls. Her raiment sparkles like unto changeable silk, green and red.”

“‘Tis *Madini*,” said Dee, with great delight. “Note well what she sayeth, for she is my good angel.”

“She sitteth down. Her lips move as though she were speaking, but I hear nothing.”

“I will speak to her,” said Dee; “for she will answer me through thy ministry, if it really be *Madini*. Art thou *Madini*, that has appeared to me beforetime?”

“I think she answereth, ‘Yes.’ But her voice is very feeble.”

“I would thou shouldest resolve me three things,” said the Doctor, again addressing himself towards the glass. “To wit—Whereto shall I direct my journey, and how shall I cause it to prosper? Secondly, I would speedily be instructed in that great and heavenly mystery, the powder of projection, which I have been oft promised, but never understood aright by reason of my feeble apprehensions, or inability to accomplish the grand and sublime arcanum. Thirdly, How may I find the treasure which was shown to me in a dream three several times; but where it is hidden is withheld from me?”

“She says she will answer so far as the will of him that sent her will permit; but she hath a short continuance, and her answer must be brief. With respect to the country, make thine own choice, and thou shalt be directed in it for thy good. The other questions she says she cannot solve, but will send one of the seven who bear rule over the seals of the metals and their matrix. She hath departed, yet I saw her not. She went like a sudden stroke of light; and now there cometh a man clad in sober apparel, with an inkhorn at his girdle. He holdeth a pen, as though he would write, but his face is veiled.”

“‘Tis a motion that I should bring my tablets,” said the Doctor.

“Now he is writing,” continued the seer. “He sheweth me a roll of parchment. But the glass becometh dim, and I think that evil spirits are troubling us, for the whole seems to waver, like the glowing air over the furnace.”

The Doctor now fell to his prayers, when Bartholomew assured him the glass grew brighter, gradually becoming still, like the subsiding of waves after some accidental disturbance. He could now see the writing distinctly, and the veil was also removed.

“Give me the words to the very letter,” said Dee earnestly, as he prepared to write.

“It runs thus:—’The most noble and divine magister; the beginning and continuation of life. Watch well, and gather him so at the highest; for in one hour he descendeth or ascendeth from the purpose.

“Take common Audcal, purge and work it by Rlodnr, of four divers digestions, continuing the last digestion for fourteen days in one and a swift proportion, until it be Dlasod fixed, a most red and luminous body, the image of resurrection. Take also Lulo of Red Roxtan, and work him through the four fiery degrees, until thou have his Audcal, and then gather him. Then double every degree of your Rlodnr, and by the law of mixture and conjunction work them diligently together. Notwithstanding backward through every degree, multiply the lower and last Rlodnr, his due office finished by one degree more than the highest. So doth it become Darr, the thing you seek for; a holy, just, glorious, red, and dignified Dlasod.”

“Methinks I have heard this before,” said Dee, “and understood it not. I am truly in great perplexity for want of money; but still I understand not the purport of these symbols, the which, I beseech thee, now vouchsafe to thine unworthy servant.”

“See thou take the season,” said the voice, “and get her while it is yet time. If ye let the harvest pass, ye shall desire to gather and shall not be able.”

“Take pity on mine infirmities, and make it plain,” supplicated the Doctor, who now began to fear the usual evasions and disappointments.

“Before I go,” replied the vision, “I will not be hidden from thee. Read thy lesson.”

“I read, ‘Take common Audcal’ and so on.”

“What is Audcal?’ inquireth the spirit.”

“Alas! I know not; but thou knowest.”

“It is gold, and Dlasod is sulphur.”

“Take also, it says, Lulo of Red Roxtan.”

“Roxtan is pure and simple wine in herself, and Lulo is her mother.”

“There is yet in these words no slight ambiguity.”

“Lulo is tartar of red wine, and Audcal is his mercury. Darr, in the angelical tongue, is the true name of the stone.”

“He said before that Audcal was gold,” said Dee, addressing the seer.

“Be thankful,” replied Bartholomew, “and keep what thou hast received.”

The Doctor was for the present satisfied; but a little reflection afterwards, and another trial, left him as ignorant and as poor as ever.

He now returned thanks in the Latin tongue, it being his general custom at the end of each revelation, or motion, as it was called.

“*Deo nostro omnipotenti sit omnis Laus, Honor, Gloria, et Jubilatio.*” Unto which the seer responded, “Amen.”

“Now for the third question.”

“He goeth to one side,” said Bartholomew, “and the curtain hideth him. Now he returneth, leading an old man blindfolded, who answereth him in manner following, as though to questions put by the first:—‘It is within, and by a garden belonging to the new lodge in Aldport Park. It is in three parts or places.’ He now seems to pause. Again he speaks—‘Many roots and trees do hinder the gathering of it; but if he be wise, and understand these things, he may obtain his pleasure. One part was laid by Sir James Stanley, the warden, an hundred years ago. Another portion was hidden by an aged nun. The remainder was left by the Romans, and may be found under the foundations of the castle in the park. The time is short, and the treasure guarded; but he shall overcome. Listen:—’*Nine with twice seven northerly, and ACER shall disappear. The mystical number added to the number enfolding itself; this shall be added to its own towards the rising sun. Then turn half-round, and note well thy right foot. What thou seest gather, and it shall lead thee on to perfection*’”

“Ask him the amount or worth of the treasure,” said Dee, whose cupidity gloated over the bare thoughts of this vast hoard.

“He says, it is ‘two thousand and a half, besides odd money.’”

“How? In gold or silver?”

“‘More than three parts thereof are in gold.’”

“Most humbly and heartily do I thank thee, oh”——

Dee was opening out another form of thanksgiving, when the seer interrupted his hypocritical and blasphemous addresses.

“The old man goeth aside, groping his way as though it were dark. Now all is dim, and the curtain covereth the stone, by which we are warned to retire.”

The needful and concluding ceremonies being gone through, the crystal was returned to its place. After pondering awhile, the Doctor put many questions to his guest about his residence, worldly calling, and so forth. He offered him £50 yearly, besides lodging, and a fair proportion of gold when the celestial and highest projection should be completed. Bartholomew was not hard at making a bargain, and the Doctor began to hope that, by a patient waiting and trust in the efficacy of these strange delusions, he should at length accomplish his desires.

A low tap at the door again betokened the presence of Lettice, who came to announce a warm friend of the Doctor’s, one Master Eccleston. On being admitted, the latter brought with him a low, ferret-eyed personage, whose leering aspect betrayed an inward consciousness of great cunning and self-satisfaction therewith. Dee received his guests with becoming dignity, inquiring to what good fortune he was indebted for their visit.

“Thou mayest remain, Hickman,” said he to his new acquaintance.

Eccleston proceeded to business as follows:—

“You may readily remember that I once happened a sore mischance—to wit, by losing a horse I had but lately bought, and which, through your good offices, kindly and without fee administered, I again got back, to my great joy and comfort. I was telling of this but few days ago to a friend of mine, one Barnabas Hardcastle, whom I have made bold to bring before your reverence. He but laughed at me for my pains, and would in no wise believe it, but mark

how he was served! Within this hour, he tells me that he has lost his mare, and would fain have the like help to its recovery.”

“Hast thou lost thy beast?” inquired the Doctor.

“Verily I have,” said Barnabas, making a respectful acknowledgment to the Doctor’s dignified address. “It was but this morning she was safe as Mancastle is in the dirt, hard by Mr Lever’s house yonder, in the fields. ‘Tis a grievous loss, Master Dee, seeing that I was offered a score of pounds for the beast last Martinmas.”

The Doctor opened his tables, and erected a scheme or figure of the heavens, to the very minute when this communication was made. Ere it was finished he gave a sharp and shrewd glance at the stranger, saying—

“The latter part of the sign Scorpio ascendeth, and it is not safe to give judgment. Mars, lord thereof, is in evil aspect with Venus, lady of the seventh and sixth likewise, or house of servants. Yet is Mercury lord of the tenth, and free from affliction. I will therefore try my skill, though I should fail. The beast thou lackest is either taken by a servant or lost through his neglect. Stay. The Dragon’s Tail, which I have just placed, being located in the seventh, thy mare is certainly lost, and will never be recovered.”

Dee looked earnestly at the man, who, gathering his features into a grin of contempt, could scarcely refrain from an unmannerly burst of laughter.

“Now, o’ my troth,” said he, “I was but minded to try the skill of your prophet, and to show your folly. The roan mare is safe, and I left her but an hour ago with my lad, who is walking her to and fro just out of the town-fields by Withy Grove, until I have done mine errand.”

“Thou art a bold man to say so,” replied the Doctor angrily, and with a glance as though it were meant to annihilate this contemner of the celestial art. “I tell thee she is lost, and shall never be got back: a reward thou hast well earned for thy folly.”

With a scornful and malicious grin did Master Barnabas receive this denunciation, taking his departure with little ceremony, as if fearful of some mischance. Eccleston, much scandalised at his friend’s proceedings, followed him down-stairs, not caring to stay longer with the Doctor.

As Bartholomew and he sate discoursing on the future, and forming many projects, more particularly about the hidden treasures, without which, Dee said, he could not continue his search for the elixir, as he was nigh beggared, they heard a swift footstep on the stairs. Presently in rushed Eccleston followed by Lettice, who strove to prevent this intrusion. The Doctor frowned on his entrance, but, Eccleston, breathless and much agitated, could with difficulty declare his errand.

“Hardcastle—Hardcastle—I say. He has lost his beast.”

“Why, I told him so,” said the Doctor, with great composure.

“But he *has* lost her!”

“I know it,” replied Dee.

“I have just left him in great anger, swearing by things both visible and invisible that he will have his own again; that we are confederate in the matter: and that he will cite us both before the chapter or the Star-Chamber.”

“How hath it happened?” said Dee, scrawling listlessly with his pen.

“I went with him to the boy, thinking I would see the end on’t. By the way he did use many taunts and ill-natured speeches about my pursuit after the great arcanum, and belief in the celestial sciences; together with many unpleasant hints that the money we have expended in the adventure will never be got back. Discoursing thus, we came near to the place where he expected to find the boy. Sure enough he was there, and fast asleep on the ground; but the mare was gone, the bridle being left on the lad’s arm, which his master banged about his shoulders until he awaked. Pray, Master Dee, be pleased to help him to his mare. I owe him moneys, for which he, taking advantage of the debt, may put me in prison.”

“The scoffer shall not go unpunished, nor shall he that revileth partake of the blessing. Go thy way, and tell him he may not recover his goods.”

Eccleston departed with this heavy message, and Bartholomew was again left communing with the Doctor.

The matter that still occupied their thoughts was the treasure at Aldport Lodge. With this in their possession they might reasonably expect that great progress would be made in their search for the philosopher’s stone and the vivifying elixir. These important articles obtained, the hidden secrets of nature would be at their command, and their schemes and wishes might then be pursued with the certainty of success. The night but one following, at the precise time when the moon came to a trine aspect with Saturn and Jupiter, was appointed for the discovery. The hour of Saturn commenced five minutes before midnight, and the heavenly influences were then singularly disposed in favour of their undertaking.

With dazzling anticipations of future prosperity and success they separated: one to indulge in dreams so chimerical and vast that even Fancy herself drew back, dazzled with her own brightness; the other to an obscure lodging in the Old Millgate, where he committed himself to the keeping of a straw pallet and a coverlet of which the rats had for some time before held undisputed possession.

The night fixed upon for their search proved drizzling and misty. Bartholomew, wrapped in a thick cloak, sallied out of a low postern towards the college. The path was more dangerous and uneven than at present, and many a grim witness of good-fellowship with his clay had the red cloth hose of Master Bartholomew Hickman ere he arrived at the arched doorway which admitted him into Dee’s lodging. We have no means of ascertaining with any degree of certainty the musings and ruminations of the seer in his progress, not having the power, or skill it may be, like unto many profound and praiseworthy historians, who can portray the form and colour of the mind as well as the cut and capacity of the doublet. Suffice it to say, that he was so fully occupied in conning over his errand as not to be aware that a certain malicious personage was dodging his steps—to wit, our worthy owner of the mare, Barnabas Hardcastle, who kept a strict watch about the premises, hoping to find some clue to the discovery of his beast.

An hour elapsed ere they came forth; the Doctor bearing a covered light, and after him the little spare form of Bartholomew Hickham, carrying under his cloak sundry implements for the search.

Passing through the churchyard, they turned into the Dean’s Gate, creeping near the houses, whose overhanging gables poured down a copious shower from their dripping eaves. The streets echoed but to the tread of these adventurers, and to the howl of a solitary watch-dog roused by their approach. They passed the gate without difficulty; the Doctor was supposed to have been called forth on clerical duties, and the porter accordingly permitted their egress, merely inquiring the probable time of their return.

A few straggling houses were built nigh to the ditch and outworks; beyond these the way was open towards the park. Here they arrived in due time, entering in by a side wicket, which led them round to the back part of the house by the gardens.

The proprietorship of the Lodge had latterly fallen to the lot of Edward Mosley, by a deed of partition between his brother Oswald Mosley and himself, a mercer of great note in Manchester, one Adam Smythe; these parties having purchased, jointly, the lands of Nether and Over Aldport from Thomas Rowe of Hartford, who had them of Sir Randle Brereton, the next purchaser from William, Earl of Derby. The house and grounds, about ninety-five acres, of Nether and Over Aldport, formerly belonged to the warden of the college for the time being, and were held, by a rent of four marks per annum only, from the Lord de la Warre. It was enjoyed uninterruptedly by them until the dissolution of this community in the first of Edward VI., when it was granted to the Earl of Derby along with the rest of the college lands.

Elizabeth, however, in the twenty-first year of her reign, granted a new foundation to the college: but the Earl of Derby, who still kept possession of the college-house and some portion of the lands, suffered the warden and ministers for some time to lodge there.

The house at Aldport was moated round, and a drawbridge stood before the main entrance. The mansion was built of timber and plaster, with huge projecting stone chimneys, gable ends, and deep casements—a fitting residence in those days for rank and nobility.

Outside the moat was an extensive garden, laid out in a sumptuous style, beyond which appeared a mound of considerable elevation and extent, the site of Mancastle, famous in history as one of the strongholds of the Romans, some account of which may be found in the legend of “Sir Tarquin.”

“I have been thinking,” said Dee, after being silent for a space, “that no savour of dishonesty can attach to our appropriation of this great treasure, seeing the house and all this fair and goodly inheritance did once appertain to the wardens of our college, of which patrimony we have been most unjustly deprived by the statute of King Edward. My gracious mistress, our Queen, not having reinstated me into this my lawful possession, I have made bold to remind her Majesty of our wrongs, and to supplicate her clemency thereupon.”

Bartholomew felt fully satisfied of the right they had to these spoils, his conscience being easily quieted on the score of appropriation.

“The rain becomes heavier, and it is more chill and showery than before. The mist, too, is driving north-east,” said the Doctor. “The clouds are cumbrous and broken, coiling, as they roll, into huge masses that will ere long bring some of the dark Atlantic on their tails. Seest thou not, Bartholomew, as though it were a grim pile of hills on the horizon?”

“I see as it might be a heavy wall of clouds gathering about us; and I think the wind comes on more fitful and squally. These heavy lunges betoken an angry and vicious humour in the air that will not be long in bursting.”

“We shall have it about our ears speedily. We must to work while it is yet a-brewing below.”

The dark pointed roofs and chimneys of the Lodge might be distinguished in grotesque masses, changeless and unvarying, against the ever-shifting darkness of the sky. A pale star sometimes looked out as if by stealth, but was obscured almost ere its brightness could be developed. The wind, as it rushed by, broke into short and irregular gusts, like scouts from the main body, betokening its approach. The rain had ceased, save a few hasty drops at intervals plashing heavily on the moat.

“What is that?” said Bartholomew in a whisper, pointing to the water. A light had glanced on its surface, and as suddenly had it disappeared.

“Again!” Dee smiled as he looked upwards to a star just twinkling through the cloud. Like some benignant spirit, as it alighted on the dark bosom of the moat, the short sharp gust fluttering over, it seemed to hover there for a while ere it departed.

Turning out of the path, they approached a thick yew-tree flanking one corner of the garden.

“I think we may climb here, Master Dee, with little risk;—there seems a fair gap beside its trunk.”

They scrambled up a high bank, thrusting themselves, with some difficulty, through the opening. The Doctor now, looking round, began to recite his instructions:—“*Nine with twice seven northerly, and ACER, shall disappear. The mystical number added to the number enfolding itself. This shall be added to its own, towards the rising of the sun. Then turn half-round, and note well thy right foot;—what thou seest gather, and it shall lead thee on to perfection.*’ Good; but from what point shall we begin to count?” said the divine, in great perplexity.

“I know not,” said Bartholomew, “unless it be from the sycamore tree at the opposite corner yonder by the old wall.”

“Thou knowest the ground hereabout?” said the Doctor hastily.

“Peradventure I may,” replied the other. “Being told aforetime of treasure that was hidden, I have wandered often, at odd times, round the garden.”

“Lead the way, then; it may be this same Acer is the tree of which thou speakest. Time passes, and I would not miss this lucky hour for all my hopes of preferment.”

Preceded by his guide, the Doctor soon came within range of a noble sycamore that threw out its huge branches in all the pride of a long and undisturbed occupation.

“‘Nine with twice seven northerly, and Acer shall disappear.’ Shall I stride the ground so many steps, or is there a mystic and hidden signification couched in these numbers?”

“I know not,” said Bartholomew; “but we had best make the trial.”

The Doctor, with great earnestness, began to stride out the number northerly, but the sycamore did not disappear; its long bare boughs were still seen throwing out their leafless and haggard extremities against the lowering sky.

They now took counsel, when Bartholomew suggested that, as numbers were often used symbolically, they must look elsewhere for a solution. It might be the exact number of trees lying between the great sycamore and the place signified. “And there they be,” said the seer, pointing to a goodly row of small twigs newly planted. “Now count them northerly, beginning as at first.”

This being done, the Doctor was greatly comforted on finding himself fairly soused up to the knees in a deep ditch or drain, from whence all appearance of the sycamore was effectually excluded.

“Now,” said the adept, still standing as before, “the mystical number, which is three, added to the most excellent number, which I take to be three times three, or the number enfolding itself, will make twelve; but there be no trees eastward, or towards the rising sun.”

“Then try the steps once more,” said Bartholomew, “and take heed they are of the right length,—proper easy-going steps. Stay, I will count them myself.”

Leaving his companion in the ditch, the seer counted forth his number with due care, halting at the last step.

“Now stand in my place, turn half-round, and gather from thy right foot.”

Dee, having cleared the bog, placed himself in the required position. Stooping down, he groped diligently by his right foot, but was aware of nothing but a crabbed stump, that resisted every attempt they could use for its dislodgment.

“Bring the mattock,” said the Doctor, cautiously uncovering the light. But though Bartholomew tugged with great energy, the Doctor helping, it was to little purpose, for the stump was immovable.

“We had best try the probe.” Saying this, the warder drew forth an instrument in shape something like unto a large auger. He could by this means easily ascertain if anything hard were below, or any symptoms of concealed treasure. As they were thus engaged a hollow voice, to their terrified apprehensions issuing from the ground, cried out—

“Hold!”

The treasure-hunters came to a full pause. The wind and rain at the same time beat so heavily they could not ascertain the sequel to this injunction.

“‘Tis Nargal, the spirit who guards hidden treasures,” said Dee: “we can approach him only by prayers and fumigations.”

“Then must we return?” said Bartholomew, apparently unwilling to desist.

“Hark!” said the Doctor, listening.

They heard a moan, as that of some one in great pain. Presently a faint shriek stole through a pause in the blast.

“‘Tis like the groan of a mandrake,” he continued: “they do ever lament and bewail thus when gathered. I doubt not but this tree is of that accursed nature.”

Again the voice was articulate.

“To-morrow thou mayest return at this hour; but I will not yield my treasure save thou bring me gold!”

“Who art thou?”

“I am the guardian of the treasure; and

“Gold I have. Bring gold with thee;

Or thou shalt get no gold from me.”

“What is thy demand?” inquired Dee, in a hollow voice, like that of an exorcist.

“Prop thy purse with fifty nobles;—then dig, and I will tell thee.”

The two worthies were somewhat startled at this demand. It was more than their joint forces could muster. Yet two thousand and more broad pieces, besides other valuables, which lay there for the gathering, was too profitable a return to make them easily give up the adventure. Accordingly, after some further questions which the demon as resolutely refused to answer, they departed, first replacing the earth and other matters they had disturbed, in their former position.

Early on the following morning the eager divine applied to his friend Eccleston for another loan, assuring him it was the last; while from the produce of the treasure he would be enabled

to pay his former advances, with a copious interest thereon. The needy expectant was loath to furnish him with another supply, though in the end he was prevailed on to borrow from his friends, at an exorbitant interest, for one day only.

This important preliminary being arranged, the night was anxiously awaited, and though more than usually tardy in its approach, twilight at length threw her mantle of grey over the world's cares and perplexities, and night, that universal coverlet of all things, whether good or evil, did wrap them gently about.

And a night of more loveliness and lustre never was unveiled to the eye of mortals.

The stars were walking in brightness—so clear and sparkling that each seemed a ray or an emblem of that ineffably glorious Beam whose uncreated splendour no eye can see and live. Those bright clusters that we now behold have been the same through all generations, and they have seen “all things that are done under the sun.” Fixed as the everlasting hills, their bounds and their habitation have been unchanged. The same lights were in the heavens when Abraham looked up from the plains of Mamre, as now when the Arab and the Ishmaelite are in the desert. The bands of Orion are not loosed, nor the sweet influences of the Pleiades unbound. The same glittering groups which the patriarch beheld beam nightly on our tabernacles. They have shone upon the world's heroes and the world's demigods—bright links in the oblivion of ages. And the numerous hosts we gaze upon will present the same glowing and immutable forms to cheer and gladden the eyes and hearts of coming generations.

Some feeling of this nature was probably rising in the Doctor's bosom as they once more took the open path to Aldport, and he looked on the wide hemisphere about him—the heavens, with their glowing constellations, all spread out without an obscurity or an obstruction. He felt for one moment the folly and futility of earthly things, and his heart seemed to wither in the immensity into which it was plunged.

It was like a faint glimpse of eternity, and he shrunk back from the abyss, all his own vast world of thought, feeling, and desire, lost in that immeasurable space. But the dazzling dream of ambition again passed before him. The portals of universal empire and immortality were thrown open. He drove back the unwelcome intruder, but the phantom he pursued again fluttered from his grasp.

They had marked the spot on their former visit, and Dee, with the fifty gold pieces in his purse, Bartholomew Hickman acting as chief workman, began his unholy proceedings: not, however, without some fear of the demon whom these moneys were to propitiate. Bartholomew laboured with great diligence, but the earth was much easier to remove than before, and the old stump soon gave way, making but a slight resistance. This was attributed to some charm wrought by the treasure they carried, and was looked upon as a favourable omen—an unloosing of the fetters which guarded the deposit. Every spadeful of earth was carefully examined, and the probe thrust down anxiously and with great caution. About a yard in depth had been taken away when the spade struck upon something hard. The strokes were redoubled, and a narrow flag appeared. Raising this obstacle they beheld a wooden coffer. Dee sung out a Latin prayer as usual; for he failed not to pour out his thanks with great fervour for any selfish indulgence that fell in his way, or, as he imagined, was granted to him by the special favour of Heaven.

“There,” said Bartholomew, raising the box, which from its weight and capacity promised a rich reward, “I think we have now what will season our labours well. What think you, Master Dee?”

But the Doctor was absorbed in visions of future greatness, now bursting on him with a glory and rapidity almost painful to contemplate. He seized the shrine, scarcely giving his helpmate time to fill up and conceal their depredations.

“But the fifty pieces—have you got them safe?” inquired Bartholomew.

“They are in my pouch. I do think the demon hath forgotten to demand them.”

“Fear not, he will be ready enough to ask for his own. What comes o’er the devil’s back will sooner or later go under his belly!”

“Let us pack and begone,” said the Doctor, fearful of losing his treasure.

The box was presently swung over the seer’s shoulders, Dee following to keep all safe, though not without many apprehensions and misgivings of heart. He feared lest the spirit might appear again for his own; or, at least, for the fifty pieces of gold, which were his right.

Just as they came to the gap by the yew-tree, and Bartholomew was resting against the trunk, a voice from behind them shouted—

“Stop!—What make ye here, ye villains?”

Dee turned round and the light flashed upon two armed men, masked, who evidently came towards them with no friendly intent.

“Put down that box,” said the foremost.

Bartholomew was proceeding to surrender at discretion, but Dee first inquired their errand.

“We can tell ye that in a twinkling,” said the malicious intruders, “after we have stepped up to the lodge, and given them a pretty guess at the quality of the knaves who be robbing of their garden. Nay, Doctor, we take no excuse, unless we take our share of the spoil with it. To work, or ye budge not hence without discovery.”

This was a provoking interruption—their all depended on a favourable issue to this adventure. Dee therefore offered terms of capitulation as follows:—

“I’ll give you five-and-twenty gold pieces on the spot if ye will let us pass.”

“Five-and-twenty!—why, that box may hold five-and-twenty hundred,” said the freebooter with a whistle, by way of derision.

“Perhaps not,” said the Doctor, warily; “it is not yet tried, and may not be opened here without risk. Come to my lodgings to-morrow, and we will share in the product.”

“Nay,” returned the rogue, sharply, “a pullet in the pen is worth a hundred in the fen. Come, we will deal kindly with thee: give us fifty, and pass on.”

Dee willingly opened his pouch, and threw the gold into the fellow’s greasy cap, which he held out for the purpose. Immediately they took to their heels and departed.

“The demon was more kind, and of a different nature from those that do generally haunt these hidden treasures,” said the Doctor, as he trudged along, following closely at Bartholomew’s heels. “If he had not warned me to bring the gold, these thieves must needs have opened the box. Had they seen the vast hoard which it contains I should not have been released for thrice the sum.”

With mutual congratulations on their good fortune, and many pious thanksgivings on the part of Dee, they arrived, without farther molestation, at the college, where Lettice was ill-humouredly awaiting their return.

Bartholomew threw down his burden in the study, where the Doctor, cautiously guarding against intrusion, wrenched open the chest. His rage and agony may be conceived when he found the treasure transformed into a heap of stones, bearing the following malicious doggerel on their front:—

“My mare is lost, but I’ve the gold;
My mare is better lost than sold.
Full fifty pieces, broad and bright,
My bullies bring me home to-night.
My trap is baited!—
Springs it well,
I get the kernel, thou the shell!
“From thy loving,
“BARNABUS HARDCASTLE, *Armiger*.”

XII. The Seer

“*Petruchio*. Pray, have you not a daughter
Call’d Katharina, fair and virtuous?

Baptista. I have a daughter, sir, call’d Katharina,”

Taming of the Shrew, Act II. Scene I.

“What sudden chance is this, quoth he,
That I to love must subject be,
Which never thereto would agree,
But still did it defie?”

King Cophetua and the Beggar-maid.

“Yet she was coy, and would not believe
That he did love her so;
No, nor at any time would she
Any countenance to him show.”

The Bailiff’s Daughter of Islington.

The wonderful exploits of Edward Kelly, one of which is recorded in the following narrative, would, if collected, fill a volume of no ordinary dimensions. He was for a considerable time the companion and associate of John Dee, by courtesy called Doctor, from his great acquirements, performing for him the office of seer, a faculty not possessed by Dee, who was in consequence obliged to have recourse to Kelly for the revelations he has published respecting the world of spirits. These curious transactions may be found in Casaubon’s work, entitled “A true and faithful Relation of what passed for many Years between Dr John Dee and some Spirits,”—opening out another dark page in the history of imposture and credulity. Dee says that he was brought into unison with Kelly by the mediation of the angel Uriel. Afterwards he found himself deceived by him in his opinion that these spirits, which ministered unto him, were messengers of the Deity. They had several quarrels before-time; but when he found Kelly degenerating into the worst species of the magic art for purposes of avarice and fraud, he broke off all connection with him, and would never afterwards be seen in his company. Kelly, being discountenanced by the Doctor, betook himself to the meanest practices of magic, in all which money and the works of the devil appear to have been his chief aim. Many wicked and abominable transactions are recorded of him. Wever, in his “Funereal Monuments,” records that Kelly, in company with one Paul Waring, who acted with him in all his conjurations, went to the churchyard of Walton-le-Dale, near Preston, where they had information of a person being interred who was supposed to have hidden a considerable sum of money, and to have died without disclosing where it was deposited. They entered the churchyard exactly at midnight, and having had the grave pointed out in the preceding day, they opened it and the coffin, exorcising the spirit of the deceased until it again animated the body, which rose out of the grave and stood upright before them. It not only satisfied their wicked desires, it is said, but delivered several strange predictions concerning persons in the neighbourhood, which were literally and exactly fulfilled.

In “Lilly’s Memoirs” we have the following account of him:—

“Kelly outwent the Doctor—viz., about the elixir and philosopher’s stone, which neither he nor his master attained by their own labour and industry. It was in this manner Kelly obtained

it, as I had it related from an ancient minister, who new the certainty thereof from an old English merchant resident in Germany, at what time both Kelly and Dee were there.

“Dee and Kelly being on the confines of the emperor’s dominions, in a city where resided many English merchants, with whom they had much familiarity, there happened an old friar to come to Dr Dee’s lodging, knocking at the door. Dee peeped down the stairs:—’Kelly,’ says he, ‘tell the old man I am not at home.’ Kelly did so. The friar said, ‘I will take another time to wait on him.’ Some few days after, he came again. Dee ordered Kelly, if it were the same person, to deny him again. He did so; at which the friar was very angry. ‘Tell thy master I came to speak with him and to do him good, because he is a great scholar and famous;—but now tell him, he put forth a book, and dedicated it to the emperor. It is called *‘Monas Hieroglyphicas.’* He understands it not. I wrote it myself. I came to instruct him therein, and in some other more profound things. Do thou, Kelly, come along with me; I will make thee more famous than thy master Dee. Kelly was very apprehensive of what the friar delivered, and thereupon suddenly retired from Dee, and wholly applied unto the friar, and of him either had the elixir ready made, or the perfect method of its preparation and making. The poor friar lived a very short time after; whether he died a natural death, or was otherwise poisoned or made away by Kelly, the merchant who related this did not certainly know.”

Kelly was born at Worcester, and had been an apothecary. He had a sister who lived there for some time after his death, and who used to exhibit some gold made by her brother’s projection. “It was vulgarly reported that he had a compact with the devil, which he outlived, and was seized at midnight by infernal spirits, who carried him off in sight of his family, at the instant he was meditating a mischievous design against the minister of the parish, with whom he was greatly at enmity.”

It would have been easy to select a more historical statement of facts respecting Kelly; but the following tale, the events of one day only, will, we hope, be more interesting to the generality of readers. It exhibits a curious display of the intrigues and devices by which these impostors acquired an almost unlimited power over the minds of their fellow-men. Human credulity once within their grasp, they could wield this tremendous engine at their will, directing it either to good or bad intents, but more often to purposes of fraud and self-aggrandisement.

In the ancient and well-thriven town of Manchester formerly dwelt a merchant of good repute, Cornelius Ethelstoun by name. Plain dealing and an honest countenance withal, had won for him a character of no ordinary renown. His friezes were the handsomest; his stuffs and camlets were not to be sampled in the market, or even throughout the world; insomuch that the courtly dames of Venice, and the cumbrous vrows of Amsterdam and the Hague, might be seen flaunting in goodly attire gathered from the store-houses of Master Cornelius.

His coffers glittered with broad ducats, and his cabinets with the rarest productions of the East. His warehouses were crammed, even to satiety, and his trestles groaned under heaps of rich velvets, costly brocades, and other profitable returns to his foreign adventures. But, alas!—and whose heart holdeth not communion with that word!—Cornelius was unhappy. He had one daughter, whom “he loved passing well;” yet, as common report did acknowledge, the veriest shrew that ever went unbridled. In vain did his riches and his revenues increase; in vain was plenty poured into his lap, and all that wealth could compass accumulate in lavish profusion. Of what avail was this outward and goodly show against the cruel and wayward temper of his daughter?

Kate—by this name we would distinguish her, as veritable historians are silent on her sponsorial appellation—Kate was unhappily fair and well-favoured. Her hair was dark as the raven-plume; but her skin, white as the purest statuary marble, grew fairer beneath the black and glossy wreaths twining gracefully about her neck. Her cheek was bright as the first blush of the morning, and ever and anon, as a deeper hue was thrown upon its rich but softened radiance, she looked like a vision from Mahomet's paradise—a being nurtured by a warmer sky and fiercer suns than our cold climate can sustain. She had lovers, but all approach was denied, and, one by one, they stood afar off and gazed. Her pretty mouth, lovely even in the proudest glance of petulance and scorn, was so oftentimes moulded into the same aspect that it grew puckered and contemptuous, rendering her disposition but too manifest; and yet—wouldst thou believe it, gentle reader?—she was in love!

Now it so fell out that on the very morning from which we date this first passage of our history, Cornelius awoke earlier than he was wont. His brow wore an aspect of more than ordinary care. It was but too evident that his pillow had been disturbed. Thoughts of more than usual perplexity had deprived him of his usual measure of repose. His very beard looked abrupt and agitated; his dress bore marks of indifference and haste. A slight, but tremulous movement of the head, in general but barely visible, was now advanced into a decided shake. With a step somewhat nimbler than aforetime, he made, as custom had long rendered habitual, his first visit to the counting-house.

The unwearied and indefatigable Timothy Dodge sat there, with the same crooked spectacles, and, as it might seem, mending the same pen which the same knife had nibbed for at least half-a-century. The tripod on which rested this grey Sidrophel of accompts looked of the like hard and impenetrable material, as though it were grown into his similitude, forming but a lower adjunct to his person. It was evident they had not parted company for the last twenty years. Nature had formed him awry. A boss or hump, of considerable elevation, extended like a huge promontory on one shoulder; from the other depended an arm longer by some inches than its fellow. As it described a greater arc its activity was proportionate. His grey and restless eyes followed the merchant's track with unwearied fidelity; yet was he a man full sparing of words—the ever ready “Anon, master,” being the chief burden of his replications. It was like the troll of an old ballad—a sort of inveterate drawl tripping unwittingly from the tongue.

The sun was just peeping through the long dim casement as Cornelius stepped over the threshold of his sanctuary. In it lay hidden the mysteries of many a goodly tome, more precious in his eyes than the rarest and richest that Dee's library could boast. No mean value, inasmuch as this celebrated scholar and mathematician, who was lately appointed warden of the college, had the most costly store of book-furniture that individual ever possessed.

“Good morrow, Dodge.”

The pen was twice nibbed ere the usual rejoinder.

“Are the camlets arrived from the country?” inquired the merchant.

“Anon, master—this forenoon may be.”

“Is the accompt against Anthony Hardcastle discharged?”

“No,” ejaculated the grim fixture.

“And where is the piece of Genoa velvet Dame Margery looked out yesterday for her mistress's wedding-suit? I do bethink me it is a good ell too long at the measure.”

“Six ells, three nails, and an odd inch, besides the broad thumbs,” replied Timothy.

“Right:—she reckoned on a good snip for waste; but let no more be sent than the embroiderer calls for.”

“Not a thread,” grunted Dodge.

A pause ensued. Some question was evidently hesitating on the merchant’s tongue. Twice did his lips move, but the word fell unuttered. The affair was, however, finally disposed of as follows:—

“Hast heard of aught, Timothy, touching the private matter that I unfolded yesterday?” Cornelius put on as careless an aspect as the disquietude of his brow could needs carry, but the inquiry was evidently one of no ordinary interest. He twisted the points of his doublet, tied and untied the silk cords from his ruff, waiting Dodge’s answer in a posture not much belying the anxiety he wished to conceal.

“Why, master, an’ it were of woman’s humours, the old seer himself could not unriddle their pranks.”

Cornelius sighed, making the following hasty reply:—

“Thinkest thou this same seer could not give me a lift from out my trouble?”

“This same seer, I wot,” replied Dodge, “is sore perplexed: some evil and mischievous aspect doth afflict the horoscope of the nation—Mars being conjunct with Venus and the Dragon’s tail. Now, look to it, master, it is no light matter that will move him; but almost ere I showed him the first glimpse of the business he waxed furious, and said that he cared not if all the unwed hussies in Christendom were hung up in a row, like rats on a string.”

“It is Kate’s birthday,” answered the merchant, “to-night being the feast of St Bartlemy; but, as thou knowest well, the astrologer that cast her figure gave no hope of her amendment should this day pass and never a husband. Who would yoke with a colt untamed? O Timothy! it were well nigh to make an old man weep. I am a withered trunk. Better had I been childless than have this proud wench to trouble mine house.”

The old man here wept, and it was a grievous thing to see his wrinkled cheeks become, as it were, but the sluices and channels of his tears. Timothy, too, was something moved from his common posture; and once he endeavoured to turn, as though he would hide his face from his master’s trouble.

He sought to speak, but an evil and husky sort of humour settled in his throat, and he waited silently the subsiding of the sorrow he could not quell.

Cornelius raised his head: a sudden thought seemed to animate him. A ray had penetrated the gloomy envelope of his mind; and he peered through the casement intently eyeing the cool atmosphere.

“I’ll visit the cunning man myself, Timothy. If he hear me not, then can I but return, weeping as I went.” And with this speech he hastily departed.

Now on this, the morrow of St Bartlemy, it so happened that Kate also arose before the usual hour, and in a mood even more than ordinarily strange and untoward. Her maiden was like to find it a task of no slight enterprise, the attempt to adorn Kate’s pretty person. Not a garment would fit. She threw the whole furniture of her clothes-press on a heap, and stamped on them for very rage. She looked hideous in her brown Venice waistcoat; frightful in her orange tiffany farthingale;—absolutely unbearable in her black velvet hood, wire ruff, and taffety gown. So that in the end she was nigh going to bed again in the sulks, had not a jacket of crimson satin, with slashed bodice, embroidered in gold twist, taken her fancy. Her little steel

mirror, not always the object of such complacency, did for once reflect a beam of good humour, which so bewitched Kate that for the next five minutes she found herself settling into the best possible temper in the world.

“Give me my kerchief, lace scarf, and green silk hood, and my petticoat with the border newly purfled. Hark! ‘Tis the bell for prayers. Be quick with my pantofles:—not those, wench—the yellow silk with silver spangles. Now my rings and crystal bracelets. I would not miss early matins to-day for the best jewel on an alderman’s thumb.”

“Anon, lady,” replied her waiting-woman, with a sort of pert affectation of meekness. But what should cause Kate to be so wonderfully attentive to her devotions was a matter on which Janet could have no suspicions, or at least would not dare to show them if she had.

Kate, being now attired, tripped forth, accompanied by her maid. As she passed the half-closed door of the counting-house, Timothy, with one of his most leaden looks, full of unmeaning, stood edgeways in the opening, his lower side in advance, with the long arm ready for action.

“Fair mistress, Master Kelly would fain have a token to-day. He hath sent you a rare device!”

“And what the better shall I be of his mummeries?” hastily replied the lady. Timothy drew from his large leathern purse a curiously-twisted ribband.

“He twined this knot for your comfort. Throw it over your left shoulder, and it shall write the first letter of your gallant’s name. A cypher of rare workmanship.”

Kate, apparently in anger, snatched the magic ribband, and, peradventure it might be from none other design than to rid herself of the mystical love-knot, but she tossed it from her with an air of great contumely, when, by some disagreeable and untoward accident, it chanced to fly over the self-same shoulder to which Timothy had referred. He made no reply, but followed the token with his little grey eyes, apparently without any sort of aim or concernment. Kate’s eyes followed too; but verily it were a marvellous thing to behold how the ribband shaped itself as it fell, and yet to see how she stamped and stormed. Quick as the burst of her proud temper she kicked aside the bauble, but not until the curl of the letter had been sufficiently manifest. Timothy drew back into his den, leaving the fair maid to the indulgence of her humours. But in the end Kate’s wrath was not over-difficult to assuage. With an air somewhat dubious and disturbed she hastily thrust the token behind her stomacher and departed.

The merchant’s house being nigh unto the market cross, Kate’s prettily-spangled feet were soon safely conducted over the low stepping-stones placed at convenient distances for the transit of foot-passengers through the unpaved streets. Near a sort of style, guarding the entrance to the churchyard, rose an immense pile of buildings, cumbrous and uncouth. These were built something in the fashion of an inverted pyramid; to wit, the smaller area occupying the basement, and the larger spreading out into the topmost story. As she turned the corner of this vast hive of habitation—for many families were located therein—a gay cavalier, sumptuously attired, swept round at the same moment. Man and maid stood still for one instant. With unpropitious courtesy, an unlucky gust turned aside Kate’s veil of real Flanders point; and the two innocents, like silly sheep, were staring into each other’s eyes without either apology or rebuke. It did seem as though Kate were not without knowledge of the courtly beau: a rich and glowing vermilion came across her neck and face, like the gorgeous blush of evening upon the cold bosom of a snow-cloud. But the youth eyed her with a cool and deliberate glance, stepping aside carelessly as he passed by. She seemed to writhe with some concealed anguish; yet her lip curled proudly, and her bosom heaved, as though striving

to throw off, with one last and desperate struggle, the oppression that she endured. In this disturbed and unquiet frame did Kate pass on to her orisons.

It may be needful to pause for a brief space in our narrative, whilst we give some account of this goodly spark who had so unexpectedly, as it might seem, unfitted the lady for the due exercise of her morning devotions.

His dress was elegant and becoming, and of the most costly materials. His hat was high and tapering, encircled by a rich band of gold and rare stones. It was further ornamented by a black feather, drooping gently towards the left shoulder. The brim was rather narrow; but then a profusion of curls fell from beneath, partly hiding his lace collar of beautiful workmanship and of the newest device. His beard was small and pointed; and his whiskers displayed that graceful wave peculiar to the high-bred gallants of the age. His neck was long, and the elegant disposal of his head would have turned giddy the heads of half the dames in the Queen's court. He wore a crimson cloak, richly embroidered: this was lined throughout with blue silk, and thrown negligently on one side. His doublet was grey, with slit sleeves; the arm parts, towards the shoulder, wide and slashed;—but who shall convey an adequate idea of the brilliant green breeches, tied far below the knee with yellow ribbands, red cloth hose, and great shoe-roses? For ourselves we own our incompetence, and proceed, glancing next at his goodly person. In size he was not tall nor unwieldy, but of a reasonable stature, such as denotes health, activity, and a frame capable of great endurance. He stepped proudly along, his very gait indicating superiority.

The town gallants looked on his person with envy, and on his light rapier with mistrust. In sooth, he was a proper man for stealing a lady's heart, either in hall or bower. Many had been his victims;—many were then in the last extremities of love. But of him it was currently spoken that he had never yet been subjected to its influence.

There be divers modes of falling into love. Some slip in through means of themselves; to wit, from sheer vanity, being never so well pleased as when they are the objects of admiration. Some from sheer contradiction, and from the well-known tendency of extremes to meet. Some, for very idlesse; and some for very love. But in none of these modes had the boy Cupid made arrow-holes through the heart of our illustrious hero; for, as we before intimated, no yielding place did seem visible, as the common discourse testified. How far this report was true the sequel of our history will set forth.

Now, this gay gallant being the wonder and admiration of the whole place, many were the unthrifty hours spent in such profitless discourse by the wives and daughters of the townsfolk, to the great discomfort and discredit of their liege lords. He was at present abiding in the college, where John Dee had apartments distinct from the warden's house, along with his former coadjutor and seer, Edward Kelly. Since the last quarrel between these two confederates, they had long been estranged; but Kelly had recently come for a season to visit his old master: when the Doctor returned from Trebona, in Bohemia, whence he had been invited back to his own country by Queen Elizabeth, he having received great honours and emoluments from foreign princes. This youth, being son to the governor of the castle at Trebona, was about to travel for his improvement and understanding in foreign manners. At the suit of his parents, Dee undertook the charge of his education and safe return. Since then young Rodolf had generally resided under Dr Dee's roof, and accompanied him on his accession to the wardenship. His accent was decidedly foreign, though he had resided some years in Britain, but not sufficiently so for Mancestrian ears to distinguish it from a sort of lisping euphuism then fashionable at court and amongst the higher ranks of society. An appearance of mystery was connected with his person. His birthplace and condition were not generally divulged, and though of an open and gallant bearing, yet on this head he was not

very communicative. Mystery begets wonder and excitement—a sort of interest usually attached to subjects not easily understood. When it emanates from an object capable of enthralling the affections, this feeling soon kindles admiration, and admiration ripens into love. No wonder, then, if all tender and compassionate dames were ready to open upon him their dread artillery of sighs and glances, and the more especially as it soon began to be manifest that success was nigh hopeless. The heart entrenched, the wearer was impenetrable.

Kate's oddly-assorted brain had not failed to run a-rambling at times after the gallant stranger. He had heard much of her beauty, and likewise of her uncertain humours. Each fancied the opposite party impregnable; and this alone, if none other motive had arisen, formed a sufficiently strong temptation to begin the attack. Kate was particularly punctual at church, and once or twice he caught an equivocating glance towards the warden's seat, and he really did at times fancy he should like to play at "*taming the shrew*." Kate was sure the stranger slighted her. He treated her, and her only, with an air of neglect she could not altogether account for, and she was in month's mind to make the young cavalier crouch at her feet. How this was to be contrived could only be guessed at by a woman, and we will not let the reader into all the secrets of Kate's sanctuary. Suffice it to say, that in so harmlessly attempting to beguile her prey into the snare, the lady fell over head and ears into it herself. In a word Kate was in love! And this was the more grievous, inasmuch as her lofty bearing hitherto would not allow her to whisper the matter even to her own bosom; and the pent-up and smothering flame was making sad havoc with poor Kate's repose.

She had oftentimes suspected the state of her heart; but instead of sighing, pining, and twanging her guitar to love-sick ditties, she would fly into so violent a rage at her own folly that nothing might quell the disturbance until fairly worn out by its own vehemency. No one suspected the truth—yes, one forsooth—gentle reader, canst thou guess? It was no less a personage than our one-shouldered friend Timothy Dodge! How the cunning rogue had contrived to get at the secret is more than we dare tell. Sure enough he had it; and as certain too that another should be privy to the fact—to wit, Edward Kelly the seer. Dodge was a fitting tool for this intriguer, and well able to help him out at a pinch.

Affairs were in this position when our story commenced. Rodolf had formidable auxiliaries at hand, had he been disposed to make the attack; but his stay was now short—Kate was petulant and perverse—the siege might be tedious. Just on the verge of relinquishing he met Kate, as we have before seen, going to church. He caught her for the once completely off her guard, and the rich blush that ensued set a crowd of odd fancies jingling through his brain. It was just as the old chimes were ringing their doleful chant from the steeple, but these hindered not a whit the other changes that were set agoing. Not aware of the alteration in his course, he was much amazed when he found himself striding somewhat irreverently down the great aisle of the church, towards the choir, from whence the low chanting of the psalms announced that service was already begun.

It was the opening of a bright autumnal day. The softened lights streamed playfully athwart the grim and shadowy masses that lay on the chequered pavement, like the smiles of infancy sporting on the dark bosom of the tomb. The screen formed a rich foreground, in half-shadow, before the east window. The first beam of the morning, clothed in tenfold brightness, burst through the variegated tracery. Prophets, saints, and martyrs shone there, gloriously portrayed in heaven's own light.

Rodolf approached the small door leading into the choir, when his vacant eye almost unconsciously alighted on a female form kneeling just within the recess. A ray, from her patron saint belike, darting through the eastern oriel, came full upon her dark and glowing eye. She turned towards the stranger, but in a moment her head was bent as lowly as before,

and the ray had lost its power. Rodolf suddenly retreated. Passing through a side door, he left the church, directing his steps towards the low and dark corridors of the college. Near the entrance to his chamber, on a narrow bench, sate a well-caparisoned page tuning his lute. His attire was costly, and his raiment all redolent with the most fragrant perfume. This youth, when very young, was sent over as the companion, or rather at that time as the playmate of his master. He was now dignified with the honourable title of page, and his affection for Rodolf was unbounded.

“Boy,” said the cavalier, something moodily, “come into the chamber. Stay—fetch me a sack-posset, prythee. I am oppressed, and weary with my morning’s ramble.”

Now the boy did marvel much at his master’s sudden return, but more especially at the great fatigue consequent on that short interval;—knowing, too, that a particularly copious and substantial breakfast had anticipated his departure.

“And yet, Altdorff, I am not in a mood for much drink. Give us a touch of those chords. I feel sad at times, and vapourish.”

They entered into a well-furnished apartment. The ceiling was composed of cross-beams curiously wrought. On one of these was represented a grim head in the act of devouring a child—which tradition affirmed was the great giant Tarquin at his morning’s repast. The room was fitted up with cumbrous elegance. A few pieces of faded tapestry covered one side of the apartment. In a recess stood a tester bed, ornamented with black velvet, together with curtains of black stuff and a figured coverlet. A wainscot cupboard displayed its curiously-carved doors, near to which hung two pictures, or tables as they were called, representing the fair Lucretia and Mary Magdalen. A backgammon-board lay on the window-seat; three shining tall-backed, oaken chairs, with a table of the same well-wrought material, and irons beautifully embossed, and a striped Turkey rug, formed a sumptuous catalogue, when we consider the manner of furnishing that generally prevailed in those days.

The page sat on a corner seat beneath the window. He struck a few wild chords.

“Not that—not that, good Altdorff. It bids one linger too much of home-longings.”

Here the boy’s eyes glistened, and a tremulous motion of the lip showed how his heart bounded at the word.

“Prythee, give us the song thou wast conning yesterday.”

The page began with a low prelude, but was again interrupted.

“Nay, ‘tis not thus. Give me that wild love-ditty thou knowest so well. I did use to bid thee be silent when thou wouldest have worried mine ears with it. But in sooth the morning looks so languishing and tender that it constrains the bosom, I verily think, to its own softness.”

The page seemed to throw his whole soul into the wild melody which followed this request. We give it, with a few verbal alterations, as follows:—

SONG.

1.
Fair star, that beamest
In my ladye’s bower,
Pale ray, that streamest
In her lonely tower;
Bright cloud, when like the eye of Heaven
Floating in depths of azure light,

Let me but on her beauty gaze
Like ye unchidden. Day and night
I'd watch, till no intruding rays
Should bless my sight.

2.

Fond breeze, that rovest
Where my ladye strays,
Odours thou lovest
Wafting to her praise;
Lone brook, that with soft music bubblest,
Chaining her soul to harmony;
Let me but round her presence steal
Like ye unseen, a breath I'd be,
Content none other joy to feel
Than circling thee!

"In good sooth, thou canst govern the cadence well. Thou hast more skill of love than thine age befits. But, mayhap, 'tis thy vocation, boy. Hast thou had visitors betimes this morning!"

"None, good master, but Kelly."

"What of him?"

"Some business that waited your return. I thought you had knowledge of the matter."

"Are there any clients astir so early at his chamber, thinkest thou?"

"None, save the rich merchant that dwells hard by, Cornelius Ethelstoun."

"Cornelius!" repeated the cavalier, in a disturbed and inquiring tone—"hath he departed?"

"Nay, I heard not his footsteps since I watched the old man tapping warily at the prophet's door."

Rodolf hastily replaced his hat, and his short and impatient rap was heard at the seer's chamber.

It occupied the north-eastern angle of the building, in the gloomiest part of the house; overlooking, on one side, a small courtyard, barricaded by walls and battlements of stout masonry, along which were ridges of long rank grass waving in all the pride of uncropped luxuriance. Another window overlooked the dark-flowing Irk, lazily rolling beneath the perpendicular rock on which the college was built—the very site of the once formidable station of Mancunium, the heart and centre of the Roman power in that vast district.

No answer being rendered to this hasty summons, Rodolf raised the latch, but marvelled not a little when he beheld the room apparently deserted. Voices were, however, heard in the inner apartment. Ere he could well draw back the door slowly opened, nor could he avoid hearing the following termination to some weighty conference.

"An hundred broad pieces—good! Ere night, thou sayest?"

"Ere the curfew," replied Cornelius.

"Look thee—'tis but a slender space for mine art to work, and"—The seer, as he uttered this with great solemnity, entered the antechamber. The gallant stood there, just meditating a retreat. A flush of anger and confusion passed for a moment over Kelly's visage. Quickly recovering his self-possession, with a severe aspect, he stood before the intruder.

“Art come to listen or to watch?” abruptly interrogated the seer. “Both be rare accomplishments truly for a youth of thy breeding.”

“Nay, good Master Kelly; I came but at thy bidding, and mine ears are not the heavier or the wiser for what they have heard, I trow.”

“I thought thee safe at morning prayers.”

“Nay,” replied Rodolf. “There be too many bright eyes and blushing cheeks for the seasoning of a man’s devotions.”

“Cornelius, thou mayest retire. What mine art can compass shall not be lacking at thy need.”

The merchant, with a profound obeisance, withdrew. The seer adjusted his beard, carefully brushed the down from his velvet cap, and sate for a while as if abstracted from all outward intercourse. His keen quick eye became fixed, its lustre imperceptibly waning. A cloud seemed to pass gradually over his sharp features, until their expression was absorbed, giving place to a look of mere lifeless inanity. A spectator might have fancied himself gazing at a sage of some remote era, conjured up from his dark resting-place. The wand of death seemed to have withered his shrunk visage for ages under the dim shadow of the grave.

Rodolf, aware that he was not to be interrupted when the gift was upon him, waited patiently the result of the seer’s revelations. A considerable time had elapsed when the cloud began to roll away. His features gradually reassumed the attributes of life, as each separately felt the returning animation. His eyes rested full on the cavalier.

“I have had a vision, Rodolf.”

“To me is it not spoken?” inquired he.

“Yea, to thee!” The seer said this in a tone so hollow and energetic, and with a look of such thrilling awe, that even Rodolf shuddered. He seemed to feel his glance.

“Listen. The spirit warned me thus:—

“‘The stranger that hither comes o’er the broad sea

Shall wed on the night of St Bartlemy.’”

“Nay, Master Kelly, thine art faileth this once, forsooth. To-night is the saint’s vigil, yet lurk I not in the beam of a woman’s favour; and ere another year I may be cured of the simples at my father’s dwelling in the old castle.”

“The vision hath spoken, and it setteth not forth idle tales. Come to me anon, I will anoint and prepare my beryl and my divining mirror. Thou shall thyself behold some of the mysteries touching which I have warned thee beforetime. About noon return to my chamber.”

Rodolf withdrew into his own apartment. His countenance looked anxious and disturbed. He sat down, but his restlessness seemed to increase. His posture was not the most easy and graceful that might be desired, nor calculated to set off his personal advantages, though now become the more needful, if, as the seer predicted, he should wive ere night—albeit his bride were yet unsought—nor wooed, nor won! Nothing could be more destructive to that easy self-satisfaction, that seductive and insinuating carriage, so essential to the fine gentleman of every age. There was a sort of angular irregularity in his movements, neither pleasant nor becoming; and his agitation so far overcame his better breeding that he really did cram his beard between at least three of his fingers. His rapier had, moreover, poked its way through his cloak, and the bright shoe-roses were nigh ruined, from the sudden crossings and disarrangements they had undergone. A considerable time had now elapsed; in the meanwhile

his impatience had risen to an alarming height, insomuch that we would not have answered for the safety of his red cloth hose and silken doublet, had not noon been happily announced.

Raising the latch of the seer's chamber with considerable eagerness, he found the room completely dark. An unseen hand led him to a seat. Soon he heard a low murmuring chant, as though from voices at a remote distance. By degrees the words grew more articulate, shaping themselves into the same quaint distich that Kelly had repeated,—

“The stranger that hither comes o’er the broad sea
Shall wed on the night of St Bartlemy.”

This was answered in a voice of considerable pathos; a burst of soft music filling up the interval. Gradually the eye began to feel sensible of the presence of surrounding objects, though in the ordinary way nothing could be distinguished; a faculty peculiarly sensitive with the loss of sight, and not quite dormant in the general mass of mankind. A faint gleam was soon perceptible, like the first blush of morning, apparently on the opposite side of the chamber. Becoming brighter, flashes of a dim, rainbow-coloured light crept slowly by, like the aurora sweeping over an illuminated cloud. Suddenly he saw, or his eyes deceived him, a female form shaping itself from these chaotic elements. But it was observed only during the short intervals when the beams seemed to kindle with unusual brightness. Every flash, however, rendered the appearance more distinct. Dazzled and bewildered, the heated senses were become the victims of their own credulity, the mind receiving back its own reactions. Taking its impression probably from the occurrences of the morning, the eye rapidly moulded the figure into the likeness of Kate. Her eyes were turned upon him, beaming with that soft and melting expression he had so recently beheld. It was but momentary, or he could have persuaded himself that she looked on him with an air the most tender and compassionate. Never did fancy portray her in a form so lovely. Deep and indelible was the impression; and though it might be

“The imagination
Become impregnate with her own desire,”

yet she had performed her office well. Not all the realities, all the blandishments that woman ever displayed, even the most resistless, could have wrought half so dexterously or gained such swift access to the heart. The vision faded, and a momentary darkness ensued. Suddenly a blaze of light irradiated the apartment. Rodolf beheld, for one short glimpse, a Gothic hall. Kate was there, and a lover kneeling at her feet. Madness seized him, agonising and intense. In vain he sought the features of his tormentor; the vision had departed, and with it his repose.

A new and overwhelming emotion had overpowered him. It arose with the speed and impetuosity of a whirlwind. All just and sober anticipations, reflections, possibilities, and a thousand calm resolves, were swept as bubbles before the full burst of the torrent.

His first impulse was to seek his mistress. But—she had another lover! The bare possibility of this event came o’er his bosom like the icy chill of the grave. He shuddered as it passed; but the pang was too keen to return with the same intensity.

Soon a low murmur, like the distant sough of the wind, gradually approached. A faint light flashed through the chamber. He saw his own wild woods and the distant castle. It was just visible, dimly outlined on the horizon, as he had last beheld it in the cold grey beam that accompanied his departure. It arose tranquilly on his spirit. The voice of other years visited his soul. His eyes filled—he could have wept in the very overflowing of his delight. He dashed his hand across his forehead; but the pageant had disappeared.

Daylight once more shone into the apartment; but nothing was discerned, save a dark curtain concealing one extremity of the room, and the seer sitting at his elbow.

“Boy, what sawest thou?” said Kelly, not raising his head as he spoke, but intently poring over a grim volume of cabalistic symbols.

“In troth, I am hard put to it, Master Kelly. The maid I have just seen is accounted the veriest shrew in the parish, and one whom no man may approach with a safe warranty. I am like to lose all hope of wiving, if this be the maiden I am to woo. And yet”—The form of the comely suitor he had seen kneeling at her feet just then flashed on his mind, yet cared he not to show the seer how much the phantom had disturbed him.

“Idle tales?” said Kelly. “I wot not but half the gay gallants in the town would give the best jewel in their caps to have one sweet look, one pretty smile from her cruel mouth. ‘Tis but the report of those whom she hath slighted with loathing and contempt, that hath raised this apprehension in her disfavour. The churls know not what is hidden beneath this outward habit of her perverse nature, and she careth not to discover. Should some youth of noble bearing and condition but woo her as she deserves, thou shouldest see her tamed, ay, and loving too, as the very idol of her worship, or I would forfeit my best gift.”

“But she hath a lover!” said Rodolf, gravely.

“Peradventure she hath, but not of her own choosing, or mine art fails me. Look, this figure is the horoscope of her birth. Thou hast some knowledge of the celestial sciences. The directions are so close worked that should this night pass and Kate go unwed—indicated by Venus coming to a trine of the sun on the cusp of the seventh house, she will refuse all her suitors, and her whole patrimony pass into the hands of a stranger; but”—he raised his voice with a solemn and emphatic enunciation—”to-night! look to it! If not thine she may be another’s.”

The listener’s brain seemed on a whirl; thought hurrying on thought, until the mind lost all power of discrimination. The succession of images was too rapid. All individuality was gone. He felt as though not one idea was left out of the busy crowd on which to rest his own identity. He seemed a mere passive existence, unable either to execute the functions of thought or volition.

“Go, for a brief space. Thou mayest return at sunset. Yet”—the seer fixed a penetrating glance on the youth as he retired—”go not nigh the merchant’s dwelling, unless thou wouldest mar thy fortune. To-night—remember!”

In the dim solitude of his chamber Rodolf sought in vain to allay the feverish excitement he had endured. He seemed left to the sport and caprice of a power he could not control. The coursers of the imagination grew wilder with restraint: he recklessly flung the reins upon their neck; but this did not tire their impetuosity. His brain glowed like a furnace; he seemed hastening fast on to the verge of either folly or madness. He threw himself on the couch, when the voice of Altdorff came like a winged harmony upon his spirit. The page was seated in the narrow cloisters,—the lute, his untiring companion, enticing a few chords from his touch, playful and gentle as the feelings that awaked them; some old and quaint chant, scarce worth the telling, but cherished in the heart’s inmost shrine, from the hallowed nature of its associations. A deep slumber crept heavily on the cavalier, but the merchant’s daughter still haunted him: sometimes snatched away from his embrace just as a rosy smile was kindling on her lips; at others, she met him with frowns and menace, but ere he could speak to her she had disappeared. Then was he tottering on the battlements of some old turret, when a storm arose, the maiden crept to his side, but in an instant, with a hideous crash, she was borne away by the rude grasp of the tempest. He awoke, with a mortifying discovery that the crash

had been of a somewhat less equivocal nature. A cabinet of costly workmanship lay overturned at his feet, and a rich vase, breathing odours, strewed the floor in a thousand fragments.

The noise brought up several of the college servitors; to rid himself from the annoyance he ascended the roof, then protected by low battlements, and leaded, so that a person might walk round the building and pursue his meditations without interruption.

On this day, teeming with events, Dr Dee had been too closely engaged in parish duties to give heed to these love fancies, and even had he been ever so free to exercise his judgment in the matter, it is more than likely Rodolf would not have opened to him the proceedings then afoot. He well knew that the Doctor yet bore no good-will to Kelly, and might possibly thwart his designs, to the undoing of any good purposed by the strange transactions that had already occurred; he resolved, therefore, to let this day pass, ere he opened his lips on the subject. But how to while away the hours until evening was a most embarrassing problem. Sleep he had tried, but he found no wish to repeat the experiment; reading was just then foreign to his humour; mathematics must, that day, go unstudied. After beating time to at least a dozen strange metres, he hit upon the happy contrivance of writing a love-song, as a kind of expedient to restore the equilibrium. He was rather unskilled at the work; but the pen becomes eloquent when the soul moves it. We will, however, leave him at this thrifty employment, having no design, gentle reader, to make the occasion as wearisome to thee as to himself. Having the power to annihilate both time and space, let us watch the round sun, as he threw his last look, that evening, on the scene of this marvellous history. The old walls of the college, and the church tower, were invested with a gorgeous apparel of light, as though illumined for some gay festival, some season of rejoicing, when gladness shines out visibly in the shape of bonfires and torches. But few moments elapsed, ere the love-sick youth was again admitted into the dark interior of the seer's dwelling.

A voice whispered in his ear—

“Not a word, hardly a breath, as thou wouldest thrive in thy pursuit. There be spirits abroad, not of earth, nor air. Be silent and discreet.”

A ray suddenly darted across the room. Again the voice was at his ear:—

“Hold thine eye to the crevice when the light enters, and mark well what thou beholdest.”

Again he saw his mistress, apparently in a vaulted chamber, lighted by a single lamp: she sat as if anxious and disturbed, her cheek pale and flushed by turns, whilst her eye wandered hurriedly around the room. Some one approached; it was the seer. Rodolf heard him speak.

“Maiden, hast thou a lover?”

The sound seemed scarcely akin to that of human speech. It rose heavily and deep, as from the charnel-house, as if the grim and cold jaws of the grave could utter a voice,—the dreary echoes of the tomb! The seer's lips were motionless, whilst he thus continued in the same sepulchral tone.

“I know thou hast. ‘Tis here thy love would tend.” He drew a richly-set miniature from his bosom. It was mounted in so peculiar a fashion that Rodolf started back with the first emotion of surprise. The miniature was his own; a gem newly from the artist, and which he had left, as he thought, in safe custody a short time ago. The voice again whispered in his ear, “Beware.”

He subdued the expression of wonder just rising on his lip, watching the issue with increased interest.

Kate covered her face. She had just glanced at the picture, and her proud bosom heaved almost to bursting.

“Look, disdainful woman! and though thy bosom be formed for love, yet wouldest thou spurn it from thee. I *know* thou lovest him. Nay, chide not; thy brow cannot blast me with its thunders. Go to. I could, by mine art, so humble thee, set thy love so exquisitely on its desire, that thou shouldest lay thy proud womanhood aside—sue and crouch, even if ‘twere for blows, like a tame spaniel! I have thee in my power, and were not the natural bent of thy dispositions kind and noblehearted, yet sore beset, and, as it were, overwhelmed by thy curst humours, I had now cast my spells about thee—ay, stricken thee to the dust! Shake off these bonds that enthrall thy better spirit, and let not that beautiful fabric play the hypocrite any longer. Why should so fair a temple be the dwelling of a demon?”

A deep sob here told that kindlier feelings were at work; that nature was beginning to assert her prerogative, and that the common sympathies, the tender attributes, of woman were not extinguished.

The struggle was short, but severe. With difficulty she repressed the outburst of her grief as she spoke.

“A woman still! ‘Tis the garb nature put on. I have wrapped a sterner garment about me.” A long and bitter sob here betrayed the violent warfare within. It was but for a moment. Affecting contempt for her own weakness, she exclaimed—

“Throw it off? Expose me defenceless to his proud contumely? Even now the cold glance of indifference hath pierced it through!”

Here she arose proudly.

“And what thinkest thou, if I were to stand unarmed, uncovered, before his unfeeling gaze?”

“He loves thee,” hastily rejoined the seer.

“Me!—as soon that bauble learn to love as”——

“Say but one word, and I will bow him at thy feet.”

“‘Tis well thou mockest me thus. To worm out my secret, perchance.—For this didst thou crave my presence? Let me be gone!”

“Thou shalt say ‘Yes,’ Kate, ere thou depart!”

The curtain which divided the apartment suddenly flew aside. The astonished lover beheld his mistress:—not the unreal phantom he had imagined, but a being substantial in quality, and of a nature like his own, though gentler than his fondest anticipations.

The seer departed: but in the end the lovers were not displeased at being betrayed into a mutual expression of their regard.

The operation of the heavenly influences was, in these days, a doctrine that obtained almost universal credit; and it would have been looked upon as a daring piece of presumption to baffle the prophetic signification of the stars.

On that same night, being the eve of St Bartholomew, they were married:—thus adding one more to the numerous instances on record, where a belief in the prediction has been the means of its accomplishment.

The remainder of Kate’s history, and how she crossed the sea, accompanied by her husband, into the wilds of Bohemia, living there for a space; and how she afterwards returned into her own land, will be set forth at some more fitting opportunity.

XIII. The Earl Of Tyrone

“Still the fairest are his fuell,
When his days are to be cruell;
Lovers’ hearts are all his food,
And his baths their warmest blood;
Nought but wounds his hands doth season,
And he hates none like to reason.”

A Hue and Cry after Cupid.—Ben Jonson.

The dark and romantic history of the Earl of Tyrone would of itself occupy a larger space than these volumes afford. The following episode, connected with his concealment in the neighbourhood of Rochdale, the author does not presume to bring forward as a fact. Yet there are good reasons for supposing that it formed an important era in his life, and was followed very soon after by the Queen’s pardon. The importance of this measure may be conceived, when by some Elizabeth’s depression, and the profound melancholy she exhibited in her latter hours, were attributed to this source. It is said that she repented of having pronounced his forgiveness; that having always resolved to bring him to condign punishment, she could receive no satisfaction from his submission; while the advantages of her high estate, and all the glories of a prosperous reign, were unable to alleviate her disappointment.

The following is a brief sketch of his life, extracted from generally-received authorities.

Hugh O’Neale was nephew to Shan O’Neale, or the Great O’Neale, as he was more commonly called, well known for his eminent courage, a virtue much esteemed by the half-civilised hordes whom he commanded. He was created Earl of Tyrone by the Queen; but disliking this servitude, and wishful to liberate his country from the English yoke, he entered into a correspondence with Spain; procured from thence a supply of arms and ammunition; and having united many of the Irish chiefs in a dependence upon himself, he began to be regarded as a formidable enemy.

The English found much difficulty in pursuing the rebels into the bogs, woods, and other fastnesses to which they retreated. Sir John Norris, who commanded the English army, was rendered thereby more willing to hearken to the proposals made by Tyrone, and the war was spun out by these artifices for some years. Sir John dying, as was reported, of vexation and discontent, was succeeded by Sir Henry Bagnall. “He advanced to the relief at Blackwater, then besieged by the enemy, but was surrounded in disadvantageous ground. His soldiers, discouraged by part of their powder accidentally taking fire, were put to flight; and though the pursuit was stopped by Montacute, who commanded the English horse, fifteen hundred men, together with the general himself, were left dead upon the spot. This victory so unusual to the Irish, roused their courage, supplied them with arms and munitions of war, and raised the renown of Tyrone, who was hailed as deliverer of his country and patron of Irish liberty.”²⁰

The unfortunate Essex was afterwards appointed to the command; but his troops were so terrified at the reputation of Tyrone that many of them counterfeited sickness, and others deserted, fearful of encountering the forces of that daring chief. Finding himself in a great measure deserted, “he hearkened to a message from Tyrone, who desired a conference; and a

²⁰ Cox, p. 415.

plain near the two camps was appointed for this purpose. The two generals met without any attendants. A river ran between them, into which Tyrone entered to his saddle-girth, but Essex stood on the opposite bank.”

At this meeting where “Tyrone behaved with great submission to the lord-lieutenant, a cessation of arms was agreed on.²¹ Essex also received a proposal of peace, into which Tyrone had inserted many unreasonable and exorbitant conditions; and there appeared afterwards some reason to suspect that the former had commenced a very unjustifiable correspondence with the enemy.” From this time the beam of Essex’s favour was obscured, the issue terminating in his death and disgrace. In the meantime, Tyrone had thought proper to break the trace, “and joining with O’Donnell and others, overran almost the whole kingdom. He pretended to be the champion of the Catholic faith, and openly exulted in the present of a phoenix plume, which Clement VIII., in order to encourage him in the prosecution of so good a cause, had consecrated, and conferred upon him.”²² Essex being recalled, the Queen appointed Mountjoy as lord-deputy. “He found the island in a desperate condition; but being a man of capacity and vigour, he immediately advanced against Tyrone in Ulster. He penetrated into the heart of that country, the chief seat of the rebels. He fortified Derry and Mount Norris. He chased them from the field, and obliged them again to shelter in woods and morasses; and by these promising enterprises he gave new life to the Queen’s authority throughout the island.”

Tyrone, however, still boasted that he was certain of receiving the promised aid from Spain; “and everything was put in condition for resisting the Spanish invasion, which was daily expected. The deputy, informed of the danger to which the southern provinces were exposed, left the prosecution of the war against Tyrone, who was now reduced to great extremities, and marched with his army into Munster.”

“At last the Spaniards, under Don Juan d’Aquila, arrived at Kinsale; and Sir Richard Piercy, who commanded in the town with a small garrison of one hundred and fifty men, found himself obliged to abandon it on their appearance. These invaders amounted to four thousand, and the Irish discovered a strong propensity to join them, in order to free themselves from the English government, with which they were extremely discontented. One chief ground of their complaint was the introduction of trials by jury,²³ an institution abhorred by that people, though nothing contributes more to the support of that equity and liberty for which the English laws are so justly celebrated. The Irish also bore a great favour to the Spaniards, having entertained the opinion that they themselves were descended from that nation; and their attachment to the Catholic religion proved a new cause of affection for the invaders. D’Aquila assumed the title of general in this ‘*holy war*,’ for the preservation of the faith in Ireland; and he endeavoured to persuade the people that Elizabeth was, by several bulls of the Pope, deprived of her crown; that her subjects were absolved from their oaths of religion, and that the Spaniards were come to deliver the Irish from the dominion of the devil.²⁴ Mountjoy found it necessary to act with vigour, in order to prevent a total insurrection of the Irish; and having collected his forces, he formed the siege of Kinsale by land, while Sir Richard Levison, with a small squadron, blockaded it by sea. He had no sooner begun his operations than he heard of the arrival of another body of two thousand Spaniards under the command of Alphonso Ocampo, who had taken possession of Baltimore and Berehaven; and he was obliged to detach Sir George Carew to oppose their progress. Tyrone, meanwhile, with

²¹ Sydney’s Letters.

²² Camden.

²³ Camden.

²⁴ Camden, p. 645.

Randal, MacSurley Tirel, Baron of Kelly, and other chieftains of the Irish, had joined Ocampo with all their forces, and were marching to the relief of Kinsale. The deputy, informed of their designs by intercepted letters, made preparations to receive them; and being reinforced by Levison with six hundred marines, he posted his troops on an advantageous ground which lay on the passage of the enemy, leaving some cavalry to prevent a sally from D'Aquila and the Spanish garrison. When Tyrone, with a detachment of Irish and Spaniards, approached, he was surprised to find the English so well posted and ranged for battle, and he immediately sounded a retreat; but the deputy gave orders to pursue him, and having thrown these advanced troops into confusion, he followed them to the main body, which he also attacked and put to flight, with the slaughter of twelve hundred men.²⁵ Ocampo was taken prisoner; Tyrone fled into Ulster; O'Donnel made his escape into Spain; and D'Aquila, finding himself reduced to the greatest difficulties, was obliged to capitulate upon such terms as the deputy prescribed to him. He surrendered Kinsale and Baltimore, and agreed to evacuate the kingdom. This great blow, joined to other successes gained by Wilmot, governor of Kerry, and by Roger and Gavin Harvey, threw the rebels into dismay, and gave a prospect of the final reduction of Ireland."

The remaining part of Tyrone's history may be gathered from the narrative.

Among other memorable incidents illustrative of his character, it is said that Tyrone, appearing in person to execute a treaty, immediately on the issue of some sanguinary engagement, was requested to sign the terms. "Here is my signature," said he, laying his bloody hand on the deed: "'tis the mark of the Kings of Ulster." Hence, tradition gravely asserts was the origin of "the bloody hand," the arms of Ulster! That such a derivation is fabulous we need not attempt to prove.

What a paradox is love!—the most selfish and yet the most disinterested of the passions; the gentlest and yet the most terrible of impulses that can agitate the human bosom; the most ennobling and the most humble; the most enduring and the most transient; slow as the most subtle venom to its work, yet impetuous in its career as the tornado or the whirlwind; sportive as the smile of infancy, and appalling as the maniac's shriek, or the laugh of his tormentor. 'Tis a joy nursed in the warm glow of hope; but who shall reveal the depths of its despair? 'Twas given to man as his best boon—his most precious gift; but his own hands polluted the shrine—marred the beauteous and holy deposit. The loveliest image was then smitten with deformity, and that passion, the highest and noblest that could animate his bosom, became the bane of his happiness, the destroyer of his peace, and the source whence every attribute of woe hath sprung to afflict and darken the frail hopes of humanity. This may be the dark side of the picture; but unless the breath of heaven sanctify even the purest affections of our nature, they are a withering blast, blighting its fairest verdure—a torment and a curse!

The following narrative, floating but indistinctly on the author's memory, and in all probability attached to other names in localities widely apart, is yet, he believes, true as to the more important particulars. The site of a few cottages in a romantic dell in the neighbourhood of Rochdale is still associated with the memory of the unfortunate Earl of Tyrone. It is yet called "Tyrone's Bed." In history, this noble chief is depicted in colours the most hideous and detestable; but if the lion had been the painter, we should have had to contemplate a different portrait. By his countrymen he was held in the most profound reverence and respect. Beloved by all, he was hailed as the expected deliverer of his native land from wrong and oppression. The most bigoted of his persecutors cannot deny that oppression, the most foul and inhuman, did exist; and the men who took up arms for the rescue of their brethren may be pitied, if not pardoned, for their noble, elevated, and enduring spirit. Let us not be

²⁵ Winwood, vol. i. p. 369.

misunderstood as the advocates of rebellion; but surely there are occasions when the galling yoke of oppression may be too heavy to sustain—when the crushed reptile may, writhing, turn against him who tramples on it. Let us not do this wrong, even to our enemies, by refusing to admire in them the disinterestedness and magnanimity which in others would have insured our admiration and applause.

About a mile from the spot we have just named stood the ancient mansion of Grizlehurst. Surrounded on every side by dark and almost trackless woods, sprung through a long line of ancestry from primeval forests, it reposed in undisturbed seclusion, still and majestic as the proud swan that basked upon the dark lake before it, secure from intrusion and alarm. Gable-ends and long casements broke the low piebald front into a variety of detail—a combination of effect throwing an air of picturesque beauty on the whole, which not all the flimsy and frittered “Gothic” can convey to the mansions of modern antiques. For the timber employed in its erection a forest must have been laid prostrate. Huge arched fire-places; chimney-pieces carved with armorial bearings; oak tables absolutely joisted to sustain their vast bulk; bedsteads that would not have groaned with the weight of a Titan;—the whole intended to oppose a ponderous resistance to the ravages of time and fashion. Not a vestige is left. Those laughing halls echo no more with the loud and boisterous revel; the music of the “many twinkling” feet is gone; scarcely a stone is left upon its fellow; a few straggling trees alone mark the site. The beech and willow are waving o’er its hearth! Who would build for the destroyer? And yet man, with the end of these vanities in prospect, daily, hourly still builds on; his schemes and his projects extending through the long vista of succeeding ages, as though his dwelling were eternal, and his own fabric should survive the ruin and the doom of all!

A long train of ancestors bearing the name of Holt occupied this dwelling as the family mansion. The manor of Spotland, forfeited by the rebellion of Paslew, Abbot of Whalley, was granted by Henry the Eighth to Thomas Holt, afterwards knighted in Scotland by Edward, Earl of Hertford, in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of that monarch. The present possessor of the same name, grandson to Sir Thomas, resided at Grislehurst during the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign and that of James. He married Constance, the daughter of Sir Edward Littleton of Pillaton Hall, Stafford. One son, Francis, and a daughter named Constance, were the fruit of this union. At the commencement of our narrative he had been for some years a widower, and his son was then absent on foreign travel.

It was in the memorable year 1603, the last of Elizabeth. The rebellion in Ireland had been smothered, if not extinguished; and the great O’Neale, Earl of Tyrone and King of Ulster, together with many other chiefs, were forced to remain concealed in woods and morasses. Outlawed and outcast, some of them crossed over into England, remaining there until pardoned by the Queen.

Constance was now in her nineteenth year. Bright as her own morn of life, she had seen but few clouds in that season of hope and delight. Sorrow was to her scarce known, save in the nursery tales and wild ballads of the surrounding district. When the glowing morn was overcast, she was unprepared, unfitted for the change. The storm came, and the little sum of her happiness, launched on this frail and perishing bark, was wrecked without a struggle!

One evening, in the full glare of a dazzling sunset, the light streaming like a shower through the dark foliage of the valley, she had loitered, along with her old nurse, in the dell to which we have before alluded. The glowing atmosphere was just fading into the dewy tint which betokens a fair morrow. To enjoy a more extended gaze upon the clouds, those gorgeous vestures of the sun, Constance had ascended, by a winding path, to the edge of a steep cliff overhanging the river. She stood for some minutes looking towards the west, unconscious of

the loose and slippery nature of the materials beneath her feet, and of her near approach to the brink. On a sudden the ground gave way, and she was precipitated headlong into the river! Nurse Agnes, who stood below, watching her young mistress, not without apprehension as to the consequences of her temerity, was stricken motionless with horror. There seemed to be no help. Fast receding from all hope of succour, Constance was borne rapidly down the stream. Suddenly, with the swiftness of a deer from the brake, a figure bounded from an opposite thicket. He seemed scarcely to leave his footmarks on the long herbage ere he gained the river's brink. Plunging into the current he succeeded in rescuing the maiden from her perilous condition. He laid her gently on the bank, beckoning to her attendant, and was speedily out of sight. The aged Agnes, with trembling hands, relieved Constance by loosening the folds from her throat; and almost ere she had wrung out the water from the raven locks of her inanimate mistress, the stranger returned. He carried a cordial, with which he moistened her lips; the old woman chafed her temples, resorting to the usual modes of resuscitation then in practice; and in the end, Constance opened her eyes. A heavy sob accompanied this effort. She looked wildly round, when she met the deep gaze of the stranger. With a faint shriek, she hid her face in the bosom of her attendant, who, overjoyed at her recovery, could scarcely refrain from falling at the feet of her deliverer. She turned to express her thanks, but he was gone.

It was not long ere several domestics, alarmed at their absence, came in search; and Constance, borne gently along, was soon restored to her anxious parent. But he looked thoughtful and disturbed when the stranger's person was described, evidently averse to hold any communication on the subject. Nurse Agnes grew eloquent in his praise, until the following conversation that same evening in the kitchen turned aside the current of her opinions.

"A rough grey cloak, gossip, thou sayest?" again inquired a hard-featured hind from the chimney-corner.

"I tell thee a cloak, and a cap turned up in front. He doused it off nobly, and took to the water like a spaniel!"

"Why, 'tis the wild man of the woods!" said another listener, who had hitherto been silent, but whose remark seemed to strike terror into the whole group. They looked round as if anticipating a visit from this fearful personage. Dame Agnes crossed herself, and muttered her prayers with great despatch; something was at length audible and articulate, as follows:—

"Mercy on me! my days are numbered. If it should indeed be this incarnate,—forgive the thought!—we are all dead creatures. The very horses and kine stagger, and fall into fits at times, when they come home, and it is all along of 'em having seen or smelt the brimstone from the pit. Davy had two died last week, and he was sure they had either seen the deil or his deputy,—this same grey man of the woods. Woe's me that I should ha' lived to behold this child of perdition!" The old woman here gave way to an outburst of sorrow, that prevented any further disclosures.

"It is about a three month ago since this same wild man was first seen," said the old seneschal, whose office, though of little use, was still filled up in the more ancient establishments. "I saw him myself once, but I shook until the very flesh seemed to crawl over my bones. They say he neither eats nor drinks, but is kept alive in the body by glamour and witchcraft. He'll stay here until his time is done, and then his tormentors will fetch him to his prison-house again. Ye should not have tarried in the wood after sunset."

"That would I not," sharply replied Agnes; "but the child, poor thing, would look at the daylight as it lingered on the hill-top, and I thought no harm in't."

“Like enough. He dares not abroad, if so much as the value or size of my thumb-nail of the sun’s rim were left above the hill!”

“Come, Gaffer, strike up a merry trowl,” said a thin, squeaking voice, from a personage almost hidden behind a copious supper of broken meat and pastry. But whether the party thus addressed was too much alarmed to let the current of his spirit run bubbling from the spring of either mirth or minstrelsy, or he was too deeply buried in his own thoughts, it were needless to inquire. The request for a while passed by unheeded.

Gaffer Gee was the ballad-monger of the whole district. He kept on a comfortable and vagabond sort of existence, by visiting the different mansions where good cheer was to be had, and where he was generally a welcome guest, both in bower and hall. His legendary lore seemed inexhaustible; and, indeed, his memory was like an old chest full of scraps continually rummaged. He knew all the scandal and family secrets throughout the parish, and had a quick eye at detecting either a love affair or a feud. He composed a number of the wild ballads that he sang or recited, or at least put them into that jingling and quaint rhythm, acquired by habitual intercourse with the phraseology peculiar to these popular descants. On hearing a story he could readily shape it into verse, extempore, too, upon occasion; and many were the jokes that rebounded from his theme, whether in hall or kitchen. It was pleasant to watch his little grey eye, and the twinkling lashes, as they rose and fell, varying the expression of his lips. A slight lisp gave an air of simplicity to his ditties, which never failed to charm his auditors. He could throw the simplest expression over his features, which made the keen edge of his rebukes infinitely more cutting and effective. But the prevailing tone of feeling in him was sad and oppressive. These wandering minstrels had, from remote ages, been held as seers, and a peep into futurity was often supposed to accompany their poetical inspirations—a superstition not confined to any particular locality, but obtaining a widely disseminated belief in all climes and nations where imagination assumes her sway, and dares to assert her power.

After a short space, and without any invitation, the ballad-maker, like some Pythian priestess on her tripod, began to exhibit manifestations of the *afflatus*. The spirit of song seemed to be stealing upon him, and in a moment the listening auditory were still. In substance, he half recited, half sung, the following ballad:—

“Maiden, braid those tresses bright,
Wreath thy ringlets from the blast;
Why those locks of curling light
Heedless to the rude winds cast?
“Maiden, why that darkened brow?
From those eyes, once dimmed with weeping,
Lurid gleams are gathering now,
O’er their pale wan shadows creeping.’
“Silent still the maid passed by,
Near nor voice nor footstep came.
Sudden cleaving earth and sky,
Flashed a brand of arrowy flame!
“Maiden, turn that gaze on me,
Onwards why so madly bent?
‘Still no stay, no pause made she
Through that kindling element.

“Now, the midnight chant is stealing,
 Mass and requiem breathing near;
 Hushed the blast, as if revealing
 Sounds to earth that Heaven might hear.
 “From yon pile, soft voices swelling
 Dirge and anthem for the dead;—
 Demon shrieks, their lost doom yelling,
 Tend Lord Rudolph’s dying bed.
 “Holy men, with song and prayer,
 Fain would shrive the passing soul;
 Fiend-like whispers, to his ear.
 Winds, in muttering curses, roll.
 “Ere his last lone shuddering cry,
 To his couch the maiden came;
 On his breast she silently
 Bent an eye of ravening flame.
 “One wild shriek the sufferer sent,
 Ere life’s last frail link might sever;
 Laughed the maiden, as she leant
 O’er that form, to cling for ever.
 “Closer to his heart she pressed;
 Scorched, the quivering flesh recoiled;
 Unconsumed his burning breast,
 While that grim tormentor smiled.
 “‘Now revenge!’ the maiden cried,
 I have bartered heaven for this;
 Mine thou art, proud Rudolph’s bride,
 Mine, by this last demon kiss.’
 “Tower, and battlement, and hall,
 Scathed as with the thunder-stroke,
 Flashed through midnight’s dusky pall,
 Twined in wreaths of livid smoke.
 “O’er that gulph of yawning flame
 Horrid shapes are hovering;
 Monstrous forms, of hideous name,
 To the bridal-bed they bring.
 “‘They come!—they come!’ their frantic yell.
 On a wave of billowy light
 Sudden rose (so marvellers tell)
 The maiden and her traitor knight.
 “The moon looks bright on Rudolph’s towers,
 The breeze laughs lightly by,
 But dark and silent sleep the hours,
 The lone brook murmuring nigh.
 “The lank weed waves round thy domain,
 The fox creeps to thy gate;
 Dark is thy dwelling, proud chieftain,
 Thy halls are desolate!”

The legend we have thus rendered. His own idiom and versification, as we have already observed, were of a more unintelligible sort, though better suited, perhaps, to the fashion of the time and the capacity of his hearers.

But a gloom still pervaded the once cheerful hearth, and the night wore on without the usual symptoms of mirth and hilarity.

Holt of Grislehurst held the manorial rights, and was feudal lord over a widely-extended domain, the manor of Spotland descending to him by succession from his grandfather. His character was that of a quiet, unostentatious country gentleman; but withal of a proud spirit, not brooking either insult or neglect. This night, an unaccountable depression stole upon him. He strode rapidly across the chamber, moody and alone. The taper was nigh extinguished; the wasted billet grew pale, a few sparks starting up the chimney, as the wind roared in short and hasty gusts round the dwelling. The old family portraits seemed to flit from their dark panels, wavering with the tremulous motion of the blaze.

Holt was still pacing the chamber with a disturbed and agitated step. A few words, rapid and unconnected, fell from his lips.

“Rebel!—Outcast! I cannot betray thee!”

“Betray me!” echoed a voice from behind. Turning, the speaker stood before him. It was the athletic form of the stranger, wrapped in his grey cloak and cap of coarse felt, plumed from the falcon’s wing.

“And who speaks the word that shall betray me? A king,—a fugitive! Yet, not all the means that treachery can compass shall trammel one hair upon this brow without my privity or consent.”

“Comest thou like the sharp wind into my dwelling?” inquired Holt, in a voice tremulous with amazement.

“Free as the unconfined air; yet fettered by a lighter bond,—a woman’s love!” returned the intruder. “Thou hast a daughter.”

The Lord of Grislehurst grew pale at these words. Some terrific meaning clung to them. After a short pause the stranger continued:—

“Thus speak the legends of Tigernach, and the bards of Ulster, rapt into visions of the future:—’*When a king of Erin shall flee at the voice of a woman, then shall the distaff and spindle conquer whom the sword and buckler shall not subdue.*’ That woman is yon heretic queen. A usurper, an intruder on our birthright. Never were the O’Neales conquered but by woman! I have lingered here when the war-cry hath rung from the shores of my country. Again the shout hath come, and the impatient chiefs wait for my return. But”——

The warrior seemed to writhe during the conflict. His hands were clenched, and every muscle stiffened with agony. Scorn at his own weakness, and dread, horrible undefinable dread, as he felt the omnipotent power mastering his proud spirit. The man who would have laughed at the shaking of a spear, and the loud rush of the battle, quailed before a woman’s hate and a woman’s love.

“And what is thy request to-night?” said Holt.

The stranger answered in a voice of thunder—

“Thy daughter!”

Tyrone, for it was he, seemed nigh choking with the emotion he sought to suppress.

“Nay,” he continued, “it must not be. Oh! did I love her less, she had been mine!”

“Thine?” suddenly retorted her father, somewhat scornfully. “And who gave thee this power over woman’s spirit? Thou hast not even had speech of her, much less the means to win her favour.”

An almost supernatural expression seemed to gather on the features of the chieftain. His eye, rolling through the vista of past years, began to pause, appalled as it approached the dark threshold of the future. He appeared lost to the presence of surrounding objects, as he thus exclaimed with a terrific solemnity—

“When the dark-browed Norah nursed me on her lap, and her eye, though dark to outward sense, saw through the dim veil of destiny, it was thus she sung as she guarded my slumbers, and the hated Sassenach was in the hall:—

“Rest thee, baby! light and darkness
Mingling o’er thy path shall play;
Hope shall flee when thou pursuest,
Lost amid life’s trackless way.

“Rest thee, baby! woman’s breast
Thou shalt darken o’er with woe;
None thou lookest on or lovest,
Joy or hope hereafter know.
Many a maid thy glance shall rue,
Where it smites it shall subdue.’

“It was an evil hour, old man, when I looked upon thy daughter.”

Holt, though of a stout and resolute temper, was yet daunted by this bold and unlooked-for address. He trembled as he gazed on the mysterious being before him, gifted, as it seemed, with some supernatural endowments. His unaccountable appearance, the nature of his communications, together with his manner and abrupt mode of speech, would have shaken many a firmer heart unprepared for these disclosures.

“What is thy business with me?” he inquired, with some hesitation.

“To warn thee;—to warn thy daughter. She hath seen me. Ay, to-night. And how runs the prophecy? Let her beware. I have looked on her beforetime. Looked on her! ay, until these glowing orbs have become dim, dazzled with excess of brightness. I have looked on her till this stern bosom hath become softer than the bubbling wax to her impression; but I was concealed, and the maiden passed unharmed by the curse. To-night I have saved her life. A resistless impulse! And she hath looked on me.” He smote his brow, groaning aloud in the agony he endured.

It may be supposed this revelation did not allay the apprehensions of the listener. Bewildered and agitated, he turned towards the window. The pale moon was glimmering through the quiet leaves, and he saw a dark and muffled figure in the avenue. It was stationary for a while; it then slowly moved towards the adjoining thicket and was lost to his view. Holt turned to address his visitor, but he had disappeared. It was like the passing of a troubled dream, vague and indistinct, but fraught with horrible conceptions. A cloud seemed to gather on his spirit, teeming with some terrible but unknown doom. Its nature even imagination failed to conjecture. His first impulse was to visit his daughter. He found the careful nurse by her bedside. As he entered the room, Agnes raised one finger to her lips, in token of silence. The anxious father bent over his child. Her sleep was heavy, and her countenance flushed. A

tremor passed over her features. A groan succeeded. Suddenly she started up. With a look of anguish he could never forget, she cried—

“Help! O my father!” She clung around his neck. In vain he endeavoured to soothe her. She sobbed aloud, as if her heart were breaking. But she never told that dream, though her haggard looks, when morning rose on her anxious and pallid countenance, showed the disturbance it had created.

Days and weeks passed by. The intrusion of the bold outlaw was nigh forgotten. The father’s apprehensions had in some degree subsided, but Constance did not resume her wonted serenity. Her earliest recollections were those of the old nursery rhymes, with which Agnes had not failed to store her memory. But the giant killers and their champions now failed to interest and excite. Other feelings than those of terror and of wonder were in operation, requiring a fresh class of stimulants for their support—tales of chivalry and of love, that all-enduring passion, where maidens and their lovers sighed for twice seven years, and all too brief a trial of their truth and constancy! As she listened, her soul seemed to hang on the minstrel’s tongue; that erratic troubadour, Gaffer Gee, being a welcome and frequent visitor at Grislehurst.

One night he had tarried late in the little chamber, where she was wont to give him audience. She seemed more wishful to protract his stay than heretofore.

“Now for the ballad of Sir Bertine, the famous Lancashire knight, who was killed at St Alban’s, fighting for the glorious red rose of Lancaster.”

Nothing loth, he commenced the following ditty:—

“The brave Sir Bartine Entwisel
 Hath donned his coat of steel,
 And left his hall and stately home,
 To fight for England’s weal.
 “To fight for England’s weal, I trow,
 And good King Harry’s right,
 His loyal heart was warm and true,
 His sword and buckler bright.
 “That sword once felt the craven foe,
 Its hilt was black with gore,
 And many a mother’s son did rue
 His might at Agincourt.
 “And now he stately steps his hall,
 A summons from the king?
 My armour bright, my casque and plume,
 My sword and buckler bring.
 ““Blow, warder, blow. Thy horn is shrill,
 My liegemen hither call,
 For I must away to the south countrie,
 And spears and lances all.’
 ““Oh, go not to the south countrie!’
 His lady weeping said;
 ‘Oh, go not to the battle-field,
 For I dreamed of the waters red!’
 ““Oh, go not to the south countrie!’
 Cried out his daughter dear;

‘Oh, go not to the bloody fight,
 For I dreamed of the waters clear!’
 “Sir Bertine raised his dark visor,
 And he kissed his fond lady;
 ‘I must away to the wars and fight
 For our king in jeopardy!’
 “The lady gat her to the tower,
 She clomb the battlement;
 She watched and greet, while through the woods
 The glittering falchions went.
 “The wind was high, the storm grew loud,
 Fierce rose the billowy sea;
 When from Sir Bertine’s lordly tower
 The bell boomed heavily!
 “‘O mother dear, what bodes that speech
 From yonder iron tongue?’
 ‘Tis but the rude, rude blast, my love,
 That idle bell hath swung.’
 “Upon the rattling casement still
 The beating rain fell fast;
 When creeping fingers wandering thrice
 Across that window passed.
 “‘O mother dear, what means that sound
 Upon the lattice nigh?’
 ‘Tis but the cold, cold arrowy sleet,
 That hurtles in the sky.’
 “The blast was still—a pause more dread
 Ne’er terror felt—when, lo!
 An armed footstep on the stair
 Clanked heavily and slow.
 “Up flew the latch and tirling-pin,
 Wide swung the grated door,
 Then came a solemn stately tread
 Upon the quaking floor!
 “A shudder through the building ran,
 A chill and icy blast;
 A moan, as though in agony
 Some viewless spirit passed!
 “‘O mother dear, my heart is froze,
 My limbs are stark and cold.’
 Her mother spake not, for again
 That turret bell hath tolled.
 “Three days passed by. At eventide
 There came an aged man,
 He bent him low before the dame,
 His wrinkled cheek was wan.
 “‘Now, speak, thou evil messenger,
 Thy tidings show to me.’
 That aged man, nor look vouchsafed,
 Nor ever a word spake he.

“‘What bringest thou?’ the lady said,
 ‘I charge thee by the rood.’
 He drew a signet from his hand,
 ‘Twas speckled o’er with blood.
 “‘Thy husband’s grave is wide and deep.
 In St Alban’s priory
 His body lies, but on his soul
 Christ Jesus have mercy!’”²⁶

Scarcely had the last solemn supplication been uttered, when the latch of the chamber was raised. The door flew open, and the outlaw, in his dark grey cap and cloak, stood before them. Constance was too much alarmed to utter a word. She clung to her companion with the agony of one grasping at the most fragile support for life and safety.

“Nay, maiden, I would not harm thee,” said the intruder, in a voice so musical and sad, that it seemed to drop into the listener’s ear like a gush of harmony, or a sweet and melancholy chime wakening up the heart’s most endeared and hallowed associations. His features were nobly formed. His eye, large and bright, of the purest grey; the lashes, like a cloud, covering and tempering their lustre. A touch of sadness rested on his lips. They seemed to speak of suffering and endurance, as if the soul’s deepest agony would not have cast a word across their barriers. Constance for a moment raised her eyes, but they were suddenly withdrawn, overflowing with some powerful emotion. He still gazed, but one proud effort broke the fixed intensity of his glance, and his tongue resumed its office.

“Maiden, I am pursued. The foe are on my track. My retreat is discovered, and unless thou wilt vouchsafe to me a hiding-place, I am in their power. The Earl of Tyrone—nay, I scorn the title—’tis the King of Ulster that stands before thee. I would not crouch thus for my own life, were it not for my country. Her stay, her sustenance, is in thy keeping.”

Never did wretchedness and misfortune sue in vain to woman’s ear. Constance forgot her weakness and timidity. She saw not her own danger. A fellow-being craved help and succour; all other feelings gave place, and she seemed animated with a new impulse. She looked on the minstrel, as if to ascertain his fidelity. It was evident, however, that no apprehension need be entertained, this personage seeming to manifest no slight solicitude for the safety of the unfortunate chief.

“The old lead mine, in the Cleuch,” whispered he.

“Nay, it must be in the house,” replied Constance, with a glance of forethought beyond her years. “The pursuers will not search this loyal house for treason!”

As was the case in most mansions belonging to families of rank and importance, a room was contrived for purposes of special concealment, where persons or property could be stowed in

²⁶ In the parish church of St Chad, Rochdale, is a marble tablet, erected by John Entwisle, Esquire, a descendant of Sir Bertine, on which is the following inscription:—

“To perpetuate a memorial in the church of St Alban’s (perished by time), this marble is here placed to the memory of a gallant and loyal man, Sir Bertine Entwisle, Knight, Viscount and Baron of Brybeke, in Normandy, and some time Bailiff of Constantin, in which office he succeeded his father-in-law, Sir John Ashton, whose daughter Lucy first married Sir Richard le Byron, an ancestor of the Lord Byrons, Barons of Rochdale, and, secondly, Sir Bertine Entwisle, who, after performing repeated acts of valour in the service of his sovereigns, Henry V. and VI., more particularly at Agincourt, was killed in the first battle of St Alban’s, and on his tomb was recorded in brass the following inscription:—

“‘Here lyth Syr Bertine Entwisle, Knighte, which was born in Lancastershyre, and was Viscount and Baron of Brybeke in Normandy, and Bailiff of Constantin, who died fighting on King Henry VI. party, 28th May, 1455.
 “‘On whose sowl Jesu have mercy!’”

case of danger. A heavy stack of chimneys was enlarged so as to admit of a small apartment, inconvenient enough in other respects, yet well adapted as a temporary hiding-place.

Hither, through secluded passages, the careful Constance conducted her guest, who had so strangely thrown himself, with unhesitating confidence, upon her generosity and protection. The proud representative of a kingly race was rescued by a woman from ignominy and death. Some feeling of this nature probably overpowered him. As he bade her good night, his voice faltered, and he passed his hand suddenly athwart his brow. Constance, having fulfilled this sacred duty, shrank from any further intercourse, and hastened to her chamber. It was long ere she could sleep; portentous dreams then brooded over her slumbers. The terrible vision was repeated, and she awoke, but not to her wonted cheerfulness.

How strange, how mysterious, the mechanism of the human heart! The feelings glide insensibly into each other, changing their hue and character imperceptibly, as the colours on the evening cloud. Protection awakens kindness, kindness pity, and pity love. Love, the more dangerous, too, the process being unperceived, insidiously disguised under other names, and under the finest sympathies and affections of our nature.

With a step light and noiseless as that of her favourite spaniel who crept behind her, did Constance make an early visit to ascertain the safety of her prisoner. His retreat was unmolested. The pursuit was for the present evaded, and his enemies thrown out in their track. It was needful, however, that he should remain for a few days in his present concealment, prior to the attempt by which he purposed to regain his native country.

Constance loved the moonlight. The broad glare of day is so garish and extravagant. Besides, there is a restlessness and a buzz no human being, at least no sensible human being, can endure. Everything is on the stir. Every creature, however paltry and insignificant, whether moth, mote, or atom, seems busy. Whereas, one serene soft gaze of the moon appears to allay nature's universal disquiet. The calm and mellow placidity of her look, so heavenly and undisturbed, lulls the soul, and subdues its operations to her influence.

Constance, we may suppose, accidentally wandered by the end of the building, where, in the huge buttress of chimneys, a narrow crevice admitted light into the chamber occupied by the fugitive. At times, perhaps unconsciously, her eye wandered from the moon to this dreary abode; where it lingered longest is more than we dare tell. She drew nigh to the dark margin of the pond. The white swans were sleeping in the sedge. At her approach they fluttered clumsily to their element; there, the symbols of elegance and grace, like wreaths of sea-foam on its surface, they glided on, apparently without an impulse or an effort. She was gazing on them when a rustle amongst the willows on her left arrested her attention. Soon the mysterious and almost omnipresent form of Tyrone stood before her.

"I must away, maiden—Constance!" His voice was mournful as the last faint sound of the evening bell upon the waters.

"Why art thou here?" She said this in a tone of mingled anxiety and surprise.

"Here? Too long have I lingered in these woods and around thy dwelling, Constance. But I must begone—for ever!"

"For ever?" cried the perplexed girl, forgetful of all but the dread thought of that for ever!

"Ay, for ever? Why should I stay?"

This question, alas! she could not answer, but stood gazing on the dark water, and on the silver waves which the bright swans had rippled over the pool. Though she saw them not, yet the scene mingled itself insensibly with the feelings then swelling in her bosom; and these

recurrent circumstances, in subsequent periods of her existence, never failed to bring the same dark tide of thought over the soul with vivid and agonising distinctness.

“Maiden, beware!”

Constance turned towards him:—the moonlight fell on his brow: the dark curls swept nobly out from their broad shadows twining luxuriantly about his cheek. His eyes were fixed on her, with an eagerness and an anguish in their expression the most absorbing and intense.

“I have loved thee. Ay, if it be love to live whole nights on the memory of a glance,—on a smile,—on the indelible impress of thy form. Here,—here! But no living thing that I have loved;—no being that e’er looked on me with kindness and favour, that has not been marked out for destruction. Oh, that those eyes had ne’er looked upon me! Thou wert happy, and I have lingered on thy footstep till I have dragged thee to the same gulph where all hope—all joy that e’er stole in upon my dark path, must perish.”

“Oh! do not foretaste thy misery thus,” cried Constance. “The cruel sufferings thou hast undergone make thee apprehensive of evil. But how can *thy* fate control my destiny?”

“How, I know not,” said Tyrone, “save that it shall bring the same clouds, in unmitigated darkness, about thy path. Dost thou love me? Nay, start not. Stay not!” cried he, making way for the maiden to pass. But Constance seemed unable to move,—terrified and speechless.

“Perchance, thou knowest it not, but thou wouldest love me as a woman loves;—ay, beyond even the verge and extremity of hope! Even now the poison rankles in thy bosom. Hark!—’tis the doom yon glorious intelligences denounced from that glittering vault, when they proclaimed my birth!”

He repeated the prediction as aforetime, with a deep, solemn intonation:—the maiden’s blood seemed to curdle with horror. A pause of bewildering and mysterious terror followed. One brief minute in the lapse of time,—but an age in the records of thought! Constance, fearful of looking on the dark billows of the spirit, sought to avert her glance.

“Thou art an exile, and misfortune prompted me to thy succour; thou hast won my pity, stranger.”

“Beshrew me, ’tis a wary and subtle deceiver, this same casuist love. Believe him not!” said he, in a burst and agony of soul that made Constance tremble. “He would lead thee veiled to the very brink of the precipice, then snatch the shelter from thine eyes and bid thee leap! Nay, ’tis not pride,—’tis the doom, the curse of my birthright that is upon me. Maiden! I will but strike to thine heart, and then—poor soul!” He shuddered; his voice grew tremulous and convulsed. “The stricken one shall fall. Hark! the hounds are again upon my track!” The well-practised ear of the hunted fugitive could discern the approach of footsteps long before they were audible to an ordinary listener:—his eye and ear seemed on the stretch;—his head bent forward in the same direction;—he breathed not. Even Constance seemed to suspend the current of her own thoughts at this interruption.

“They are approaching. In all likelihood ’tis a posse from the sheriff.” Again he listened.

“They are armed. Nay, then, Tyrone thou must to cover: thou canst not flee. Point not to the hiding-place I have left. If, as I suspect, they bring a warrant of search, thy father’s life may be in jeopardy.”

“Where,—oh, where?” said Constance, forgetful of all consequences, in her anxiety for her father’s fate and that of the illustrious stranger.

“In thy chamber, lady.”

She drew back in dismay.

“Nay,” continued he, guessing at the cause of her alarm. “They will not care to scrutinise for me there with much exactness; and, by the faith of my fathers, I will not wrong thee!”

There was a frankness, an open and undisguised freedom of manner, in this address, which assured her. Her confidence returned, and she committed herself promptly to the issue. She felt her soul expand with the desire of contributing to his ultimate escape. All the ardour of her nature was concentrated in this generous and self-devoted feeling. Too innocent for suspicion she seemed to rise above its influence.

Silently, and with due caution, she led the unfortunate Earl to her own chamber, where, in a recess opening through the bed’s head into the arras, he seemed secure from discovery.

Scarcely was this arrangement completed, ere a thundering knock announced the visitor. It was an officer of justice, attended by some half-dozen followers, who watched every avenue to the house whilst his message was delivered within.

This official delivered into the hands of Holt a warrant for the apprehension of O’Neale, Earl of Tyrone, a traitor, then suspected of being harboured in the mansion of Grislehurst, whom the occupier was commanded, on pain of being treated as an accomplice, to deliver into the hands of justice, for the due administering of those pains and penalties which were attached to his crime.

The loyal owner, fired with indignation at this foul charge, rebutting the accusation with contempt.

“However loth,” said the messenger, “I must execute mine office; and, seeing this first mission hath failed in its purpose, I have here a warrant of search. Mine orders are imperative.”

“I tell thee I have no plotters lurking here. Search and welcome;—but if thou findest aught in this house that smells of treason, the Queen may blot out my escutcheon. I’ll dismount the *pheon*. The arrow-head shall return to its quiver. ‘Twas honestly won, and, by our lady’s grace, it shall be honestly worn!”

“We must obey,” said the officer; “it shall be done with all courtesy and despatch.”

Holt bit his lips with rage and vexation. From the suspicion of harbouring and aiding the traitor Tyrone, his known loyalty and good faith should have protected him. He hoped, however, to throw back on the author of this foul slander the disgrace attached to it. Smothering his wrath, and brooding over its gratification, he accompanied the messenger, who, placing an additional guard at the main entrance, proceeded with a wary eye to the search. He carefully scrutinised the shape of the rooms, striking the walls and wainscots, measuring the capacity of the chambers, that no space might be left unaccounted for either in one way or another. The concealed apartment in the chimney-range did not escape his examination. Closets, cupboards, folding-doors,—even the family pictures were turned aside, lest some strategem should lurk behind.

Holt, with a look of malicious satisfaction, beheld every fresh disappointment, which he followed with undisguised expressions of ill-will.

“Now for the women’s apartments,” said the officer.

“I have but one daughter. Dost fancy that treason may be stitched in her petticoat? Thinkest thou she would hide this invisible gallant in her bedchamber? ‘Sdeath, that it should ha’ come to this! But I’ll have my revenge.”

“I would fain spare thee from this contumely, but”——

“But what?”

“I must search the house through; and though I doubt not now that our information is false, yet I may not disobey the mandate I have received.”

“Is this thy courtesy?”

“My courtesy must yet consist with the true and honest discharge of mine office. I wait not further parley.”

A short gallery communicated from the stairhead to the private chamber of Constance. They met her outside the door; and the timid girl grew pale as she beheld the officer led on by her father.

“Constance,” cried he, “thy chamber smacks of treason: it must be purged from this suspicion. This mousing owl will search the crannies even of a woman’s wits ere he sate his appetite for discovery. Hast aught plotting in the hem of thy purple, or in thy holiday ruff and fardingale? Come with us, wench;—the gallant Earl of Tyrone would sport himself bravely in thy bedchamber, pretty innocent!”

“If my gallantry were akin to mine office,—then, lady, would I spare thy bosom and mine own nature this extremity. Believe me, thou shall suffer no rudeness at my hands.”

The officer bowed low, observing her confusion and distress.

“Go with us,” said her father, “and leave not until our search is over. Mayhap he may find a lover in thy shoe, or in the wrinkles of thy rose-tie.” He entered the chamber as he said this. It was a little room, tricked out with great elegance and beauty. Indian cabinets were there, and other costly ornaments, inlaid with ivory and pearl, in the arrangement of which, and of the other furniture, considerable taste was displayed. A lute lay in one corner;—tambour-work and embroidery occupied a recess near the window;—the clothes’ presses showed their contents neatly folded, and carefully set out to the best advantage.

“I’faith, wench, thy chamber seems well fitted for so goodly a brace of guests—not a thread awry. Everything in trim order for thy gallants, mayhap. Thou hast not been at thy studies of late.—I have seen its interior in somewhat less orderly fashion. I marvel if it might not be pranked out for our coming. Now, to work, sir:—where does thy grubbing begin?”

Constance posted herself in a gloomy corner, where she could watch their proceedings almost unperceived. She hoped that in her chamber the search would not be so strict as in situations of more likelihood and probability for concealment. At any rate, the common feelings of delicacy and respect,—not quite extinct, she observed, even in this purveyor of justice,—would prevent any very exact and dangerous scrutiny. Nor was she deceived. He merely felt round the walls, opened the presses and closets, but did not disturb the bed furniture. He was retiring from the search, when her father scornfully taunted him with the ill success of his mission.

“I wonder thou hast not tumbled the bed topsy-turvy. I am glad to see thou hast yet some grace and manners in thy vocation. Now, Sir Messenger, to requite thee for this thy courtesy and forbearance, I will show thee a secret tabernacle, which all thy prying has not been able to discover.”

Saying this he approached the bed: a spring was concealed in one of the posts communicating with the secret door behind which Tyrone was hidden. As he turned aside the drapery to

ascertain precisely its situation, Constance, no longer able to control her apprehension of discovery, rushed before him. Her terror, for the time, threw her completely from her guard.

“Do not, my father:—he must not look there. For my sake, oh, spare *this*”——

She was silent:—her lips grew deadly pale; and she leaned against the pillar for support. The officer’s suspicions were awakened, and he gave a shrewd guess at the truth.

“Now, fair dame,” he cried: “it is but an ungracious office to thwart a lady of her will, but I must see what lurks in that same secret recess. Master Holt, I prythee help me to a peep behind the curtain.”

But Holt was too much astonished to comply. What could exist there to excite his daughter’s apprehensions so powerfully, puzzled him greatly. He had not a thought, the most remote, that could affect her fidelity;—yet he hesitated. The officer, in a more peremptory tone, demanded admission. Rousing from his stupor, and mortified at the folly of these girlish fancies, he struck the spring: in a trice, a portion of the bed’s head flew open, displaying a dark chasm beyond. Swift as thought the officer darted through the aperture; but the door was immediately shut, and with great violence. A scuffle was heard within, but not a word was spoken. Holt, in doubt and consternation gazed with a wild and terrific aspect on the devoted Constance, who, covering her face, sought to avoid seeing the expected result of her imprudence. Her father now listened. There was a dread suspense in his look more fearful than even the most violent outburst of his wrath. He seemed every moment to expect some irrefragable proof,—some visible and overwhelming conviction of his daughter’s infamy. The door was still closed. Groans were plainly audible, telling of some terrible strife within. Suddenly these indications ceased. Holt shuddered. He fancied some foul act was perpetrating—perhaps even now consummated—under his own roof; and swift would be the vengeance required at his hands. Constance, too, seemed to apprehend the commission of some deadly crime, as she threw herself imploringly before her father.

“Save them,—oh, save them!—their strife is mortal!”

He shook her from him with a glance of abhorrence, and the maiden fell heavily on the floor. He was preparing to enter when the door flew open, and a form rushed through in the gaudy apparel of the officer. He leaped on the floor, and, ere Holt could utter a word, he heard him descending the stairs with great precipitation.

“Whom hast thou concealed in thy bedchamber?” inquired the almost frantic father. Constance sat on the ground, her head resting on the chair beside which she had fallen. She wept not, but her heart was full even to bursting.

“What is the name of thy paramour?—Thou hast been somewhat eager, methinks, to accomplish thine own and a father’s disgrace?”

This cutting address roused her. She replied, but in a firm tone—

“A stranger,—an exile. Misfortune appeals not to woman’s heart unalleviated. He threw himself on my protection; and where the feelings own no taint, their purity is not sullied,—even in a lady’s bedchamber!”

A glance of insulted pride passed over her beautifully-formed features. It was but for a moment. The agony of her spirit soon drank up the slender rill her feelings had gushed forth, and she stood withered and drooping before the angry frown of her father.

“Surely, ‘tis not the rebel Tyrone that my daughter harbours in the privacy of her chamber? Speak!—Nay, then hast thou indeed brought an old man’s grey hairs to the grave in sorrow!

Treason!—Oh, that I have lived for this,—and my own flesh and blood hath done it. Out of my sight, unnatural monster. Dare not to crawl again across my path, lest I kill thee!”

“O my father! I am indeed innocent.” She again threw herself at his feet, but he spurned her from him as though he loathed her beyond endurance. Boiling and maddened with rage at the presumption of this daring rebel, Holt, forgetful of his own danger, seized the light. He burst open the secret door; but what was his astonishment on beholding, not the hated form of Tyrone, but the officer of justice himself, gagged, pinioned, and deprived of his outer dress. The cap and mantle of Tyrone, by his side, told too plainly of the daring and dangerous exploit by which his escape had been effected.

The outlaw, soon after his enlargement, finding that the cause he had espoused was hopeless, and that matters were at the last extremity in his own fate, and that of his unhappy country,—fearful, too, of drawing the innocent Constance and her father into the deep vortex of his own ruin,—made all haste to the capital, where, through the powerful interest excited in his behalf, aided by his well-known valour and the influence he was known to possess amongst his countrymen, he received a free pardon from the Queen.

Yet his thoughts lingered on the remembrance of her to whose heroic and confiding spirit he owed his safety. Never had his proud bosom been so enthralled. Though nurtured in camps, amid the din of arms, and the shout of the battle, yet his knowledge of the female heart was almost intuitive. He had loved more than once, but in every case the attachment ended unhappily, terminating either by the death of the object or by some calamity his own evil fate had unavoidably brought upon its victim. Though fearful the same operation of his destiny would ensue, and that misery and misfortune would still follow the current of his affections, yet he resolved to behold once more the maiden he loved with an ardour almost surpassing his own belief.

One cold dull morning, towards the wane of the year, when the heavy drops lay long on the rank herbage; no sunbeam yet loitering through the damp chill atmosphere, but the sky one wide and unvarying expanse—a sea of cloud—here and there a black scud passing over, like a dim bark sweeping across the bosom of that “waveless deep,” a stranger stood by a low wicket near the mansion of Grislehurst. He looked wistfully at the gloomy windows, unlighted by a single reflection from without, like the rayless night of his own soul:—they were mostly closed. A mysterious and unusual stillness prevailed. The brown leaves fluttered about, unswept from the dreary avenues. Decayed branches obstructed the paths; and every object wore a look of wretchedness and dilapidation. The only sign of occupancy and life was one grey wreath of smoke, curling heavily from its vent, as if oppressed with the gloom by which it was surrounded. The melancholy note of the redbreast was the only living sound, as the bird came hopping towards him with its usual air of familiarity and respect. Enveloped in a military cloak, and in his cap a dark feather drooping gently over his proud features, the stranger slowly approached the house: a side-door stood partly open. He entered. A narrow passage led into the hall. No embers brightened the huge chimney. The table showed no relics of the feast,—no tokens of the past night’s revel. The deer’s antlers still hung over the master’s place at the board, but the oaken chair was gone. Dust and desertion had played strange antics in these “high places.” The busy spider had wreathed her dingy festoons in mockery over the pomp she degraded.

He listened, but there was no sound, save the last faint echo of his footstep. Turning towards the staircase, a beautiful spaniel, a sort of privileged favourite of Constance, came, with a deep growl, as if to warn away the intruder. But the sagacious animal suddenly fawned upon him, and with a low whine ascended the stairs, looking back wistfully, as though inviting him to follow.

Scarcely knowing why, or bestowing one thought on the nature of his intrusion, he ascended. The place seemed familiar to him. He entered a narrow gallery, where he paused, overcome by some sudden and overwhelming emotion. The dog stood too, looking back with a low and sorrowful whine. With a sudden effort he grappled with and shook off the dark spirit that threatened to overpower him. A low murmur was heard apparently from a chamber at no great distance. Without reflecting a moment on the impropriety of his situation, he hastily approached the door. His guide, with a look of almost irresistible persuasion, implored him to enter.

It was the chamber of Constance. A female was kneeling by the bed, too much absorbed to be conscious of his approach: she was in the attitude of prayer. He recognised the old nurse,—her eye glistening in the fervour of devotion, whilst pouring forth, to her FATHER in secret, the agony of soul that words are too feeble to express.

Bending over the bed, as if for the support of some frail victim of disease, he beheld the lord of the mansion. His look was wild and haggard;—no moisture floated over his eyeballs: they were glazed and motionless; arid as the hot desert,—no refreshing rain dropped from their burning orbs, dimmed with the shadows of despair.

Stretched on the bed, her pale cheek resting on the bosom of her father, lay the yet beauteous form of Constance Holt. A hectic flush at times passed across her features. Her lip, shrunk and parched with the fever that consumed her, was moistened by an attendant with unremitting and unwearied assiduity; her eye often rose in tenderness on her parent, as if anxious to impart to him the consolation she enjoyed.

“Oh, I am happy, my father!” Here a sudden change was visible,—some chord of sorrow was touched, and it vibrated to her soul.

Her father spoke not.

“I *have* loved!—Oh, faithfully. But, now—let me die without a murmur to Thee, or one wish but Thy will, and I am happy!” She raised her soft and streaming eyes towards the throne of that Mercy she addressed. The cloud passed, but she sank back on her pillow, exhausted with the conflict. Her father bent over her in silent terror, anticipating the last struggle. Suddenly he exclaimed, as if to call back the yet lingering spirit:—

“Live, my Constance! Could I save thee, thou blighted bud—blighted by my”—His lip grew pale; he struck his forehead, and a groan like the last expiring throe of nature escaped him.

“Would the destroyer of my peace were here!—’Tis too late—or I would not now forbid thy love. But he was a traitor, a rebel—else”——

Constance gradually revived from her insensibility. A sudden flash from the departing spirit seemed to have animated her—a new and vehement energy, which strangely contrasted with her weak and debilitated frame.

“I have seen him,” she cried. “Oh, methought his form passed before me;—but it is gone!” She looked eagerly round the apartment; other eyes involuntarily followed,—but no living object could be distinguished through the chill and oppressive gloom that brooded over that chamber of death.

“It was a vision—a shadowy messenger from the tomb. Yet, once more if I might see him—ere I die.” A deep sob, succeeded by a rapid gush of tears, relieved her; but it told of the powerful and all-pervading passion not yet extinguished in her breast.

“We shall meet!” again she raised her eyes towards that throne to which the sigh of the sufferer never ascended in vain.

“Yes, my own—my loved Constance, now!” cried the stranger, rushing from his concealment. He clasped her in his arms. A gleam, like sunlight across the wave, shot athwart the shadow that was gathering on her eye. It seemed the forerunner of a change. The anxious father forbore to speak, but he looked on his daughter with an agony that seemed to threaten either reason or existence. Constance gazed on her lover, but her eye gradually became more dim. Her hand relaxed in his grasp, yet her features wore a look of serenity and happiness.

“O most merciful Father! Thou hast heard my prayer, through Him whose merits have found me a place in that glory to which I come. Be merciful to him whose love is true as mine own, and faithful unto death. Tyrone, we meet again!—Oh, how have I prayed for thee!” Her eyes seemed to brighten even in this world with the glories of another.

“Farewell!—I hear the hymns of yon ransomed ones around the throne. They beckon my spirit from these dark places of sorrow. Now—farewell!”

She cast one look towards her lover: it was the last glimpse of earth. The next moment her gaze was on the brightness of that world whence sorrow and sighing flee away. So sudden was the transition, that the first smile of the disembodied spirit seemed to linger on the abode she had left, like the evening cloud, reflecting the glories of another sky, ere it fades for ever into the darkness and solitude of night.

XIV. Hoghton Tower

“Pastime with good company
 I love, and shall until I die;
 Grudge so will, but none deny;
 So God be pleased, so live will I.
 For my pastance,
 Hunt, sing, and dance,
 My heart is set;
 All godly sport,
 To my comfort,
 Who shall me let!”

The Kinges Balade.

“God gives not kings the style of gods in vain,
 For on his throne his sceptre do they sway;
 And, as their subjects ought them to obey,
 So kings should feare and serve their God againe.”

King James to his Son Prince Henry.

“The ancient castle denominated Hoghton Tower stands on the summit of a hill, formerly shrouded with trees, four miles and a half west of Blackburn. It was erected by Sir Thomas Hoghton, in the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign. It remained for several generations the principal seat of the Hoghton family; and after part of it had been blown up by accident, when garrisoned for Charles the First, the injury was repaired. The family have now removed to Walton Hall; and Hoghton Tower is left to decay, two poor families inhabiting the south wing only. A ponderous gateway, immediately under the centre tower, leads to the quadrangular courtyard, capable of holding six hundred men. The noble embattled tower, forming the west front, with its two minor square towers, serve as appendages to the north and south wing, and are united by low walls. Within the courtyard, a noble flight of steps leads to the middle quadripartite, similar in aspect to Stonyhurst College, the ancient residence of the Sherbornes. This middle pile contains large staircases, branching out to long galleries, into which the several chambers open. One chamber, still called James the First’s room, is considered ‘most worthy of notice;’ it has two square windows in both north and south, is beautifully wainscoted, and contains some old furniture. A fine prospect is gained from this ancient and sequestered abode: the pretty village of Walton-le-dale, delightfully situate in a valley, the improving town of Preston, and the single-coned Nase Point presenting itself majestically in the distance. The gentle river Darwen pursues its placid course among the enclosures at the base of the hill.”

The above description, extracted from Nichols’s *Royal Progresses of James the First*, and likewise the particulars scattered through the following tale, will, we hope, convey to the reader a pretty accurate idea of this noble but deserted mansion.

A petition, which was presented here (some say at Meyerscough) to King James, by a great number of Lancashire peasants, tradesmen, and servants, requesting that they might be allowed to take their diversions (as of old accustomed) after divine service on Sundays, is said to have been the origin of the *Book of Sports*, soon after promulgated by royal authority. James being persuaded those were Puritans who forbade such diversions, and that they were

Jewishly inclined, because they affected to call Sunday the Sabbath, recommended that diverting exercises should be used after evening prayer, and ordered the book to be read publicly in all churches; and such ministers as refused to obey the injunction were threatened with severe punishment in the High Commission Court. This legal violation of the day which is unequivocally the Christian Sabbath, roused at the time the indignation of the seriously disposed, and has been frequently reprobated by historians. Foremost of its opposers, and eminent in example, stands the virtuous and firm Archbishop Abbot, who, being at Croydon the day it was ordered to be read in churches, flatly forbade it to be read there; which the King was pleased to wink at, notwithstanding the daily endeavours that were used to irritate the King against him. The *Book of Sports* is not, however, without its apologists among modern writers. The following are Mr D'Israeli's remarks on the subject:—"The King found the people in Lancashire discontented, from the unusual deprivation of their popular recreations on Sundays and holidays after the church service: 'With our own ears we heard the general complaint of our people.' The Catholic priests were busily insinuating among the lower orders that the Reformed religion was a sullen deprivation of all mirth and social amusements, and thus 'turning the people's hearts.' But while they were denied what the King terms 'lawful recreations' (which are enumerated to consist of dancing, archery, leaping, vaulting, May-games, Whitsun-ales, morris-dances, and the setting up of Maypoles, and other manly sports), they had substituted some vicious ones. Alehouses were more frequented, drunkenness more general, tale-mongery and sedition, the vices of sedentary idleness, prevailed, while a fanatical gloom was spreading over the country. The King, whose gaiety of temper instantly sympathised with the multitude, being perhaps alarmed at this new shape which Puritanism was assuming, published the *Book of Sports*, which soon obtained the contemptuous name of 'The Dancing Book'" (*Life of James*, p. 135). In reply to this view of the subject we shall, for the present, conclude with Dr Whitaker's remark, that "The King was little aware of the effects which the ill-judged licence was likely to produce on the common people. The relics of it are hardly worn out to this day; and there is scarcely a Sunday evening in any village of the county of Lancaster which does not exhibit symptoms of obedience to the injunction of honest 'recreation.'"—*Royal Progresses of James I.*

On the 15th of August, in the year 1617, a day memorable for its heat and brightness, and for the more enduring glory shed over this remote corner of our rejoicing and gladdened realm, came forth King James, from the southern gate of his loyal borough of Preston, in a gilded and unwieldy caroché, something abated of its lustre by reason of long service and the many vicissitudes attending his Majesty's "progresses," which he underwent to the great comfort and well-being of his dominions.

It were needless to set forth the mighty state in which this war-hating monarch, this "vicegerent of Divinity," departed—or the great error and agitation of Mr Breares, the lawyer, when he made a marvellous proper speech at the town-cross—wiping his forehead thrice, and his mouth barely once. Nor shall we dilate upon the distress, and dazzling silk doublets of the mayor and aldermen of this proud and thrice-happy borough—nor how they knelt to the soft salute of his Majesty's hand. Our whole book were a space too brief, and a region too inglorious, for the wide pomp and paraphernalia of the time; and how the bailiff rode, and the mace-bearer guarded the caroché, it were presumption, an offensive compound of ignorance and pride, to attempt the portraiture. Suffice it to say, they wore mulberry-coloured taffeta gowns, carried white staves and foot-cloths, and were preceded by twenty-four stout yeomen riding before the king, with fringed javelins, unto a place beyond Walton, where they departed. Our object is to notice matters of less magnitude and splendour; occurrences then too trivial to guide the pen of the chronicler, lost beneath the blaze and effulgence that followed on the track of this pageant-loving king. Scraps, which the pomps

and vanities of those days would have degraded, we thus snatch from oblivion; a preservation more worthy, and an occupation more useful, we hope, than to hand down to admiring ages the colour and cut of taffeta or brocade.

This “wisest” of earthly kings was an ill-spoiled compound of qualities, the types of which existed in his monitor and his preceptor; two great men, whom history has not failed to distinguish—Archie Armstrong and George Buchanan—the wit and the scholar, which in him became the representatives of two much more useful and esteemed qualities—fool and pedant!

Attended by his favourite Buckingham and a numerous train of officials, he “progressed” upon the road to Hoghton Tower, the spacious and splendid dwelling of Sir Richard Hoghton, the first baronet of that family, whose guest he was to continue for a space, to the great envy and admiration of the whole neighbourhood.

As they came nigh the Tower, nothing could be conceived more beautiful or picturesque. Its embattled-gateway, bartizans, and battlements, crowning the summit of a bold and commanding eminence, became brightly illuminated, flashing against grim and shapeless masses of cloud, the shattered relics of a storm, that was rolling away in the distance.

Many of the neighbouring gentry were in attendance, not disdaining to wear, out of grace and courtesy to Sir Richard Hoghton, the livery of their thrice-honoured entertainer.

The king’s train alone were very numerous, amongst whom appeared Lord Zouch, Constable of Dover Castle, and Sir George Goring, Lieutenant of the Gentlemen Pensioners.²⁷ With the latter rode Sir John Finett,²⁸ Assistant Master of the Ceremonies, but who acted the chief part in this important office during the king’s journey; two worthies, of whom it might be said, that for tempering of the king’s humour, and aptness in ministering to his delights, their like could scarcely have been found. Such nights of feasting and dancing, such days of hawking, hunting, and horse-racing, had never before gladdened the heart of “Merry Englonde,” or England’s monarchs. It seemed as if the whole realm were given up to idolatry and dissipation. The idol pleasure was worshipped with such ardour and devotion, that all ranks were striving to outdo each other in tinsel, trumpery, and deeds of worthlessness and folly.

The king loved such disguises and representations as were witty and sudden; the more ridiculous, and to him the more pleasant. This vain and frivolous humour might seem unworthy and unbecoming in so great a prince, whose profundity of wisdom had well entitled him to the appellation of “our English Solomon,” did we not call to remembrance that the greatest of men have not disdained to be children in their sports; the deepest dispositions of the mind seeming to require the lightest and most frivolous recreations.

²⁷ “Sir George Goring, of Hurst Pierrepont, in Sussex, representative of a junior line of the respectable family of Goring, which maintains its importance in that county, was bred at Court, under the care of his father, one of Elizabeth’s Gentlemen Pensioners; was knighted May 29, 1608; in 1610, occurs as Gentleman in Ordinary of the Bedchamber to Prince Henry; and now accompanied the king to Scotland as Lieutenant of his Gentlemen Pensioners. He was recommended to James equally by his sagacity and a peculiar jocularity of humour, and became the king’s familiar companion.”—Nichols’s *Royal Progresses*, vol. iii. p. 256.

²⁸ Sir John Finett, says Anthony à Wood (*Fasti* by Bliss, vol. i. col. 492), was son of Sir Robert Finett, of Souton, near Dover, in Kent, son and heir of Sir Thomas, son and heir of John Finett, of Sienna, in Italy (where his name is ancient), who came into England in quality of servant to Cardinal Campegius, and married a maid of honour to Queen Katharine. “Sir John was always bred in the Court, where by his wit, innocent mirth, and great skill in composing songs, he pleased James the First very much. He was sent into France in 1614, about matters of public concern, and in the year after received the honour of knighthood at Whitehall; about which time (or rather about 1612) he was made assistant to the master of the ceremonies, with the reversion of that place.”—Nichols’s *Progresses*, vol. iii. p. 133.

These worthy purveyors to the king's pleasure were of a temper and capacity widely different. Sir George Goring was caustic and severe; Sir John Finett pleasant and social, delighting in nothing so much as in the happiness and gratification of his friends. But the natural disposition of his thoughts was wild and melancholic, taking its hue from some early impression, that was now fading in doubt and disappointment.

The full burst of his hilarity floated joyously on the surface, and his loud mirth, blunting the keen edge of his own feelings, became the more exhilarating in proportion to their acuteness. He had the warm blood of the Italian in his veins, being descended from an ancient family of Sienna; and his rich brown cheek and darkly-speaking eye belied not the land of his origin. Goring was fat and swarthy: his nose small and supercilious, and his eye grey and piercing. He cared not whom he wounded, provided the shafts he drew were well pointed; and his wit quick and well-aimed, causing the king to laugh, and his victim to writhe during their operation.

As the monarch sate discoursing with the Duke of Buckingham, being sore heated, he threw open the windows of his coach, from whence he occasionally obtruded his wise head for a survey, and a visit from some vagrant and silly breeze, if any were abroad. The roads admitted not of aught but the gentlest paces, and the great clamour and cloud about the procession made the dust and heat excessively annoying; whereupon the king, it is said, did apply a very uncourteous epithet to some of his loving subjects, who came too close upon his person, which, though not generally averse to being gazed at, was in too warm an atmosphere at present for enjoying these kingly exhibitions.

"O' my saul, that meikle stane would build a bra' chappin-block for my Lord Provost," said royalty, its head again stationed at the window, surveying with solemn curiosity an egg-shaped stone of the boulder sort, which, sure enough, was of a remarkable bigness, though not of that rarity or infrequency that should have drawn forth the wonder of a king. His native dialect he generally employed on jocose and familiar subjects. In affairs of importance he affected the use of the English tongue, which he spoke with great formality and pomp.

"Stop," said he. "There be *literæ* or letters thereon. Unto what purport?"

But no one could resolve him as to the use of the stone, or the purport of the writing. His worthy host protested that the wonder had never before been observed. It was doubtless some miracle worked for the occasion.

"But the *scriptum* or writing will set forth the motive or argument thereto. The letters be goodly and well-shapen."

Many voices recited the inscription, forming the following ill-spelled line.

"Torne me o're, an I'le tel thee plaine."

The well-known childish curiosity of the monarch would not permit him to go away unsatisfied. The day was hot, and the stone was heavy; but a long and laborious toil brought to light the following satisfactory intelligence,—

"Hot porritch softens hard butter-cakes,

*So torne me o'er again"*²⁹

²⁹ This stone, the author has been told, was in existence less than a century ago, though not in the precise situation above alluded to. He has heard the disappointment of the curious passers-by told with considerable humour; they, however, generally took care to replace the stone with its word of promise before the eye, that the next comer might bestow the same labour for the like result.

“And o’ my saul,” said the king, “ye shall gang roun’ to yere place again; for sa meikle as these country gowks mauna ken the riddle without the labour.”

So the “muckle stane” was replaced for the next comer who had strength and curiosity enough to unriddle the sphinx.

But James did not relish fooleries wherein he was the butt. Whether it was devised by some wicked rhymester and contemner of royalty in the neighbourhood, or placed there by some of the wits of his own company, was never ascertained, though he challenged them at random, and swore lustily that he would know the originator of this piece of folly and impertinence.

As the king drew nigh to the avenue, there presently issued forth a goodly flourish of trumpets, which made the women caper and the horses prance. Sir Richard Hoghton rode with the king; but his son Sir Gilbert met his Majesty with a great retinue, clad mostly after the same fashion; many of the neighbouring gentry, as we have before observed, not disdaining to put on Sir Richard’s gowns and liveries, to swell the pomp and magnificence of that memorable occasion.

The javelin-bearers rode two and two: halting at his Majesty’s approach, they formed an avenue, through which Sir Gilbert, sumptuously attired, went forth to salute the king. His cloak and hose were all glistening and spangled with embroidery; his vest was cloth of gold, enriched with rare and costly stones; his shirt-bands and ruffles were worked in silver; and his gloves, Spanish, breathing out the choicest perfume; his hat was of French murrey, the brims thick set with gold twist and spangles; round it was a band of goldsmith’s work, looped with a crystal button.

On approaching the monarch he gracefully alighted; whereupon James commanded that the carriage should be stayed, thrusting out his hand in a very gracious sort to this worthy knight, who, on his knees, received the blessing.

His Majesty then took horse, assisted by Buckingham, who held the stirrup. But the king’s peculiar and unsteady vaulting was much noticed. Many of the bystanders, not aware of his Majesty’s dislike to these equestrian feats, marvelled not a little at the motion of his leg, and the disturbed and uneasy position he assumed. The pathway up the avenue was laid with purple velvet, on which the glittering cavalcade, horse and foot, formed a noble pageant, whose pomp was almost dazzling to behold. The carriages took another path opened for the occasion. The whole area in front of the Tower teemed with multitudes, whose shouts and huzzas made the very hills and echoes loyal, while they rang with acclamations to their sovereign. Presently issued forth from the middle gateway two curiously-attired figures, bearing emblems to indicate their character and design. There were living allegories, represented by the house-steward and Hobbe Handycap, the forester or tienman, keeper of vert and venison, a “ryghte merrie knave,” and one foremost in all pastimes and “honest recreations;” a great promoter and performer of May-games, morris-dancing, and the like. These figures were to be conceived as household gods, the tutelary deities of Hoghton. The first spokesman was clad in a purple taffeta mantle; in one hand was a palm-tree branch, on his head a garland of the like sort, and in the other hand he carried a dog.

King James accustomed to, and expecting these mummeries, made a full stop, when, forthwith, began the purple mantle as follows—

“This day, great Kinge, for government admired,
Which these thy subjects have so much desired,
Shall be kept holy in their heart’s best treasure,
And vowed to James, as is this month to Cæsar;”

with a good score of lines besides, of the like brevity and metre. In them he was said to be greater even than the immortal gods themselves, seeing that they came to render their homage unto him, together with all things else over which they bare rule, even as the greater doth include the less.

Then spake Hobbe, the deity of the chase:—

“Greatest of mortals!”

But he was presently nonplussed, and the steward stepped forth to his relief, reciting how that the glorious beams from his Majesty’s person had stricken dumb this weaker divinity. Having finished, the heat being intense, and they mightily encumbered with garments, did presently turn their backs on the king’s majesty, making all speed towards the gateway for shelter. This breach of good manners was not unnoticed by the monarch, who said, wittily, we suppose, for it was much applauded, that these gods were not of High Olympus, but of the nether sort, inasmuch as they had turned tail upon their subject.

James and his company, passing through the ponderous and embattled gateway, entered into the great quadrangle, an area, it is reported, of sufficient size to contain six hundred men. Here he alighted, and was conducted in great state to the oaken chamber, where, royalty being very hot, a tankard of Rhenish wine, mingled with rosewater, was handed to him; of this he partook but sparingly, calling to Buckingham for a cup of muscadine and eggs.

Goring and Finett were not idle, but each of them fully employed in their respective vocations. Sir John had been pierced by a pair of dark eyes from the crowd upon the staircase, and Goring was making all haste for the royal hunt, his Majesty having signified that he would on that same evening kill a stag. James was, generally, as quick to resolve as he was impotent to execute; vacillating, and without any fixed purpose, in matters that required decision and promptitude of action.

With his usual pusillanimity the king went through the business of the hunt, the deer being literally driven into the very teeth of the dogs. An hour having been thus occupied, he commanded that they should return, highly satisfied with his own skill and intrepidity. Ascending the hill with his favourite, Goring, and discoursing pleasantly on this noble pastime, the king turned round on the sudden, as though recollecting something he had lost.

“What! Jack Finett. Quhere? quhere, I say, is my Sienna balsam?” said he, laying a deep emphasis on the guttural. This sally was acknowledged with delight by the courtiers. But “Jack” had not been seen or even remembered. Some trick or device was doubtless intended, and the king held himself in readiness for the expected surprise; but none was forthcoming. No magazine of mirth exploded; no mine was sprung; and James entered into his chamber without any visible expression of jocoseness issuing from the fertile brains of Sir John Finett. The irritation produced by his absence seemed to arise, not from any need of him, but from that tormenting desire which mortals universally feel for the possession of objects beyond their reach. Search was commanded for the truant, unsuccessfully; and supper was begun.

The eastern side of the hill on which the tower is built is bold and rugged, being steep and difficult of access. At its base the Darwen forces itself through a narrow channel, its waters tumbling over huge heaps of rock, and reeling in mazy eddies to the echo of their own voice. The river seems to have worked itself a passage through the chasm; and the boiling and noisy torrent, struggling to free itself from observation, foams and bellows like the gorge of a whirlpool, from whence originates its name, “The Orr,” not unlike in sound to the effect that is here produced.

On the opposite shore the rock is nearly perpendicular, the dog-rose and the bramble hiding its crevices, and the crawling campanula wreathing its bright bells about the sterile front, from which its sustenance was derived, like youth clinging to the cold and insensate bosom of age. The declivity sloping abruptly from the tower was then covered with a wild and luxuriant underwood, stunted ash and hazel twigs thinly occupying a succession of ridges to the summit. Here and there a straggling oak threw its ungraceful outline over a narrow path, winding immediately under the base of the hill,—its bare roots undermined by ooze from above, and giving way to the slow but certain operation of the destroyer. From the heat and dryness of the season the torrent was much diminished, rushing into a succession of deep pools, which the full free light of heaven had scarcely ever visited. Now dimly seen through the hot gleams of a summer evening, they seemed wavering in the lurid reflection from surrounding objects.

Up this narrow gorge had strayed Sir John Finett with a companion, too busily engaged, it might seem, in their own converse to note the lapse of time, and the probable consequences of the king's displeasure.

"Fair lady," said the gay cavalier, "I am not more bold than my vocation holdeth meet. Your cousin, at Myerscough, was so liberal of his own suit, and my countenance therein, that he hath entrusted this love-billet to my keeping, warning me that I should let none but yourself be privy to its delivery."

"Would that my cousin had eschewed letter-writing! I am averse to his suit, and yet he ceaseth not to vex me continually with his drivelling ditties. His ballad-mongering to these 'eyne' alone would set up one of your court rhymesters for a twelvemonth."

"Yet may aversion cease, and your mislikings be not over difficult to assuage," said the courtier.

"I doubt not but Sir John Finett speaks of the capricious and changeable humours he hath witnessed;—our country fashion holdeth not so lightly by its affection or disfavour."

"Then there be doubtless of those stout vessels that shall never leak out a lady's favour. That this lot were mine!"

Sir John, perhaps unconsciously, threw his dark eyes full upon the lady, who blushed deeply; but the gloom concealed this outward show of feeling, too unformed and indefinite for thought. She spoke not; but the knight, under cover of his errand, continued the discourse without awakening her alarm. He excelled in that specious, though apparently heedless raillery, which is so apt to slip without suspicion into a lady's ear; and he could ply his suit, under this disguise, with such seeming artlessness and unconcern, that a lodgement in the citadel was sometimes effected ere the garrison was aware of the intrusion.

This fair dame, Grace Gerard, was of gentle blood, a daughter of the Gerards of Ashton Hall, near Lancaster. At the earnest solicitations of the Hoghton family, she was induced to remain a guest with them during the royal visit. Of a sweet and excellent temper, her form and face were its very image and counterpart. The world was to her untried—fresh, fair, unblemished—she looked upon it as though she were newly alighted on "some heaven-kissing hill," from whence the whole round of life's journey was blent and mingled with the glowing beam that now encompassed her. Alas! that youth should so soon pluck and eat of the "Tree of Knowledge!" that a nearer approach should dissipate the illusion! that our path, as it winds through those scenes we have looked on from afar in the light of our imagination, should at every step discover the tracks of misery,—a world of wretchedness and of woe!

Sir John, with all his faults, inseparable it may be from the society into which he had been thrown, was not vicious. Loving and beloved, he existed but as the object of woman's regard. This foible he indulged not farther. But many a bright eye waxed dim,—many a fond heart was withered, in the first spring-tide of its affection.

"Now that I have granted you this audience for my cousin's sake, and given him my reply, it is needful that we return. Besides, the night is coming on. The king and the feast demand your presence."

"Nay, thou cruel tyrant, tell me not of my chain. The king's humour I can control, but"——

"Presume not on the favour of princes; an ancient but wholesome caution," said the maiden, laughing at Sir John, who, for the first time, seemed to be aware of his duty, and was puzzling his brains for an excuse.

The bell now rang out lustily from the Tower, increasing the knight's perplexity. The innocent cause of this delay only laughed at his concern, singing, as though to herself—

"The bell has been rung, and the mass hath been sung,
And the feast eat merrily,
Merrily!
and the king's master of the ceremonies absent."

The aspect of affairs was now more serious than he had anticipated. Supper was indeed commencing. Some scheme or witty device must be hit upon,—speedily too, or the king's displeasure might be difficult to assuage.

"But for thy bright eyes and fair speech, my lady Grace, I had not been amissing from my duty." He looked thoughtful, and it was the maiden's turn to rally.

They ascended the hill by a short but steep path. As they approached the summit, he seemed to awake from a deep reverie.

"Now have you granted me an audience for a lover's sake—to-morrow, let me be the ambassador for another."

"I have no lovers from whom I would care to be honoured with an embassy!"

"None?" said the knight, peering curiously, as if he would penetrate the folds of a real Flanders scarf she had thrown carelessly about her head—

"Then will I be thy lover true,
And thou my beauteous queene,'

"through these gay festivities. But mark me!"—He became serious on the sudden. The expression of his eye, from its general character of assumed gaiety, was changed into that of tenderness and respect. "Mark me, lady, I would be spared the horror of a rival. Will you be my partner in these pageantries—my mistress unto whom I may render mine homage and my trust?"

"'Tis a brave speech, Sir John," cried the lady, as though wishful to divert the subject. "My cousin tells me that you are a knight of great courage and renown, but he sayeth not aught of your disposition to outrival him in heroics. Good-bye—a promise made is a promise broken; therefore, I'll offer none. I meet you not to-night at the feast, having obtained mine excuse."

Saying this, she bounded from him ere he was aware, and was speedily out of sight.

He was not a little chagrined at her abrupt departure; yet her very carelessness, and the open simplicity of her manner, only served to fix her the more deeply in his thoughts. But a

problem of greater difficulty was to be resolved than how to fix the chameleon hue of woman's thought. He had a king to pacify—wayward as a child, fickle as a lady's favour. Unless he could acquit himself by some witty quibble or device, he might bid adieu to the gaieties over which he presided. The time was short, and his wit must needs be ambling. As he passed through the court, revolving many plans for his deliverance, he was aware of a loud dispute between the two household divinities we have before noticed. Words were nigh being exchanged for blows, but they were stayed out of respect to the intruder.

Leaving Sir John to confer with those doughty disputants, let us follow the king to supper. Space forbids that we describe the wonders of this feast, and the dainties that were provided—how the swans were roasted, and the herons eaten cold—how pies were baked of the red deer, and the wild boar, not a whit too small for the reception of any moderate-sized Christian subject of his Majesty's. There were turkeys, quails, poults, and plovers; but of pheasants only two, and one for the king. The greatest triumph, however, was reserved for the confections; an artificial hen was here served of puff-paste; her wings displayed, sitting upon eggs of the same materials. In each of these was enclosed a fat lark roasted, and seasoned with pepper and ambergris.

They sat down, but the master of the ceremonies was still absent; whereupon the king, much distempered thereby, called out to Sir George Goring—

“Our mummer and our dancer being departed—whilk thing, aforetime, we did maist righteously inhibit—thinkest thou, he may not henceforth eschew our service?”

“My liege, your Grace's commands were to seek him a full hour ago, but the scared deer hath taken to covert. He was, peradventure, afraid of the hunting, and liketh his own neck better than the sport. He careth not, methinks, to show his face that turns big back on his comrade's peril.”

“May be,” said Buckingham, “your Majesty's favour is not so winsome as a lady's cheek. I would wager my cap, Jack Finett hath found a smoother tongue, but a harder service, than your Majesty's.”

“O' my saul,—if I thought so,” said the monarch, as he threw down a spoonful of buttered pease, “I would send him to the Tower, and he should write a book on Hercules his distaff.”

“Or Omphale's spindle,” said a voice at the lower end of the hall, which, issuing from a mask, closely fitted, sounded wondrously hollow and portentous. A profound silence ensued—all eyes being turned towards the speaker, who was no less a personage than the first household god, attired in his proper suit. He approached the king's table, waving his hand in token of attention—

“The knight ye speak of, mark me well,

I've just drawn from the castle-well!”

“Mercy on us,” cried Sir Richard Hoghton. “The draw-well is more than eighty yards deep. Thou art a lying deity, and shalt be banished from this bright Olympus.”

But the deity, nothing abashed, thus continued—

“How came he thus, I dare not tell;

My brother may the mystery dispel.”

He stooped down—rising again to the astonished eyes of the fair dames and nobles at the upper bench, in the forester's habit of Kendal green, with cloak and doublet of the same colour.

“What’s now?” said James. “Witchery and fause negromancie, o’ my troth. ‘Tis treason, Sir Richard, to use glamour in the king’s presence.”

But the sylvan god continued in the doggerel of his predecessor—

“Sir John to be forgiven would hope;

He had been drowned, but for the rope!”

“Ay,” said the king, chuckling at this opportunity, purposely given, for a display of his wit—
”he’ll be hanged—na doot, na doot.”

“Prythee, Sylvanus, or whatever thou be, bring Sir John hither, that he may dry his web in the hot sunshine of a lady’s glance,” said Villiers, with an ill-suppressed sneer.

Again this Proteus was transformed. Doffing his habit, Sir John Finett stood confessed before them. He knelt penitently before the king, humbly assuring his Majesty that he had been preparing this device, and many others, to please and surprise him; but that, through the bungling of some, and the bashfulness of others, he was obliged to enact the parts himself. This excuse the king was graciously pleased to accept, commending him for his great diligence and zeal.

The night now wore on with much outward show of mirth and revelry; but the king went early to rest, purposing to rise betimes.

On the following day he went out again with a great company, and killed a brace of stags, which mighty achievement, by authentic record, we find was accomplished before dinner—the king alone being able to bring down the venison.

We willingly pass over this day’s banquet; nor do we care to chronicle the feats of Morris the head-cook, and his deputies of the ranges and the pastries. The boiling and roasting of poults and pullets, and the construction of comfits and confections, we consign to everlasting oblivion.

When the king rose from table, about four o’clock, as we find it in the private journal of one present, he purposed to view the alum-mines, about two miles distant from the Tower; but, being eager for the sport, he went forth again a-hunting. He shot at a stag and missed. The next bolt broke the thigh-bone, and the dog being long in coming, Lord Compton despatched the poor beast, whereby his capture was effected. We forbear to dwell on this, and much more of the like interest, returning with the king to supper, where the beauteous Grace Gerard was present, and Sir John Finett, her true knight and devoted slave. Dr Morton, then Bishop of Chester, was chaplain, doling out a long Latin grace with great unction.

The music had ceased, the second course being just served, when a signal was given for the king’s pledge.

“Let each one pledge the fairest,” cried the royal toast-master, moved to some unwonted gallantry by approximation with the fair and lusty dames about his person. For it hath been wittily if not wickedly said by a popular writer in another place that James was in all things like unto Solomon, save in the matter of women.

Now was there a brave stir throughout the assembly. Such pledging of mistresses and challenging of cups, that nothing could be like unto it.

“To the bright eyes and peerless grace of the lady Grace Gerard,” said Sir John Finett, draining his goblet to the uttermost;—and the maiden’s cheek glowed like a furnace.

“Said I not that he could win a lady’s grace sooner than a monarch’s disfavour? Nay, your Majesty, I but meant that Sir John conveys the fairest eyes and the warmest hearts into his

own keeping, like an *Ochus-Bochus*,” said Buckingham, looking envious at the distinction he had gained.

“I see plainly that Truth is hidden in a well,” said Goring, drily.

Sir John Finett, courtier and dissembler as he was, could scarcely hide the truth of this sally. But he quickly recovered his self-possession ere the king’s eye could detect a change. Yet did he not escape the vigilance of his two friends, who suspected the real cause of his absence on the preceding night.

“Thou shalt be her true knight to-morrow, and she shall be queen of our sports,” said the king, graciously extending his hand to the blushing maiden.

But this speech pleased not some of the courtiers, and Buckingham, having his eye on this fair flower, secretly resolved that Sir John should not enjoy its fragrance unmolested.

On the following morning, being Sunday, there came a great company of peasants and handicraftsmen—notorious idlers about the parish—with a petition, wherein it was shown that the loyal and peaceable inhabitants of Lancashire had been long hindered of their usual diversions on Sundays and other holidays by the rigour of Puritans, Precisians, and such like folk,³⁰ who, being enemies to all innocent and lawful mirth, did mightily begrudge and maliciously restrain their use. These petitioners, therefore, prayed his Majesty, “that he would not forbid their exercising of all honest and lawful recreation, such as dancing of men and women, archery, running, leaping, and vaulting; nor prohibit the use of May-games, May-poles, morris-dances, and other like lawful sports, so that the same should not impediment or cause neglect of divine service.”

The ground of this complaint was laid in the time of Elizabeth, who, in order to reform the manners of the people, instituted a high commission in the year 1579. The commissioners were Henry Earl of Derby, Henry Earl of Huntingdon, William Lord Bishop of Chester, and others. At their sittings, which were held in Manchester, they issued orders throughout the county against “pipers and minstrels playing, making, and frequenting bear-baiting and bull-baiting on the Sabbath days, or upon any other days in time of divine service, and also against superstitious ringing of bells, wakes, and common feasts; drunkenness, gaming, and other vicious and unprofitable pursuits.” These restrictions the royal pedant thought incompatible with the public weal, and graciously answered the petitioners in such-wise that he would have these over-righteous zealots rebuked; that it was a misuse of their authority; and that he would not only grant the humble request of his subjects, but, on that very evening he would have a masque and an allegory, with dancing and other like diversions, by the lords and other nobility there present.

Such was the origin of the famous *Book of Sports*. His Majesty, on returning to the capital, issued a proclamation,³¹ stating—

“That in his progress through Lancashire he found it necessary to rebuke some Puritans and precise people, and took order that the said unlawful carriage should not be used by any of them hereafter, in the prohibiting and unlawfully punishing his good people, for using their lawful recreations and honest exercises upon Sundays, after divine service.” “His Majesty further saw that his loyal subjects in all other parts of the kingdom did suffer in the same kind, though not, perhaps, in the same degree as in Lancashire; and he did therefore, in his princely wisdom, publish a declaration to all his loving subjects concerning lawful sports to be used on Sundays and festivals.”—Published by his royal command in the year 1618, under

³⁰ Some say this petition was presented at Myerscough, but we incline to the opinion here given.

³¹ Royal proclamation, May 21, 1618.

the title of the *Book of Sports*. The royal visit to Lancashire proved ultimately of more importance to the civil and ecclesiastical establishments of the kingdom than could have been anticipated either by the king or his subjects. This infamous *Book of Sports* formed the first link in that mysterious chain of events, ending in the downfall of the Stuarts, and their exile and expulsion from the throne.

The gladsome tidings having been communicated to the petitioners, with one accord they galloped off, shouting and huzzaing, to the great annoyance of all peaceable and sober-minded persons, and the great dishonour of that holy day.

The king attended divine service at the chapel, where Dr Morton preached, commanding and exhorting to an obedience well pleasing to their Maker; inasmuch as it was rendered to the vicegerent of heaven, the high and mighty and puissant James, defender of the Faith, and so forth. After this comfortable and gracious doctrine, there was a rush-bearing³² and a piping before the king in the great quadrangle. Robin Hood and Maid Marian, with the fool and hobby-horse, were, doubtless, enacted to the jingling of morris-dancers and other profanities.

These fooleries put the king into such good humour that he was more witty in his speech than ordinary. Some of these sayings have been recorded, and amongst the rest that well-known quibble which has been the origin of an absurd mistake, still current through the county, respecting the sirloin. It is said to have been knighted there by his Majesty, who found, such were his knight-making propensities, that other subjects were exhausted.

The occasion, as far as we have been able to gather, was thus:—Whilst he sat at meat, casting his eyes upon a noble *surloin* at the lower end of the table, he cried out—

“Bring hither that *surloin*, sirrah, for ‘tis worthy of a more honourable post, being, as I may say, not *surloin* but *sirloin*, the noblest joint of all;” which ridiculous and desperate pun raised the wisdom and reputation of England’s Solomon to the highest.

Great was the stir and preparation for the evening masque; a pageant containing many allegories and devices; dancing and merry games, with all other “lawful recreations and honest amusements.” Little heed was given, we fear, to their Maker’s service, these vain follies running in the heads and filling the thoughts of the few who chose to attend in the chapel; the greater portion were preparing for the entertainment, into which service they entered heartily, and without grudge.

Sir George Goring and Sir John Finett were verily indefatigable on the occasion, drilling and marshalling men, women, and children; conning their lessons, and correcting the awkward and ridiculous movements and mistakes of their pupils. Hobbe and the house steward were the foremost in their parts, having important functions allotted to them; one to grunt and howl in the similitude of a huge bear, and the other to roar in lieu of a lion, before the “*Bower of Beautie*” for such was the title or motto of the pageant. Nor was Sir John lacking in due homage to his mistress; she was appointed to enact “The Queen of Beautie.” It was after

³² This ceremony was formerly used for the conveyance of rushes intended to be strewed in the church upon the clay floors between the benches. It is now generally known but as an unmeaning pageant still practised in the northern and eastern parts of Lancashire, for the purpose of levying contributions on the inhabitants. An immense banner, of silk adorned with tinsel and gay devices, precedes the rush-cart, wherein the rushes, neatly woven and smooth cut, are piled up and decorated with flowers and ribands, in rustic taste. The cart, thus laden, is drawn round to the dwellings of the principal inhabitants, by morris-dancers, who perform an uncouth dance, attended by a man in motley attire, a sort of nondescript, made up of the ancient fool and Maid Marian. This personage jingles a horse-collar hung with bells, which forms not an unsuitable accompaniment to the ceremony.

much solicitation that she consented, receiving with great gravity and attention the instructions of her accomplished preceptor.

The day was nigh spent and the sun fast sinking on the ocean, now waiting with a chariot of flame to conduct him to other skies.

Grace was just finishing her toilet, and her maid adjusting the last plait in her head-dress, when a low and guarded knock announced a visitor. The door was slightly opened, when a messenger threw in a gay billet and departed. It was superscribed thus:—"To the Fairest, These."

With a quickened pulse and a tremulous hand, she glanced over the page, elaborately penned as follows:—

"The Bower of Beautie hath a snake; beware that he come not nigh thee, for his tooth has venom, and his tail a sting.

"From the mask with the black visard and silver mantle.

"THESE."

She had barely finished the perusal, when there came tripping in the page of Sir John Finett, carrying a sealed billet redolent with the most costly perfume. The superscription was precisely similar, and nearly in the same hand:—"To the Fairest, These."

She hastily broke open the packet.

"Beauteous and most matchless queen! jealous of thy coming, the orb of day hasteneth to hide himself in Thetis's lap. He leaveth thee our luminary in his stead, whose twin stars shall so outmimic day that his brightness shall not be remembered. Truly am I in great heaviness and sorrow, seeing that I cannot be with you in the opening of the pageant, by reason of mine office, and my duty to the king. Yet will I not leave you without a protector. My trusty friend Weldon will enact your faithful knight. He weareth a black visard and mantle of spotted silver, and will accompany you to the bower, from whence he delivereth the queene and her distressed damsels out of durance. When the dancing begins, expect me.

"THINE."

Little space was left for deliberation. The bell rang out its signal for the actors to arrange themselves; hearing which, she thrust the billets behind her stomacher, and hastened to the great court, where, on a platform supported by four wheels, was builded a sort of hut, decorated in a tawdry and fanciful style, and yeled "The Bower of Beautie."

Into this bower the queen was to be conducted, but the uproar and confusion was indescribable; strange and antic figures hurrying to and fro, seeking their companions, and crying lustily for their places. Sir John Finett and Sir George Goring fulfilled the office of whippers-in, attempting to establish order out of these undisciplined elements. Grace drew back; but suddenly there came forth an armed knight from the bower towards her, wearing a black visor and a mantle of spotted silver, courteously beseeching her that she would accompany him to her station. A great curtain of figured arras hung in front, concealing the interior, where the queen and her maidens were supposed to be held captive. Grace stepped into this temporary confinement, in which were four other ladies masked, who graciously saluted their queen. The black-faced visor having seated himself, the arras was again let down; when several men, bedizened with ribands and nosegays, wheeled off the vehicle to its destination on the green.

The bower was garnished with roses, gilliflowers, pinks, and odoriferous herbs. Garlands of artificial flowers were interspersed; likewise imitations in satin, silk, and gold, of various trees, herbs, and fruits, not to be found in those parts. All this had been accomplished with great pains by the ladies of the queen's mimic court, Sir John Finett superintending "*The Bower of Beautie*," as his peculiar province. To Sir George Goring were allotted the bears, satyrs, imps, angels, gods, and other like rabble, who were taught with much labour and difficulty, in so short a space, their several parts.

Sir John Finett had received a mandate to be near the king during the acts, that he might be instructed in their several uses and designs, Buckingham having signified his wish to sport a mask on the occasion; Sir John, therefore, much to his regret, was completely debarred from approaching his mistress.

The king's coming was announced by a flourish of trumpets, and a loud bray from the delighted multitude, who sent up a shout that shook the very foundations.

Under a pavilion of crimson cloth, decked with fringes and valences of gold, walked forth the monarch. He leaned familiarly on the arm of his host, who, together with Sir John Finett, was in immediate attendance. After the king's train had passed, came a troop of morris-dancers, and the hobby-horse, who frolicked in a most ungainly fashion round the Bower of Beautie, kissing hands, and making many salutations towards their enthralled queen. Next came out a bear and a lion, accompanied by a thing intended to represent an ape, whose office it was to torment these grave animals with his tricks. But so encumbered were they in their disguise,—a heavy covering of bucks' skins and long wool,—that they had much ado to keep on their clothes, while attempting to resent the indignities they endured.

"Hang thee, Will—keep thy paws off my tail," said lion: "Dost not see I shall be uncovered before the king?"

"I'll baste thine hide," said bear, "if thou meddlest any more with mine."

The ape had settled himself on the back of this august-looking animal, from whence he was suddenly dislodged, much to the delight and entertainment of the king, who laughed heartily at his disaster. The ravenous animals were on their way to the bower, there to watch for the captives, making great demonstrations all the while of their bloodthirsty intent.

Bear and lion accordingly squatted down before it, making as though they would gladly have been at supper on the fair carcasses of those within. Anon comes a mighty magician, with a long beard, and a wand of some ells in extent, purposing to effect the deliverance of the captives; but the beasts rushed upon him, and in a trice brought him to the ground. At this juncture the Silver Knight—showing thereby the superiority of true valour over false gramarye—should have issued from the bower, rescued the magician, and slain the beasts, opening a way for the escape of these imprisoned damsels, who were to come forth dancing, and representing a fair masque before the king;—but the magician remained unrescued, while bear and lion lay growling for a long space, not knowing what else to do. They looked about wistfully, not choosing to feast on their prostrate victim. At last, finding no change in the posture of affairs, they fairly stood erect, much to the marvel and amusement of the spectators, running off on their hind legs amid the shouts and derision of the assembly.

Sir John, apprehending some mistake, left the king for a moment to see how matters stood; but Goring had lifted up the arras, and, lo! the knight with the black visor and mantle of silver was not there, neither was the Queen of Beauty in her bower. The four disconsolate maidens still sat waiting for their cue, and expecting release. This was an unlooked-for disaster. The pageant was at a stand. On inquiry, the maidens told how that the gallant knight and the peerless queen had departed before the king's arrival, saying they would return anon.

Sir John was bewildered and alarmed. The Silver Knight was trusty, and no suspicion crossed him from that source; yet was their absence wholly unaccountable. The king, seeing some mistake in the unravelling or conception of the plot, good-naturedly commanded the minstrels to strike up a favourite tune; at the hearing of which a number of masks immediately mustered to begin dancing in the soft and dewy twilight. Amongst the rest came in Buckingham, negligently attired, and without his visor.

“I thought thee hidden amongst the maskers,” said the king.

“Ay, my liege, a short space;—but the night is hot, and I am something distempered and weary in this turmoil.”

Buckingham looked flushed and agitated, strangely differing from his usual manner. It was not unobserved by the king, who attributed the change to illness.

“Thou shalt continue about our person,” said the monarch. “Jack, see to the sports:—the pageant hath suffered greatly from thine absence. I do think the Queen of Beauty hath played thee false.”

Buckingham took his usual station by the king; and Sir John Finett, in great dolour, went forth in search of his mistress. He questioned the guests diligently, but could gain no further tidings, save that she had been seen by many in company with the Silver Knight. Every minute added to his uneasiness: thoughts of a wild and terrible import haunted him. In vain he tried to shake off these intruders—they came like shadows, horrible and indistinct. His naturally sensitive and sanguine temperament, as prone to the anticipation of evil as of delight, was a curse, and not a blessing. Departed hopes may fling a deeper shadow even on the brow of Despair!—and rayless was the night which visited his spirit. It was now too evident—for he was no novice in the science—that his admiration had awakened one dormant but hallowed affection, long lulled in the soft lap of pleasure. The maiden, with whom it was his sole aim to pass a few hours of pleasantry and amusement, had enthralled him by so sudden a spell, that he was more than half inclined to believe in the boasted skill and exploits of the sex, which has rendered Lancashire so famous. Her unaccountable absence impressed itself strangely upon his thoughts. He was in love!—and he writhed at the discovery; but he would have given worlds just then to have proclaimed it at his mistress’s feet.

Scarcely conscious how the night wore on, he was obliged to act his part. Supper was announced; and he took his station where he could see the guests unmask as they entered to the banquet.

The tables were nearly filled, but the Silver Knight and his fair lady were still absent. Grace Gerard is doubtless in her own chamber, was the host’s reply to some inquiry from Sir John:—she had craved excuse from some slight indisposition. But this did not satisfy him to whom it was addressed: he suspected her chamber would be found unoccupied;—his heart felt wasted and desolate;—it was as if the whole fair face of nature were blotted out,—the light being gone which rendered it visible.

“What ho!” said the king, “bring my Sienna knight a cup of hot sack and a merry-thought, for he seems melancholic and watchful—a wary eye, but a silent tongue. Sir John, are your wits a wool-gathering with your queen?”

“I am in my widowhood, most gracious prince,—my queen having departed.”

“More fool thou, to fling thy heart after thy wits. Come, honest Jack, we’ll have some minstrelsy after the feast,—a merry troll and a short one.”

Sir John was well skilled in handling the lute and rebeck. He had been early trained to their use; and many a kind glance and tender word he had won thereby.

The feast was over, and those hushed halls thrilled to the following ditty:—

I.

“They bade me sing, they bade me smile,
They bade my heart be gay;
They called my spirit forth, to while
The laughing hours away.
I’ve sung, I’ve smiled: where’er my path
Mirth’s dazzling meteors shine:
All hearts have owned its magic power,
And all are glad but mine.

II.

“I’ve soothed the darkest surge of woe,
And many a bosom blessed;
Forbade the sufferer’s tear to flow,
And brought the weary rest:
I’ve poured upon the bleeding heart
The balm of Hope,—the shrine
Where holier, happier thoughts shall dwell;—
But who shall gladden mine?

III.

“Forgive; ‘tis but one short complaint,
One pang I would reveal:
The wretch upon the torturing rack
Is not forbid to feel!
Then laugh,—let merry hearts to-night
Their brightest wreaths entwine:
The flowers that bloom on every breast
Will, withering, fade on mine!”³³

Many were the bright eyes glittering on him through their long silken lashes; but Sir John looked downward,—diligently noting something extraordinary in the disposition of his shoe-roses, or in the tie of his garter.

“One raven will set another croaking,” said Sir George.

“That we may escape a concert so detestable,” cried out Buckingham, “let Sir John Finett follow me, and we will reel with our fair dames, until cares whirl off like sling-stones.”

“And may he that tires first fiddle the witches’ jig,” said the sapient king.

A burst of harsh music followed, and Sir John’s feebly tinkling strings were thrown aside. Never had he wished so anxiously for one short hour of quietness; and right fain he was when the king retired to his chamber. His duties for that day were over, and he strolled out from the hot and oppressive atmosphere into a calm quiet moonlight. The cool breeze came like a healing balm upon his spirit, the soft dew fell upon his cheek,—but the fire in his veins burnt fiercely. His mistress’s form, her face, the sweet influence of her smile, were fixed indelibly on his heart. Away from the bustle and cares of office,—which, like waves on the surface, for a while effaced their image,—the whole beauteous impression was revealed before him in all

³³ See Note at the end.

its loveliness and truth. His heart bounded at the thought:—it was but for a moment. Again he stood, hopeless and desolate, gazing upon the soft mist-wreath in the valley, as though expecting it would render up the form of his beloved.

Suddenly the short swift steps of a steed were heard hurrying up the avenue. A horseman approached the gateway: it was his friend, the *soi-disant* knight of the silver mantle!

“How now, Weldon!³⁴—whither have thy unlucky familiars carried thee? Hast thou bestridden the enchanted horse, or wert thou bidden to a witch-feast?”

“I have been to Myerscough with your message,—and the pains I have had for my labour.”

“My message!” said Sir John, with amazement: “I sent thee on no other errand than to guard the lady, whom thou hast either made away with or she hath slipped from thine hold.”

“You are pleasant, Sir John. Your tricks are well enough in court-hours. Come, be serious, and tell me thou hast had a fool’s errand out of me.”

“I never was more serious in my life, Weldon, I do vouch, as my head shall swing safely on its pivot. But who gave thee a message—and to whom?”

“To our fair hostess at Myerscough. Thy page thrust a scrap of writing into my hand after prayers. The request was, that I should see the accompanying billet safely delivered, and with mine own hand, without loss of time. It was one of your curiously-folded fantastic love-billets, as I thought. Knowing I could well be spared hence, I immediately took horse, and came in a bath of foam to the lady; but when she opened her pretty token, she drew herself erect with great majesty. ‘Tell Sir John Finett,’ said she, ‘that when he next sends thee forth on his fooleries, to choose another butt; to shoot his arrows where they will stick, or his goose-feathers may fly back again.’”

Horror almost deprived Sir John of utterance. That some foul play had been meditated, and in all probability accomplished, was but too plain; but how, or by whom, was inscrutable as ever.

The page was straitly questioned; but he merely said that his message was given him by some person he did not recognise in the crowd at the chapel-doors, who said he was to seek Weldon forthwith, and deliver him the papers from his master. What course to adopt, or where to begin their search, were questions alike embarrassing and impossible to answer. In the end they determined to lay the matter before the king on the morrow.

It may be needful to go back a short space to “The Bower of Beautie,” wherein the knight of the silver mantle, having safely ensconced himself, as the reader may remember, the arras was let down; after which, being wheeled away to their destination, they were to await for the commencement of the masque. But the Silver Knight, lifting up the curtain, observed they were much too early for the performance, and courteously entreated the lady that she would alight. The evening was hot, and the bower close and oppressive. An hour might, in all probability, elapse ere their presence would be required. Grace, trusting to her companion, quitted the car, strolling out amongst the masks. Gradually they left the main crowd, unconsciously approaching the steep brow of the hill, where, looking towards the east, they beheld the broad red moon swinging out from the blue horizon. The loud hum of the revellers

³⁴ This person is supposed to be the writer of a curious satire (Harl. MSS. 5191), called a Description of Scotland. Weldon’s name is not attached to it in the MS., but it is duly ascribed to him by Sir Walter Scott, in his description of Holyrood Chapel, in the *Antiquities of Scotland*. Sir Anthony Weldon accompanied the king into Scotland; but that he returned with him is not so certain, one of his letters saying he should return by sea. By this, however, may be understood his return to the court at Edinburgh, having had leave of absence to visit his friends in London.

came softly and pleasantly on the ear. It was an hour of quietness and delight—a few hasty, happy moments snatched from these gaudy hours—the pomp and circumstance of life. Would that Sir John had been here in lieu of his friend! thought Grace. No, she did not think so, but she felt as though such a thought might have been nursed into being with little effort. They were now stealing down the hill, and the dark waters of the Orr were leaping and bubbling at their feet.

“We must return,” said the maiden, looking up, alarmed at seeing, for the first time, that they were cut off from all connection and intercourse with their companions. Her attendant was a perfect stranger, except in name, and though counselled to rely implicitly on his care by the master of the ceremonies himself, she felt her situation embarrassing and unpleasant.

“And why must we return?” said the mask. The tone startled her; its expression was now soft and beseeching, as though he had before spoken in a masked voice.

“Why!” said she, looking as though she would have pierced through his disguise.

“Nay, whet not thy glance so keenly. I am not what I seem, and yet am not unseemly.”

“Your jests had been better timed had they taken a fitter season. I must hence.”

“Go not, my beauteous queen,” said the stranger, taking her hand, which she dashed from her with indignation and alarm. She was darting up the crag, but was again detained.

“I will worship thee:—thou shall be my star—the axle of my thoughts. All”——

“Unhand me, sir, or I’ll call those who have the power to punish as well as to humble thy presumption!”

“Whom wilt thou call, my pretty lamb? The wolf? The snake is scotched in the bower, and I but beseech thy gratitude. How that look of scorn becomes thee! Pout not so, my queen, or thou wilt indeed make an excuse for my rudeness.”

“How? Again this insult! Begone, or thou shalt rue that ever thy thought escaped thy tongue. I’ll report thee to thy betters.”

“My betters! and who be they, maiden? Thou knowest me not, *perdie*. Hath not Sir John Finett shorn his love-locks and eschewed thy service after leaving thy bower the other night?”

This taunt raised her indignation to a blaze—her bosom swelled at the rebuke.

Still he retained her hand—with the other she clung to a withered tree, whose roots held insecurely by the rock. Making another effort, she sprang from his grasp; but the tree was rent from its hold, and she fell with it to the edge of the precipice. Ere the Silver Knight could interpose, a faint shriek announced her descent: a swift crash was heard amongst the boughs and underwood—a groan and a rebound. He saw her disappear behind a crag. Then came one thrilling moment of terror, one brief pause in that death-like stillness, and a heavy plunge was heard in the gulf below! He listened—his perceptions grew more acute—eye and ear so painfully susceptible, and their sensibility so keen, that the mind scarcely distinguished its own reactions from realities—from outward impressions on the sense. He thought he heard the gurgle and the death-throe. Then the pale face of the maiden seemed to spring out from the abyss. He rushed down the precipice. Entangled in the copsewood and bushes, some time elapsed ere he gained the narrow path below. He soon found, as in most other situations, the shortest road the longest—that the beaten track would have brought him quicker to his destination; but these nice calculations were forgotten. All pranked out and bedizened as he was, the puissant knight plunged into the gulf; but his exertions were fruitless, and he gave up the search. His love for the maiden living and breathing did not prompt him to drown himself

for her corpse. With hasty steps he regained the Tower, where he doffed his dripping garments unobserved.

Sir John Finett, by advice from his friend Weldon, determined on acquainting their host with the lady's disappearance. They had a shrewd suspicion that Buckingham was the contriver of this daring outrage; though from his great power, influence, and audacity, they had everything to fear and but little to hope from the result. Yet no time should be lost in the attempt.

As they entered the hall, Sir Gilbert Hoghton and several of the guests were still making merry after the feast. Calling him aside, they communicated the dismal tidings.

"Grace Gerard amissing, say ye?"

"'Tis even so," said Sir John; "we have yet no clue to the search; but this night shall not pass without the attempt, at any rate. In the morning we will to the king with our complaint."

"Boy," said the baronet to his little henchman, "go to the woman's suite, and rouse Grace Gerard's maid."

"The woman was in the kitchen some half hour ago, conveying her mistress a warm draught, or some such puling diet," said the page.

"Haste," cried Sir John impatiently, marvelling at this unexpected intelligence,— "the lad is blinded by some misapprehension. I'll forfeit my best jewel she is not in her chamber. This interlude works i' the plot—part of the trickery now enacting."

But the page made a quick return.

"What news?" said Finett.

"The lady is gone to rest; something discomposed, though, and out of spirits. So says her maiden, whom I would have questioned more straitly, but she rebuked me sharply for my impertinence."

"Pray you send and question her," said Sir John.

"Nay," returned Sir Gilbert, smiling, "I'll be bound the lady is safe; and her maiden has other guess-matters to look to than letting out the secrets of her mistress's chamber."

They were obliged to rest satisfied, or rather unsatisfied, with this answer. But the mystery was more and more inexplicable. Either some laughable mistake or some deep-laid villany was intended. Sir John dared not pursue the subject to this extremity. He felt assured of her purity and honour. Her manners, so confiding and unsuspecting, showed a heart unacquainted with guile.

After a sleepless night Sir John arose, feverish and unrefreshed. He threw open the window of his chamber, which looked into the courtyard. Near a side postern stood a grey palfrey, caparisoned for a lady's use, and impatiently awaiting its burden. The hour was too early for morning rambles, but the beast was evidently equipped for a journey. Two other steeds were now led forth, as if for the attendants. He caught a glimpse of Grace Gerard's maid, who seemed, by her dress, to be of the party whose movements he was so anxious to ascertain. He suspected this sudden departure was for the purpose of escaping without his observance. He hurried towards the stairs: just entering the corridor, he met Grace Gerard. She was evidently confused at his appearance. It was but for a moment; her spirit grappled with the occasion; and she replied firmly, and with becoming dignity, to his questions.

“Whither away, our beauteous queen?” said he, bowing almost to the ground. “Are you bound for some isle of the Western Ind, getting the start of Phoebus in his nightly race to those gem-bearing climes? Methinks the sun is departing from us, though but just risen.”

“‘Tis my purpose to depart, Sir John. This clime is too bright, and its beams too fervid, for a lady’s eye.”

“One word in sober speech:—Wherefore?”

“I know your question, Sir John. Time hastens, and I reply. Your knight of the silver mantle I proclaim a recreant, as treacherous as he is base. Sir John, for my—no, for your own sake”—

“Another stole into his place,” said he, interrupting her with great eagerness. “A base-born changeling!—some villain, who, under this disguise, abused our honourable intent; but say, peerless princess, to whose prowess we owe your rescue.”

“‘Tis my first venture into the unhallowed limits of your licentious court; and through the grace that hath preserved me harmless, I here resolve it shall be my last. By your instructions, Sir John, I relied implicitly on the protection of your friend. He would fain have abused his trust, but I escaped from the offered insult. Struggling to free my hand from his grasp, by yonder hill-side, I lost my footing. I fell down the steep unhurt. Fear lent me unwonted strength, and I escaped unseen, round the narrow pathway. My discourteous knight thought, doubtless, I had tumbled into the roaring abyss; for the night mist hung below, and I heard a huge fragment of rock, loosened in my descent, plunge into the dimly-rolling waters. Now, hear me: my resolve is taken, and no earthly influence or persuasion shall stay me. I was bewildered, yet flattered by your follies: foolish and thoughtless enough to frolic and flutter on the very brink of a precipice. I was dazzled by the glittering but dangerous excitement. Conscience spoke, but I durst not listen. My course of life hitherto has been through scenes of gentleness and peace, and I could not look on your bustle and dissipation without alarm. Yet was I persuaded to mingle in your sports yesterday—that day hallowed by the last fiat of its Creator, wherein the soul, freed awhile from the cares of earth, may prostrate itself in homage before Him who said, ‘It is mine!’ Justly punished for trifling with my better thoughts, my escape shall not be without its acknowledgment.”

Sir John was silent. She stood before him like some purer, brighter thing than could be deemed akin to this polluted earth.

“Those siren waves were bearing me on to the gulf where”—She paused a moment, shuddering at the dark retrospect of the past. “Where all your pomp and pageantry will be overwhelmed, and yourselves, for ever, in the same irretrievable ruin!”

Sir John looked uneasy, and his eye wandered, as if in search of some object wherewith to throw off these gloomy anticipations. The maiden again spoke:—

“It seemed as though a veil, invisible heretofore, were suddenly undrawn. The glory and the baseness, the splendour and the pollution, were at once revealed. The hand unseen had drawn it aside. I would now shun—I hope for ever—these paths of folly; and I bid farewell to your pleasures without a murmur or a regret.”

Sir John, courtier though he was, ardently and willingly rendering homage at the shrine of pleasure and dissipation, was awe-struck. Conscience echoed a fearful response; and he shrank before the reproof he could not shun.

“Without regret!” said he, faltering and abashed. “I had hoped—perhaps wished—but it was too presumptuous. My purest thoughts would have sullied so pure a shrine.”

“Stay, Sir John; though the confession be humbling to a maiden’s pride, yet my heart tells me ‘tis the last time we meet; and it is the only acknowledgment,—I render it to your honesty and good faith.” Her voice grew hesitating and tremulous. “There was a tendril twining about my heart; but it is wrung off, and I am again—alone!”

Her heart was full, and her whole frame convulsed by some overpowering emotion. An adieu died upon her lips; but she resolutely refused any further communication. Hastening to the courtyard, she mounted her little white palfry, and quitted for ever those fascinating and dangerous allurements, which, having once felt, few have had the power to withstand.

We need scarcely add, that, amid the gaieties and splendours by which the lover was enthralled, the recollection of Grace Gerard sometimes mingled in the revelries of this votary of pleasure. It often came as a warning and a rebuke. By degrees the impression grew less powerful. Each succeeding wave from the ever-tossing ocean left the traces less distinct, until they were overwhelmed in the dull tide of oblivion.

NOTE ON THE BALLAD

The *music* to these words is *traditionary*, if we may be allowed the expression. It is one of the many wild and characteristic melodies floating about, perhaps unappropriated, on the popular breath, varied indefinitely according to the humour of the performer. The author has listened to several of these ditties; some of them he thinks peculiar to this and the neighbouring counties. They are generally sung by the labouring classes, and would, in many cases, defy any attempt to commit them to writing, being apparently founded upon a ratio of tones and semitones at variance with our diatonic scale. From this we might almost be led to imagine some truth in the theory that the ancients had different scales peculiar to their different moods: a theory which, however impossible it may be considered, is not without its advocates, who will perhaps not be displeased to find here some slight confirmation of their opinions. Yet in these songs the prevailing character of the minor key may generally be detected, which, from its being imperfect, and probably vitiated by the mistakes of these rustic melodists, may give a colour to the notion of a change in the scale.

The great antiquity of these melodies is unquestionable, and it would be an interesting inquiry to trace them back through remote ages, perhaps to the Jewish temple and the tent of the patriarchs. The author has found in them a strong resemblance to the Hebrew music, sounds which, since the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and the destruction of their temple, 606 B.C., and in consequence of musical instruments being afterwards forbidden, they have clung to with increased tenacity, preserving their ancient melodies, and bequeathing them by memory from one generation to another with the same jealous care that a miser would his treasure, and as the last melancholy relics of a “kingdom passed away.”

Algarotti says, “Those airs alone remain for ever engraven on the memory of the public, that paint images to the mind, or express the passions, and are for that reason called the speaking airs, because more congenial to nature, which can never be justly imitated but by a beautiful simplicity, that will always bear away the palm from the most laboured refinement of art.”

The author has ventured to give the following air, which he fancies would almost suggest the words of the song to which Sir John Finett is supposed to have appropriated it. As we have before mentioned, the tune is traditionary, possessing some of the peculiar characteristics we have described. It bears a considerable resemblance to the ancient Jewish music, and likewise to the airs generally given to the little snatches of old ballads in Shakespeare’s plays, which are supposed to have been handed down successively from the performers in his time; being then probably “household” music more ancient than the ballads themselves. This opinion

seems warranted by the poet himself in that beautiful allusion, with which he introduces one of the songs of the *Clown*, in *Twelfth Night*—

“Mark it, Cesario; it is old and plain:
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chant it; it is silly sooth,
And dallies with the innocence of love
Like the old age.”

HOGHTON TOWER.

They bade me sing, they bade my smile,
They bade my heart be gay;
They called my spirit forth to while
The laughing hours away.
I've sung, I've smiled: where'er my path
Mirth's dazzling meteors shine;
All hearts have owned its magic power,
And all are glad but mine.

XV. The Lancashire Witches

“More swift than lightning can I flye
About this aery welkin soone;
And, in a minute’s space, descrye
Each thing that’s done below the moone.”

—BEN JONSON.

“When I consider whether there are such persons as *witches*, my mind is divided: I believe, in general, that there is such a thing as witchcraft, but can give no credit to any particular instance of it.”—ADDISON.

The term witchcraft, says the historian of Whalley, is now “transferred to a gentler species of fascination, which my fair countrywomen still continue to exert in full force, without any apprehension of the county magistrates, or even of the king in council.”

Far different was the application in days of old. The common parish witch is thus described by a contemporary writer, as an old woman “with a wrinkled face, a furred brow, a hairy lip, a gobbler tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice, or a scolding tongue; having a rugged coat on her back, a skull-cap on her head, a spindle in her hand, and a dog or cat by her side.” Such was the witch of real life when this superstition was so prevalent in our own neighbourhood, and even throughout England. From the beginning of the reign of James the First to the concluding part of the reign of James the Second, it may be considered as having attained the zenith of its popularity. “Witchcraft and kingcraft both came in with the Stuarts and went out with them.” It was as if his *infernal* majesty had taken a lesson from his *sacred* majesty, and issued a book of sports for his loyal subjects. “The Revolution put to rights the faith of the country as well as its constitution.” “The laws were more liberally interpreted and rationally administered. The trade of witch-finding ceased to be reputable or profitable;” and that silly compilation, the “*Demonology*” of James, which, with the severe laws enacted against witchcraft by Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, had conjured up more witches and familiars than they could quell, was consigned to the book-worm and the dust. It is said in the Arabian tales, that Solomon sent out of his kingdom all the demons that he could lay his hands on, packed them up in a brazen vessel, and cast them into the sea. But James, “our English Solomon,” “imported by his book all that were flying about Europe, to plague the country, which was sufficiently plagued already in such a sovereign.” This sapient ruler, who, it is said, “taught divinity like a king, and made laws like a priest,” in the first year of his reign made it felony to suckle imps, &c. This statute, which was repealed March 24th, 1736, describes offences declared felonious, thus:—

“One that shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any evil or wicked spirit, or consult, covenant with, entertain or employ, feed or reward, any evil or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth; or the skin, bone, or other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; or shall practise or exercise any witchcraft, &c., whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof: such offenders, duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer death.”

As might be expected, witchcraft so increased in consequence of these denunciations, that, “in the course of fifty years following the passing of this act, besides a great number of single

indictments and executions, fifteen were brought to trial at Lancaster in 1612, and twelve condemned; in 1622, six were tried at York; 1634, seventeen condemned at Lancaster; 1644, sixteen were executed at Yarmouth; 1645, fifteen condemned at Chelmsford, and hanged; in the same and following year, about forty at Bury in Suffolk; twenty more in the county, and many in Huntingdon; and (according to the estimate of Ady) some thousands were burned in Scotland.”

Popular hatred rendered the existence of a reputed witch so miserable, that persons bearing that stigma often courted death in despair, confessing to crimes which they had never committed, for the purpose of ridding themselves of persecution.

“One of the latest convictions was that of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender, before Sir Matthew Hale at Bury, in 1664. They were executed, and died maintaining their innocence.” Their execution was a foul blot upon his name, as it is scarcely to be doubted but that they were the victims of imposture. It was clearly ascertained by experiments in the judge’s presence, that the children who pretended to be bewitched, when their eyes were covered, played off their fits and contortions at the touch of some other person, mistaking it for that of the accused, yet “he charged the jury without summing up the evidence, dwelling only upon the certainty of the fact that there were witches, for which he appealed to the Scriptures, and, as he said, to ‘the wisdom of all nations;’ and the jury having convicted, the next morning left them for execution.”

But we proceed with a few explanatory notices respecting that portion of the history of this superstition, which will be found interwoven with the traditionary matter in our text.

A number of persons, inhabitants of Pendle Forest, were apprehended in the year 1633, upon the evidence of Edmund Robinson, a boy about eleven years old, who deposed before two of his Majesty’s justices at Padiham, that on All-Saints’-day he was getting “bulloes,” when he saw two greyhounds—a black one and a brown one—come running over the field towards him. When they came nigh they fawned on him, and he supposed they belonged to some of the neighbours. He expected presently that some one would follow; but seeing no one, he took them by a string which they had tied to their collars, and thought he would hunt with them. Presently a hare sprang up near to him, and he cried “Loo, loo,” but the dogs would not run. Whereupon he grew angry, and tied them to a bush for the purpose of chastising them, but instead of the black greyhound he now beheld a woman, the wife of one Dickisson, a neighbour; the other was transformed into a little boy. At this sight he was much afraid, and would have fled; but the woman stayed him and offered him a piece of silver like a shilling if he would hold his peace. But he refused the bribe; whereupon she pulled out a bridle and threw it over the little boy’s head, who was her familiar, and immediately he became a white horse. The witch then took the deponent before her, and away they galloped to a place called Malkin Tower, by the Hoarstones at Pendle. He there beheld many persons appear in like fashion; and a great feast was prepared, which he saw, and was invited to partake, but he refused. Spying an opportunity, he stole away, and ran towards home. But some of the company pursued him until he came to a narrow place called “the Boggard-hole,” where he met two horsemen; seeing which, his tormentors left off following him. He further said, that on a certain day he saw a neighbour’s wife, of the name of Loynd, sitting upon a cross piece of wood within the chimney of his father’s dwelling-house. He called to her, saying, “Come down, thou Loynd wife,” and immediately she went up out of sight. Likewise upon the evening of All-Saints before-named, his father sent him to seal up the kine, when, coming through a certain field, he met a boy who began to quarrel with him, and they fought until his face and ears were bloody. Looking down, he saw the boy had cloven feet, and away he ran. It was now nearly dark; but he descried at a distance a light like a lantern. Thinking this was

carried by some of his friends, he made all haste towards it, and saw a woman standing on a bridge, whom he knew to be Loynd's wife; turning from her he again met with the boy, who gave him a heavy blow on the back, after which he escaped. On being asked the names of the women he saw at the feast, he mentioned seventeen persons, all of whom were committed to Lancaster for trial. They were found guilty, and sentenced to be executed. The judge, however, respited them, and reported the case to the king in council.

The celebrated John Webster, author of *The Discovery of Pretended Witchcraft*, afterwards took this young witch-finder in hand. He says:—

“This said boy was brought into the church at Kildwick (in Craven), a large parish church, where I, being curate there, was preaching in the afternoon, and was set upon a stall to look about him, which moved some little disturbance in the congregation for a while. After prayers, I, inquiring what the matter was, the people told me it was the boy that discovered witches; upon which I went to the house where he was to stay all night, where I found him, and two very unlikely persons that did conduct him, and manage the business.

“I desired to have some discourse with the boy in private; but that they utterly refused. Then, in the presence of a great many people, I took the boy near me, and said, ‘Good boy, tell me truly and in earnest, didst thou see and hear such strange things of the meeting of witches as is reported by many that thou didst relate?’—But the two men, not giving the boy leave to answer, did pluck him from me, and said he had been examined by two *able* justices of the peace, *and they did never ask him such a question*. To whom I replied, the persons accused had the more wrong. As the laws of England, and the opinions of mankind then stood, a mad dog in the midst of a congregation would not have been more dangerous than this wicked and mischievous boy, who, looking around him, could, according to his own caprice, put any one or more of the people in peril of tortures or of death.”

Four of the accused only were sent to London, and examined by the king in person. In the end they were set at liberty, but not from the sagacity of the examiners,—the boy Robinson having confessed that he was suborned to give false evidence against them. One of these poor creatures, strange to say, had confessed the crime with which she was charged. In the Bodl. Lib. Dods. MSS. v.61, p.47, is the confession itself, wherein she gives a circumstantial and minute account of the transactions which took place between her and a familiar whom she calls Mamilian, describing the meetings, feasts, and all the usual routine of witchery and possession.—(See Whitaker's *Whalley*.)

Part First

The mill went merrily round, and Giles the miller sang and whistled from morning to noon, and from noon till evening, save when the mulcting-dish was about to be embowelled in the best sack; a business too serious for such levity, requiring careful and deliberate thought.

Goody Dickisson, the miller's wife, was a fat, round, pousy dame, of some forty years' travel through this wilderness of sorrow, and a decent, honest, sober, and well-conditioned housewife she was; cleanly, thrifty, and had an excellent cheese-press, which the whole neighbourhood could testify.

But the days of man's happiness are numbered, and woman's too, as the following narrative will set forth.

The mill had stood, for ages it may be, at the foot of a wild and steep cliff, forming the eastern extremity of the dreary range of Cliviger;³⁵ an elevated mountainous pass, from

³⁵ Or the rocky district.

whence the waters descend both to the eastern and western seas. Upon those almost inaccessible crags the rock-eagle and falcon built their nests, unscared by the herdsmen, who in vain attempted their destruction. Through this pass, the very gorge of the English Apennines, the Calder,³⁶ a rapid and narrow torrent, brought an unfailing supply of grist to the ever-going hopper of Giles Dickisson.

Not far from this happy abode, in the innermost part of the gorge, where the rocks of Lancashire and Yorkshire frown in close but harmless proximity, at an immense height,—the road and this narrow cleft only separating their barriers,—rises a crag of a singular shape, jutting far out from the almost perpendicular strata beneath. Its form is precisely that of a gigantic helmet, hammered out by the fanciful artist into the likeness of an eagle, its wings partly outstretched, and its beak—the point of the crag—overshadowing the grim head of some gaunt warrior. With but little aid from the imagination, the whole features may be discerned; hence it was denominated, “*The Eagle Crag*.” But another appellation, more awful and mysterious, might be attached to it—a reminiscence of those “deeds without a name,” which have rendered this district of Lancashire so fearfully notorious—“The witches’ horse-block.”

The narrow pass we have described opens out into a succession of picturesque valleys, abounding in waterfalls of considerable depth and beauty, and expanding towards the north in tracts of fertile pasture-ground to the base of Pendle, well known as the reputed scene of those mysteries in which “the witches of Pendle” acted so conspicuous a part.

Towards the close of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the fame, or rather the infamy, of witchcraft, infested this once peaceful and sequestered district. The crag we have just noticed was, no doubt, to the apprehensions of the simple-hearted peasant, oft visited by the unhallowed feet of weirds and witches pluming themselves for flight to the great rendezvous at Malkin Tower, by the side of “the mighty Pendle.”

Little did our country deserve, in those days, the name of “Merry England.” Plague or the most noisome pestilence would have been a visitation of mercy compared to the miseries caused by so dark a superstition. “Even he who lived remote from the scene of this spiritual warfare, though few such there could be, so rapidly was it transferred from county to county to the remotest districts;—he, in whose vicinity no one was suspected of dealing with the foul fiend, whose children, cattle, or neighbours, showed no symptoms of being marks for those fiery darts which often struck from a distance, yet would he not escape a sort of epidemic gloom, a vague apprehension of the mischief which might be. The atmosphere he breathed would come to him thick with foul fancies; he would ever be hearing or telling some wild and melancholy tale of crime and punishment. His best feelings and enjoyments would be dashed with bitterness, suspicion, and terror, as he reflected that, though uninvaded, yet these were at the mercy of malignant fellow-mortals, leagued with more malignant spirits, the laws and limits of whose operations were wholly undefinable.

“What must have been his feelings on whom the evil eye had glared,—against whom the spell had been pronounced; on whom misfortunes came thick and fast, by flood and field, at home and abroad, in business and in pleasure; whose cattle died, whose crops were blighted, and about whose bed and board, invisible, unwelcome, and mischievous guests held their revels; who saw not in his calamities the results of ignorance and error, to be averted by caution, nor the inflictions of Heaven to be borne with resignation, but was the victim of a compact, in which his disasters were part of the price paid by the powers of darkness for an immortal soul! He who pined in consumption supposed that his own waxen effigy was

³⁶ Col-dwr, or *narrow water*. See Whitaker’s etymology of the word (*Hist. of Manchester*).

revolving and melting at the charmed fire; the changes of his sensations told him when wanton cruelty damped the flame, to waste it lingeringly, or roused it in the impatience of revenge: and when came those sharp and shooting pains, the hags were thrusting in their bodkins, and their laugh rang in his ears: they sat upon his breast asleep,—he awoke gasping, and, as he started up, he saw them melting into air. Yet more miserable was the wight whom the fiends were commissioned bodily to possess;—with whose breathing frame an infernal substance was incorporate and almost identified;—whose thoughts were sufferings, and his words involuntary blasphemies. Can we wonder that all this was not borne passively;—that its authors were hunted out, even, if needful, by their own charms;—that suspicion grew into conviction, and conviction demanded vengeance;—that it was deemed a duty to hold them up to public hatred, and drag them to the bar of public justice;—and that their blood was eagerly thirsted after, of which the shedding was often believed not merely a righteous retribution, but the only efficient relief for the sufferers?

“The notion of witchcraft was no innocent and romantic superstition, no scion of an elegant mythology, but was altogether vulgar, repulsive, bloody, and loathsome. It was a foul ulcer on the face of humanity. Other vagaries of the mind have been associated with lofty or with gentle feelings;—they have belonged more to sportiveness than to criminality;—they are the poetry interspersed on the pages of the history of opinions;—they seem to be dreams of sleeping reason, and not the putrescence of its mouldering carcase; but this has no bright side, no redeeming quality whatever.”³⁷

The human body is not more liable to contagion than is that faculty of the mind which is called imagination. That many of the accused believed in their crime, we have sufficient evidence in their own voluntary confessions, as well as in the traditions handed down to us on this subject. Both knavery and delusion were at work, as the following incidents will abundantly manifest. They have been selected from a wide range of materials on this important topic, as illustrating the varied operations of the same delusion on different orders and grades of mind,—the temptations warily suited to each disposition, all tending to the same crime, and ultimately to the same punishment.

Our lusty miller had no children: it was a secret source of grief and anxiety to his dame, and many an hour of repining and discontent was the consequence. Yet Giles Dickisson’s song was none the heavier; and if his wheel went merrily round, his spirits whirled with it, and danced and frolicked in the sunshine of good humour, like the spray and sparkle from his own mill-race. But a change was gathering on his wife’s countenance: her grief grew sullen; her aspect stern and forbidding;—some hidden purpose was maturing: she seldom spoke to her husband. When addressed, she seemed to arouse from a sort of stupor, unwillingly forcing a reply. “She is bewitched,” thought Giles. He had his suspicions; but he could not confidently point out the source of the mischief.

One evening, as Goody Dickisson was sitting alone, pondering and discontented, there came in one Mal Spencer, a dark and scowling hag, to whom Giles bore no good-will. He had beforetime forbidden his wife to hold any intercourse with this witch-woman, who was an object generally of suspicion and mistrust. If the “evil eye” can be supposed to inhabit a human frame, this old woman had an undisputed claim to its possession. This night, however, old Molly came hobbling in without further ceremony than a “Good e’en, thou Dickisson wife,” and took her seat opposite the dame in the miller’s own chair. “Aroynt thee, witch,” should have been returned to such an ill-omened salute; but the miller’s wife was either unwilling or unable to utter this well-known preservative against the malice of the Evil Ones.

³⁷ See an able article on this subject in the *Retrospective Review*, vol. v. part i.

The horse-shoe had been taken down from the door, and the blessed herb, moly, was incautiously thrown aside; neither had Goody Dickisson offered up the usual petition that evening, to be defended from the snares of the devil. Her discontent was too great, and she was in a fitter mood for murmuring than prayer.

Leaning her long thin chin upon a little crutch, and throwing her bleared eyes full upon the dame, old Molly abruptly exclaimed, in a voice like the croaking of a raven—

“Thou hast asked for children, but they are denied thee. What said I to thee, Goody Dickisson, in the clough yonder, by the hollow trunk of the oak? Rememberest thou, when thou saidest thou wouldst pawn thy body for the wish of thy soul?”

Dame Dickisson waxed pale, and her knees shook; but the hag went on.

“Worship the master I serve, and thou shalt have thy desire—ay and more!”

“More!—What meanest thou?”

“Come to the feast, as I have bidden thee. If thou likest not the savour of our company, thou shalt depart, and without harm.”

“But who shall give me a safe conduct that I come back, and harmless as I went? Once in your possession, methinks”——

“What!” shouted the beldame, with a look of dark and devilish malignity:—“the word of a prince! Shall Goody Dickisson, the miller’s wife, hold it in distrust? Go, poor fool, and chew thy bitterness, and bake thy bannocks, and fret thy old husband until thy writhen flesh rot from thy bones, and thou gnawest them for malice and vexation. Is it not glorious to ride on the wind—to mount the stars—to kiss the moon through the dark rolling clouds, when the blast scatters them in its might? To ride unharmed on their huge peaks tipped with thunder? To be for ever young in desire and enjoyment, though old and haggard, and bent double with age and infirmities? To have our wish and our revenge—ay, and the bodies of our enemies wasting before our spells, like wax to the flame? But go, sneak and drivel, and mind thy meal and barley-cakes, and go childless to thy grave.”

She rose as if to depart; but Goody Dickisson’s evil destiny prevailed, and she promised to attend the feast, with this condition only, that no harm should befall her, nor force nor entreaty should be used to win her consent to join their confederacy. But she returned not from that unhallowed assembly until body and soul were for ever under the dominion of the destroyer.

The mill went merrily on no more, and the miller’s song was still. He looked a heavy and a doomed man. Strange suspicions haunted him. His wife’s ill-humour he could have borne; but her very laugh now made him tremble: it was as if the functions of mind and body were animated by a being distinct from herself. Her countenance showed not that her thoughts mingled in either mirth or misery, except at times, when terrible convulsions seemed to pass over like the sudden roll of the sea, tossed by some unseen and subterranean tempest. The neighbours began to shun his dwelling. His presence was the signal for stolen looks and portentous whispers. To church his wife never came; but the bench, her usual sitting-place, was deserted. At the church-doors, after sermon, when the price of grain, the weather, and other marketable commodities were discussed and settled, Giles was evidently an object of avoidance, and left to trudge home alone to his own cheerless and gloomy hearth.

Dick Hargreave’s only cow was bewitched. The most effectual and approved method of ascertaining under whose spell she laboured was as follows:—

The next Friday, a pair of breeches was thrown over the cow's horns; she was then driven from the shippen with a stout cudgel. The place to which she directed her flight was carefully watched, for there assuredly must dwell the witch. To the great horror and dismay of Giles Dickisson, the cow came bellowing down the lane, tail up, in great terror—telling, as plain as beast could speak, of her distress, until she came to a full pause, middle deep in his own mill-dam. This was a direct confirmation to his suspicions; but the following was a more undeniable proof, if need were, of his wife's dishonest confederacy with the powers of darkness.

One morning, ere his servant-man Robin had taken the grey mare from the stable, Giles awoke early, and found his wife had not lain by his side. He had beforetime felt half roused in the night from a deep but uneasy slumber; but he was too heavy and bewildered to recollect himself, and sleep again overcame him ere he could satisfy his doubts. He had either dreamt, or fancied he had dreamt, that his wife was, at some seasons, away for a whole night together, and he was rendered insensible by her spells. This morning, however, he awoke before the usual time, probably from some failure in the charm, and he met her as she was ascending the stairs. Something like alarm or confusion was manifest. She had been to look after the cattle, she stammered out, scolding Robin for an idle lout to lie a-bed so long. The stable-door was open. With an aching heart, he went in. The grey mare was in a bath of foam, panting and distressed as though from some recent journey. Whilst pondering on this strange occurrence, Robin came in. His master taxed him with dishonesty. After much ado, he confessed that his mistress had many times of late borrowed the mare for a night, always returning before the good man awoke. Giles was too full of trouble to rate Robin as he deserved, contenting himself with many admonitions and instructions how to act in the next emergency.

Not many nights after, as Robin was late in the stable, his mistress came with the usual request, and her magic bridle in her hand.

"Now, good Robin, the cream is in the bowl, and the beer behind the spigot, and my good man is in bed."

"Whither away, mistress?" said Robin, diligently whispering down and soothing the mare, who trembled from head to foot when she heard her mistress's voice.

"For a journey, Robin. I have business at Colne; but I will not fail to come back again before sunrise."

"Ay, mistress, this is always your tale; but measter caught her in a woundy heat last time, and will not let her go."

"But, Robin, she shall be in the stable and dry two hours before my old churl gets up."

"But measter says she maunna go."

"Thou hast told him, then,—and a murrain light on thee!"

With eyes glistening like witch-fires, did the dame bestow her malison. Robin half-repent-ed his refusal; but he was stubborn, and his courage not easily shaken. Besides, he had bragged at the last Michaelmas feast that he cared not a rush for never a witch in the parish. He had an *Agnus Dei* in his bosom, and a leaf from the holy herb in his clogs; and what recked he of spells and incantations? Furthermore, he had a waistcoat of proof given to him by his grandmother.³⁸

³⁸ "On Christmas daie at night, a threed must be sponne of flax, by a little virgine girl, in the name of the divell; and it must be by her woven, and also wrought with the needle. On the breste or fore part thereof must be made, with needlework, two heads; on the head of the right side must be a hat, and a long beard,—the left head must

“Since thou hast denied me the mare, I’ll take thee in her place.”

Robin felt in his bosom for the *Agnus Dei* cake, but it was gone!—He had thrown of his waistcoat, too, for the work, and his clogs were lying under the rack. Before he could furnish himself with these counter-charms, Goody Dickisson threw the bridle upon him, using these portentous words:—

“Horse, horse, see thou be;
And where I point thee carry me.”

Swift as the rush of the wind, Robin felt their power. His nature changed: he grew more agile and capacious; and without further ado, found Goody upon his back, and his own shanks at an ambling gallop on the high-road to Pendle. He panted and grew weary, but she urged him on with an unsparing hand, lashing and spurring with all her might, until at last poor Robin, unused to such expedition, flagged and could scarcely crawl. But needs must when the witches drive. Rest and despite were denied, until, almost dead with toil and terror, he halted in one of the steep gullies of Pendle near to Malkin Tower.

It was an old grey-headed ruin, solitary and uninhabited. The cold October wind whistled through its joints and crannies;—the walls were studded with bright patches of moss and lichen;—darkness and desolation brooded over it, unbroken by aught but the cry of the moor-fowl and the stealthy prowling of the weasel and wild cat.

But this lonesome and time-hallowed ruin was now lit up as for some gay festival; lights were flickering through the crevices, and the coming of the guests, each mounted on her enchanted steed, was accompanied by loud and fiend-like acclamations. Shrieks and howlings were borne from afar upon the blast. Unhallowed words and unutterable curses came on the hollow wind. Forms of indescribable and abominable shape flitted through the troubled elements. Robin, trembling all over with fright and fatigue, was told by his mistress to graze where he could, while she went into the feast:—”Make good use of thy time, for in two hours I shall mount thee back again.”

This was poor sustenance for Robin’s stomach,—furze and heath were not at all to his mind, and he peeped about for a quiet resting-place. Here he was kicked and bitten by others of the herd; several of them were in the like pitiable condition with himself; but some were really of the brute kind, and these fared the best and were better mannered than most of their human companions. Often did our unfortunate hero wish himself in their place. Having little else to do, he was prompted by curiosity to approach the building, from whence the loud din of mirth and revelry grated harshly on his ears. A long chink disclosed to him some part of the mysteries within. There sat on the floor a great company of witches, feasting and cramming with all their might. An elderly gentleman of a grave and respectable deportment, clad in black doublet and hosen, sat on a stone-heap at the head, from whence he dealt out the delicacies with due care and attention. This was a mortifying sight to a hungry stomach, and Robin’s humanity yearned at the display. After the first emotions had a little subsided, he found himself at leisure to examine the faces of the opposite guests, and he recognised several dames of his acquaintance, feasting right merrily at the witches’ board. Either his fears and “thick-coming fancies” deceived him, or, as he afterwards declared, he saw nearly the whole of the neighbourhood at the assembly.

Presently it seemed as if the first course were ended, and the floor cleared by invisible hands in a twinkling.

have on a crown, and it must be so horrible that it maie resemble Belzebub; and on each side of the wastcote must be made a crosse.”—*Discoverie of Witchcraft*, by Reginald Scott, 1584.

“Now pull,” said the grave personage in black.

Many ropes hung from the roof. These the women began to pull furiously, when down came pies, puddings, milk, cream, and rare wines, which they caught in wooden bowls; likewise sweet-meats and all manner of dainties, which made Robin’s mouth to water so at the sight that he could bear it no longer. Intending to groan, he involuntarily uttered a loud neigh, which so alarmed the company that the lights were extinguished, and the guests sallied out, each immediately bestriding her steed, and setting forth at full gallop, save Goody Dickisson, who, in attempting to mount Robin, met with a sore mishap. Recollecting the charm which operated upon him, he gave his head a sudden fling: as good luck would have it, the bridle became entangled about her neck. His speech now came again, and he cried out—

“Mare, mare, see thou be;
And where I point thee carry me.”

Suddenly she was metamorphosed, and Robin in his turn bestrode the witch. He spared her not, as will readily be imagined, until he had her safe in her own stable before break of day. Leaving her there with the bridle about her neck, he entered the house, hungry and jaded. Soon he heard Giles coming down-stairs in a great hurry—

“How now, sirrah!” cried the incensed miller; “did I not tell thee to forbid thy mistress the mare?”

“Why, master,” replied Robin, scratching his head, “and so I have—the beast hasna’ been ridden sin’ ye backed her on Friday.”

“Thou art a lying hound to look me in the face and say so. Thy mistress hath been out again last night upon her old errands—I found it out when I awaked.”

“And what’s the matter of that?” said Robin, with great alacrity. “Ye may go see, master, an’ ye liken—the mare’s as dry as our meal-tub, and as brisk as bottled ale.”

Giles turned angrily away from him towards the stable, tightening a tough cudgel in his grasp, with which he intended to belabour the unfortunate hind on his return. Nor was he long absent—Robin had scarcely swallowed a mouthful of hot porridge when his master thus accosted him—

“Why, thou hob thrust, no good can come where thy fingers are a-meddling; there is another jade besides mine own tied to the rack, not worth a groat. Dost let thy neighbours lift my oats and provender? Better turn my mill into a spital for horses, and nourish all the worn-out kibboes i’ the parish!”

“Nay, measter, the beast is yours; and ye ha’ foun’ her bed and provender these twenty years.”

“I’ll cudgel that lying spirit out o’ thee,” said Giles, wetting his hands for a firm grasp at the stick.

“Hold, master!” said Robin, stepping aside; “she has cost you more currying than all the combs in the stable are worth. Step in and take off the bridle, and then say whose beast she is, and who hath most right to her, you or your neighbours. But mind, when the bridle is off her neck, she slip it not on to yours; for if she do you are a gone man.”

Giles stayed not, but ran with great haste into the stable. The tired beast could scarcely stand; but he pulled off the bridle, and—as Robin told the tale—his own spouse immediately stood confessed before him!

Here we pause. In the next part we shall rapidly sketch another of the traditions current on this strange subject. It will but be a brief and shadowy outline: space forbids us to dilate: the whole volume would not contain the stories that tradition attributes to the prevalence of this unnatural and revolting, though, it may be, imaginary crime.

Part Second

On the verge of the Castle Clough, a deep and winding dingle, once shaded with venerable oaks, are the small remains of the Castle of Hapton, the seat of its ancient lords, and, till the erection of Hapton Tower, the occasional residence of the De la Leghs and Townleys. Hapton Tower is now destroyed to its foundation. It was a large square building, and about a hundred years ago presented the remains of three cylindrical towers with conical basements. It also appears to have had two principal entrances opposite to each other, with a thorough lobby between, and seems not to have been built in the usual form,—that of a quadrangle. It was erected about the year 1510, and was inhabited until 1667. The family-name of the nobleman—for such he appears to have been—of whom the following story is told, we have no means of ascertaining. That he was an occasional resident or visitor at the Tower is but surmise. During the period of these dark transactions we find that the mansion was inhabited by Jane Assheton, relict of Richard Townley, who died in the year 1637. Whoever he might be, the following horrible event, arising out of this superstition, attaches to his memory. Whether it can be attributed to the operations of a mind just bordering on insanity, and highly wrought upon by existing delusions,—or must be classed amongst the proofs, so abundantly furnished by all believers in the reality of witchcraft and demoniacal possession, our readers must determine as we unfold the tale.

Lord William had seen, and had openly vowed to win, the proud maiden of Bernshaw Tower. He did win her, but he did not woo her. A dark and appalling secret was connected with their union, which we shall briefly develop.

Lady Sibyl, “the proud maiden of Bernshaw,” was from her youth the creature of impulse and imagination—a child of nature and romance. She roved unchecked through the green valleys and among the glens and moorlands of her native hills; every nook and streamlet was associated with some hidden thought “too deep for tears,” until Nature became her god,—the hills and fastnesses, the trackless wilds and mountains, her companions. With them alone she held communion; and as she watched the soft shadows and the white clouds take their quiet path upon the hills, she beheld in them the symbols of her own ideas,—the images and reflections,—the hidden world within her made visible. She felt no sympathy with the realities—the commonplaces of life; her thoughts were too aspiring for earth, yet found not their resting-place in heaven! It was no grovelling, degrading superstition which actuated her: she sighed for powers above her species,—she aspired to hold intercourse with beings of a superior nature. She would gaze for hours in wild delirium on the blue sky and starry vault, and wish she were freed from the base encumbrances of earth, that she might shine out among those glorious intelligences in regions without a shadow or a cloud. Imagination was her solace and her curse; she flew to it for relief as the drunkard to his cup, sparkling and intoxicating for a while, but its dregs were bitterness and despair. Soon her world of imagination began to quicken; and, as the wind came sighing through her dark ringlets, or rustling over the dry grass and heather bushes at her side, she thought a spirit spoke, or a celestial messenger crossed her path. The unholy rites of the witches were familiar to her ear, but she spurned their vulgar and low ambition; she panted for communion with beings more exalted—demigods and immortals, of whom she had heard as having been translated to those happier skies, forming the glorious constellations she beheld. Sometimes fancies wild and horrible assaulted her; she then shut herself for days in her own chamber, and was heard as

though in converse with invisible things. When freed from this hallucination, agony was marked on her brow, and her cheek was more than usually pale and collapsed. She would then wander forth again:—the mountain-breeze reanimated her spirits, and imagination again became pleasant unto her. She heard the wild swans winging their way above her, and she thought of the wild hunters and the spectre-horseman:³⁹ the short wail of the curlew, the call of the moor-cock and plover, was the voice of her beloved. To her all nature wore a charmed life: earth and sky were but creatures formed for her use, and the ministers of her pleasure.

The Tower of Bernshaw was a small fortified house in the pass over the hills from Burnley to Todmorden. It stood within a short distance from the Eagle Crag; and the Lady Sibyl would often climb to the utmost verge of that overhanging peak, looking from its dizzy height until her soul expanded, and her thoughts took their flight through those dim regions where the eye could not penetrate.

One evening she had lingered longer than usual: she felt unwilling to depart—to meet again the dull and wearisome realities of life—the petty cares that interest and animate mankind. She loathed her own form and her own species:—earth was too narrow for her desire, and she almost longed to burst its barriers. In the deep agony of her spirit she cried aloud—

“Would that my path, like yon clouds, were on the wind, and my dwelling-place in their bosom!”

A soft breeze came suddenly towards her, rustling the dry heath as it swept along. The grass bent beneath its footsteps, and it seemed to die away in articulate murmurs at her feet. Terror crept upon her, her bosom thrilled, and her whole frame was pervaded by some subtle and mysterious influence.

“Who art thou?” she whispered, as though to some invisible agent. She listened, but there was no reply; the same soft wind suddenly arose, and crept to her bosom.

“Who art thou?” she inquired again, but in a louder tone. The breeze again flapped its wings, mantling upwards from where it lay, as if nestled on her breast. It mounted lightly to her cheek, but it felt hot—almost scorching—when the maiden cried out as before. It fluttered on her ear, and she thought there came a whisper—

“I am thy good spirit.”

“Oh, tell me,” she cried with vehemence: “show me who thou art!”—a mist curled round her, and a lambent flame, like the soft lightning of a summer’s night, shot from it. She saw a form, glorious but indistinct, and the flashes grew paler every moment.

“Leave me not,” she cried; “I will be thine!”

Then the cloud passed away, and a being stood before her, mightier and more stately than the sons of men. A burning fillet was on his brow, and his eyes glowed with an ever-restless flame.

“Maiden, I come at thy wish. Speak!—what is thy desire.”

“Let thought be motion;—let my will only be the boundary of my power,” said she, nothing daunted; for her mind had become too familiar with invisible fancies, and her ambition too boundless to feel either awe or alarm. Immediately she felt as though she were sweeping through the trackless air,—she heard the rush of mighty wings cleaving the sky,—she thought

³⁹ In Lancashire these noises are called the Gabriel Ratchets, according to Webster, which seem to be the same with the German *Rachtvogel* or *Rachtraven*. The word and the superstition are still prevalent. Gabriel Ratchets are supposed to be like the sound of puppies yelping in the air, and to forebode death or misfortune.

the whole world lay at her feet, and the kingdoms of the earth moved on like a mighty pageant. Then did the vision change. Objects began to waver and grow dim, as if passing through a mist; and she found herself again upon that lonely crag, and her conductor at her side. He grasped her hand: she felt his burning touch, and a sudden smart as though she were stung—a drop of blood hung on her finger. He unbound the burning fillet, and she saw as though it were a glimpse of that unquenchable, unconsuming flame that devoured him. He took the blood and wrote upon her brow. The agony was intense, and a faint shriek escaped her. He spoke, but the sound rang in her ears like the knell of hopes for ever departed.

For words of such presumptuous blasphemy, tradition must be voiceless. The demon looked upwards; but, as if blasted by some withering sight, his eyes were suddenly withdrawn.

What homage was exacted, let no one seek to know.

After a pause, the deceiver again addressed her; and his form changed as he spoke.

“One day in the year alone thou shalt be subject to mischance. It is the feast of All-Hallows, when the witches meet to renew their vows. On this night thou must be as they, and must join their company. Still thou mayest hide thyself under any form thou shalt choose; but it shall abide upon thee until midnight. Till then thy spells are powerless. On no other day shall harm befall thee.”

The maiden felt her pride dilate:—her weak and common nature she thought was no longer a degradation; she seemed as though she could bound through infinite space. Already was she invested with the attributes of immateriality, when she awoke!—and in her own chamber, whither the servants had conveyed her from the crag an hour before, having found her asleep, or in a swoon, upon the verge of the precipice. She looked at her hand; the sharp wound was there, and she felt her brow tingle as if to remind her of that irrevocable pledge.

Lord William sued in vain to the maid of Bernshaw Tower. She repulsed him with scorn and contumely. He vowed that he would win her, though the powers of darkness withstood the attempt. To accomplish this impious purpose, he sought Mause, the witch’s dwelling. It was a dreary hut, built in a rocky cleft, shunned by all as the abode of wicked and malignant spirits, which the dame kept and nursed as familiars, for the fulfilment of her malicious will.

The night was dark and heavy when Lord William tied his steed to a rude gate that guarded the entrance to the witch’s den. He raised the latch, but there was no light within.

“Holloa!” cried the courageous intruder; but all was dark and silent as before. Just as he was about to depart he thought he heard a rustling near him, and presently the croaking voice of the hag close at his ear.

“Lord William,” said she, “thou art a bold man to come hither after nightfall.”

He felt something startled, but he swerved not from his purpose.

“Can’st help me to a bride, Mother Helston?” cried he, in a firm voice; “for I feel mightily constrained to wed!”

“Is the doomed maiden of Bernshaw a bride fit for Lord William’s bosom?” said the invisible sorceress.

“Give me some charm to win her consent,—I care not for the rest.”

“Charm!” replied the beldame, with a screech that made Lord William start back. “Spells have I none that can bind her. I would she were in my power; but she hath spell for spell. Nought would avail thee, for she is beyond my reach; her power would baffle mine?”

“Is she too tainted with the iniquity that is abroad?”

“I tell thee yea; and my spirit must bow to hers. Wouldst wed her now—fond, feeble-hearted mortal?”

Lord William was silent; but the beautiful form of the maiden seemed to pass before him, and he loved her with such overmastering vehemence that if Satan himself had stood in the gap he would not have shrunk from his purpose.

“Mause Helston,” said the lover, “if thou wilt help me at this bout, I will not draw back. I dare wed her though she were twice the thing thou fearest. Tell me how her spell works,—I will countervail it,—I will break that accursed charm, and she shall be my bride!”

For a while there was no reply; but he heard a muttering as though some consultation were going on.

“Listen, Lord William,” she spoke aloud. “Ay, thou wilt listen to thine own jeopardy! Once in the year—’tis on the night of All-Hallows—she may be overcome. But it is a perilous attempt!”

“I care not. Point out the way, and I will ride it rough-shod!”

The beldame arose from her couch, and struck a light. Ere they separated the morning dawned high above the grey hills. Many rites and incantations were performed, of which we forbear the disgusting recital. The instructions he received were never divulged; the secrets of that night were never known; but an altered man was Lord William when he came back to Hapton Tower.

On All-Hallows’ day, with a numerous train, he went forth a-hunting. His hounds were the fleetest from Calder to Calder; and his horns the shrillest through the wide forests of Accrington and Rossendale. But on that morning a strange hound joined the pack that outstripped them all.

“Blow,” cried Lord William, “till the loud echoes ring, and the fleet hounds o’ertake yon grizzled mongrel.”

Both horses and dogs were driven to their utmost speed, but the strange hound still kept ahead. Over moor and fell they still rushed on, the hounds in full cry, though as yet guided only by the scent, the object of their pursuit not being visible. Suddenly a white doe was seen, distant a few yards only, and bounding away from them at full speed. She might have risen out of the ground, so immediate was her appearance. On they went in full view, but the deer was swift, and she seemed to wind and double with great dexterity. Her bearing was evidently towards the steep crags on the east. They passed the Tower of Bernshaw, and were fast approaching the verge of that tremendous precipice, the “Eagle Crag.” Horse and rider must inevitably perish if they follow. But Lord William slackened not in the pursuit; and the deer flew straight as an arrow to its mark,—the very point where the crag jutted out over the gulf below. The huntsmen drew back in terror; the dogs were still in chase, though at some distance behind;—Lord William only and the strange hound were close upon her track. Beyond the crag nothing was visible but cloud and sky, showing the fearful height and abruptness of the descent. One moment, and the gulf must be shot:—his brain felt dizzy, but his heart was resolute.

“Mause, my wench,” said he, “my neck or thine!—Hie thee; if she’s over, we are lost!”

Lord William’s steed followed in the hound’s footsteps to a hair. The deer was almost within her last spring, when the hound, with a loud yell, doubled her, scarcely a yard’s breadth from the long bare neb of that fearful peak, and she turned with inconceivable speed so near the

verge that Lord William, in wheeling round, heard a fragment of rock, loosened by the stroke from his horse's hoof, roll down the precipice with a frightful crash. The sudden whirl had nearly brought him to the ground, but he recovered his position with great adroitness. A loud shriek announced the capture. The cruel hound held the deer by the throat, and they were struggling together on the green earth. With threats and curses he lashed away the ferocious beast, who growled fiercely at being driven from her prey. With looks of sullenness and menace, she scampered off, leaving Lord William to secure the victim. He drew a silken noose from his saddle-bow, and threw it over the panting deer, who followed quietly on to his dwelling at Hapton Tower.

At midnight there was heard a wild and unearthly shriek from the high turret, so pitiful and shrill that the inmates awoke in great alarm. The loud roar of the wind came on like a thunder-clap. The tempest flapped its wings, and its giant arms rocked the turret like a cradle. At this hour Lord William, with a wild and haggard eye, left his chamber. The last stroke of the midnight bell trembled on his ear as he entered the western tower. A maiden sat there, a silken noose was about her head, and she sobbed loud and heavily. She wrung her white hands at his approach.

"Thy spells have been o'ermastered. Henceforth I renounce these unholy rites; I would not pass nights of horror and days of dread any longer. Maiden, thou art in my power. Unless thou wilt be mine,—renouncing thine impious vows,—for ever shunning thy detested arts,—breaking that accursed chain the enemy has wound about thee,—I will deliver thee up to thy tormentors, and those that seek thy destruction. This done, and thou art free."

The maiden threw her snake-like glance upon him.

"Alas!" she cried, "I am not free. This magic noose! remove it, and my promise shall be without constraint."

"Nay, thou arch-deceiver,—deceiver of thine own self, and plotter of thine own ruin,—I would save thee from thy doom. Promise, renounce, and for ever forswear thy vows. The priest will absolve thee; it must be done ere I unbind that chain."

"I promise," said the maiden, after a deep and unbroken silence. "I have not been happy since I knew their power. I may yet worship this fair earth and yon boundless sky. This heart would be void without an object and a possession!"

She shed no tear until the holy man, with awful and solemn denunciations, exorcised the unclean spirit to whom she was bound. He admonished her, as a repentant wanderer from the flock, to shun the perils of presumption, reminding her that HE, of whom it is written that He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted* of the devil,—HE who won for us the victory in that conflict, taught *us* in praying to say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." She was rebaptized as one newly born, and committed again to the keeping of the Holy Church. Shortly afterwards were united at the altar Lord William and Lady Sibyl. He accompanied her to Bernshaw Tower, their future residence,—becoming, in right of his wife, the sole possessor of those domains.

Part Third

Twelve months were nigh come and gone, and the feast of All-Hallows was again at hand. Lord William's bride sat in her lonely bower, but her face was pale, and her eyes red with weeping. The tempter had been there; and she had not sought for protection against his snares. That night she was expected to renew her allegiance to the prince of darkness. Those fearful rites must now bind her for ever to his will. Such appeared to be her infatuation that it led her to imagine she was yet his by right of purchase, without being fully conscious of the

impiety of that thought. His own power had been promised to her: true, she must die; but might she not, a spirit like himself, rove from world to world without restraint? She thought—so perilously rapid was her relapse and her delusion—that his form had again passed before her, beautiful as before his transgression!—"The Son of the Morning!" arrayed in the majesty which he had before the world was,—ere heaven's Ruler had hurled him from his throne. Her mental vision was perverted. Light and darkness, good and evil, were no longer distinguished. Perhaps it was a dream; but the imagination had become diseased, and she distinguished not its inward operations from outward impressions on the sense. Her husband was kind, and loved her with a lover's fondness, but she could not return his affection. He saw her unhappy, and he administered comfort; but the source of her misery was in himself, and she sighed to be free?

"Free!"—she started; the voice was an echo to her thought. It appeared to be in the chamber, but she saw no living form. She had vowed to renounce the devil and all his works in her rebaptism, before she was led to the altar, and how could she face her husband?

"He shall not know of our compact."

These words seemed to be whispered in her ear. She turned aside; but saw nothing save the glow of sunset through the lattice, and a wavering light upon the floor.

"I would spare him this misery," she sighed. "Conceal but the secret from him, and I am again thine!"

Suddenly the well-known form of her familiar was at her side.

The following day was All-Hallows-e'en, and her allegiance must be renewed in the great assembly of his subjects held on that fearful night.

It was in the year 1632, a period well known in history as having led to the apprehension of a considerable number of persons accused of witchcraft. The depositions of these miserable creatures were taken before Richard Shuttleworth and John Starkie, two of his Majesty's justices of the peace, on the 10th of February 1633; and they were committed to Lancaster Castle for trial.

Seventeen of them were found guilty, on evidence suspicious enough under ordinary circumstances, but not at all to be wondered at, if we consider the feeling and excitement then abroad. Some of the deluded victims themselves confessed their crime, giving minute and connected statements of their meetings, and the transactions which then took place. Justices of the peace, judges, and the highest dignitaries of the realm, firmly believed in these reputed sorceries. Even the great Sir Thomas Brown, author of the book intended as an exposure of "Vulgar Errors," gave his testimony to the truth and reality of those diabolical delusions. But we have little need to wonder at the superstition of past ages, when we look at the folly and credulity of our own.

It may, perhaps, be pleasing to learn that the judge who presided at the trial respited the convicts, and reported their case to the king in council. They were next remitted to Chester, where Bishop Bridgeman, certifying his opinion of the matter, four of the accused—Margaret Johnson, Frances Dickisson, Mary Spencer, and the wife of one Hargreaves—were sent to London and examined, first by the king's physicians, and afterwards by Charles I. in person. "A stranger scene can scarcely be perceived," says the historian of Whalley; "and it is not easy to imagine whether the untaught manners, rude dialect, and uncouth appearance of these poor foresters would more astonish the king; or his dignity of person and manners, together with the splendid scene by which they were surrounded, would overwhelm them."

The story made so much noise that plays were written on the subject, and enacted. One of them is entitled, “The late Lancashire Witches, a well-received Comedy, lately acted at the Globe on the Bank-side, by the King’s Majesty’s Actors. Written by Thomas Haywood and Richard Broom. *Aut prodesse solent, aut delectare*, 1634.”

But our element is tradition, especially as illustrating ancient manners and superstitions; we therefore give the sequel of our tale as tradition hath preserved it.

Giles Dickisson, the merry miller at the Mill Clough, had so taken to heart his wife’s dishonesty that, as we have before observed, he grew fretful and morose. His mill he vowed was infested with a whole legion of these “hell-cats,” as they were called; for in this shape they presented themselves to the affrighted eyes of the miserable yoke-fellow, as he fancied himself, to a limb of Satan. The yells and screeches he heard o’ nights from these witches and warlocks were unbearable; and once or twice, when late at the mill, both he and Robin had received some palpable tokens of their presence. Scratches and bloody marks were plainly visible, and every hour brought with it some new source of annoyance or alarm.

One morning Giles showed himself with a disconsolate face before Lord William at the Tower; he could bear his condition no longer.

“T’other night,” said he, “the witches set me astride o’ t’ riggin’ o’ my own house.⁴⁰ It was a bitter cold time, an’ I was nearly perished when I wakened. I am weary of my life, and will flit; for this country, the deil, I do think, holds in his own special keeping!”

Then Robin stept forward, offering to take the mill on his master’s quittance. He cared not, he said, for all the witch-women in the parish. He had “fettled” one of them, and, by his Maker’s help, he hoped fairly to drive them off the field. The bargain was struck, and Robin that day entered into possession.

By a strange coincidence, this transaction happened on the eve of All-Hallows before mentioned; and Lord William requested that Robin would on that night keep watch. His courage, he said, would help him through; and if he could rid the mill of them, the Baron promised him a year’s rent, and a good largess besides. Robin was fain of the offer, and prepared himself for the strife, determined, if possible, to eject these ugly vermin from the premises.

On this same night, soon after sunset, the lady of Bernshaw Tower went forth, leaving her lord in a deep sleep, the effect, as it was supposed, of her own spells. Ere she departed, every symbol or token of grace was laid aside;—her rosary was unbound. She drew a glove from her hand, and in it was the bridle ring, which she threw from her,—when the flame of the lamp suddenly expired. It was in her little toilet-chamber, where she had paused, that she might pursue her meditations undisturbed. Her allegiance must be renewed, and revoked no more; but her pride, that darling sin for which she raised her soul, must first suffer. On that night she must be guided by the same laws, and subjected to the same degrading influence, as her fellow-subjects. At least once a year this condition must be fulfilled:—all rank and distinction being lost, the vassals were alike equal in subordination to their chief. On this night, too, the rights of initiation were usually administered.

⁴⁰ “Riggin’” or ridging. The hills which divide the counties of York and Lancaster are sometimes called “th’ riggin’,” from their being the highest land between the two seas forming part of what is called the backbone of England. An individual residing at a place named “The Summit,” from its situation, was asked where he lived. “I live at th’ riggin’ o’ th’ warld, I reckon,” says he; “for th’ water fro’ t’ one side o’ th’ roof fa’s to th’ east sea, an’ t’ other to th’ west sea.”

The time drew nigh, and the Lady Sibyl, intending to conceal the glove with the sacred symbol, passed her hand on the table where it had lain—but it was gone!

In a vast hollow, nearly surrounded by crags and precipices, bare and inaccessible, the meeting was assembled, and the lady of the Tower was to be restored to their communion. Gliding like a shadow, came in the wife of Lord William,—pale, and her tresses dishevelled, she seemed the victim either of disease or insanity.

Under a tottering and blasted pine sat their chief, in a human form; his stature lofty and commanding, he appeared as a ruler even in this narrow sphere of his dominion. Yet he looked round with a glance of mockery and scorn. He was fallen, and he felt degraded; but his aim was to mar the glorious image of his Maker, and trample it beneath his feet.

A crowd of miserable and deluded beings came at the beck of their chief, each accompanied by her familiar. But the lady of Bernshaw came alone. Her act of renouncement had deprived her of this privilege.

The mandate having been proclaimed, and the preliminary rites to this fearful act of reprobation performed, the assembly waited for the concluding act—the cruel and appalling trial: one touch of his finger was to pass upon her brow,—the impress, the mark of the beast,—the sign that was to snatch her from the reach of mercy! Her spirit shuddered;—nature shrank from the unholy contact. Once more she looked towards that heaven she was about to forfeit,—and for ever!

“For ever!”—the words rang in her ears; their sound was like the knell of her everlasting hope. She started aside, as though she felt a horrid and scorching breath upon her cheek, as though she already felt their unutterable import in the abysses of woe!

Conscience, long slumbering, seemed to awake; she was seized with the anguish of despair! It seemed as though judgment were passed, and she was doomed to wander like some rayless orb in the blackness of darkness for ever. One fearful undefined form of terror was before her; one consciousness of offence ever present; all idea of past and future absorbed in one ever-during NOW, she felt that her misery was too heavy to sustain. A groan escaped her lips, but it was an appeal to that power for deliverance, who is not slow to hear, “nor impotent to save.” Suddenly she was roused from some deep and overpowering hallucination; the promises of unlimited gratification to every wish prevailed no more, the tempter’s charm was broken. All was changed; the whole scene seemed to vanish; and that form, which once appeared to her like an angel of light, fell prostrate, writhing away in terrific and tortuous folds on the hissing earth. The crowd scattered with a fearful yell;—she heard a rush of wings, and a loud and dissonant scream,—and the “Bride of Bernshaw” fell senseless to the ground.

We leave the conscience-stricken victim whilst we relate the result of Robin’s watch-night at the mill.

He lay awake until midnight, but there was no disturbance; nothing was heard but the plash of the mill-stream, and the dripping ooze from the rocks. His old enemies, no doubt, were intimidated, and he was about commencing a snug nap on the idea—when, lo! there came a great rush of wind. He heard it booming on from a vast distance, until it seemed to sweep over the building in one wide resistless torrent that might have levelled the stoutest edifice;—yet was the mill unharmed by the attack. Then came shrieks and yells, mingled with the most horrid imprecations. Swift as thought, there rushed upon him a prodigious company of cats, bats, and all manner of hideous things, that scratched and pinched him, as he afterwards

declared, until his flesh verily “reeked” again. Maddened by the torment, he began to lay about him lustily with a long whittle which he carried for domestic purposes. They gave back at so unexpected a reception. Taking courage thereby, Robin followed, and they fled, helter-skelter, like a routed army. Through loop-holes and windows went the obscene crew, with such hideous screeches as startled the whole neighbourhood. He gave one last desperate lunge as a parting remembrance, and felt that his weapon had made a hit. Something fell on the floor, but the light was extinguished in the scuffle, and in vain he attempted to grope out this trophy of his valour.

“I’ve sliced off a leg or a wing,” thought he, “and I may lay hold on it in the morning.”

All was now quiet, and Robin, to his great comfort, was left without further molestation.

Morning dawned bright and cheerful on the grey battlements of Bernshaw Tower; the sun came out joyously over the hills; but Lord William walked forth with an anxious and gloomy countenance. His wife had feigned illness, and the old nurse had tended her through the night in a separate chamber. This was the story he had learnt on finding her absent when he awoke. Early presenting himself at the door, he was refused admission. She was ill—very ill. The lady was fallen asleep, and might not be disturbed: such was the answer he received. Rising over the hill, he now saw the gaunt ungainly form of Robin, his new tenant, approaching in great haste with a bundle under his arm.

“What news from the mill, my stout warrior of the north?” said Lord William.

“I think I payed one on ‘em, your worship,” said Robin, taking the bundle in his hand. “Not a cat said mew when they felt my whittle. Marry, I spoilt their catterwauling: I’ve cut a rare shive!”

“How didst fare last night with thy wenches?” inquired the other.

“I’ve mended their manners for a while, I guess. As I peeped about betimes this morning, I found—a paw! If cats are bred with hands and gowden rings on their fingers, they shall e’en ha’ sporting-room i’ the mill! No bad luck, methinks.”

Robin uncovered the prize, and drew out a bleeding hand, mangled at the wrist, and blackened as if by fire; one finger decorated with a ring, which Lord William too plainly recognised. He seized the terrific pledge, and, with a look betokening some deadly purpose, hastened to his wife’s chamber. He demanded admittance in too peremptory a tone for denial. His features were still, not a ripple marked the disturbance beneath. He stood with a calm and tranquil brow by her bed-side; but she read a fearful message in his eye.

“Fair lady, how farest thou?—I do fear me thou art ill!”

“She’s sick, and in great danger. You may not disturb her, my lord,” said the nurse, attempting to prevent his too near approach;—“I pray you depart; your presence afflicts her sorely.”

“Ay, and so it does,” said Lord William, with a strange and hideous laugh. “I pray thee, lady, let me play the doctor,—hold out thy hand.”

The lady was still silent. She turned away her head. His glance was too withering to endure.

“Nay, then, I must constrain thee, dame.”

She drew out her hand, which Lord William seized with a violent and convulsive grasp.

“I fear me ‘tis a sickness unto death; small hope of amendment here. Give me the other; perchance I may find there more comfort.”

“Oh, my husband, I cannot;—I am—I have no strength.”

“Why, thou art grown peevish with thy distemper. Since ‘tis so, I must e’en force thy stubborn will.”

“Alas! I cannot.”

“If not thy hand, show me thy wrist!—I have here a match to it, methinks. O earth—earth—hide me in thy womb!—let the darkness blot me out and this blasting testimony for ever!—Accursed hag, what hast thou done?”

He seized her by the hair.

“What hast thou promised the fiend? Tell me,—or”—

“I have, oh, I fear I have,—consented to the compact!”

“How far doth it bind thee?”

“My soul—my better part!”

“Thy better part?—thy worse! A loathsome ulcer, reeking with the stench from the pit! Better have given thy body to the stake, than have let in one unhallowed desire upon thy soul. How far does thy contract reach?”

“All interest I can claim. His part that created it I could not give, not being mine to yield.”

“Lost! lost! Thou hast, indeed, sold thyself to perdition! I’ll purge this earth of witchery;—I’ll make their carcasses my weapon’s sheath;—hence inglorious scabbard!” He flung away the sheath. Twining her dark hair about his fingers—“Die!—impious, polluted wretch! This blessed earth loathes thee,—the grave’s holy sanctuary will cast thee out! Yon glorious sun would smite thee should I refrain!”

He raised his sword—a gleam of triumph seemed to flash from her eye, as though she were eager for the blow; but the descending weapon was stayed, and by no timid hand.

Lord William turned, yet he saw not the cause of its restraint. The lady alone seemed to be aware of some unseen intruder, and her eye darkened with apprehension. Suddenly she sprang from the couch; a shriek from no human agency escaped her, and the spirit seemed to have passed from its abode.

Lord William threw himself on her pale and inanimate form.

“Farewell!” he cried: “I had thought thee honest!—Nay, lost spirit, I must not say farewell!”

He gazed on his once-loved bride with a look of such unutterable tenderness that the heart’s deep gush burst from his eyes, and he wept in that almost unendurable anguish. The sight was too harrowing to sustain. He was about to withdraw, when a convulsive tremor passed across her features—a trembling like the undulation of the breeze rippling the smooth bosom of the lake; a sigh seemed to labour heavily from her breast; her eyes opened; but as though yet struggling under the influence of some terrific dream, she cried—

“Oh, save me—save me!” She looked upwards: it was as if the light of heaven had suddenly shone in upon her benighted soul.

“Lost, saidst thou, accursed fiend?—Never until his power shall yield to thine!”

Yet she shuddered, as though the appalling shadow were still upon her spirit.—“Nay, ‘twas but a dream.”

“Dreams!” cried Lord William, recovering from a look of speechless amazement. “Thy dreams are more akin to truth than ever were thy waking reveries.”

“Nay, my Lord, look not so unkindly on me—I will tell thee all. I dreamt that I was possessed, and this body was the dwelling of a demon. It was permitted as a punishment for my transgressions; for I had sought communion with the fiend. I was the companion of witches—foul and abominable shapes;—a beastly crew, with whom I was doomed to associate. Hellish rites and deeds, too horrible to name, were perpetrated. As a witness of my degradation, methought my right hand was withered. I feel it still! Yet—surely ‘twas a dream!”

She raised her hand, gazing earnestly on it, which, to Lord William’s amazement, appeared whole as before, save a slight mark round the wrist, but the ring was not there.

“What can this betide?” said the trembling sufferer. She looked suspiciously on this apparent confirmation of her guilt, and then upon her husband. “Oh, tell me that I did but dream!”

But Lord William spoke not.

“I know it all now!” she said, with a heavy sob. “My crime is punished; and I loathe my own form, for it is polluted. Yet the whole has passed but as some horrible dream—and I am free! This tabernacle is cleansed; no more shall it be defiled; for to Thee do I render up my trust.”

A mild radiance had displaced the wild and unnatural lustre of her eye, as she looked up to the mercy she invoked, and was forgiven.

Her spirit was permitted but a brief sojourn in this region of sorrow. Ere another sun, her head hung lifeless on Lord William’s bosom;—he had pressed her to his heart in token of forgiveness; but he held only the cold and clammy shrine—the idol had departed!

According to the popular solution of this fearful mystery, a demon or familiar had reanimated her form while she lay senseless at the sudden and unlooked-for dissolution of the witches’ assembly. In this shape the imp had joined the rendezvous at the mill, and fleeing from the effects of Robin’s valour, maliciously hoped that Lord William would execute a swift vengeance on his erring bride. But his hand was stayed by another and more merciful power, and the demon was cast out.

The ring and glove were not found. It was said that Mause Helston had taken them as a gage of fealty, and dying about the same period, was denied the rites of Christian burial. Hence may have arisen the belief which tradition has preserved respecting the Lady Sibyl.

Popular superstition still alleges that her grave was dug where the dark “Eagle Crag” shoots out its cold bare peak into the sky. Often, it is said, on the eve of All-Hallows, do the hound and the milk-white doe meet on the crag—a spectre huntsman in full chase. The belated peasant crosses himself at the sound as he remembers the fate of “The Witch of Bernshaw Tower.”

XVI. Siege Of Lathom

“Let me no longer live, she sayd,
Than to my lord I true remain;
My honour shall not be betray’d
Until I see my love again.

“Oh! blame her not if she was glad
When she her lord again had seen.
Thrice welcome home, my dear, she said,—
A long time absent thou hast been:
The wars shall never more deprive
Me of my lord whilst I’m alive.”

—*Mirroure for Married Women.*

No authentic drawing or representation of Lathom House, we believe, exists. The author has, however, had the temerity to present a restoration of this renowned edifice, as it appeared before the siege, and before “the sequestrators under Cromwell, weary of the slow disposal of the building materials by sale, invited the peasants of the hundred of West Derby to take away the stones and timbers without any charge.”

The very numerous documents to which he has had recourse were aided by measurements, and a visit to the spot, where he found that a tolerable accurate idea might be formed of the situation and extent of the walls and towers, together with the main entrance, and the “great Eagle Tower.”

The accompanying view is taken from a hill above the valley or trench, where, it is said, the main army of the besiegers was encamped. It is called in the neighbourhood “Cromwell’s Trench,” and the engraving may serve to convey some idea of that magnificent and princely dwelling, which, as the old ballad expresses it, would hold “two kinges, their traines and all.” Henry the Seventh, two years after his visit to Lathom, restored his palace at Richmond, the same authority tells us, “like Lathom Hall in fashion.” The gate-house in the engraving is drawn from the description of a carving of the Stanley legend in Manchester Collegiate Church, executed in the time of James Stanley, Bishop of Ely. From this it appears to have had two octagonal turrets on each side of an obtusely-pointed or circular archway with battlements, machicolated and pierced for cannon.

The Eagle Tower alone remained when part of the estate was transferred to John Lord Ashburnham, on his marriage, in 1714, with Henrietta, daughter of William, ninth earl of Derby. Lord Ashburnham sold it to a Furness, and he to Sir Thomas Bootle. Not a vestige now exists, and even the records of the family are destroyed. “Golforden,” says Mr Heywood, in his interesting *Notes to a Journal of the Siege of Lathom*, “along whose banks knights and ladies have a thousand times made resort, hearkening to stories as varied as those of Boccaccio;—the maudlin well, where the pilgrim and the lazar devoutly cooled their parched lips;—the mewing-house,—the training round,—every appendage to antique baronial state,—all now are changed, and a modern mansion and a new possessor fill the place.”

This memorable siege, and the heroic defence by Lady Derby, though among the most prominent topics in the history of the county, supply but few materials which may not be found in records that already exist. Yet there are incidents connected with them which the

historian has left unrecorded; occurrences, it might be, too trivial or too apocryphal for his pen. One of the main events in the following narrative, though not found amongst written and authenticated records, the author has listened to when a child, with a vigorous and greedy appetite for wonder,—one of the earliest and most delightful exercises of the imagination.

We purpose to follow briefly the order of events as they appear in the several narratives to which we have had access, interweaving such traditionary matter as we have gathered in our researches, thereby interrupting and relieving the tediousness of this “thrice-told tale.”

Lord Derby, from the usual unhappy fatality, or rather from the indecision and jealousies prevailing in his Majesty’s councils, had been commanded to leave the realm, and proceed instantly to the Isle of Man, at the precise time when his presence here would have been the most serviceable, not only from his great zeal, activity, and loyalty to his sovereign, but by reason of the influence he possessed, and the example which his noble and valiant bearing had shown throughout the county. His house, children, and all other temporal concerns, he left to the care of his lady, first making provision, secretly, for their defence, supplying her with men, money, and ammunition, that she might not be unprepared in case of attack. His lordship’s opinion of this disastrous and impolitic removal may be gathered from the following hasty expressions. After a perusal of the despatches, announcing the king’s, or rather the queen’s, pleasure that he should speedily repair to the Isle of Man, where an invasion was apprehended from the Scots,—speaking to the Lady Derby with more than ordinary quickness, he said, “My heart, my enemies have now their will, having prevailed with his Majesty to order me to the Isle of Man, as a softer banishment from his presence and their malice.”

This valiant and high-born dame was daughter to Claude, Duke of Tremouille, and Charlotte Brabantin de Nassau, daughter of William, Prince of Orange, and Charlotte de Bourbon, of the royal house of France. By this marriage the Earl of Derby was allied to the French kings, the Dukes of Anjou, the Kings of Naples and Sicily, the Kings of Spain, and many other of the sovereign princes of Europe. Her father was a staunch Huguenot, and a trusty follower of Henry IV. That she did not sully the renown acquired by so illustrious a descent, the following narrative will abundantly prove.

It was at a special council of the Holy States,⁴¹ held at Manchester on Saturday the 24th of February 1644, that, after many former debates and consultations, the siege of Lathom was concluded upon. The parliament troops under Colonel Ashton of Middleton, Colonel Moore of Bank-Hall, and Colonel Rigby of Preston, on the same day began their march, proceeding by way of Bolton, Wigan, and Standish, under a pretence of going into Westmoreland, that the soldiers should not presently know of their destination.

Lathom, for magnificence and hospitality, was held in high reputation, assuming, in these respects, the attitude of a royal court in the northern parts of the kingdom; and the family were regarded with such veneration and esteem that the following harmless inversion was familiar “as household words:”—“God save the Earl of Derby and the King;” the general feeling and opinion thereby apparent being love to their lord and loyalty to their prince.

On the 27th of February the enemy took up their quarters about a mile distant from the house. The next day Captain Markland was the bearer of a letter to her ladyship from Sir Thomas Fairfax, commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces, and likewise an ordinance of parliament: the one requiring that she should surrender the house upon such honourable terms as he might propose; and the other setting forth and commending the great mercy they had

⁴¹ The name assumed by a body of men who met, during the wars, in Manchester; and who in energy and power were second only to their London brethren.

manifested by thus offering to receive the Earl of Derby if he would submit himself. But she indignantly refused to surrender without the consent and commandment of her lord; and after many interviews, to which she assented only to gain time, and to complete the provisioning and fortifying of her little garrison, they began to find her answers too full of policy and procrastination, dangerous to the fidelity of their troops. In the end, seeing she was only amusing them by vain pretences, they sent the following as their final terms, by Colonel Morgan, commander of the engineers, who had been appointed by Sir Thomas Fairfax to conduct the siege:—

1st. “That the Countess of Derby shall have the time she desires, and then liberty to transport her arms and goods to the Isle of Man, except the cannon, which shall continue there for the defence of the house.

2d. “That her ladyship, by ten o’clock on the morrow, shall disband all her soldiers, except her menial servants, and receive an officer and forty parliament soldiers for her guard.”

Morgan is described as “a litle man short and peremptory, who met with staidnes to coole his heat; and had the honor to carry backe this last answer—for her ladyshipp could scrue them to noe more delays, viz.—

“That she refused all their articles, and was truely happy they had refused hers, protesting shee had rather hazard her life than offer the like again;—

“That though a woman, and a stranger, divorced from her friends, and rob’d of her estate, she was ready to receive their utmost vyolence, trusting in God both for protection and deliverance.”

The next morning they discovered the enemy had been at work about a musket-shot from the house, in a sloping ground, where they appeared to be forming a breast-work and trench to protect the pioneers—multitudes of country people being every day forced into this laborious service.

The situation of Lathom deserves some notice, it being admirably calculated to resist any attack.

“It was encompassed by a strong wall, two yards thick; upon the walls were nine towers, flanking each other, and in every tower six pieces of ordnance, that played three one way and three another. Upon the tops of these towers were placed the best and choicest marksmen, who usually attended the Earl in his sports, as huntsmen, keepers, fowlers, and the like, who continually kept watch, with screwed guns and long fowling-pieces, to the great annoyance and loss of the enemy, especially of their commanders, who were frequently killed in the trenches. Without the wall was a moat eight yards wide and two yards deep; between the wall and the moat was a strong row of palisadoes. A high tower, called the Eagle Tower, stood in the midst, surmounting all the rest. The gate-house had a strong tower on each side, forming the entrance to the first court.”

The site of the house seemed to have been formed for a stronghold, or place of safety: thus described by Seacome:—

“Before the house, to the south and south-west, is a rising ground, so near as to overlook the top of it, from which it falls so quick, that nothing planted against it on those sides can touch it further than the front wall; and on the north and east sides there is another rising ground, even to the edge of the moat.” “The situation of it may be compared to the palm of a man’s hand, flat in the middle, and covered with a rising ground, about it, and so near to it, that the

enemy, in two years' siege, were never able to raise a battery against it, so as to make a breach in the wall practicable to enter the house by way of storm."⁴²

It is said the camp of the besiegers was in a woody dell, near what is now called "The Round O Quarry," about half-a-mile from Lathom. This dell is still called "Cromwell's Trench;" and a large and remarkable stone, having two circular hollows or holes on its upper surface, evidently once containing nodules of iron, is called "Cromwell's Stone"—the country people supposing these holes were used as moulds for casting balls during the siege.

The besiegers, however, thought to reduce the place by famine, being deceived through the following device of her ladyship's chaplain, the Rev. Mr Rutter, a person whom the Earl had left to her assistance, that she might be guided by his great skill and prudence:—

During one of the conferences before-named, a captain of the parliamentary forces, recognising in the chaplain an old friend, with whom he had been educated, and very intimate and familiar aforetime, took a secret opportunity of addressing him, hoping to worm out her ladyship's secrets; conjuring him, by reason of their former friendship, to tell truly upon what ground or confidence she still refused these offers, seeing that it was impossible to defend her house against such a numerous and well-furnished army as was then encamped in the park.

Rutter, casting his eyes earnestly towards the ramparts, bade his friend note their disposition and defence. Her ladyship, as commander-in-chief, to prevent any sudden assault, and likewise to awe the enemy by these demonstrations, had disposed her soldiers in due order, so that they should be seen, under their respective officers, from the main-guard in the first court, down to the great hall, where they had left her ladyship's council. The rest of her forces she had placed upon the walls, and on the tops of the towers, in such manner that they might appear both numerous and well-disciplined.

"She is in nothing so desirous," said Rutter, "as that you should waste your strength and forces by a sudden assault, wherein you would not fail to have the worst of the battle: the place being armed at all points, as thou seest, and able to withstand any attack but that of famine."

A promise of secrecy was exacted, when the wary chaplain pretended to unfold her ladyship's plans. He said there was but little provision in the place—that she was oppressed with the number of her soldiers—that she would not be able to subsist more than fourteen days; and she hoped to dare them to a sudden onset, not from her own confidence to give them a repulse, but knowing that, should they continue the siege, she must inevitably be forced to surrender.

The captain, after embracing his friend, and promising faithfully to maintain the secret, revealed, as Rutter intended he should, the whole of his confidential story to the enemy's council; who, giving credit to the tale, laid aside, for the present, all thoughts of an attack, and resolved to invest the place in a close and formal siege.

Fourteen days being expired, and they, supposing her provisions were nigh spent, and the garrison reduced to the last extremity, sent another and more peremptory summons. But during this time her soldiers were training, the walls and fortifications were undergoing a thorough repair, and the cannon properly served and mounted. The fortress, too, was well stocked, and even abundantly stored with provisions, in spite of their enemies, who kept a strict watch, but failed to detect the source and manner of the supply. She was not without hope, too, of relief from the king's troops, whom she daily expected to her assistance.

⁴² "Hist. of the House of Stanley," p.90.

The besiegers finding themselves deceived, their confidence abused, and their schemes only serving to the advantage of the opposite party, orders were given and preparations made for more offensive measures, by drawing a line of circumvallation round the house.

The garrison consisted of 300 men, commanded by the Captains Henry Ogle, Edward Chisnall, Edward Rawsthorne, William Farmer, Mullineux Ratcliffe, and Richard Fox, assisted in their consultations by William Farrington of Werden, Esq., who, for executing the commission of array, and attending her ladyship in these troubles, had suffered the seizure of all his personal estate and the sequestration of his lands.

There were 150 men each night upon the watch, with the exception of sixteen select marksmen out of the whole, who all day kept the towers.

The besieger's army was between two and three thousand, divided into tertias of seven or eight hundred men, who watched every third day and night. They were commanded by Colonels Egerton, Ashton, Holland, Rigby, Moore, and Morgan, with their captains and lieutenants.

After many warlike demonstrations, by which they hoped to intimidate the garrison, and after some days spent in fruitless endeavours to bring her ladyship, as they said, to a due sense of her condition, they sent one Captain Ashurst, "a fair and civil gentleman, of good character," with fresh proposals. But Lady Derby, justly considering these frequent treaties and debates were a discouragement to her men, implying weakness and a want of confidence in her resources, replied sharply—

"That no one should quit the house, but that she would keep it, whilst God enabled her, against all the king's enemies; that, in brief, she would receive no more messages, but referred them to her lord, scorning their malice, and defying their assaults."

As the sequel of a business often depends upon the manner of its beginning, to second and confirm this answer the next morning she ordered a sally, when Captain Farmer with one hundred foot and Lieutenant Kay with twelve horse, their whole cavalry, went forth at different gates. Captain Farmer, determining to take them by surprise, marched up to the enemy's works without firing a shot; then pouncing upon them suddenly in their trenches, he ordered a close and well-aimed volley, which quickly made them leave their holes in great disorder. Immediately Lieutenant Kay, wheeling round with his horse, took them in flank, doing great execution as they fled. There were slain of the enemy about thirty men. The spoil was forty muskets, one drum, and six prisoners.

The retreat of this little band was skilfully secured by Captain Ogle and Captain Rawsthorne, so that not one of the assailants was either slain or wounded.

The besiegers were much annoyed with devices, ingeniously contrived by the garrison to intimidate them, and hinder and injure their work. Hitherto they had not been able to cast up a mound for their ordnance, so harassed and occupied were they with these incessant alarms. But Rigby, on whom devolved the plan and conduct of the siege, seeing that their affairs were in no thriving condition, but that rather they were the scoff and jest of the garrison, who daily taunted them from the walls, determined at all hazards to raise his cannon. For this purpose a considerable number of the peasantry and poorer sort in the neighbourhood, and for miles round, were driven like beasts to their daily work, labouring unremittingly at the mounds and trenches. At first they were sheltered by baskets and hurdles, afterwards by a testudo, or wooden house running upon wheels and roofed with thick planks. Still many lives were lost in this desperate service. In the end they brought up one piece of cannon, amusing themselves like schoolboys at a holiday, in practising their harmless reports. The first shot struck the outer wall, but it was found proof. Afterwards they aimed higher, intending to beat down a

pinnacle or turret, but this also passed without damage. The last shot, which missed entirely, went over and beyond the buildings, burrowing in a field on the other side.

When they had performed this mighty feat they sounded another parley, having, as they supposed, mightily beat down the hearts of the besieged. Colonel Rigby's chaplain then appeared at the gate with a letter that Sir Thomas Fairfax had received from Lord Derby, who was now at Chester, on his return from the Isle of Man. In this epistle he desired a free and honourable passage for his lady and their children, if she so pleased, being unwilling, as he said, to expose them to the uncertain hazard of a long siege. His lordship knew not, by reason of his long absence, either how his house was provided with ammunition and sustenance, or in what condition it might be to withstand the attack. He was desirous that the garrison alone should bear the brunt, and that a defenceless woman and her children should be rescued from captivity.

Her ladyship replied that she would communicate with the earl, and if he should then continue in the same opinion, she would willingly submit to his commands; but until this, she would neither yield up the house nor abate in her hostility, but would abide by the result. Immediately she despatched to his lordship a messenger, conveying him from the house by a well-executed sally. The attempt succeeded; but whether he was suffered to reach his destination or not we have no means of ascertaining. No answer was returned, though some days had elapsed, during which the enemy made many fruitless attempts to batter the walls.

They had now mounted the whole of their artillery, including their great mortar-piece, at that period looked upon as a most destructive engine, casting stones thirteen inches in diameter and eighty pounds weight; likewise grenadoes—hollow balls of iron, filled with powder, and lighted by a fusee. These were dangerous intruders, calculated to produce great alarm and annoyance, as we shall find in the sequel. The mortar was planted only about half a musket-shot from the walls, south-west, on a rising ground, from whence the engineer commanded a view of the whole buildings.

The work on which it stood was orbicular, with a rampart of two yards and a half broad above the ditch. To lessen the destructive effects of this dangerous piece of artillery, chosen men were set as guards with wet hides and woollen coverlids to quench the flame, had the enemy been skilful enough to accomplish their purpose; it being their general opinion that to burn the house would be the most effectual means of subduing and driving out the garrison. But finding their endeavours met with no prosperous return, they bethought them to cast a show of religion over these attempts at robbery and rapine, issuing out commands to all men well affected towards their success, to co-operate with them for the overthrow of the "Babylonish harlot," by which term some worthy disciples of the visible church scrupled not to call the Lady of Lathom.⁴³

The following proclamation was sent forth from their headquarters at Ormskirk:—

"To all ministers and parsons in Lancashire, well-wishers to our successes against Lathom House, these:—

"Forasmuch as more than ordinary obstrucc'ons have from the beginning of this p'sent service ag^t Lathom House interposed our proceedings, and yet still remaine, which cannot otherwise be removed, nor our successes furthered, but onely by devine assistance: it is, therefore, our desires to the ministers and other well-affected persons of this county of Lancaster, in publike manner, as they shall please, to com'end our case to God, that as wee

⁴³ One of these sons of violence, Bradshaw of Brazen-nose, took occasion, before his patrons at Wigan, to profane the 14th verse of the 15th chapter of Jeremiah, from thence proving that Lady Derby was the scarlet whore and the whore of Babylon whose walls he made as flat and thin as his own discourse

are appoynted to the s^d employment, soe much tending to the settleing of our p'sent peace in theise parts, soe the Almighty would crowne our weake endeavours with speedy success in the said designe.

(Signed)

“RALPH ASHTON.

“JOHN MOORE.

“ORMSKIRK, 5 Ap. 1644.”

The four following days were, on their part, consumed in these unholy exercises; but the garrison, tired with inaction, resolved to awaken them, and turn their thoughts into a more profitable channel.

On Wednesday, the 10th of April, says the MS. journal, “about eleven o'clock, Captⁿ Farmer and Captⁿ Mullineux Rattcliffe, Lieu^t Penckett, Lieu^t Woorrale, wth 140 souldiers, sallyed out at a postern gate, beate the enemy from all theire worke and batteries, w^{ch} were now cast up round the house, nailed all theire canon, killed about 50 men, took 60 armes, one collours, and three drumes, in which acc'on, Captⁿ Rattcliffe deserves this remembrance, that wth 3 souldiers, the rest of his squadron being scattered wth execuc'on of the enemy, he cleared two sconces, and slew 7 men wth his owne hand, Lieu^t Woorrall, ingageing himself in another worke among 50 of the enemy, bare the fury of all, till Captⁿ Farmer relieved him, who, to the wonder of us all, came off without any dangerous wound.⁴⁴—The sally-port was that day warded by Captⁿ Chisnall, who with fresh men stood ready for succour of ours, had they been putt to the extremity; but they bravely marched round the works, and came in att the great gates, where Captⁿ Ogle wth a p'ty of musketeers kept open the passage. Captⁿ Rawstorne hadd the charge of the musketeers upon the walls, which hee plac'd to the best advantage to vex the enemy in their flight. Captⁿ Foxe, by a collours from the Eagle Tower, gave signall when to march and when to retreate, according to the motions of the enemy, which hee observed at a distance.—In all this service wee had but one man mortally wounded, and wee tooke onely one prisoner, an officer, for intelligence. In former sallyes some prisoners were taken, and by exchange releast, Colonel Ashton and Rigby promising to sett at liberty as many of the king's freinds, then prisoners in Lancaster, Manchester, Preston, and other places proposed by her ladishipp. But most unworthily they broke condic'ons, it suiting well with their religion neither to observe faith with God nor men; and this occasioned a greater slaughter than either her la^{pp} or the captaynes desired, because wee were in no condic'on to keepe prisoners, and knew the co'manders wold never release 'em but upon base or dishonorable terms.”

Though their cannon had been injured in the spiking, yet were they not rendered useless; for the same night they “played a sacre twice,” it is said, “to tell us they had cannon that wold speke tho' our men had endeavoured to steele up all their lippes.”

On the 15th a grenado fell short of the house, in a walk near the chapel tower: some pieces of the shell, two inches thick, flew over the wall, and were gathered up by the attendants. It was a mighty achievement to fire this unwieldy engine, requiring great labour and exertion to fill up its mouth when once it had vomited forth its malice. The day after, they loaded it with stones: to their great joy, Morgan and his bombardiers beheld one of them strike within the body of the house, it being always a matter of some uncertainty where the ball might spend

⁴⁴ Plus animi est inferenti quam periculum propulsanti.—*Cæs. Com.*

itself. Indeed, it was said, in derision it might be, that sometimes their guns occasioned more damage to the besiegers than to the besieged.

Morgan now set to work, keeping as accurately as he might the head of the blatant beast to the same level, and loading it with a grenado. When the gunner had finished his task and lighted the fusee, Morgan rubbed his hands for joy. Retiring sharply, off went the missile with an explosion that shook the whole fabric. When the smoke was gone they perceived some trifling damage in an old court, where the bomb, striking about half-a-yard into the earth, burst as it rose, much abated of its violence; yet it shook down some slight buildings near, but without hurting any one, save two women who had their hands scorched as a memorial of their presence at the siege of Lathom.

This mortar-piece was like some mighty dragon of old, causing great terror in the minds of the soldiers, who knew not how to escape, but were in continual fear and watchfulness, dreading the assaults of this terrible monster. To allay their apprehensions, and to show their own indifference, the captains lodged in the uppermost rooms, behind clay walls, when not upon duty; and many other devices were resorted to for the purpose of encouraging their troops. One circumstance, however, seemed to renew their courage; a gunner opposite, as he was mounting the ramparts to see the success of his shot, was slain by a marksman from one of the towers. The next day one of their cannoneers was slain through the porthole by a skilful hand, which made the enemy more cautious than formerly. Yet did they not slacken their endeavours, but fired almost incessantly. On the Saturday afternoon they played their mortar-piece five times; and in the night twice with stones, and once with a grenado, which by the turning of the gunner fell short of the house.

On Easter Monday and Tuesday Colonel Rigby must needs gratify the country people with some pastime. He had already spent upwards of two thousand pounds, and his great pretensions were hitherto unfulfilled. Accordingly he ordered his batteries to be directed against the Eagle Tower, which, as we have before seen, stood near the centre of the buildings, and was the place where Lady Derby and the children usually lodged.

“We will strike off a horn of the beast, or level one of her hills,” said Rigby, as he strode forth early on that morning to the enterprise.

“Which seven towers be the seven hills of Rome or spiritual Antichrist,” said Jackson, his chaplain, who kept near his master, or rather kept his master between himself and the Babel that roused his indignation. Morgan was just preparing his engines when Rigby approached, cautiously worming his way along the trenches, for the marksmen were become unmercifully expert by reason of continued practice.

The match was lighted,—when bounce went the shot, a four-and-twenty pounder, against the Eagle Tower.

“We will beat the old lady from her perch: I find she hath taken to high-roosting of late,” said Morgan, as he watched the despatch and destination of his messenger.

The ball had entered into her ladyship’s chamber, where she and the children were at breakfast. With as little emotion as Charles the Twelfth on a like occasion, she merely remarked that since they were likely to have disagreeable intruders, she must e’en seek a new lodging.

“But,” said she, rising with great dignity, “I will keep my house while a building is left above my head.”

This mischievous exploit, though an occasion at the time of great triumph and exultation to the besiegers, was the main cause of their subsequent expulsion and defeat.

We now propose to follow out their operations with more minuteness, tracing the consequences of this action to its final result.

That same night some of the garrison, having permission from their commanders, annoyed their enemies with strange and noisome alarms, during which they contrived to steal some powder, and other necessities of which they were much in want.

Colonels Egerton and Rigby were in close counsel before their tent when they beheld a terrible appearance moving towards them,—looking in the dark like the leaders of some mighty army, waving their torches to light them to the assault. This frightful apparition was a poor forlorn horse, studded with lights fastened to cords, that shook and flickered about in so fearful a manner. In this plight he had been turned out of the gates, the garrison looking on, with frightful shouts and yells.

The sentinels ran from their posts, crying out that the king's army was coming. In an instant all was uproar and confusion, the trenches were cleared, and happy was he that came foremost in the rout.

Rigby clasped on his sword-belt which he had doffed for the night. Springing on his horse, he met some of the runaways, whom he forced back, hoping by their means to stem the main torrent. But, lo! in the very height of the panic, appeared another and more direful intruder—an avenue of fire seemed to extend from the walls to their own trench. It appeared as though the enemy had by some unaccountable means formed in a double line from the fortress, illuminated rank and file as if by magic—flinging their torches by one simultaneous and well-concerted movement into the air with great order and regularity.

Had a legion from the puissant army of Beelzebub been approaching, their terror could not have been greater. Yet fear kept many from escaping, while they knew not which way to run for safety. Rigby in the nick of time galloped up to this awful and hostile appearance, crying out to his troops that he would soon demolish the bugbear. This saying encouraged some of the runaways, who followed him to the combat. Approaching within a sword's length, for he was not deficient either in hardihood or valour, he made a furious stroke right in the face of this flaming apparition, when down it fell, revealing its own harmlessness and their cowardice.

Taking advantage of the panic which followed the lighted horse, a few of the garrison had thrown a cord covered with matches and other combustibles round a tree, close to the enemy's camp; one end was fastened near the walls, and the other was quickly carried back after being passed round the tree. The whole on being lighted was swung to and fro, producing the terrific appearance we have described.

Rigby was greatly mortified at this exploit; it seemed as though they were become the jest and laughing-stock of the garrison.

Morgan at this moment galloped up in great dudgeon. The enemy had found him a similar employment, he having twice bravely discharged his cannon, loaded with cartridge and chain-shot, against two lighted matches thrust into balls of clay that were thrown at him from the walls.

The leaders, provoked beyond measure, speedily assembled in council. Egerton, who had the most influence, from the beginning had urged milder measures, thinking to starve the enemy into submission; but Morgan, Rigby, and some others were now red-hot for mischief, smarting from their late ridiculous disaster.

“And what have we gotten by delay?” said Rigby; “we have wearied our soldiers, wasted our powder, and emptied our purses; and this proud dame still beats and baffles us, casting her gibes in our very teeth which we deserve to lose for our pains.”

“Take thine own course, then,” said Egerton, mildly. “We are brethren, serving one cause only; the which, being best served, is best won.”

“Then be to-morrow ours,” said Morgan, with his usual heat and impatience. “We will burn them up like a heap of dry faggots. The house, though well fenced against our shot, hath yet much inward building of wood, and you shall see a pretty bonfire kindled by my bomb-shells—a roaring blaze that shall ride on the welkin between here and Beeston Castle!”

“Whilst thou art plying thy vocation we will scale the walls, and the sword shall slay what the fire hath failed to devour,” said Rigby.

“Fire and sword!” cried Egerton. “Ye are apt at a simile; but, methinks, these be your own similitudes.”

“They give their prisoners no quarter,” said Morgan; “and why should we sheath the sword when a weapon is at our own throat?”

“Why, doubtless they have more mouths to feed than they can conveniently supply,” said the more pacific personage. “Living men, to keep them so, even though prisoners, require feeding.”

“Our vengeance is sure, though tardy,” said Rigby, rising in great choler. “The blood of these martyrs crieth from the ground. To-morrow!” and he breathed a bloody vow, looking fiercely up to heaven in the daring and impious attitude of revenge.

“We had best give her ladyship another summons; which, if she refuse, her blood be upon her own head!” Saying this, Egerton abruptly left the council.

On the next morning, which was cold and drizzly, a “pragmatical” drummer went out from the nearer trench, beating his drum for a parley, lest his person should be dismissed without ceremony to the hungry kites.

Early had he been summoned to Rigby’s lodging, where Ashton and Morgan were contriving a furious epistle to the contumacious defenders of their lives and substance. A summons, couched in no very measured terms, was drawn up, to the purport that the fortress should be surrendered, and all persons, goods, arms, and munitions therein, to the mercy of parliament; and by the next day, before two o’clock, her ladyship to return her answer, otherwise at her peril. Their valour grew hotter with the reading of this cruel message, which they secretly hoped and suspected she would refuse. The drum-major was called in, one Gideon Greatbatch by name—a long, straight-haired, sallow-faced personage, of some note among the brethren for zeal and impiety. By this we mean that awful and profane use of Scripture phraseology with which many of these gifted preachers affected to interlard their everyday discourse, attaching a ludicrous solemnity to matters the most trivial and unimportant.

In delineating this species of character, unfortunately not extinct in our own days, we do not hold it up to ridicule, but to reprehension. Irreverence and profanity, under whatever pretext, are without excuse, even beneath the mask of holy zeal and ardent devotion.

The man stalked in with little ceremony and less manners. He stood stiff and erect, the image of pride engendered by ignorance.

“‘Tis our last,” said Rigby, folding up the message; “and if our arms are blessed, as we have hoped, and, it may be, unworthily deserved, ere the going down of to-morrow’s sun yon strong tower wherein she trusteth shall be as smoke; for the hope of the wicked shall perish.”

“Yea, their idols shall fall down; yea, their walls shall be as Jericho,” said the drum-major, with a sing-song whine, to sanctify his blasphemous allusions, “and shall utterly fall at the sound of”——

“Thy two drumsticks, mayhap,” returned Morgan, sharply; for this latter personage, though his presence became needful in the camp by reason of his reputed skill and bravery, was a great scandal to the real and conscientious professors—of whom not a few had joined the ranks of the besiegers—as well as the hypocritical and designing; some of whom did not hesitate to liken him to Achan and the accursed thing, by reason of which they were discomfited before their enemies.

“Thine ungodly speeches, Master Morgan, I would humbly trust, may not be as the fuel that, when the fire cometh, shall consume the camp, even the righteous with the wicked,” said Gideon, as if shrinking from the contact of so unholy a personage.

Morgan replied not to this deprecation, save by swearing—covertly, though it might be—at the impudence and insubordination of these inferior agents, whose disorderly conduct it was necessary to connive at, while they were looked upon as saints and prophets—men from whose presence was impiously expected the blessing and protection of heaven.

A loud screaming was heard, and Rigby, darting a furious look through the doorway, ordered it to be closed.

“Another porker!” said he. “I verily think she hath provision behind the walls that would last out our siege till doomsday. There is treachery somewhere. Have we not heard, morning by morning, the self-same cry?”

“A whole herd of swine have been martyred in the cause,” said Morgan, sneeringly.

“Every day they have slain a pig,” said the leader of the drums. “Two score and eight,” reckoning upon his fingers. “Verily a drove from the legion.”

They knew not that this unfortunate swine, the only one in the garrison, was made to perform so uncomfortable a duty every morning to mislead the besiegers, and impress them with the idea of a plentiful supply within the walls.

“Even the rabble about the garrison throw shives of bread into our trenches,” said Morgan; “and once or twice I have thought their muskets were loaden with peas instead of pellets.”

“Then is our assault the more urgent,” replied Rigby: “delay doth not increase her strength. Prince Rupert too, some fair morning, may jump between us and head-quarters.”

“I have as many grenadoes,” said Morgan, “as will save his highness the trouble. Were he here, I would make him dance the Flemish *coranto*.”

“The Amalekites shall ye utterly destroy,” said Gideon, with a sudden indrawing of the breath, as though he were suffering the pangs and throes of possession. “Neither shall ye spare the women and the little ones nor the stuff; no, not even a kid for a burnt-offering. Your eye shall not spare as Saul spare Agag, whom Samuel hewed in pieces.”

“Keep thy counsel to light thine own courage. Yon fiery-tempered woman will not be over-nice in her respect to thy vocation. Peradventure she may dangle thy carcase over the walls in defiance of our summons.” Morgan would have rebuked him farther, had not Rigby hastily put the message into his hands, and bade him good speed.

With inward but audible murmurs at this unholy connection, for Morgan valued not their prayers a rush, Gideon strode forth, his eyes twinkling grievously as the drizzling rime came on his face. His long ungainly figure, surmounted by a high-peaked hat, was seen cautiously stealing through the trenches. Near to the embrasure by Morgan's mortar-piece he made a sudden halt. After preparing his drum, he first beat the roll to crave attention. He then stepped upon the redoubt, drumming the usual signal for a parley. It was soon answered from the walls, and Gideon, with much ceremony and importance, arrived with his musical appendage before the gate. The requisite formalities being gone through, the drawbridge was lowered, and this parliamentary representative was speedily admitted through a little wicket into the Babylon which he abhorred. His very feet seemed in danger of defilement. He looked as if breathing the very atmosphere of pollution; but when ordered to kneel down that he might be blindfolded, his spirit rose indignantly at the command.

"Ye be contemnners and despisers of our holy heritage. I have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor will I worship the beast or they that have his name on their foreheads. Do with me as ye list. Ye would cover mine eyes that your iniquities may be hidden;—but ye shall suddenly be destroyed, and none shall deliver."

A loud laugh was the answer to this denunciation; for truly it were a marvellous thing to hear an ignorant, arrogant drummer, misapply and profane the words of Holy Writ, wresting the Scriptures to their destruction, if not his own.

In the outer court soldiers were playing at span-counter with silver moneys, which Gideon observing, again lifted up the voice of warning and rebuke.

"But destruction cometh upon them, even as upon a woman in"——

"Peace, thou spirit of a drum-stick!" cried one of them, and, as though he were playing at chuck-farthing, he threw a tester between his teeth; for the soldiers had about fifty pounds amongst them in silver coin, but it was of no use except as so many counters, which they lent one another by handfuls without telling. Sometimes one soldier had won the whole, then another; but if they had been heaps of the rarest jewels they had been of less worth than pebble-stones.

Gideon's speech was marred in the delivery; thinking he had been hit with a stone, he sputtered out the offending morsel; but, seeing the coin with the king's image and superscription, he gathered it up again.

"This shall be to me for a prey, even a spoil, as Moses spoiled the Egyptians." Saying this Gideon thrust the king's money into his pocket, and consented to be blindfolded, as was customary, in order that he should not act the spy in his progress. He heard many gates unbarred, many sentries challenged, and the pass-words demanded. Indeed the order and discipline throughout was of an excellent and well-contrived regularity.

"Make way for the drum!" ran along the avenues, as though he were passing through a numerous array of guards and soldiery. At length he was safely deposited in a spacious hall used as a guard-room; where his conductors delivered him to Captain Ogle, the officer in waiting that morning upon her ladyship. Being informed she was at prayers, for, as we are told, "her first care was the service of God, which in sermons and solemn prayers she daily saw performed," Gideon lifted up his hands and said—

"Their new moons and their fasts are an abomination." He then desired to be conducted near the fire, for the double purpose of drying his threadbare red coat, and relieving his extreme length by a change of position.

He had not waited long ere the signal was given for an audience. Still blindfolded, he was led by a circuitous route into a little wainscotted chamber lighted by a single bay-window. Here the bandage was taken from his eyes, and when the dimness had a little subsided, he beheld that heroic lady for the first time whom he had often compared, in no very moderate terms, to Jezebel, and many other names equally appropriate. A very different person she appeared from what his heated and morbid fancy had suggested. Indeed, if she had been the personification of all evil, with a demon's foot and a fiend's visage, he had been less surprised than to find her with the outward form and attributes of humanity.

She was sitting with the children, before a narrow table covered with papers. She wore a black habit, with a white kerchief on her head, and a long Flanders veil of rich open work. This she threw back, and Gideon beheld a countenance not at all either commanding or heroic, but one to which smiles and good-nature would have been most congenial, though a shade of anxiety was now thrown over the natural expression of her features. Her eye seemed to have forgotten its bland and benevolent aspect, and was fixed sharply upon him. For a moment his spiritual pride was daunted, and that natural and inherent principle, not extinct though often dormant,—a deference to superiority, whether of intellect or station—rendered him for a while mute and inoffensive. It is even said that he made a sort of half-conscious obeisance; but his mind misgiving him during the offence, which smote him on the sudden as an act of homage and idolatrous veneration, he breathed out a very audible prayer.

"Pardon thy servant in this matter, even if I have bowed in the house of Rimmon." As he said this, he threw himself back, lifting his narrow eyes towards the ceiling; then thrusting out his hand with the despatch at arm's length, he was striding forward, but Ogle intervened ere he had made his way to the Countess.

"With all courtesy, friend," said he, "these communications must proceed from the officer on duty."

With great gallantry and respect the captain presented it to his mistress.

"Eye-service and will-worship!" growled Gideon. "'Tis like your vain and popish idolatry and the like, through the ministry of saints, even to a woman, vain and sinful as yourselves. I would as soon commit my prayers to the angel of the bottomless pit!"

Her ladyship had broken open the seals. Her eye kindled as she spoke—

"Thou hadst thy reward were we to hang thee up at the gate.—Yet art thou but a foolish instrument in the hands of this traitor Rigby; and we do not punish the weapon, but him that wields it."

Now Gideon, finding himself moved by natural heat and choler, and mistaking this wrath for a righteous indignation, thought himself surely called upon to reprove these unrighteous ones for their iniquities. His body fell into the usual disposition for a harangue. His eyes rolled upwards, and his whole frame swung to and fro whilst the exhortation was preparing. To his great mortification, however, the lady quitted the room, leaving word for them to follow her to the hall.

The preacher was greatly chagrined, when his eyes resumed their office, to find himself almost thrust out and on his way back to the guard-chamber. A number of soldiers and domestics were here assembled. Lady Derby, with her chaplain, steward, and captains, ranged on each side, stood at the higher end of the chamber.

Silence was commanded, whilst she read aloud the despatch.

“And this,—and this, my answer!” said she, tearing the paper as she spoke, and throwing the fragments indignantly from her.

“Tell that insolent rebel he shall neither have our persons, our goods, nor yet this house. When our strength and provision be spent, we shall find a fire more merciful than Rigby; and then, if the providence of God prevent it not, my goods and house shall burn in his sight:—myself, children, and soldiers, rather than fall into his hands, will seal our religion and loyalty in the same flame!”

A loud shout burst through the assembly, who, with one general voice, cried out—

“We will die for his Majesty and your honour:—God save the king!”

Gideon’s countenance grew terrible, and he seemed as though suffering under some violent excitement. Lifting up his hand, he was about to thunder forth anathemas and denunciations, the dealing out of which, strange to say, most parties agree in reserving to themselves. Even men whose honesty and single-heartedness we cannot doubt—who have boldly defended our rights and liberties against religious tyranny and intolerance—have still arrogated to themselves exclusively the control of opinions and modes of belief:—wielding the terrors of Heaven where the arm of Omnipotence can alone be felt; their efforts futile and ineffectual, as though a feeble worm were attempting to grasp the quiver,—to launch the bolt and the arrow from the skies.

But Gideon’s purpose was again frustrated: the impious idolaters, refusing to listen, blindfolded him before he was aware.

But his spirit kindled suddenly, and he cried aloud—

“Yet shut your eyes wilfully, and go blindfold to your destruction. To-morrow these walls in which ye trust, this Egypt in whom your soul delighteth, shall be as Sodom. Brimstone and fire shall devour you; and they that flee from it shall not escape!”

Gideon and his threats were, however, speedily thrust out at the gates, and the answer transmitted through him was faithfully reported to the council.

Though this heroic woman was not daunted, yet she saw her soldiers were, at times, dispirited, by reason of the expected succours so long delayed. The mortar-piece, too, which, if it had been well managed, was sufficient to have laid the fortress in ruins, was an object of daily terror and annoyance.

One of the MS. journals states,⁴⁵ “The little ladies had stomach to digest cannon; but the stoutest souldiers had noe hearts for granadoes, and might not they att once free themselves from the continual expectac’on of death?”

Her ladyship was well aware that inactivity is, of all things, the most dangerous and dispiriting to the soldier, who, used to the bustle and array of camps, doth fear nothing so much as a quiet home and winter quarters.

It was needful that something should be done, some decisive blow struck; for, according to the historian, “Chaunges of tymes are the most fitt for brave attempts, and delays they are dangerous, where softnes and quyetnes draweth more danger than hazarding rashly.”

“A hard choice either to kill or be killed;” but such was their case. The Countess therefore proposed that the next morning, a little while after daybreak, they should make a sortie; and

⁴⁵ Harleian MSS. 2043.

though ordnance was planted against every passage, yet that they should sally forth, and stake their all upon one desperate throw.

On the 26th April, about four o'clock, before sunrise, the action commenced. Captain Chisnall and Captain Fox, with Lieutenants Brettargh, Penketh, Walthew, and Woorral, were appointed for the service. Captain Ogle had the main-guard to secure a retreat at the southern gate, while Rawsthorne had the charge of the sally-gate to secure a retreat on the eastern side. Captain Ratcliffe had the command of the marksmen and musketeers on the walls, while Farmer, with the reserve, stood ready at the parade, to relieve any of them in case of necessity. All things being ready, Captain Chisnall and two lieutenants issued out at the eastern sally-port. The morning favoured their attempt, being wet and foggy, so that before he was discovered he got completely under their cannon, marching immediately upon the scouts where the enemy had planted their great gun.

“It cost him a light skirmish to gain the fort; at last hee entered; many slayne, some prisoners, and some escaping. Now by the command of that battery, the retreat being assured, Capt Foxe seconds him wth much bravery, beateing upon their trenches from the easterne to the south-west point, till hee came to the work w^{ch} secur'd the mortar-peece, w^{ch} being guarded wth 50 men, hee found sharpe service, forceing his way through muskett and cannon, and beateing the enemy out of the sconce wth stones, his muskett, by reason of the high worke, being unserviceable. After a quarter of an houres hard service, his men gott the trench and scal'd the rampier, where many of the enemy fledd, the rest were slayne. The sconce, thus won, was made good by a squadron of musketeers, which much annoyed the enemy, attempting to come upp agayne. The 2 maine works thus obtained, the two captaynes wth ease walked the rest of the round, whilst Mr Broome, wth a companye of her la^{pps} servants and some fresh souldiers, had a care to levell the ditch, and by a present devise, with ropes lifting the mortar-peece to a low dragge, by strength of men drew it into the house, Capt. Ogle defending the passage ag^t another companye of the enemye which play'd upon their retreat. The like endeavour was used to gayne theire greate gunnes; but lying beyond the ditch, and being of such bulke and weight, all our strength could not bringe them off before the whole army had fallen upon us; however, our men took tyme to poyson all the cannon round, if anything will doe the feate, Capt. Rawstorne still defending the first passe ag^t some offers of the enemy to come up by the wood.”

It was near the conclusion of this affray, as Mr Broome, the steward, and several of his helpers, were encompassing the great dragon which had so often vomited forth fire and smoke upon them, intending to carry it away captive, that they heard a voice from the breach below:—

“Hold, ye uncircumcised:—I will make your house desolate, and the glory thereof shall be turned into ashes.”

The mortar was ready charged, and they beheld Gideon, with a lighted match, springing towards them. Several of the men drew aside in dismay; but as Providence willed it, he was prevented from his purpose, the light being struck from his hand, and himself tumbled backwards into a deep and muddy ditch, extinguishing both light and life apparently together. But he arose, and would have run a tilt at them in this unsavoury condition, had he not been caught by one of his enemies, who waggishly exclaimed—

“Let us yoke this great Amalekite to the gun. He'll help us well over the ditch.”

This goodly piece of advice was not neglected; and the unhappy Gideon, fastened between two yoke-fellows, was dragged on by main force, the hindmost threatening to shoot him if he made any resistance.

In vain did he cry out for vengeance upon them. His gods were deaf—no miracle was wrought for his deliverance; and though he would have called down fire from heaven upon his adversaries, the thunders he impiously desired died harmless on his own tongue.

We again quote the words of the journal:—

“This action continued an houre, with the loss of two men on our part, who, after they were mortally wounded, still fired upon the enemy, till all retreating. What number of the enemy were slain it is not easy to guesse. Besides the execuc'on done in their trenches, Capt. Farmours and Capt. Rattcliffes reserves, wth the best marksmen, played upon them from the walls with much slaughter, as they quitt their holds. Our men brought in many armes, three drums, and but five prisoners, preserved by Capt. Chisnall to show that he had mercy as well as valour. One of theese was an assistant to their engineere, Browne, who discovered to us the nature of their trench, in which they had laboured two monthes to draw away our water. Their first designe was to drayne and open our springs, not considering their rise from a higher ground south-east from the house, w^{ch} must needs supply our deepe well, where-ever they suncke their fall: this invenc'on faileing, they bringe up an open trench in a worme work, the earth being indented or sawed for the securitie of their myners, and the ditch two yards wide and three deepe for the fall of the water.

“But now neither ditches nor aught els troubled our souldiers, their grand terror, the mortar-peece, which had frighted 'em from their meate and sleepe, like a dead lyon, quietly lying among 'em; everye one had his eye and his foote upon him, shouteing and rejoicing as merrily as they used to doe wth their ale and bagpipes. Indeed ev'y one had this apprehenc'on of the service, that the maine worke was done, and what was yet behind but a meere pastime.

“Her la^{pp} though not often overcarried wth any light expressions of joy, yet religiously sensible of soe great a blessing, and desirous, according to her pious disposition, to returne acknowledgements to the righte authour, God alone, presently commands her chaplaynes to a publike thanksgiving.

“The enemy, thus terrified with this defeate, durst not venture their workes agayne till midnight; towards morneing removeing some of their cannon, and the next night stealeing away all the rest, save one peece for a memorand. This one escapyt nayleing, which the colonells durst not venture on its owne mount, but planted at a distance, for feare of the madmen in the garrison.

“One thing may not heere bee omitted: that day that our men gave Rigby that shameful defeate, had hee destined for the p'secuteing of his utmost cruelty. Hee had invited, as it is now gen'ally confest, all his friends, the holy abettors of this mischief, to come see the house yeilded or burnt, hee having purposed to use his mortar gunne wth fireballs or granadoes all afternoone; but her la^{pp} before two o'clock (his own tyme) gave him a very skurvy satisfying answe'r, soe that his friends came opportunely to comfort him, who was sicke of shame and dishonour, to be routed by a lady and a handfull of men.”

This proved a sore disaster to the besiegers. The soldiers, too, began to cry out for their pay. The long-expected plunder of Lathom had hitherto kept them quiet; but they were now willing to leave this precious booty to the next comers, and content themselves with their stated allowance.

Rigby, fearful of the crumbling away and dispersion of his army, made shift to furnish some small arrears of their pay, declaring that it had cost him £2000 of his own moneys during the siege; but how he got such great store of gold we are not informed, save that “he was once a lawyer, and a bad one!”

Still there were many deserters, escaping even in the open day; not a few of them coming over with valuable intelligence to the garrison.

Wearied with duty, and sorely perplexed, Rigby sent for Col. Holland, from Manchester, to his assistance. Many days now elapsed, during which little happened worth recording on either side. On the 23d May, Captain Moseley brought another message to her ladyship, desiring, in terms of great courtesy and respect, that she would grant him an interview. He was received with great ceremony; for she abated not a whit of the dignity belonging to her high birth and station.

“Captain Moseley,” said she, having read the summons, commanding her that she should yield up the house, together with the ammunition, arms, goods, servants, children, and her own person too—submitting to the mercy of parliament, “you are, I understand, an honourable man and a soldier.”

He bowed with great humility.

“I would not receive this from any other. But”—and her lip curled proudly as she spoke. “Here seems a slight mistake in the wording of your message. They should rather have written *cruelty* and not *mercy*!”

“Nay, my lady,” he replied, “the mercy of parliament. Trust me, you will not be evil entreated at their hands.”

“The *mercies* of the wicked are *cruel*,” said she, quickly, but with great composure. “Not that I mean,” she continued, “a wicked parliament, of which body I have an honourable and reverend esteem, but wicked agents and factors, such as Moore and Rigby, who for the advantage of their own interests labour to turn kingdoms into blood and ruin. Besides, ‘tis dangerous treating when the sword is given into the enemies’ hand.”

“Most assuredly, madam, as our tractates on the art of war teach us,—which it seems you have not studied in vain,” said Moseley, bowing with an air of great deference and gallantry. “Your ladyship is commander-in-chief, we hear.”

“My lord being absent. I am left in trust, and cannot listen to treaties without his permission.”

“Not to dishonourable overtures, assuredly. But if we agree to your own conditions,—quitting the house in the way it shall seem best to your ladyship, as was once the basis of your own propositions, I believe, it cannot in this case be a reproach or a breach of trust, but will prevent much damage, and be the saving of many lives.”

“I will not treat without my lord’s commands, Captain Moseley, and I have listened to you longer than is expedient. It is unjust to myself, and these brave defenders, that I appear in any way doubtful of their ability and courage. For their sakes, and for my own, I must end this parley.”

The officer bowed low at this peremptory dismissal, wishing her ladyship’s resolutions were less firm or her means more ample.

“I can but deliver your reply. Yet”—He hesitated awhile. “There be fierce and bloody men about the camp, who would lay down their own lives to compass your destruction. It is not in our power to restrain them.”

“One of these flaming zealots is already extinguished: we have him safe under cover,” said her ladyship, smiling; “in our own custody, I trow. He threatened us with all the plagues of Egypt and that of his own tongue to boot,—the worst that ere visited the garrison. One morning, an earthquake would devour us; another, we were to be visited with the destruction

of Sodom. Some of our men once looked out for the coming tempest, and buffeted him well for their disappointment. He seems either malignant or insane; but in charity, of which Christian exercise he seems utterly ignorant, we suppose the latter. We have therefore made his feet fast in the stocks, from whence, I hear, he pronounces his anathemas as confidently as though he were armed with the power and thunders of the Vatican!"

"May I crave the name of this doughty personage?—We have but too many of them amongst us."

"Verily, 'tis your drum, by whose hands I have had a message heretofore. The chances of war have again brought him hither,—but now a prisoner!"

"Gideon Greatbatch?"

"The same. We have heard him, with many blasphemous allusions, liken himself unto that great one among the judges of Israel,—and truly he seems more fitted to wield the sword than the drum-stick!"

"Your ladyship would perhaps indulge me with an interview. It might comfort him to see one from the camp."

"Provided that no sinister design or advantage be lurking under this request. Yet am I speaking, I would fain hope, to a gentleman and a soldier."

Moseley was conducted down a dark flight of steps, damp and slippery. The ooze and slime rendered his footing tedious and insecure. Soon he recognised the mighty voice of Gideon bellowing forth a triumphant psalm. Another stave was just commencing as the door opened, and the torch glared lurid and dismally on the iron features and grisly aspect of the captive. A pair of rude stocks, through which Gideon's long extremities protruded, stood in the middle of the dungeon. He scowled terrifically at the intruders; but suddenly resumed his exercise.

"Still at thy devotions?" said Moseley; but the moody fanatic vouchsafed not to reply.

"We must wait the finishing of this duty, I fear," said the captain, knowing that interruption would be useless. Silently they awaited the conclusion, when Gideon abruptly cried out—

"Captain Moseley, are ye, too, cast into this den of lions?"

"I came hither on an embassy, and I have craved this visit ere I depart."

"Hast furnished my breakfast?" inquired this stalwart knight from the enchanted wood. "I think your garrison be short of victual, or my"—

"Hold thy tongue, thou piece of ill-contrived impertinence," said the gaoler. "We have victual and drink too; but for such as thou art, it were an ill-bestowed morsel. I marvel what can have possessed my lady to keep thee alive!"

The gaoler drew out from his provision bag a small dark-coloured loaf, which he threw at the hungry captive, who, to say the truth, had been half-starved since his imprisonment.

Gideon was devouring it greedily without any further notice, when he suddenly cried out to his keeper—

"Where gat ye this coarse stuff? I would not say good-morrow to my dog with so crusty a meal."

"It was tossed over the wall," replied the gaoler. "Our friends oft supply us that way with provision, captain. I picked it up as I came, and thought it was too good for thy dainty appetite."

“Captain Moseley,” said the hungry drummer, with great earnestness, “take this. Break it before thy brethren, and show them how vilely these Egyptian task-masters do entreat us in the house of bondage.”

There was something more than usually impressive in his manner. Moseley took the loaf as requested; and the gaoler, as if the object before him were beneath suspicion, exclaimed with a knowing look—

“Had I not brought the manchet myself, and watched thee narrowly, I should have guessed thou hadst crammed some secret message therein to the camp. But I defy thee, or any of thy batch, to cheat old Gabriel, the rogue’s butler!”

“Prithee, search,” said Captain Moseley, drawing the loaf from his pocket; “thou mayest, peradventure, find treachery in a toothmark, for o’ my troth they be legibly written.”

“Nay,” said Gabriel, with great self-importance, “the knave’s jaws will score no ciphers. I had as lief interpret pot-hooks and ladles.”

The captain again thrusting it beneath his belt, promised to show his commanders with what coarse fare and severity the prisoners were treated.

“Wilt thou that I intercede for thee before the Countess?” he continued; “if so be that she would remit thee of this durance.”

In a voice of thunder spake the incorrigible Gideon—

“Intercede!—I would as lief pray to the saints they should intercede with the Virgin Mary. I will rot from this perch piecemeal ere I pray to yonder ungodly woman. Yet shall I escape out of their hands, but not by mine own might, or mine own strength,” said the lion-hearted captive.

Leaving this indomitable Roundhead to his fate, Moseley returned to the camp, reporting the ill success of his mission.

Great part of the day was spent in angry discussion, so that Moseley had nigh forgotten his message from Gideon; yet he remembered it ere he left the council. Pulling out a coarse bannock, to the great astonishment of his auditory, he brake it, relating his interview with the captive. Near to where the prisoner had taken his last mouthful, Moseley found a bit of crumpled paper. The surprise and dismay of the assembly may be conceived after he had read the following billet:—

“MY DEAREST HEART,—

“With much joy and comfort I send thee news that his Highness Prince Rupert hath gotten a great victory over the rebels at Newark; and I have besought his Majesty that he should march into Lancashire. By two days, at farthest, these enemies who now beleaguer my house shall be cut off. We purpose to come upon them suddenly, so that they shall be taken in their own snare. I have raised £3000 on the jewels conveyed to me from Lathom by the last sally, which sum I purpose giving in largess to the soldiers, that it may quicken them to thy help. My prayers and blessing for thee and the children.—Thine,

“DERBY.”

This secret intelligence had missed its destination. The gaoler had unfortunately picked it up from where some friendly hand had thrown it, reserving the curious envelope for Gideon’s breakfast, not aware of the important message it contained. But the prisoner, more wary than his keeper, when he felt the paper between his teeth, rightly judged that it was some

communication of importance to his enemies, and craftily conveyed it, as we have seen, into the hands of Captain Moseley.

No mean act of heroism for a starving man to wrench the food from his own jaws,—a deed we might in vain look for amongst the patriots of our own day,—persons who would sneer at the fanaticism, and, it may be, the sincerity of Gideon Greatbatch.

Consternation was visible throughout the assembly. They had all along flattered themselves with the expectation that Prince Rupert's army was too urgently required for the relief of York, to have caused them any disturbance; and, with inward curses on the king for his humanity, secret preparations were made for raising the siege.

Though ignorant of the cause, the garrison soon espied an unusual bustle in the camp. They were evidently preparing for some exploit. One of the spies brought intelligence that two squadrons had departed in the night, and that Colonels Moore and Ashton were on their return to Manchester.

On Monday morning, the 27th of May, it was agreed that Captains Ogle and Rawsthorne should make a sally. But they found the enemy had been beforehand with them, leaving the camp in the utmost terror and disorder. Intelligence now arrived that Prince Rupert had entered Lancashire by way of Stockport, where the Parliament army, under Colonels Duckenfield, Mainwaring, Buckley, and others, had suffered a total route. The besiegers had commenced their retreat between twelve and one o'clock the preceding night.

Thus ended the first siege of Lathom, after the place had been closely beset four months; during which time the garrison lost but six men,—four in the service, and two by negligence and over-daring.

They were, in general, supplied with provisions, her ladyship seeing the men's rations duly served. Yet were they not seldom pushed to a sally for their dinner; their friends outside, by lights and other appointed signals, directing the foragers in their operations.

The enemy shot 107 cannon-balls, 32 stones, and but four grenadoes. By their own confession near 100 barrels of gunpowder were spent, part of which was in supplies to the garrison, who often replenished their stock at the expense of the besiegers. They lost about 500 men, besides wounded and prisoners, according to their own returns.

The next day Rigby, with about 3000 men, drew up at Eccleston Green, six miles only from Lathom, in great uncertainty which way to march, fearful of meeting with Prince Rupert. In the end, imagining that his Highness would go through Blackburn or Lancaster to the relief of York, Rigby marched off in great haste to Bolton, then a garrison town, and well fortified.

The Prince, hearing of their escape, together with Lord Derby, immediately turned their forces in this direction, determined to carry the place by assault, and revenge the insults and barbarity her ladyship had endured. This resolution was terribly accomplished. Sixteen hundred of her besiegers lay dead on the place; and twenty-two colours, which three days before flourished proudly before the house, were presented to her from his Highness by Sir Richard Crane, as a memorial of her deliverance, and "a happy remembrance of God's mercy and goodness to her and her family."

XVII. Raven Castle

“He bargained with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children young,
And slay them in a wood.

“Away then went these pretty babes,
Rejoycing at that tide,
Rejoycing with a merry minde,
They should on cock-horse ride.”

—*The Children in the Wood.*

Situated amid the wild and high moorlands, at whose feet hath stood for ages the royal and ducal capital of the county palatine of Lancaster, once rose a strong border defence called Raven Castle. Its site only remains. This noble and castellated fortress now lies an almost undistinguishable heap on the barren moor; the sheep browse above it, and the herdsman makes his pillow where warriors and dames once met in chivalric pomp, and the chieftain held his feudal and barbaric court.

The point on which it stood is nearly on the line of separation between the counties of York and Lancaster. From the southern declivity of the hill on the Yorkshire side springs one of the rills which fall into the Hodder, a well-known stream, held in great respect by those ambulatory gentlemen whose love of society and amusing recreations leads them to lay in a stock of patience for life in the pursuit of piscatory delights.

This mountainous tract forms part of the forest of Bowland, once ranged by numerous herds of deer, and is still under the jurisdiction of a master-forester, or bow-bearer, called *Parker*, which office has been held for centuries by a family of that name.

It was in the broad and still moonlight of a spring morning, in the year 16—, that two horsemen were ascending by a steep and difficult pass through the Trough of Bolland, along the hills and almost pathless wilds of the forest. They were apparently of that dubious class called “Knights of the Post,”—highway-men, deer-stealers, or cattle-harriers; all and every of which occupations they occasionally followed.

As they passed by the edge of a steep ravine, from which hung a few stunted oaks projecting over the gulf, the foremost rider—for the path admitted them not abreast—turned sharply round on his saddle.

“Again!—Didst thou not see it, Michael?” inquired he, in great alarm.

“Nothing, Anthony, as I do follow thee in this honest trade;—nothing, I tell thee, save thine ugly face in this clear moonshine. Prythee, make more speed, and thou wilt have the fewer wry mouths to answer for. Thou art fool enough to make a man forswear honesty, and rid him of his conscience for life. Beshrew me! thou hast got a troublesome tenant; either less roguery, or fewer qualms; depend on ‘t, thou canst not keep friends with both.”

“I’ll go no farther. Old Hildebrand finds some foul business on his hands, that he would fain thrust into our fingers. A bad business quits best at the beginning; if once we get to the middle, we might as well go on, or we may be like old Dick, who swam half-way through the mill-pond, and then, being faint-hearted, swam back again.”

“Look thee now, thou art a precious ass:—thou wouldst be a wit without brains, and a rogue, ay, a very wicked and unconditional rogue, without courage. Tut, that same cowardly rogue, of all unparalleled villains, is verily the worst. Your liquorish cat, skulking and scared with a windle-straw, is always the biggest thief, and has the cruellest paws, for all her demure looks and her plausible condescensions.”

“I don’t care for thy jeers, Michael.”

“What!—hast brought thy purpose to an anchor already? ‘Tis well. I shall on to Raven Castle with all speed, if it were only to inform one Hildebrand Wentworth of this sudden qualm. Likewise I may, peradventure, remember to tell him of another little qualm thou wast taken with, once upon a time, at the sight of a score of his fat beeves; a little bit of choice roguery played off upon him by honest Anthony of the tender conscience! Look to it, comrade, he shall know of this before thou canst convey thy cowardly carcass out of his clutches. An’ it be thou goest forward—mum!—backward! Ha! have I caught thee, my pretty bird?”

At the conclusion of this speech, with the malice of a fiend urging on his hesitating victim to the commission of some loathed act of folly and of crime, the speaker lashed on his companion’s beast, and they were soon past the steepest part of the ascent, on their way to Raven Castle. Its present occupier, whom, it appears, they had befriended beforetime, in the way of their several callings, had sent for them in haste, requiring their aid, it might seem, in some business relative to their profession.

For an hour or two they travelled on as fast as the nature of their track would permit. Day was just brightening in the east, when, emerging from a more than usually intricate path, they pushed through a thick archway of boughs. Suddenly a bare knoll presented itself, sloping towards a narrow rivulet; beyond, a dark and well-fortified mansion stood before them,—here and there, a turret-shaped chamber, lifting its mural crown above the rest, rose clear and erect against a glowing sky, now rapidly displacing the grey hues of the morning. The narrow battlements rose up, sharp and distinct, but black as their own grim recesses, in solemn contrast with the bright and rolling masses from behind, breaking into all the gorgeous tints that betoken a heavy and lurid atmosphere.

They crossed a narrow bridge, and the clattering of their horses’ hoofs were soon heard in the courtyard of the castle.

“So, masters, if it had not pleased your betters to have built hostels and roosting-places on the road, I might have been snug in my blanket some hours ago may be.”

The personage who thus accosted them was dressed in a plain leathern cap and doublet, with a pair of stout hose that would not have disgraced a burgher of the first magnitude; his short and frizzled beard was curiously twirled and pointed, we may suppose after the fashion of those regions; and his manner and appearance was that of some confidential menial belonging to the establishment. His whole demeanour had in it an air of impertinent authority; his little sharp eyes twinkled in all the plenitude of power, and peered in the faces of the travellers as they alighted to render him an unwilling salutation.

“We have made the best of our road, Master Geoffery, since we left our quarters in Netherdale. But, in troth, it’s a weary way, and a drouthy one into the bargain: I have not wet even the tip of this poor beast’s nose since we started.”

“Go to; an’ the beasts be cared for, thine own muzzle may take its chance of a swill. Willy, see to the horses. Now for business. Master has been waiting for you these three hours: make what excuse you may. Heigh-ho! my old skull will leak out my brains soon with these upsittings.”

Taking a small lamp from a recess, he commanded the strangers to follow. A wide staircase led to the gallery, from whence a number of low doors communicated with the chambers or dormitories. Entering a passage from an obscure corner, they ascended a winding stair. The huge and terrific spars of the intruders struck with a shrill clank on the narrow steps, mingled with the grumblings of Master Geoffery Hardpiece; a continual muttering was heard from the latter, by way of running accompaniment to the directions which, ever and anon, he found it needful to set forth.

“There—an ass, a very ass!—keep thy face from the wall, I tell thee, and lift up thy great leathern hoofs.”

Then came another series of murmurings, mingled with confused and rambling sentences.

“This stair is like old Giles’s horn, it’s long a-winding. Now,—thy spurs, is it? Aroynt thee, knave, thou art like to frighten the children with their clattering. They are up, and ready for their trip. Alice will stitch a pillow to your pummels, and they’ll ride bravely, the pretty dears. Stop there, I tell ye; I’ll just say that you wait his pleasure, and return.”

Old Hardpiece tapped gently at a small door; it was opened hastily; and a few moments only elapsed ere Master Geoffery’s cunning face was cautiously extended out of the narrow opening. He beckoned to his companions, and at once ushered them into a low chamber. A lamp, half extinguished, stood on the floor; the walls were nearly bare, and streaked in various colours by the moisture filtering from the roof; a curiously-carved oak-table, and two or three stone benches comprised the furniture of the apartment; a few rusty swords, with two large pistols nearly falling from their holsters, hung from the wall. In one corner, reposing in decayed dignity, were seen some halberds, with several unmatched pairs of mildewed boots; near to the window, or rather loop-hole, heaped up in dust and disorder, lay a score or two of rusty helmets, their grim appurtenances mostly broken and disjointed.

Pacing to and fro in this audience-chamber appeared a figure of about the middle size, attired in a loose open garment. His head was nearly bald; a few thin locks only hung from the lower part of his poll; and yet his age was not so far advanced as the scanty covering of his forehead might seem to intimate. He paused not as they entered; but during the greater part of the succeeding interview persevered in the same restless and abrupt gait, as though repose were anguish, and it was only by a continued change of position that he could soothe the rising perturbation of his spirit.

“Is this your haste, when my commands are most urgent?”

He turned sharply upon them as he spoke: his eyes grew wild and keen; but at times a heaviness and languor, as if from long watching, seemed to oppress them.

“We could not”—Michael was stammering out an apology, when thus interrupted:—

“Enough! I know what thou wouldst say. Let thy comrade remain below. Geoffery, conduct him to the refectory; Michael abides here. Haste, and let refreshments be prepared.”

What was the purport of the conversation that ensued may be surmised from the following history.

Old Hardpiece, grumbling the greater part of the way, led his companion through a labyrinth of stairs and passages to a small room, where a huge flagon of ale, with cold beef and other substantial articles for breakfast, were about being displayed. Anthony, nothing loth, threw aside his cap, and unbraced his girdle, for the more capacious disposal of such savoury and delicious viands. A heavy pull at the tankard again brought out Master Geoffery’s deep-mouthed oratory. Anthony’s tongue grew more nimble as his appetite waxed less vigorous;

he asked many questions about the business which required their presence at Raven Castle in such haste.

“The orphan children of Sir Henry Fairfax are to be conveyed to some place of concealment for a short period. Master says he has had intimation of a design on the part of the late Sir Henry’s friends to seize them perforce. Which act of violence Hildebrand Wentworth, being left as their sole guardian, will make all haste to prevent.”

“The children of the late Sir Harry Fairfax who was killed in the wars?” inquired Anthony.

“Ay, ay. Poor things! since their mother drowned herself”——

Old Hardpiece here looked round, as though fearing some intrusion. He continued in an undertone——

“Goody Shelton says she walks in the forest; and that her wraith so frightened Humphrey’s horse that it would not budge a straw’s breadth, just beside the great oak in the Broad Holm, before you get into the forest on the other side towards Slaidburn.”

Anthony was, at this precise moment, cramming the last visible remains of a goose-pie into the same place where he had before deposited half the good things on the table, anointing his beard with their savoury outskirts,—when suddenly his chin dropped, his face assumed a sort of neutral tinge, and his whole form appeared to grow stiff with terror. He made several efforts to speak; but the following words only could be distinguished:—

“I was sure it would be a ghost!”

“What!—a ghost!—Where!” anxiously inquired Geoffery.

“Just by the great oak in the Broad Holm, on the other side of the forest.”

“What was it like?”

“I cannot tell; and Michael pretended he did not see it!”

“Thou canst surely show the appearance it put on.”

“Something, as it might be, like unto a woman, crossed our path twice, and within a stone’s throw. O Master Geoffery, we be dead men!”

Another groan here interrupted their discourse. Master Hardpiece muttered some unintelligible prayers, putting on a face of great solemnity. Several minutes elapsed, while the following exclamations rapidly succeeded each other:—

“A ghost!—save us!—a very ghost! I’ll not to Slaidburn again without help. Another draught, Anthony; a stiffener to thy courage, mayhap. It’s now daylight, though,” said he, looking through the casement, “and most of us fear only what may be felt, in the day-time at any rate.”

Anthony took the cup, and, apparently without being aware, drank off the contents. He was much invigorated by the draught which seemed to invest him with new courage; partly from the recollection that a long daylight would intervene between the beginning and the end of his journey, and partly because of the sudden rush of spirits to his brain. He arose, and assuming a posture more erect, planted his cap in a becoming attitude, whilst Geoffery was putting aside the empty vessels into a sort of large wooden chalice, for the purpose of a more convenient removal.

Light footsteps were now heard bounding along the passage, and the door was suddenly burst open by two rosy-cheeked children; the elder a boy of some four or five years’ growth, and his sister scarcely a twelvemonth younger.

“Master Geoffery, Master Geoffery,” lisped one laughing urchin, “hide me; there is Alice—she’ll not let me go. We are to ride on two great horses; and I shall have a sword, and sister Julia a coach.”

Here nurse Alice made her appearance. She had been weeping; tears and entreaties were vain. She asked permission to accompany them; but with a frown Hildebrand Wentworth had chidden her from his presence. Since the loss of her mother, and almost from the time that news had arrived of their father’s death, which happened a little while before the birth of Julia, she had borne a mother’s part to her little charge; and had it been allowed her, she would gladly have served them without reward.

Fearful of leaving them, she had followed hastily into the room. With a searching glance she eyed the stranger for a while; then suddenly turning to the children, she addressed them with great seriousness and affection.

“Harry, you have not repeated your prayer this morning. Do you think God will take care of you to-day, if you ask Him not?”

Here the rebuked boy grew silent; and with a suffused face, ran to his nurse. Whilst in her lap, he poured out his morning orison. It was a simple but affecting request. Julia knelt also; and Alice, laying a hand on each, blessed the children.

“God of their fathers, I commit them to Thy care!”

She could say no more; loud sobs checked her utterance; but leaning over these little ones, she convulsively clasped them in her embrace.

Old Hardpiece grew unusually busy about matters of no importance, and the hard-featured trooper was seen to brush his brows, as though some unpleasant suspicions had crossed his brain. He raised his arm as he gazed on the children, muttering as he clenched his hand—

“If he dare!”—He then carelessly examined his sword, returning it quickly into its sheath, as the weeping Alice drew away the children to her own apartment. Old Geoffery now grew more talkative. Leaning his chin upon his hand, and his elbow on the table, he thus proceeded:—

“It’s four long years come St Barnabas since Sir Harry’s death; and my lady, rest her soul! went melancholy soon after. Everything was bequeathed in trust to my master, Hildebrand Wentworth, a great friend of Sir Harry’s, and his secretary or purse-bearer, I forget which—no matter—all the property, I say, was left in trust for Sir Harry’s wife and children. Hildebrand brought a will from Sir Harry to this effect, and poor Lady Fairfax never looked up afterwards. She moped about, and would see nobody, and then it was they said she was out of her wits. It was not long before her head-gear and mantle were found by the river-side just below the old bridge you crossed—but her body never.”

Here the entrance of Michael cut short the old man’s discourse.

“Belike thou hast not lacked a cup of warm sack, and a whey-posset with my master in the west turret,” scoffingly cried Master Geoffery. Michael looked surly as he replied—

“Old Gabergeon, let us have a draught of thy best, a stirrup-cup. Breakfast I have settled with above stairs.”

“Marry take your swill, Mr Saucypate,” tartly replied Geoffery. “And so, because you have eaten and drunk with my master, it is ‘old Gabergeon;’ else had it been good Master Hardpiece, or ‘if you will, Master Geoffery!’ Out upon such carrion, say I, that think themselves live meat when they are but fly-blown.”

“Old Geoffery,” said Michael, coolly, “we’ll settle our rank at a more convenient opportunity. Just now I’ll thank thee for the flagon.”

“It’s in the cupboard,” growled Hardpiece. “Verily these arms would tingle. But I am old, and that same Michael but a sorry brute—no beating would mend him. An ass of most vicious propensities; he will bite forwards and kick backwards. Friends get the benefit of his teeth, and foes the favour of his heels.”

Thus did the old man console himself for the rudeness he could not restrain. It was not long ere a summons hurried them to the courtyard. They found their beasts equipped and ready to depart; Harry and Julia looking joyously on, vastly diverted with the horses’ accoutrements. Hildebrand stood by the gateway, looking moody and anxious for their departure; Alice, full of sorrow, attended with some refreshments which were stowed into the wallet. The journey was but short, and an hour’s ride that fine morning, Michael said, would bring them to their destination. Hildebrand forbade him to mention the place where he wished to conceal the children, lest it should be known to their iniquitous relatives. Each horseman, with a child mounted before him, slowly passed the outer court, at the entrance of which Alice disappeared. The iron tramp of the steeds rang shrilly from underneath the arched gateway; Hildebrand stood by the platform; he bade them good speed. Anthony passed first; Michael checked his horse for a moment, when Hildebrand took the hand of the boy, and pressed it; but one portentous look, as at the recognition of some sinister purpose, passed between Michael and the old man, unobserved by his colleague. Hildebrand raised his hand above his mouth, and slowly whispered—

“Remember!—the gulf underneath the waterfall.”

The horsemen departed. Passing the bridge they were just rising over the green slope when the children recognised Alice upon her mistress’s palfrey. They screamed out loudly to her; but she was riding in a contrary direction, and soon passed out of their sight.

The narrow glades of the forest suddenly encompassed them. The morning was pretty far advanced; the merry birds twittered in their dun covert, brushing the dewdrops from the boughs with their restless wings. The thrush and blackbird poured forth a more melancholy note; whilst the timid rabbit, scared from his morning’s meal, rushed by and sought his burrow. The wood grew thicker, and the sunbeams that shot previously in broad slopes across their path soon became as lines of intensely-chequered light piercing the grim shadows beneath. The trees, too, put on a more sombre character; and the sward appeared choked with rank and noxious weeds. It seemed a path rarely trod, and only to be recognised by occasional openings through the underwood.

They travelled for some hours. Michael had taken the lead, and Anthony with his prattling charge rode carelessly on. Looking round, the latter suddenly checked his horse. A momentary alarm overspread his features as he cried—

“Michael, you have surely mistaken the path: an hour’s ride should have brought us to the end of our journey, and our beasts have been footing it on since morning.”

“Heed not, comrade; thou wilt soon find we have the right track before us. We shall be through the wood presently.”

“Why, this is the road to Ingleton, if I mistake not; I hear the roar of the Greta.”

“Right—we shall be on our road to the old castle shortly.”

They travelled on more silently than before, until the brawling of the torrent they had heard for some time increased with rapid intensity. The road now widening, Anthony spurred on his

beast by the side of his companion, who slackened his pace to afford an opportunity for further parley.

“Whither are we bound?” inquired Anthony.

“Where the children will be well cared for.”

A dubious expression of countenance, which Anthony but too well understood, accompanied these words; and villain was expressed by indications too unequivocal to be easily mistaken through every change and inflection of his visage. Anthony, though not of the most unsullied reputation, and probably habituated to crimes at which humanity might shudder, pressed the little victim closer to his breast. The prattle of the babe had won his heart: and the morning scene with Alice had softened his spirit so that he could have wept when he thought of the remorseless nature of his comrade, to whose care the children were entrusted.

The roar of the torrent grew louder. Suddenly they entered upon a sort of irregular amphitheatre—woods rising above each other to the very summit of the hills by which they were surrounded. A swollen waterfall was visible, below which a bare and flattened trunk, whose boughs had apparently been but just lopped, was thrown across the torrent. A ruined keep or donjon was seen above a line of dark firs, crowning the summit of a steep crag that rose abruptly from the river.

“This is our halfway-house,” said Michael, pointing to the grim fortress: “the children are tired, and have need of refreshment. Tarry here with the horses whilst I carry them over the bridge.”

“We have refreshments in the wallet—what need we to loiter yonder?” replied Anthony, eyeing the other with an expression of distrust.

“The children want rest,” said Michael, “and we shall there find shelter from the heat.”

“If rest be needful,” was the reply, “surely this dry sward and these overhanging leaves will afford both rest and shelter.”

“The children are in my keeping,” said Michael, fiercely, “and I am not to account with thee for my proceedings. Alight, and give me the child.”

“I will not!—Michael, I have watched thee, and I know that thou art a villain. Ay, draw, I have weapons too, comrade.”

Fast and furious grew the combat, during which the terrified children made the woods echo with their shrieks. The result was not long doubtful. Michael soon proved himself the better swordsman; and his antagonist, stumbling from fatigue, broke his own weapon in the fall. Defenceless and exposed, the uplifted sword of his adversary was raised for his destruction, when suddenly the arm of the ruffian was arrested, the weapon snatched from his grasp, and a female figure habited in a dark and coarse vestment stood between the combatants. Her brow was bare, and her dark full eye beamed on them with a look of pity and of anger. Her naturally pale cheek was flushed; but it betrayed not the agitation she endured. Erect and unbending she stood before them, and the quailing miscreant crouched at her feet.

“Away to thy master!—thy blood, too worthless even for thine own steel”——

She hurled away the weapon as she spoke.

Burning with revenge at his late defeat, Anthony flew after the falling brand: seizing it, he renewed the attack. Michael fled towards the bridge. With the bound of a bereaved tiger Anthony sprung upon his prey. Just where the root of the trunk rested on the bank they closed, after a desperate lunge parried by the unprotected arm of Michael. It was disabled—

but he still clung to his enemy. Anthony strove to disengage himself; but the other, aware that life or death depended on the issue of that struggle, hung on him with a convulsive tightness that rendered the advantage he had gained of no avail. The sword was useless. Anthony threw it into the boiling gulf at his feet. Both hands being now free, whilst one arm of his opponent hung powerless and bleeding at his side, he had greatly the advantage. He wrenched the other arm of Michael from its hold, lifted him from his narrow footing-place, and with a malignant shout of triumph shook him over the abyss. One startling plunge, and the wretch sank in the rolling waters. An agonising yell, and but one, escaped him, as he hung quivering over that yawning portal to eternity; the next cry was choked by the seethe of the boiling foam. The waves whirled him round for a moment like some huge leviathan tossing its prey. He sank into its gorge, and the insatiate gulf swallowed him up for ever. Anthony drew back. He turned from the horrid scene, with some yet lingering tokens of compunction, in the expectation of rejoining his companions; but in vain—the babes and his deliverer had disappeared!

Hildebrand Wentworth had passed the remainder of that day in his own chamber. It was a dark lone room, leading out of the turret we have before described. Often had he ascended the narrow stair communicating with the parapet, and often had he watched the dark woods beneath the distant mountain. It was the road taken by his guilty emissaries; and, whether on the look-out for signals or for their return, he repeated his visits until the blue mists were gathering on the horizon, and day—another day!—had passed into the bosom of eternity. It was an hour of holiness and peace, but heavy and disturbed was the current of his thoughts. He sat near a projecting angle of the turret, his head bent over the parapet. A female voice was heard beneath, chanting monotonously a low and melancholy psalm. Soon the following words were distinguished:—

“Dark as the bounding waters
When storm clouds o’er them roll,
The face of Zion’s daughters
Reveals the troubled soul.”

Hildebrand drew his breath, as if labouring under some violent emotion. His whole frame was agitated. His lip grew pale as she went on with a voice of exultation—

“But joy is sown in sadness,
And hope with anxious fears;
Yon clouds shall break in gladness.
And doubts dissolve in tears.”

Fiends increase their torments at the sight of heaven! Hildebrand threw back his cloak,—with one clenched hand he struck his forehead, and with a loud groan he rushed from the spot. He sought rest in the gloom and solitude of his chamber; but hours passed on, during which the conscience-stricken culprit endured the horrors of accumulated guilt. Sometimes he opened the casement, gazing on the dark heavens, until he thought they were peopled, and he held converse with unseen and terrible things. Inarticulate murmurs broke from his lips. A few words might occasionally be distinguished—“Murder!—An old man too—The children—they are at rest!” A gleam of pleasure passed over his haggard features.

“I am now”—looking round—“now master of all.”

“All?” breathed a low voice in the chamber.

The cringing wretch was speechless. Sense almost forsook him: horror fastened on his spirit, while he turned his eyes, as if by some resistless constraint, towards the place from whence the voice had issued. Near his couch was a curiously-wrought cabinet inlaid with ivory and

gems of the most costly workmanship. An heir-loom of the house, it was highly valued, and tradition reports that it was one of those spoils on which our forefathers cast a longing glance in the wars of the Holy Sepulchre. Be this as it may, every document of value connected with the family was here deposited. By virtue of the power given to him from the dying Sir Henry, though ostensibly for the benefit of his lady and her infant offspring, Hildebrand guarded the trust with a jealous eye. No one had access to it but himself, nor did he permit any other person than old Geoffery, the house-steward, to visit his chamber.

Before this cabinet stood a figure enveloped in a dark robe. Pale, deadly pale, were the features, though scarcely discernible in their form and outline. The lamp burnt dimly; but with the quickened apprehension of guilt he recognised the wan resemblance of Lady Fairfax!

A cry of exhausted anguish escaped him, and he fell senseless on the floor.

Morning had risen, casting its bright and cheerful rays into the chamber, ere Hildebrand Wentworth awoke. Consciousness but slowly returned, and the events of the preceding hours came like shadows upon his soul. He stamped thrice, and immediately the vapid countenance of Geoffery Hardpiece was before him.

“Come hither, Hardpiece. I am wondrous heavy and ill at ease.”

“Why, master, your bed has not been disturbed these two nights.—How should there be anything but an aching head, and complaining bones, when”——

Hildebrand cast a hasty and confused glance towards the couch as he replied—

“I have matters of moment just now that weigh heavily on my spirit. I cannot”——

Here was a short pause; he continued, with a slow and tremulous accent—

“I hope the children are safe.”

“Why, master,” said Geoffery, “you have sent them out of harm’s way, I hope; but—I know not what ails me—an uneasy night of it I have had about them.”

“What hast thou seen?” eagerly demanded Hildebrand.

“Seen! I have seen nothing, but I have been haunted at all quarters by a vast crowd of vexatious busy dreams—about cut-throats and murderers.”

“Who says murderer?—I will have thee in the stocks.”

Hildebrand attempted to lay hold on him as he spoke; but, accustomed to these outbreaks of temper, Master Hardpiece merely stepped on one side, still maintaining his usual forward and self-sufficient demeanour.

“Mr Hildebrand Wentworth, when an old servant”——

“Peace!” interrupted his master,—“I am chafed beyond endurance.” He struck his forehead violently, but suddenly recollecting himself, he seized Geoffery by the arm.

“What sawest thou last night, knave?”

“Only dreams, master—but”——

“Say on—what makes thee hesitate?”

“A messenger arrived last night.”

“A messenger!—from whence?” eagerly demanded Hildebrand.

“Unluckily,” said Geoffery, “it was shortly after you had retired for the night; I durst not then trouble you with the message. Marry, it’s not the sort of news one likes to be in a hurry to tell.”

“Go on, varlet.”

“Why,” continued the provoking simpleton, looking as if he had to reveal unpleasant tidings, and drawing back as he spoke, “the bearer is in the train of some herald or pursuivant, come from o’er sea to our court, about exchange of prisoners and the like. This man has a message from Sir Henry Fairfax.”

“He lies! I’ll have his tongue bored!” furiously cried Hildebrand.

“Nay, but listen: he says Sir Henry, whom we all thought dead, is now alive, and a prisoner in some ugly old German fortress.”

During this recital the astonished Hildebrand clenched his hands, with a look of awful and impotent rage. Hardpiece continued—

“This coxcomb says he was sent specially by Sir Henry to obtain from you some papers of great moment, which will ensure his immediate release. He bears Sir Henry’s signet, and the knave hath no lack of assurance.”

“Has this fellow had any communication with the menials, Geoffery?—or hast thou done me the service to keep him and his message to thyself?” anxiously inquired Hildebrand.

“Why, as touching that, Alice, somehow or other,—for these women are always looking to anybody’s business but their own,—wormed out his message in part, before I was aware of her drift.”

“Alice!—Again has that viper crossed my path?—Bid the messenger attend.”

When Geoffery returned he was followed by a short, muscular-looking personage, attired in a foreign garb. A military cloak, and slouched hat, garnished with a broad band and feather, gave him altogether an air of importance which his bare exterior had not sustained. On entering he made a slight obeisance. Hildebrand watched his bearing, as if he would have searched him to the heart’s core. Not in the least disconcerted, the soldier threw himself on a seat. Preliminaries were waived by this uncereemonious guest, who, speaking evidently in a foreign accent, began the interrogatory as follows:—

“You were the private secretary of Sir Henry Fairfax?”

“I was,” briefly replied Hildebrand.

“Know you this signet?”

“I do,” again he sullenly answered.

“It was given into my keeping,” said the stranger, “as a token whereby Hildebrand Wentworth should, in the due exercise of his fealty and trust, commit to my charge certain documents that shall immediately be set forth. But first, and briefly, it may be needful to relate the manner in which Sir Henry recovered after your departure. On the day following the skirmish, wherein Sir Henry was supposed to be mortally wounded, he gave unto you, as his most valued and bosom friend, those solemn credentials, by which, as a dying man, he invested you with full powers to proceed to England, as the sole guardian and protector of his beloved wife and their infant offspring. The goods and effects of which he died the possessor were vested in your name, I believe, in trust for her benefit and the surviving children. I think I am right in this? In case of her death, though, I believe the property became yours.”

“It did.”

“Such was the nature of the wound that his physicians believed a few hours only could intervene before his dissolution. He urged your immediate departure. Shortly afterwards the whole camp equipage, together with the sick and wounded, fell into the hands of his enemies. Driven off to a considerable distance up the Rhine at full speed, and without any other comforts or necessities than what his captors could supply, his wounds bleeding afresh, and every limb racked with pain, to the astonishment of all he speedily recovered; and from that time he has remained a close prisoner in the fortress. Not receiving any tidings from his native shores, he knows not his loss. Yesternight only I heard of Lady Fairfax’s most lamentable decease. In a cartel lately arrived for negotiating an exchange of prisoners, Sir Henry sends by me, secretly, as one of the envoys, a requisition for the papers I have before mentioned. His name, by some mistake, perhaps, not being included in the lists for exchange, has induced him so to act. The credentials, which he will thus be enabled through me to present, will doubtless accomplish his release, and restore him to his family and to his home. They are papers of great moment, and will set forth claims which cannot be overlooked; and I have most minute and special instructions to get them laid before the council.”

“Where are these precious documents deposited?” said Hildebrand.

“An Eastern cabinet of choice and costly workmanship, containing other records of great value, stands in Sir Henry’s private chamber.” The envoy looked round, and his eyes rested on the cabinet. “The outer doors being opened, there are seen two ranges of drawers, with their separate mountings and compartments, each containing materials of greater or less moment. Sir Henry was minute in his directions, lest his lady might be bsent; and the innermost secrets of this goodly tabernacle not being known, save to themselves, the object of my visit might be retarded. With the permission of Hildebrand Wentworth, I will describe minutely where he may find this deposit.”

Hildebrand slightly moved his head, and the speaker continued—

“From Sir Henry’s description, and the tracings which he drew on the floor of his cell, I should conceive that this room contains the object of our search. I will recount the memoranda that I made, lest memory should be unfaithful. When the third cover is unclosed, in the lowest part of the recess on the right hand, beneath a sliding panel, is a spring, on touching which the whole flies back, and discovers a rare device, beautifully wrought in arabesque relief. So far, in all likelihood, you being his confidential secretary, have beheld?”

“I have seen this cunning work thou speakest of. What more?”

“Embellishing the four corners thereof is the likeness of a hand, curiously chased in silver; the second joint on the third finger of the lowest of them, on the left, being pressed, the whole picture, by marvellous sleight and artifice, riseth up, revealing the treasure of which I am in search.”

“Hath Sir Henry sent no written message, that we may know his will in this matter?” inquired Hildebrand.

“It is strictly forbidden to a prisoner,” replied the other, “to use tablets; but my knowledge of the secret is a sufficient safeguard against imposture.”

“Retire: I will begin the search with all speed. But hold thyself in readiness for immediate departure. Thou wilt not have the worse thrift for a hasty dismissal.”

The stranger withdrew, accompanied by Hardpiece. Hildebrand listened to their retreating footsteps; when, like unto one possessed, he stamped, and tore his thin grey locks, and cursed—audibly and bitterly cursed—his destiny.

“Hast thou escaped?—when the draught danced and bubbled over my parched lips. Fate—fortune, whatever thou art, I would curse thee!”

As he spoke, he lifted up one clenched hand towards heaven, laden with imprecation. And why did not that power, whose vengeance he visibly defied, launch a bolt against the impious?—Why not render him, in that very act, a monument of just and righteous retribution?—“*Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?*” is a master-key that unlocks the mysteries and ministrations of Divine Providence, however complicated in their nature and obscure in their design.

As the hoary sinner withdrew his hand, suddenly the muscles of his face relaxed; a ray of hope had irradiated his spirit—a gleam of delight passed over his pale features. He grew calm, and with a firm step he strode across the apartment. He approached the cabinet.

“Thou shalt not escape me now!”—As he said this, he threw open the doors. Hildebrand had often searched this depository, but the place of concealment pointed out by the stranger had hitherto escaped his notice. He soon detected the stratagem—the lid flew back; but the papers of which he was in search were gone!

The spirit of mischief was again foiled, but his evil genius did not forsake him. He sat down, and, for purposes of the blackest malignity, forged a series of evidences—a development of plans and proceedings that would at once have branded Sir Henry as a coward and a traitor. These letters he sealed up, and calling for the messenger, committed the packet into his hands.

“You have Sir Henry’s orders to lay these before the king?” said Hildebrand.

“I have,” replied the envoy.

“Then hasten to court, and so good speed. Stay—when you meet Sir Henry Fairfax, offer him an old man’s sympathy and condolence. Break the matter to him tenderly—and when he returns—I say no more. Away, thy mission hath need of despatch.”

The soldier made a slight inclination of the head as he departed.

Hildebrand Wentworth sat down to reap the fruits of his villany—a harvest of his own planting. The full fruition of it he now seemed ready to enjoy; but days and weeks passed by, and still found him feverish and anxious. The fate of the children—whether the work of destruction had or had not been accomplished—was still to him a matter of uncertainty. He had often sent in search of the ruffians, but they had not been seen at their usual haunts. Guilt whispered that all was not complete. Restless and oppressed by undefined and terrible apprehensions, he resolved to end his doubts, and, if possible, procure an interview. He expected to obtain some clue to their proceedings by a visit to the tower.

It was not far from the close of a bright summer’s day when he gained the rude bridge below the waterfall. He shuddered as he looked on the narrow trunk and the ever-tossing gulf beneath. The blackness of darkness was upon his spirit, and he ran as if some demon had pursued him, climbing with almost breathless haste the steep and winding staircase that gave access from the bridge to the ruined fortress above.

From the platform a narrow ledge of rock led to the ditch, now dry, and nearly filled with fragments from the ruins. He passed the tottering arch of the portcullis;—long weeds choked up the entrance, waving drearily as the light breeze went over them. Hildebrand heard not the

moan of the coming blast. Evening approached, and the thousand shadows haunted him,—grim spectres that crossed his path, crowding upon him with anger and menace. From a ruined doorway he ascended a narrow stair, and had penetrated far into the interior of that part of the castle which, in some measure, remained entire, when, for the first time, he seemed startled into a consciousness of his situation. It was an appalling scene of solitude and decay. The realities, to which he almost instantaneously awoke, might have awed a less guilty spirit than that which inhabited the bosom of Hildebrand Wentworth. A long gallery, supported by huge pillars, terminated in the distance by a long and narrow oriel. On each side, broken but richly-variegated windows threw down a many-tinted light, which, oppressed by the dark and caverned arches, gave a strange and mysterious character to the grotesque reflections hovering on the floor. Narrow streams of light flitted across the dense vapours, visible only in their gleam. Involuntarily did Hildebrand pass on: impelled as if by some unseen but resistless power, he durst not retrace his footsteps. His tread was slow and fearful, as he traversed the long and dreary vista. Every sense was now in full exercise;—his faculties becoming more acute by the extremity of terror he endured. His ear caught the slightest sound—his eye, the least motion that glimmered across his path. Sometimes a terrific shape seemed to glide past: he brushed the cold and clammy damps from his brow, and it vanished.

Suddenly a door opened at the extremity of the gallery, and a faint light streamed from the crevice. Voices—children’s voices—were heard in the chamber. He rushed onward. Rage, frantic and uncontrolled, possessed him, as he beheld the babes, the intended victims of his avarice, in all the bloom of health and innocence, unconscious of danger, bounding through the apartment, together with their nurse and protector, Alice! Goaded by his insatiate tormentor, he drew a poniard from his vest, and rushed on the unoffending objects of his hate. Alice shrieked; she attempted to throw herself between them and their foe, but was too far off to accomplish her purpose. His arm was too sure, and his stroke too sudden. But ere the steel could pierce his victims it was arrested. He looked round, and a female figure, loosely enveloped in a dark cloak, had rescued them from death. It was the same form that had before interposed between them and the fangs of their remorseless enemy. Loosened by the sudden spring, her garment flew aside. Hildebrand gazed silently, but with a look of horror, too wild and intense to be portrayed. He seemed to recognise the intruder—his lips moved rapidly while he spoke.

“Thee!—whom the waves had swallowed! Have the waters given up their dead?”—he faintly exclaimed, almost gasping for utterance.

“Monster! canst thou look upon this form,” she cried, “and not wither at the sight? But I have done,” she meekly continued: “Heaven hath yet a blessing for the innocent;—but thy cup of iniquity is full. Thy doom is at hand. I have trusted Thee, O my Father; and I trust Thee still!”

It was the much injured and persecuted wife of Sir Henry Fairfax who now stood before the abashed miscreant.

“Away!” she cried; “to Heaven I leave my vengeance and thy crime. Hence—to thy home! Thine, did I say? Soon, monster, shall thou be chased from thy lair, and the wronged victim regain his right.”

Hildebrand, awed and confounded, retraced his path, brooding over some more cunning stratagem to ensure his prey. He had passed the bridge, and, on attempting to remount his steed, his attention was directed to a cloud of dust, and a pale flash of arms in the evening light. Two horsemen drew nigh—their steeds studded with gouts of foam, and in an instant

one of them alighted before the traitor. It was Sir Henry Fairfax! "Have I caught thee?" cried the knight.—"What mischief art thou here a-perpetrating?—Seize that villain!"

In a moment, Hildebrand was denied all chance of escape.

"Thy machinations are defeated—thy villanies revealed, and vengeance demands a hasty recompense."

Hildebrand prostrated himself on the ground in the most abject humiliation, and besought mercy.

"I will not harm thee, wretch," exclaimed the gallant knight: "to a higher power I leave the work of retribution. The ministers of justice await thee at my castle. I came hither first to seek my wife!—Lead the way; thou shalt be witness to our meeting—wife, children, all. Our bliss will to thee be misery that the most refined tortures could not inflict. On—on."

Hildebrand, with imbecile agony, grasped at the very stones for succour. He then rushed towards the bridge, and, ere his purpose could be anticipated, with one wild yell, precipitated himself into the waters!

A few lines will suffice by way of explanation to this unlooked-for termination of their sufferings.

When Lady Fairfax fled from the castle, in order to elude his search,—for Hildebrand had the audacity to threaten by force to make her his wife,—she threw off her cloak and head-dress, laying them on the river's brink that it might appear as though she had accomplished her own destruction. To the care of the faithful Alice she had committed her children, and likewise the secret of her concealment. Alice was in continual correspondence with her unfortunate mistress; and great was the joy and exultation with which she communicated the arrival of a messenger from her lord, whom she had long mourned as dead. Providentially, no interview took place between Hildebrand and the stranger on the night of his arrival; and sufficient time intervened to enable Lady Fairfax to make a desperate attempt, in the hope of gaining possession of the papers for which he had been sent. She well knew Hildebrand would not relinquish the possession of credentials that might ensure his lord's return. It was Lady Fairfax who had alarmed him the same night by her appearance in his chamber. She hoped to have found him asleep; but was enabled to get possession of the writings through his timidity and surprise. With these she met the envoy, as he was returning from the castle. Disclosing all the tortuous and daring villany of Hildebrand, she committed the real documents to his care, instructing him at the same time to lay before her sovereign the narrative of her wrongs. Soon was the captivity of Sir Henry terminated; and joy, heightened by recollection of the past, and chastened by the severity of their misfortunes, attended them through the remainder of their earthly career.

XVIII. The Phantom Voice

“He heerde a sunde but noughte he zee.
No touche upon his fleshe ther came;
Bot a swedderin witide smote heavilee,
And heavilee brenn’d the fleckerin’ flame.”

—*Old Ballad.*

The following tradition, like some of the preceding legends, has been found, under various modifications and disguises, connected with local scenery, and attaching itself in the mind of the hearer to well-known places and situations with which he may have been familiar.

Southport, a bathing-place of great resort on the Lancashire coast, has been pointed out as the scene of the following tragedy, which probably occurred long before its salubrity and convenience for sea-bathing had rendered this barren tract of sand the site of a populous and thriving hamlet. From the mildness and congeniality of the air to persons of weak and relaxed habits, it has been not inaptly termed, “The Montpelier of England.”

“But the coast is probably as dangerous for shipping as any round the kingdom. The sandbanks extend in a north-westerly direction for at least six miles, so as to render the navigation extremely difficult even to the natives, and impracticable for strangers. Hence shipwrecks are very frequent;” and “in a coming tide, accompanied by a strong westerly wind, it is almost impossible for boats to put off or to live in the sea.”

“It not unfrequently happens that these accidents occur in the night-time, in very hazy weather, or at ebb tide. In the latter case it is necessary for boats to be taken in carts over the sands down to low-water mark, before any assistance can be attempted.

“If the captain of the vessel be obstinate, and trust to his own skill, he increases the danger. When the crews of the vessels take to their own boats, and disobey the directions of the Southport pilots, their jeopardy is tenfold greater, and their loss almost inevitable.”⁴⁶

Nearly one hundred vessels have been wrecked on this coast within the last thirty years, and more than half of them totally lost. Of these calamities the particulars are upon record. Which of them may have given rise to the events here detailed we have no means of ascertaining.

It was at the close of a bright and memorable evening in October that I had carelessly flung the reins upon the neck of my horse, as I traversed the bare and almost interminable sands skirting the Lancashire coast.

On my right a succession of low sand-hills, drifted by the partial and unsteady blasts, skirted the horizon—their summits strongly marked upon the red and lowering sky in an undulating and scarcely-broken outline. Behind them I heard the vast and busy waters rolling on, like the voice of the coming tempest. Here and there some rude and solitary hut rose above the red hillocks, bare and unprotected: no object of known dimensions being near by which its true magnitude might be estimated, the eye seemed to exaggerate its form upon the mind in almost gigantic proportions. As twilight drew on, the deception increased; and, starting occasionally from the influence of some lacerating thought, I beheld, perchance, some huge-and turreted fortress, or a pile of misshapen battlements, rising beyond the hills like the grim castles of romance, or the air-built shadows of fairy-land.... Night was fast closing; I was

⁴⁶ Glazebrook’s Southport.

alone, out of the beaten track, amidst a desert and thinly-inhabited region; a perfect stranger, I had only the superior sagacity of my steed to look to for safety and eventual extrication from this perilous labyrinth.

The way, if such it might be called, threading the mazes through a chain of low hills, and consisting only of a loose and ever-shifting bed of dry sand, grew every moment more and more perplexed. Had it been daylight, there appeared no object by which to direct my course,—no mark that might distinguish whether or not my path was in a right line or a circle: I seemed to be rambling through a succession of amphitheatres formed by the sand-hills, every one so closely resembling its neighbour that I could not recognise any decided features on which to found that distinction of ideas which philosophers term individuality. In almost any other mood of the mind this would have been a puzzling and disagreeable dilemma; but at that moment it appeared of the least possible consequence to me where the dark labyrinth might terminate.

Striving to escape from thought, from recollection, the wild and cheerless monotony of my path seemed to convey a desperate stillness to the mind, to quench in some measure the fiery outburst of my spirit. It was but a deceitful, calm—the deadening lull of spent anguish: I awoke to a keener sense of misery, from which there was no escape.

But it was not to lament over my own griefs that I commenced my story. Let the dust of oblivion cover them; I would not pain another by the recital. There are sorrows—short ages of agony—into the dark origin of which none would dare to pry: one heart alone feels, hides, and nourishes them for ever!

Night now came on, heavy and dark; not a star twinkled above me; I seemed to have left the habitations of men. In whatever direction I turned not a light was visible; all fellowship with my kind had vanished. No sound broke the unvarying stillness but the heavy plunge of my horse's feet and the hollow moan of the sea. Gradually I began to rouse from my stupor: awaking, as from a dream, my senses grew rapidly conscious of the perils by which I was surrounded. I knew not but some hideous gulf awaited me, or the yawning sea, towards which I fancied my course tended, was destined to terminate this adventure. It was chiefly, however, a feeling of loneliness, a dread, unaccountable in its nature, that seemed to haunt me. There was nothing so very uncommon or marvellous in my situation; yet the horror I endured is unutterable. The demon of fear seemed to possess my frame, and benumbed every faculty. I saw, or thought I saw, shapes hideous and indistinct rising before me, but so rapidly that I could not trace their form ere they vanished. I felt convinced it was the mind that was perturbed, acting outwardly upon the senses, rendered more than usually irritable by the alarm and excitation they had undergone—yet I could not shake off the spell. I heard a sharp rustling past my ear; I involuntarily raised my hand; but nothing met my touch save the damp and chilly hair about my temples. I tried to rally myself out of these apprehensions, but in vain: reason has little chance of succeeding when fear has gained the ascendancy. I durst not quicken my pace lest I should meet with some obstruction; judging it most prudent to allow my steed to grope out his path in the way best suited to his own sagacity. Suddenly he made a dead halt. No effort or persuasion could induce him to stir. I was the more surprised from knowing his generally docile and manageable temper. He seemed immovable, and, moreover, as I thought, in the attitude of listening. I too listened eagerly—intensely; my senses sharpened to the keenest perception of sound.

The moan of the sea came on incessantly as before; no other sound could be distinguished. Again I tried to urge him forward; but the attempt was fruitless. I now fancied that there might be some dangerous gulf or precipice just at his feet, and that the faithful animal was unwilling to plunge himself and his rider into immediate destruction. I dismounted, and with

the bridal at arm's length, carefully stepped forward a few paces, but I could find no intimation of danger; the same deep and level bed of sand seemed to continue onwards, without any shelving or declivity whatever. Was the animal possessed? He still refused to proceed, but the cause remained inscrutable. A sharp and hasty snort, with a snuffing of the wind in the direction of the sea, now pointed out the quarter towards which his attention was excited. His terror seemed to increase, and with it my own. I knew not what to anticipate. He evidently began to tremble, and again I listened. Fancy plays strange freaks, or I could have imagined there was something audible through the heavy booming of the sea—a more distinct, and as it were, articulate sound—though manifestly at a considerable distance. There was nothing unusual in this—perhaps the voice of the fisherman hauling out his boat, or of some mariner heaving the anchor. But why such terror betrayed by the irrational brute, and apparently proceeding from this source? for it was manifest that some connection existed between the impulses of the sound now undulating on the wind, and the alarm of my steed. The cause of all this apprehension soon grew more unequivocal—it was evidently approaching. From the sea there seemed to come, at short intervals, a low and lengthened shout, like the voice of one crying out for help or succour. Presently the sounds assumed a more distinct and definite articulation. “Murder!—Murder!” were the only words that were uttered, but in a tone and with an expression of agony I shall never forget. It was not like anything akin to humanity, but an unearthly, and, if I may so express it, a sepulchral shriek—like a voice from the grave.

I crept closer to my steed: nature, recoiling from contact with the approaching phantom, prompted me thus intuitively to cling to anything that had life. I felt a temporary relief, even from the presence of the terrified beast, though I could distinctly perceive him shuddering, yet fixed to the spot. The voice now came on rapidly; it was but a few paces distant. I felt as though I was the sport and prey of thoughts too horrible for utterance. Alone, I had to cope with the Evil One;—or I was already, perhaps, the victim of some diabolical agency. The yell was close upon my ear; I felt the clammy breath of the grave across my face, and the sound swept by. It slowly arose;—but the agony of the cry was more intense,—more sharp and vehement the shriek of “Murder!” Grown bolder, or perhaps more desperate, I cried out, “Where, in the name of——?” I had scarcely uttered the words when a loud rushing cleft the air, and a crash followed, as though some heavy body had fallen at my feet. The horse burst from its bonds, galloping from me at full speed, and I stood alone! In this appalling extremity, I approached the object of my fears. I bent to the ground; stretching out my hand, my fingers rested on the cold and clammy features of a corpse! I well remember the deep groan that burst from my lips;—nature had reached the extremity of endurance—I felt a sudden rush of blood to the heart, and fell beside my ghastly companion, equally helpless and insensible.

I have no means of ascertaining the duration of this swoon; but, with returning recollection, I again put out my hand, which rested on the cold and almost naked carcase beside me. I felt roused by the touch, and started on my feet—the moon at this instant emerging from a mass of dark clouds, streamed full on the dead body, pale and blood-stained, the features distorted, as if by some terrible death. Fear now prompted me to fly: I ran as if the wind had lent me wings—not daring to look back, lest my eyes should again rest on the grisly form I had just left. I fled onwards for some time; the moon now enabling me to follow the beaten track, which, to my great joy, brought me suddenly, at the turn of a high bank, within sight of a cheerful fire gleaming through a narrow door, seemingly the entrance to some wayside tavern. Bursts of hilarity broke from the interior; the voice of revelry and mirth came upon my ear, as though I was just awakening from a dream. It was as if I had heard the dead laugh in their cold ceremonies. As I stepped across the threshold, the boisterous roar of mirth made

me shudder; and it seemed, by the alarm visible in the countenances of the guests, that my appearance presented something as terrible to their apprehensions. Every eye was fixed on me as I seated myself by a vacant table; and I heard whisperings, with suspicious glances occasionally directed towards the place where I sat. The company, however, soon began to get the better of their consternation, and were evidently not pleased at so unseasonable an interruption to their mirth. I found that some explanation was necessary as to the cause of my intrusion, and with difficulty made them comprehend the nature of my alarm. I craved their assistance for the removal of the body; promising, if possible, to conduct them to the spot where the miserable victim was thrown. They stared at each other during this terrible announcement; and, at the conclusion, I found every one giving his neighbour credit for the requisite portion of courage, though himself, at the same time, declining to participate in the hazards of the undertaking.

“Roger towed me ‘at he stood i’ th’ churchyard, wi’ shoon-bottoms uppermost, looking for the wench he wur to wed through the windows. Ise sure he’ll make noa bauk at a bogle.”

“Luk thee, Jim, I canna face the dead; but I wunna show my back to a live fist, the best and the biggest o’ the country-side—Wilt’ smell, my lad?”

Roger, mortified at this test of his courage, raised his clenched hand in a half-threatening attitude. A serious quarrel might have ensued, had not a sudden stop been put to the proceedings of the belligerents by an interesting girl stepping before me, modestly inquiring where I had left the corpse; and offering herself as a companion, if these mighty cowards could not muster sufficient courage.

“Shame on thee, Will!” she cried, directing her speech to a young man who sat concealed by the shadow of the projecting chimney;—”shame on thee, I say, to be o’erfaced by two or three hard words. I’s gangin’,—follow ‘at dare.”

Saying this, she took down a huge horn lantern, somewhat dilapidated in the outworks, and burnt in various devices, causing a most unprofitable privation of light. A bonnet and cloak, hastily thrown on, completed her costume; and, surrendering the creaking lantern to my care, she stood for a moment contemplating the dingy atmosphere before she stepped forth to depart. During these ominous preparations, a smart sailor-looking man, whose fear of his mistress’ displeasure had probably overcome his dread of the supernatural, placed himself between me and the maiden, and taking her by the arm, crustily told me that if I could point out the way, he was prepared to follow;—rather a puzzling matter for a stranger, who scarcely knew whether his way lay right or left from the very threshold. Thus admirably qualified for a guide, I agreed to make the attempt, being determined to spare no pains, in the hope of discovering the object of our search.

Company breeds courage. Several of the guests, finding how matters stood, and that the encounter was not likely to be made single-handed, volunteered their attendance; so that our retinue was shortly augmented to some half-dozen stout fellows. The vanguard was composed of myself and the lovers; the rest crept close in our rear, forming their rank as broad as the nature of the ground would admit.

Luckily I soon found the jutting bank round which I had turned on my first view of the house we had just left. We proceeded in silence,—except that a whisper occasionally arose from one of the rearmost individuals talking to his bolder neighbour in front, when finding his own courage on the wane. Following for some time what appeared to be the traces of recent footsteps, I hoped, yet almost feared, that every moment I might stumble on the bleeding corpse. An attendant in the rear now gave the alarm,—something he saw moving on our left causing him to make a desperate struggle to get before his companions. This produced a

universal uproar—each fighting for precedency, and thoroughly determined not to be the last. I soon beheld a dark object moving near, and the next minute I was overjoyed to find my recreant steed, quietly searching amongst the tufted moss and sea-reed for a scanty supper. My associates knew not what to make of this discovery. Some of them, I believe, eyed him with deep suspicion; and more than one glance was given at his hoofs to see if they were not cloven.

Order, however, being re-established, we again set forward with what proved a useful auxiliary to our train. We had not travelled far ere I was again aware of the peculiar snort by which he manifested his alarm; and it was with difficulty I got him onwards a few paces, when he stood still, his head drawn back, as if from some object that lay in his path. I knew the cause of his terror, and, giving the bridle to one of my attendants, cautiously proceeded, followed by the maiden and her lover; who, to do him justice, showed a tolerable share of courage—at any rate, in the presence of his mistress. At length I recognised the spot, where, yet unmoved, lay the bleeding carcase. The girl started when she beheld the grim features, horribly drawn together and convulsed, as if in the last agony. I was obliged to muster the requisite fortitude to attempt its removal; and raising it from the sand, with a little assistance I placed it across the horse, though not without a most determined opposition on the part of the animal. Throwing a cloak over the body, we made the best of our way back; and on arriving at the house I found that the only vacant apartment where I could deposit my charge was a narrow loft over the out-house, the entrance to which was both steep and dangerous. With the assistance of my two friends, though with considerable difficulty, it was in the end deposited there, upon a miserable pallet of straw, over which we threw a tattered blanket. On returning, I found the guest-room deserted: the old woman to whom the tavern belonged—the mother, as I afterwards found, of my female companion—was hastily clearing away the drinking utensils, and preparing for an immediate removal to the only apartment above-stairs which bore the honours of the bedchamber. She kindly offered me the use of it for the night; but this sacrifice of comfort I could not allow; and throwing my cloak over a narrow bench, I drew it near the fire, determining to snatch a brief interval of rest, without robbing the good woman and her daughter of their night's repose.

It was now past midnight; sleep was out of the question, as I lay ruminating on the mysterious events of the few past hours. The extraordinary manner in which the murdered wretch had been committed to my care seemed an imperative call upon me to attempt the discovery of some foul and horrible crime. With the returning day I resolved to begin my inquiries, and I vowed to compass sea and land ere I gave up the pursuit. So absorbed was I in the project, that I scarcely noticed the storm, now bursting forth in a continuous roll from the sea, until one wild gust, that seemed to rush by as if it would have swept the dwelling from its seat, put an end to these anticipations. I watched the rattling casement, expecting every moment that it would give way, and the groaning thatch be rent from its hold. Involuntarily I arose and approached the window. It was pitchy dark, and the roar of the sea, under the terrific sweep of the tempest, was truly awful. Never had I heard so terrible a conflict. I knew not how soon I might be compelled to quit this unstable shelter; the very earth shook; and every moment I expected the frail tenement would be levelled to its foundations. The eddying and unequal pressure of the wind heaped a huge sand-drift against the walls, which probably screened them from the full force of the blast, acting at the same time as a support to their feeble consistency; sand and earthy matter were driven about and tossed against the casement, insomuch that I almost anticipated a living inhumation. The next gust, however, generally swept off the greater portion of the deposit, making way for a fresh torrent, that poured upon the quaking roof like the rush of a heavy sea over a ship's bulwarks.

I was not destined to be left companionless in the midst of my alarms. The old woman and her daughter, too much terrified to remain quiet, came down from their resting-place, which, being close within the thatch, was most exposed to the tempest. A light was struck, and the dying embers once more kindled into a blaze. The old woman, whom I could not but observe with emotions of awe and curiosity, sat cowering over the flame, her withered hands half-covering her furrowed and haggard cheeks; a starting gleam occasionally lighted up her grey and wasted locks, which, matted in wild elf-knots, hung about her temples. Occasionally she would turn her head as the wind came hurrying on, and the loud rush of the blast went past the dwelling. She seemed to gaze upon it as though 'twere peopled, and she beheld the "sightless coursers of the air" careering on the storm; then, with a mutter and a groan, she again covered her face, rocking to and fro to the chant of some wild and unintelligible ditty. Her daughter sat nearly motionless, hearkening eagerly during the short intervals between the gusts; and as the wind came bellowing on, she huddled closer into the chimney-corner, whither she had crept for protection.

"Such nights are not often known in these parts," said I, taking advantage, as I spoke, of a pause in the warfare without. The old woman made no answer; but the daughter, bending forwards, replied slowly and with great solemnity:—"Mother has seen the death-lights dancing upo' the black scud: some ha' seen the sun sink down upon the waters that winna see him rise again fro' the hill-top."

"Is your mother a seer, then, my pretty maiden?"

"Ye're but a stranger, I guess, if you know not Bridget o' the Sandy Holm—Save us! she's hearkening again for the"——

"There!—Once!" The old woman raised her hands as she spoke, and bent her head in an attitude of listening and eager expectation. I listened too, but could discover no sound, save the heavy swing of the blast, and its receding growl."

"Again!" As she said this, Bridget rose from the low stool she had occupied, and hobbled towards the window. I thought a signal-gun was just then audible, as from some vessel in distress. Ere I could communicate this intelligence, another and a nearer roll silenced all conjecture. It was indeed but too evident that a vessel was in the offing, and rapidly driving towards the shore, from the increasing distinctness of the signals.

Old Bridget stood by the window; her dim and anxious eyes peering through the casement as if she could discern the fearful and appalling spectacle upon the dark billows.

"Your last!—your last, poor wretches!" she cried, when a heavy gust brought another report with amazing distinctness to the ear. "And now the death shriek!—another and another!—ye drop into the deep waters, and the gulf is not gorged with its prey. Bridget Rimmer, girl and woman, has ne'er watched the blue dancers but she has heard the sea-gun follow, and seen the red sand decked with the spoil. Wench, take not of the prey: 'tis accursed!"

The beldame drew back after uttering this anathema, and again resumed her station near the hearth.

The storm now seemed to abate, and as if satisfied with the mischief at this moment consummating, the wind grew comparatively calm. The gusts came by fitfully, like the closing sobs of some fretful and peevish babe, not altogether ceasing with the indulgence of its wishes. As I stood absorbed in a reverie, the nature of which I cannot now accurately determine, the maiden gently touched my arm.

"Sir, will ye walk to the shore? I'se warrant the neighbours are helping, and we may save a life though we canna gie it."

She was wrapped in a thick cloak, the hood thrown forward, and the horn lantern again put in requisition, fitted up for immediate service. We opened the door with considerable difficulty, and waded slowly through the heavy sand-drifts towards the beach. The clouds, shattered and driven together in mountainous heaps, were rolling along the sky, a dark scud sweeping over their huge tops, here and there partially illuminated by the moonbeams: the moon was still obscured, but a wild and faint light, usually seen after the breaking up of a storm, just served to show the outline of objects not too remote from our sphere of vision.

My companion soon brought me to an opening in the hills which led directly down to the beach. Immediately I saw lights before us moving to and fro, and the busy hum of voices came upon the wind; forms were indistinctly seen hurrying backward and forward upon the very verge of the white foam boiling from the huge billows. Hastening to the spot, we found a number of fishermen—their wives assisting in the scrutiny—carefully examining the fragments of wreck which the waves were from time to time casting up, and throwing with a heavy lunge upon the shore. Either for purposes of plunder, or for the more ostensible design of contributing to their preservation, sundry packages were occasionally conveyed away, subsequently to an eager examination of their contents. My associate ran into the thickest of the group, anxiously inquiring as to the fate of the crew, and if any lives had been preserved.

“I guess,” cried an old hard-featured sinner, “they be where they’ll need no lookin’ after. Last brast o’ wind, six weeks ago next St Barnaby, I gied my cabin to the lady and her children—an’ the pains I waur like to ha’ for my labour—I didn’t touch a groat till the parson gied me a guinea out o’ th’ ‘scription;—but I may trot gaily hoam to-night. There’s no live lumber to stow i’ my loft; the fishes ha’ the pick o’ the whole cargo this bout.”

“Canna we get the boats?—I can pull an oar thou knows, Darby, wi’ the best on ‘em,” inquired the female.

“Boats!” exclaimed Darby; “ne’er a boat would live but wi’ keel uppermost. I’se not the chap to go to Davy Jones tonight pickled i’ brine, my pratty Kate.”

“Thou’rt a greedy glead;—I’se go ask Simon; but I’ll warrant thou’lt be hankering after the reward, and the biggest share to thine own clutches.”

She turned away from the incensed fisherman; and proceeding to a short distance, we found a knot of persons gathered around a half-drowned wretch who owed his appearance again upon land to having been lashed on some lumber which the sea had just cast ashore. Almost fainting from cold and exhaustion, he was undergoing a severe questioning from the bystanders—every one wishing to know the name of the ship, whither bound, and the whole particulars of the disaster. We just came in time for his release; and I soon had the satisfaction to find the poor fellow in my quarters, before a comfortable fire, his clothes drying, and his benumbed limbs chafed until the circulation was again pretty nigh restored. After drinking a tumbler of grog he appeared to recover rapidly; and we found on inquiry that he was master of the vessel just wrecked on the coast. He shook his head on a further inquiry as to the fate of her crew. “A score as good hands,” said he, “are gone to the bottom as ever unreefed a clean topsail or hung out a ship’s canvas to the wind; I saw them all go down as I lashed myself to the jib.” He groaned deeply; but speedily assuming a gayer tone, requested a quid and a quiet hammock. “My lights are nearly stove in,—my head hangs as loose as a Dutchman’s shrouds; a night’s sleep will make all taut again.”

Old Bridget was gone to bed; and unless the sailor chose to occupy the straw pallet already in the possession of a guest whose mysterious arrival seemed to be the forerunner of nothing but confusion and disaster, there did not seem any chance of obtaining a berth save by remaining in his present situation. I told him of the dilemma, but Kate replied:—“We can just take the

body fro' the bed; it winna tak' harm upo' the chest i' the fur nook. The captain will not maybe sleep the waur for quiet company."

He did not seem to relish the idea of passing the night even with so quiet a companion; but as it seemed the least disagreeable alternative, we agreed to pilot him to the chamber and help the miserable pallet to change occupants. The corpse we agreed to lay on some clean litter used for the bedding of the cattle. We conducted the stranger to his dormitory, which was formerly a hay loft, until converted into an occasional sleeping-room for the humble applicants who sometimes craved a night's lodging at the Sandy Holm.

The only entrance was by a crazy ladder, and so steep, that I was afraid our feeble companion would find considerable difficulty in climbing to his chamber. It was my intention to have prevented him from getting a sight of the ghastly object that occupied his couch; but pressing foremost, he ran up the ladder with surprising agility, gaining the top ere I had made preparations for the ascent. I mounted cautiously, giving him the light whilst I made good my landing; and he went directly to the bed. I had set my foot on the floor, and was lending a hand to Kate, who had still to contend with the difficulties of the way, when I heard a dismal and most appalling shriek. Starting round, I beheld the stranger gazing on the couch, his eyeballs almost bursting from their sockets, and his countenance distorted with horror and amazement. I ran to him as the light dropped from his grasp; catching it ere it fell, I perceived his eyes rivetted on the livid and terrific features of the corpse. My limbs grew stiff with horror; thoughts of strange import crowded on my mind; I knew not how to shape them into any definite form, but stood trembling and appalled before the dark chaos whence they sprung. Scarcely knowing what I said, still I remember the first inquiry that burst from my lips—"Knowest thou that murdered man?"

The words were scarcely uttered when the conscience-stricken wretch exclaimed, in accents which I shall never forget, "Know him!—yesterday he stood at my helm. I had long borne him an evil grudge, and I brooded on revenge. The devil prompted it—he was at my elbow. It was dark, and the fiend's eyes flashed when I aimed the blow. It descended with a heavy crash, and the body rolled overboard. He spoke not, save once; it was when his hated carcase rose to the surface. I heard a faint moan; it rang on my ear like the knell of death; the voice rushed past—a low sepulchral shout; in my ear it echoed with the cry of 'MURDER!'"

Little remains to be told; he persisted to the last in this horrible confession. He had no wish to live; and the avenging arm of retributive justice closed the world and its interests for ever on a wretch who had forfeited all claims to its protection—cast out, and judged unworthy of a name and a place amongst his fellow-men.

XIX. The Bar-Gaist

“From hag-bred Merlin’s time have I
 Thus nightly revelled to and fro;
 And for my pranks men call me by
 The name of Robin Goodfellow.
 Fiends, ghosts, and sprites,
 Who haunt the nightes,
 The hags and goblins do me know;
 And beldames old
 My feates have told—So *vale, vale*; ho, ho, ho!”

—BEN JONSON.

“In the northern parts of England,” says Brand, speaking of the popular superstitions, “ghost is pronounced *gheist* and *guest*. Hence *barguest* or *bargheist*. Many streets are haunted by a *guest*, who assumes many strange appearances, as a mastiff dog, &c. It is a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon *gart*, *spiritus*, *anima*.”

Drake, in his *Eboracum*, says (p. 7, Appendix), “I have been so frightened with stories of the barguest when I was a child, that I cannot help throwing away an etymology upon it. I suppose it comes from A.S. *bupp*, a town, and *gart*, a ghost, and so signifies a town sprite. N.B. *gart* is in the Belgic and Teutonic softened into *gheist* and *geyst*.”

The boggart or bar-gaist of the following story resembles the German *kobold*, the Danish *nis*, and the Scotch *brownie*; but, above all, the Spanish *duende*, which signifies a spirit or sprite, supposed by the vulgar to haunt houses and highways, causing therein much terror and confusion. “DUENDE. *Espiritu que el vulgo cree que infesta las casas y travessea, causando en ellas ruidos y estruendos*”—LEMURES, LARVÆ. “To appear like a *duende*,” “to move like a *duende*” are modes of speaking by which it is meant that persons appear in places where they are least expected. “To have a *duende*” signifies that a person’s imagination is disturbed.

The following curious Spanish “Moral,” the MS. of which has been kindly lent to the author by Mr Crofton Croker may not be deemed uninteresting as an illustration of the subject. We have accompanied each stanza with a parallel translation of our own.

DUENDE ENEMIGO DEL JUEGO.

DUENDE AN ENEMY TO GAMING.

Cuento Morál.

A Moral Tale.

Un *Duende*, grave Señor,
 Que estudió la astrologia,
 Se propuso la mania,
 De ser rico jugador.

A grave and learned Senior, who
 Practised astrology,
 Bethought him by his lucky stars
 He passing rich would be.

Todos los siete planetas,
Formaban su gran consejo;
Y antes de llegar á viejo,
Ya no tenia calzetos.

The planets seven his council made,
He hugged the glozing cheat;
But ere the pedant's legs were old,
No stockings held his feet!

Aburrido y sin dinero,
Mui tarde se arrepintió,
Y en un desban se metió
A llorar su error primero.

Enraged and disappointed, he
Waxed sour and melancholy,
And to a vintner's garret trudged,
There to bewail his folly.

Por su gran sabiduría,
En duende se corivirtió,
Y la guerra declaró,
Al arte de fullería.

"I'll have revenge," he cried, then wrought
So wondrous cunningly,
That in a trice transformed he was,
A brisk *Duende* he.

La vecindad asombrada,
De sus fuertes alaridos,
Corriendo despavoridos,
Abandonan la Posada.

This pedant, now a "Boggart" made,
No soul could rest in quiet;
Nor rogue nor bully was his match
For kicking up a riot.

Dueño absolute ya el duende,
De la espantosa mansion,
Se aunientó la confusion,
Y el temor entre la gente.

At last none dared that garret drear,
His dwelling, to come nigh;
Sole master of his attic, he
Reigned peremptorily.

Pero siendo tan demente
El hombre que es codicioso,
No faltó quien jactancioso,
Despreciase al señor duende.

Not so the sharpers, who this house
 Had made their special haunt:
 “Señor Duende!—Humph!”—cried they
 “May suck eggs with his aunt!”

Unos cuantos jugadores,
 Que llaman de profesion,
 Eligieron la mansion
 Para exercer sus primores.

They and their worthy company,
 Of the black-limbed profession,
 Here cheated in a lawful way,
 By that best right—possession!

Mui luego la compañía,
 Numerosa vino á ser,
 Y el que Ilegaba á perder,
 Contra al duende maldecía.

The crowd increased. Some luckless wight
 His winnings at an end, he
 Swore by his trumps, ‘twas owing to
 That rascally *Duende*!

La confusa gritería,
 Pronto al duende incomodó,
 Y al complot se apareció
 Que ápenas, cuarta tenía.

This roused him from his garret, where
 He heard the daily squabble;
 And lo, in human form, he stands
 Before the shirtless rabble!

En voz, como chirimía,
 Dijoles cortés y Atento
Que habitaba el aposento
Donde su amo existia.

He squeaked, “Your servant, gentlemen;
 I would not thus intrude,
 ‘Pon honour, but your conduct is
 So very-very rude.

Que en alta camara fiero,
Todo señor, reclamaba
El orden, y lo aperaba,
Aunque ageno de en fullero.

“My master,—he who sits up-stairs
 I mean,—no jesting, gents,—
 Expects that you’ll be quiet, else
 He’ll scold at all events.”

No fue poca la sorpresa,
Del mensage y la vision;
Y aun con todo, un temerón,
Quiso de ella hacer presa.

The gamblers stared, some tumbled down,
Some gaped, some told their prayers
But one, more daring, swore, i' fack,
He'd kick the brute down-stairs!

Mas el caso se fustró,
Sin saber como ni cuando,
Pues por el ayre volando
Nuestro duende se fugó.

But ere he felt th' uplifted foot
He 'scaped,—how none could tell;
But, sooth it was, this messenger
No bodily harm befell!

El suceso maldecían
Los unos por el temor,
Y gritaban con furor
Los que el dinero perdían.

The rogues, who saw him disappear,
Waxed paler than before:
Some said an *Ave*; some for fear,
And some for folly, swore.

Vuelve por segunda vez,
El mensajero, crecido
Media vara, y atrevido,
Les dice, menos cortés.

When suddenly amidst them all,
Again the demon stands;
A full half-yard in stature grown!
Their business he demands.

*Que su amo, era absoluto,
De aquella encantada casa,
Y su paciencia era escasa,
Con todo fullero astuto.*

“I tell ye, villains, gamblers, thieves!
His patience is but small,
With such as you,—so master says,
Who master will you all!

*Que les mandaba salir
De aquel lugar, con presteza,
Pues de no, su gentileza,
Los haría consumir.*

“Out of the house, ye rabble rout!
Out of the house! I say,
Or otherwise his honour will
Consume you utterly!”

Del duendecito quisieron
Apoderarse valientes,
Mas se les fué entre los dientes,
Y sin la presa se vieron.

Thought one, “I’ll seize this varlet vile,”
And speedily arose;
He caught him in his clutch—the sprite
Vanished and tweaked his nose!

Ya el temor empezó á obrar
Y entraron las reflexiones,
Apoyando con varones,
Que era Duende, á no dudar.

“San Jerome, save us, we are loo’d
If this should be the sprite;
The big *Duende*, best we bid
His boggartship good night.”

Como siempre al jugador,
Lo sostiene la esperanza,
Fundaron la confianza,
En que un Duende es vividor.

But hope, the gambler’s enemy,
Beguiled them to their ruin;
“These ugly sprites, they say, are rich,
Yet yield nought without wooing.

Que su ciencia atrae dinero,
Y medios paro adquirirlo,
Y era cuerdo el admitirlo,
Dandole el lugar primero.

“His skill may help us to repair
Our cloaks, and eke our breeches;
Best speak him fair. We’ll worship Nick
If he but grant us riches!”

Mas el duende que escuchaba
La trama de los fulleros,
Quiso en tales caballeros,
Vengàr, lo que suspiraba.

The sly *Duende*, like a mouse,
Harkening behind the wall,
Did now resolve he quickly would
The greedy rogues bemaule

En efecto, agigantado,
 Con negro manto talár,
 Cornamenta singular,
 Ufias largas y barbado.

A mighty giant, lo he comes.
 Wrapped in a cloak of sable;
 With horns, hoofs, nails, and beard yclad,
 He jumped upon the table!

Un garrote enarbolado
 Y brotando espuma y fuego,
 Les dijo: *Yo devo al juego*
Mi desgracia y este estado.

A cudgel of some seven years' growth
 He brandished. Fire and smoke
 Shot from his lips, while thus he spake;—
 "I'll gripe you gambling folk.

Los fulleros me han quitado
Con mi dinero, la vida,
Y pues que sois homicida
De todo hombre inocente!

"To gaming my disgrace I owe,
 With money went my wife;
 'Tis such as you the murderers be,—
 This night shall end your life!

No quede vicho viviente,
En toda culta nacion,
Que ejérza la profesion
De fullero y vagamundo.

"In every nation, called refined,
 Or gamblers or their wives,
 Or wealthy wight shall ne'er be found,
 Who shakes the bones and thrives."

Y dando un grito profundo,
 Su garrote descargando,
 A todos fué despachando,
 Sin dejar uno en el mundo.

With that a loud and horrid yell
 He gave. And cudgel flew
 Broadside amongst them; when, like vermin, he
 Dispatched the hungry crew!

No extinguió, sin duda, el Duende,
 Toda la mala semilla,
 Pues hay muchos, como el Duende,
 Sin camisa, y sin capilla.

But woe is me, they were not all destroyed.
 For many still, by these cursed arts decoyed,
 Shoeless and shirtless, miserable sinners,
 Are seen, snuffing, with empty wind, their dinners!

In the *Dunske Folkesagen* appear one or two circumstances relative to the freaks of a *nis*, the goblin of the Danish popular creed, similar to the pranks detailed in our Lancashire legend. Fancy, however sportive and playful with materials already in her possession, is of a much less creative character than is generally supposed, even by those most susceptible to her influence. It is surprising how few are the original conceptions that have sprung from the human mind. Popular superstitions—the great mass of them spread over an immense variety of surface, climate, manners, and opinions—might be supposed to exhibit a corresponding difference in originality and invention. But here we find the same paucity of incidents, varying only in character with the climate which gave them birth; the leading features being evidently common to each. The Scandinavian and the Hindoo, the European and the Asiatic, construct their legends on the same basis; the same stories, and even the same train of events, proving their common origin.

Mr Crofton Croker, a name familiar to all lovers of legendary lore, has kindly communicated the following tale. In substituting this, in place of what the author might have written on the subject, he feels convinced that his readers will not feel displeased at the change, and assures them it is with real gratification that he presents them with an article from the pen of the writer of *The Fairy Legends*.

Not far from the little-snug smoky village of Blakeley, or Blackley, there lies one of the most romantic of dells, rejoicing in a state of singular seclusion, and in the oddest of Lancashire names, to wit, the “Boggart-hole.” Rich in every requisite for picturesque beauty and poetical association, it is impossible for me (who am neither a painter nor a poet) to describe this dell as it should be described; and I will therefore only beg of thee, gentle reader, who peradventure mayst not have lingered in this classical neighbourhood, to fancy a deep, deep dell, its steep sides fringed down with hazel and beech, and fern and thick undergrowth, and clothed at the bottom with the richest and greenest sward in the world. You descend, clinging to the trees, and scrambling as best you may,—and now you stand on haunted ground! Tread softly, for this is the Boggart’s clough; and see in yonder dark corner, and beneath the projecting mossy stone, where that dusky sullen cave yawns before us, like a bit of Salvator’s best, there lurks the strange elf, the sly and mischievous Boggart. Bounce! I see him coming; oh no, it was only a hare bounding from her form; there it goes—there!

I will tell you of some of the pranks of this very Boggart, and how he teased and tormented a good farmer’s family in a house hard by, and I assure you it was a very worthy old lady who told me the story. But first, suppose we leave the Boggart’s demesne, and pay a visit to the theatre of his strange doings.

You see that old farm house about two fields distant, shaded by the sycamore-tree: that was the spot which the Boggart or Bar-gaist selected for his freaks; there he held his revels, perplexing honest George Cheetham—for that was the farmer’s name—scaring his maids, worrying his men, and frightening the poor children out of their seven senses, so that at last not even a mouse durst show himself indoors at the farm, as he valued his whiskers, five minutes after the clock had struck twelve.

It had long been remarked that whenever a merry tale was told on a winter’s evening a small shrill voice was heard above all the rest, like a baby’s penny trumpet, joining in with the laughter.

“Weel laughed, Boggart, thou’rt a fine little tyke, I’se warrant, if one could but just catch glent on thee,” said Robert, the youngest of the farmer’s sons, early one evening, a little before Christmas, for familiarity had made them somewhat bold with their invisible guest. Now, though more pleasant stories were told on that night beside the hearth than had been told there for the three preceding months, though the fire flickered brightly, though all the faces around it were full of mirth and happiness, and though everything, it might seem, was there which could make even a Boggart enjoy himself, yet the small shrill laugh was heard no more that night after little Bob’s remark.

Robert, who was a short stout fellow for his age, slept in the same bed with his elder brother John, who was reckoned an uncommonly fine and tall lad for his years. No sooner had they got fairly to sleep than they were roused by the small shrill voice in their room shouting out, “Little tyke, indeed! little tyke thysel’. Ho, ho, ho! I’ll have my laugh now—Ho, ho, ho!”

The room was completely dark, and all in and about the house was so still that the sound scared them fearfully. The concluding screech made the place echo again;—but this strange laughter was not necessary to prevent little Robert from further sleep, as he found himself one moment seized by the feet and pulled to the bottom of the bed, and the next moment dragged up again on his pillow. This was no sooner done, than by the same invisible power he was pulled down again, and then his head would be dragged back, and placed as high as his brother’s.

“Short and long won’t match,—short and long won’t match,—ho, ho, ho!” shouted the well-known voice of the Boggart, between each adjustment of little Robert with his tall brother, and thus were they both wearied for more than a hundred times; yet so great was their terror, that neither Robert nor his brother—”Long John,” as he ever afterwards was called—dared to stir one inch; and you may well suppose how delighted they both were when the first grey light of the morning appeared.

“We’st now ha’ some rest, happen,” said John, turning on his side in the expectation of a good nap, and covering himself up with the bed-clothes, which the pulling of Robert so often backwards and forwards had tumbled about sadly.

“Rest!” said the same voice that had plagued them through the night, “rest!—what is rest? Boggart knows no rest.”

“Plague tak’ thee for a Boggart!” said the farmer next morning, on hearing the strange story from his children: “Plague tak’ thee! can thee not let the poor things be quiet? But I’ll be up with thee, my gentleman: so tak’ th’ chamber an’ be hang’d to thee, if thou wilt. Jack and little Robert shall sleep o’er the cart-house, and Boggart may rest or wriggle as he likes when he is by himsel’.”

The move was accordingly made, and the bed of the brothers transferred to their new sleeping-room over the cart-house, where they remained for some time undisturbed; but his Boggartship having now fairly become the possessor of a room at the farm, it would appear, considered himself in the light of a privileged inmate, and not, as hitherto, an occasional visitor, who merely joined in the general expression of merriment. Familiarity, they say, breeds contempt; and now the children’s bread and butter would be snatched away, or their porringers of bread and milk—would be dashed to the ground by an unseen hand; or if the younger ones were left alone but for a few minutes, they were sure to be found screaming with terror on the return of their nurse. Sometimes, however, he would behave himself kindly. The cream was then churned, and the pans and kettles scoured without hands. There was one circumstance which was remarkable;—the stairs ascended from the kitchen, a partition of boards covered the ends of the steps, and formed a closet beneath the staircase.

From one of the boards of this partition a large round knot was accidentally displaced; and one day the youngest of the children, while playing with the shoe-horn, stuck it into this knot-hole. Whether or not the aperture had been formed by the Boggart as a peep-hole to watch the motions of the family, I cannot pretend to say. Some thought it was, for it was called the Boggart's peep-hole; but others said that they had remembered it long before the shrill laugh of the Boggart was heard in the house. However this may have been, it is certain that the horn was ejected with surprising precision at the head of whoever put it there; and either in mirth or in anger the horn was darted forth with great velocity, and struck the poor child over the ear.

There are few matters upon which parents feel more acutely than that of the maltreatment of their offspring; but time, that great soother of all things, at length familiarised this dangerous occurrence to every one at the farm, and that which at the first was regarded with the utmost terror, became a kind of amusement with the more thoughtless and daring of the family. Often was the horn slipped slyly into the hole, and in return it never failed to be flung at the head of some one, but most commonly at the person who placed it there. They were used to call this pastime, in the provincial dialect, "laking wi' t' Boggart;" that is, playing with the Boggart. An old tailor, whom I but faintly remember, used to say that the horn was often "pitched" at his head, and at the head of his apprentice, whilst seated here on the kitchen table, when they went their rounds to work, as is customary with country tailors. At length the goblin, not contented with flinging the horn, returned to his night persecutions. Heavy steps, as of a person in wooden clogs, were at first heard clattering down-stairs in the dead hour of darkness; then the pewter and earthen dishes appeared to be dashed on the kitchen-floor; though in the morning all remained uninjured on their respective shelves. The children generally were marked out as objects of dislike by their unearthly tormentor. The curtains of their beds would be violently pulled to and fro,—then a heavy weight, as of a human being, would press them nearly to suffocation, from which it was impossible to escape. The night, instead of being the time for repose, was disturbed with screams and dreadful noises, and thus was the whole house alarmed night after night. Things could not long continue in this fashion; the farmer and his good dame resolved to leave a place where they could no longer expect rest or comfort: and George Cheetham was actually following with his wife and family the last load of furniture, when they were met by a neighbouring farmer, named John Marshall.

"Well, Georgey, and soa you're leaving th' owd house at last?" said Marshall.

"Heigh, Johnny, ma lad, I'm in a manner forced to 't, thou sees," replied the other; "for that wearyfu' Boggart torments us soa, we can neither rest neet nor day for't. It seems loike to have a malice again't young ans,—an' it ommost kills my poor dame here at thoughts on't, and soa thou sees we're forc'd to flitt like."

He had got thus far in his complaint, when, behold, a shrill voice from a deep upright churn, the topmost utensil on the cart, called out—"Ay, ay, neighbour, we're flitting, you see."

"Od rot thee!" exclaimed George: "if I'd known thou'd been flitting too I wadn't ha' stirred a peg. Nay, nay,—it's to no use, Mally," he continued, turning to his wife, "we may as weel turn back again to th' owd house as be tormented in another not so convenient."

They did return; but the Boggart, having from the occurrence ascertained the insecurity of his tenure, became less outrageous, and was never more guilty of disturbing, in any extraordinary degree, the quiet of the family.

XX. The Haunted Manor-House

“But he was wary wise in all his way,
And well perceived his deceitful sleight;
No suffered lust his safety to betray;
So goodly did beguile the *guiler* of the prey.”

—SPENSER.

Ince-hall, the subject of our view, stands about a mile from Wigan, on the left hand of the high road to Bolton. It is a very conspicuous object, its ancient and well-preserved front generally attracting the notice and inquiry of travellers.

About a mile to the south-east stands another place of the same name once belonging to the Gerards of Bryn. The manor is now the property of Charles Walmsley, Esq., of Westwood, near Wigan.

The two mansions are sometimes confounded together in topographical inquiries; and the following story, though told of some former proprietor of the Ince to which our plate refers, yet, by its title of the “Manor-house,” would seem as though intended for the other and comparatively less known mansion, the old “Manor-house of Ince,” once inhabited by a family of that name. But the same traditions are often found connected with localities widely asunder, so that we need not be surprised at the mistake which gossips have made in this particular instance.

It is, after all, quite uncertain whether the event occurred here or not, story-tellers being very apt to fix upon any spot near at hand on which to fasten their marvellous narratives, and to give them a stronger hold on the listener’s imagination.

The story is supposed to be written or related by the chief actor in the occurrences arising out of the “Haunted House.” The author has thrown the narrative into this form, as he hopes it will vary the style of the traditions, and probably give more character and interest to the events here detailed than they would retain if told by a third person.

The coach set me down at the entrance to a long and unweeded avenue. A double row of beech-trees saluted me, as I passed, with a rich shower of wet leaves, and shook their bare arms, growling as the loud sough of the wind went through their decayed branches. The old house was before me. Its numerous and irregularly-contrived compartments in front were streaked in black and white zig-zags—*vandyked*, I think, the fairest jewels of the creation call this chaste and elegant ornament. It was near the close of a dark autumnal day, and a mass of gable-ends stood sharp and erect against the wild and lowering sky. Each of these pinnacles could once boast of its admired and appropriate ornament—a little weathercock; but they had cast off their gilded plumage for ever, and fallen from their high estate, like the once neatly-trimmed mansion which I was now visiting. A magpie was perched upon a huge stack of chimneys, his black and white plumage rivalling the mottled edifice at his feet. Perhaps he was the wraith, the departing vision of the decaying fabric; an apparition, insubstantial as the honours and dignities of the ancient and revered house of——!

I looked eagerly at the long, low casements: a faint glimmer was visible. It proceeded only from the wan reflection of a sickly sunbeam behind me, struggling through the cleft of a dark hail-cloud. It was the window where in my boyhood I had often peeped at the town-clock through my little telescope. There was the nursery chamber, and no wonder that it was

regarded with feelings of the deepest interest. Here the first dawnings of reason broke in upon my soul; the first faint gleams of intelligence awakened me from a state of infantine unconsciousness. It was here that I first drank eagerly of the fresh rills of knowledge; here my imagination, ardent and unrepressed, first plumed its wings for flight, and I stepped forth over its threshold into a world long since tried, and found as unsatisfying and unreal as the false glimmer that now mocked me from the hall of my fathers.

A truce to sentiment!—I came hither, it may be, for a different purpose. A temporary gush will occasionally spring up from the first well-head of our affections. However homely and seemingly ill-adapted, in outward show and character, for giving birth to those feelings generally designated by the epithet romantic, the place where we first breathed, where our ideas were first moulded, formed and assimilated, as it were, to the condition of the surrounding atmosphere (their very shape and colour determined by the medium in which they first sprung) the casual recurrence of a scene like this,—forming part and parcel of our very existence, and incorporated with the very fabric of our thoughts,—must, in spite of all subsequent impressions, revive those feelings, however long they may have been dormant, with a force and vividness which the bare recollection can never excite.

The garden-gate stood open. The initials of my name, still legible, appeared rudely carved on the posts—a boyish propensity which most of us have indulged; and I well remember ministering to its gratification wherever I durst hazard the experiment, when first initiated into the mystery of hewing out these important letters with a rusty pen-knife.

Not a creature was stirring; and the nature of the present occupants, whether sylphs, gnomes, or genii, was a question not at all, as it yet appeared, in a train for solution. The front door was closed; but, as I knew every turn and corner about the house, I made no doubt of soon finding out its inmates, if any of them were in the neighbourhood. I worked my way through the garden, knee-deep and rank with weed, for the purpose of reconnoitring the back-offices. I steered pretty cautiously past what memory, that great dealer in hyperbole, had hitherto generally contrived to picture as a huge lake—now, to my astonishment, dwindled into a duck-pond—but not without danger from its slippery margin. It still reposed under the shadow of the old cherry-tree, once the harbinger of delight, as the returning season gave intimation of another bountiful supply of fruit. Its gnarled stump, now stunted and decaying, had scarcely one token of life upon its scattered branches. Following a narrow walk, nearly obliterated, I entered a paved court. The first tramp awoke a train of echoes that seemed as though they had slumbered since my departure, and now started from their sleep to greet or to admonish the returning truant. Grass in luxuriant tufts, capriciously disposed, grew about in large patches. The breeze passed heavily by, rustling the dark swathe, and murmuring fitfully as it departed. Desolation seemed to have marked the spot for her own—the grim abode of solitude and despair. During twenty years' sojourn in a strange land memory had still, with untiring delight, painted the old mansion in all its primeval primness and simplicity—fresh as I had left it, full of buoyancy and delight, to take possession of the paradise which imagination had created. I had, indeed, been informed that at my father's death it became the habitation of a stranger; but no intelligence as to its present condition had ever reached me. Being at L——, and only some twenty miles distant, I could not resist the temptation of once more gazing on the old Manor-house, and of comparing its present aspect with that but too faithfully engrafted on my recollections. To all appearance the house was tenantless. I tried the door of a side kitchen or scullery: it was fastened, but the rusty bolts yielded to no very forcible pressure; and I once more penetrated into the kitchen, that exhaustless magazine which had furnished ham and eggs, greens and bacon, with other sundry and necessary condiments, to the progenitors of our race for at least two centuries. A marvellous change!—to me it appeared as if wrought in a moment, so recently had memory reinstated the scenes of

my youth in all their pristine splendour. Now no smoke rolled lazily away from the heavy billet; no blaze greeted my sight; no savoury steam regaled the sense. Dark, cheerless, cold,—the long bars emitted no radiance; the hearth unswept, on which Growler once panted with heat and fatness.

Though night was fast approaching, I could not resist the temptation of once more exploring the deserted chambers, the scene of many a youthful frolic. I sprang with reckless facility up the vast staircase. The shallow steps were not sufficiently accommodating to my impatience, and I leapt rather than ran, with the intention of paying my first visit to that *cockaigne* of childhood, that paradise of little fools—the nursery. How small, dwindled almost into a span, appeared that once mighty and almost boundless apartment, every nook of which was a separate territory, every drawer and cupboard the boundary of another kingdom! three or four strides brought me to the window;—the broad church-tower was still visible, peacefully reposing in the dim and heavy twilight. The evening-bell was tolling: what a host of recollections were awakened at the sound! Days and hours long forgotten seemed to rise up at its voice, like the spirits of the departed sweeping by, awful and indistinct. These impressions soon became more vivid; they rushed on with greater rapidity: I turned from the window, and was startled at the sudden moving of a shadow. It was a faint long-drawn figure of myself on the floor and opposite wall. Ashamed of my fears, I was preparing to quit the apartment when my attention was arrested by a drawing which I had once scrawled, and stuck against the wall with all the ardour of a first achievement. It owed its preservation to an unlucky, but effectual, contrivance of mine for securing its perpetuity: a paste-brush, purloined from the kitchen, had made all fast; and the piece, alike impregnable to assaults or siege, withstood every effort for its removal. In fact, this could not be accomplished without at the same time tearing off a portion from the dingy papering of the room, and leaving a disagreeable void, instead of my sprawling performance. With the less evil it appeared each succeeding occupant had been contented; and the drawing had stood its ground in spite of dust and dilapidation. I felt wishful for the possession of so valuable a memorial of past exploits. I examined it again and again, but not a single corner betrayed symptoms of lesion: it stuck bolt upright; and the dun squat figures portrayed on it appeared to leer at me most provokingly. Not a slip or tear presented itself as vantage-ground for the projected attack; and I had no other resource left of gaining possession than what may be denominated the Cæsarean mode. I accordingly took out my knife, and commenced operations by cutting out at the same time a portion of the ornamental papering from the wall commensurate with the picture. I looked upon it with a sort of superstitious reverence; and I have always thought that the strong and eager impulse I felt for the possession of this hideous daub proceeded from a far different source than mere fondness for the memorials of childhood. Be that as it may, I am a firm believer in a special Providence; and that, too, as discovered in the most trivial as well as the most important concerns of life. It was whilst cutting down upon what seemed like wainscoting, over which the papering of the room had been laid, that my knife glanced on something much harder than the rest. Turning aside my spoils, I saw what through the dusk appeared very like the hinge of a concealed door. My curiosity was roused, and I made a hasty pull, which at once drew down a mighty fragment from the wall, consisting of plaster, paper, and rotten canvas; and some minutes elapsed ere the subsiding cloud of dust enabled me to discern the *terra incognita* I had just uncovered. Sure enough there was a door, and as surely did the spirit of enterprise prompt me to open it. With difficulty I accomplished my purpose; it yielded at length to my efforts; but the noise of the half-corroded hinges, grating and shrieking on their rusty pivots, may be conceived as sufficiently dismal and appalling. I know not if once at least I did not draw back, or let go my hold incontinently, as the din “grew long and loud.” I own, without hesitation, that I turned away my head from the opening, as it became wider and wider at every pull; and it required a considerable effort

before I could summon the requisite courage to look into the gap. My head seemed as difficult to move as the door. I cannot say that I was absolutely afraid of ghosts, but I *was* afraid of a peep from behind the door—afraid of being frightened! At length, with desperate boldness, I thrust my head plump into the chasm!

But I was more startled at the noise I had thus produced than by anything that was visible. As far as the darkness would permit, I explored the interior, which, after all, was neither more nor less than a small closet. From what cause it had been shut out from the apartment to which it had belonged, it were vain to conjecture. All that was really cognisable to the senses presented itself in the shape of a shallow recess, some four feet by two, utterly unfurnished, save with some inches of accumulated dust and rubbish, that made it a work of great peril to grope out the fact of its otherwise absolute emptiness. This discovery like many other notable enterprises seemed to lead to nothing. I stepped out of my den, reeking with spoils which I would much rather have left undisturbed in their dark recesses.

Preparing for my departure, and a visit to my relation in the nearly adjoining town, who as yet had no other intimation of my arrival than a hasty note, to apprise him that I had once more set foot on English ground, and intended to visit him before my return, I stepped again to the window. Darkness was fast gathering about me; a heavy scud was driven rapidly across the heavens, and the wind wailed in short and mournful gusts past the chamber. The avenue was just visible from the spot where I stood; and, looking down, I thought I could discern more than one dark object moving apparently towards the house. It may be readily conceived that I beheld their approach with an interest by no means free from apprehension; and it was not long ere two beings, in human habiliments, were distinctly seen at a short distance from the gate by which I had entered. Feeling myself an intruder, and not being very satisfactorily prepared to account for my forcible entry into the premises, and the injury I had committed on the property of a stranger, I drew hastily aside, determined to effect a retreat whenever and wherever it might be in my power. Door and window alternately presented themselves for the accomplishment of this unpleasant purpose, but before I could satisfy myself as to which was the more eligible offer, as doubters generally do contrive it, I lost all chance of availing myself of either. "*Facilis descensus*"—"Easier in than out"—&c., occurred to me; and many other classical allusions, much more appropriate than agreeable. I heard voices and footsteps in the hall. The stairs creaked, and it was but too evident they were coming, and that with a most unerring and provoking perseverance. Surely, thought I, these gentry have noses like the sleuth-hound; and I made no doubt but they would undeviatingly follow them into the very scene of my labours; and what excuse could I make for the havoc I had committed? I stood stupefied, and unable to move. The thoughts of being hauled neck and heels before the next justice, on a charge of housebreaking, or what not—committed to prison—tried, perhaps, and—the sequel was more than even imagination durst conceive. Recoiling in horror from the picture, it was with something like instinctive desperation that I flew to the little closet, and shut myself in, with all the speed and precision my fears would allow. Sure enough the brutes were making the best of their way into the chamber, and every moment I expected they would track their victim to his hiding-place. After a few moments of inconceivable agony, I was relieved at finding from their conversation that no notion was entertained, at present, of any witness to their proceedings.

"I tell thee, Gilbert, these rusty locks can keep nothing safe. It's but some few months since we were here, and thou knowest the doors were all fast. The kitchen door-post is now as rotten as touchwood; no bolt will fasten it."

"Nail it up,—nail 'em all up," growled Gilbert; "nobody'll live here now; or else set fire to 't. It'll make a rare bonfire to burn that ugly old will in."

A boisterous laugh here broke from the remorseless Gilbert. It fell upon my ear as something with which I had once been disagreeably familiar. The voice of the first speaker, too, seemed the echo of one that had been heard in childhood. A friendly chink permitted me to gain the information I sought; there stood my uncle and his trusty familiar. In my youth I had contracted a somewhat unaccountable aversion to the latter personage. I well remembered his downcast grey eye, deprived of its fellow; and the malignant pleasure he took in thwarting and disturbing my childish amusements. This prepossessing Cyclop held a tinder-box, and was preparing to light a match. My uncle's figure I could not mistake: a score of winters had cast their shadows on his brow since we had separated; but he still stood as he was wont—tall, erect, and muscular, though age had slightly drooped his proud forehead; and I could discern his long-lapped waistcoat somewhat less conspicuous in front. He was my mother's brother, and the only surviving relation on whom I had any claim. My fears were set at rest, but curiosity stole into their place. I felt an irrepressible inclination to watch their proceedings, though eaves-dropping was a subterfuge that I abhorred. I should, I am confident—at least I hope so—have immediately discovered myself, had not a single word which I had overheard prevented me. The “will” to which they alluded might to me, perhaps, be an object of no trivial importance.

“I wish with all my heart it were burnt!” said mine uncle.

“The will, or the house?” peevishly retorted Gilbert.

“Both!” cried the other, with an emphasis and expression that made me tremble.

“If we burn the house, the papers will not rise out of it, depend on ‘t, master,” continued Gilbert; “and that box in the next closet will not prove like Goody Blake's salamander.”

I began to feel particularly uncomfortable.

“I wish they had all been burnt long ago,” said mine honest uncle. After a pause he went on: “This scapegrace nephew of mine will be here shortly. For fear of accidents—accidents, I say,—Gilbert—it were better to have all safe. Who knows what may be lurking in the old house, to rise up some day as a witness against us! I intend either to pull it down or set fire to it. But we'll make sure of the will first.”

“A rambling jackanapes of a nephew!” said Gilbert; “I hoped the fishes had supped on him before now. We never thought, master, he could be alive, as he sent no word about his being either alive or dead. But I guess,” continued this amiable servant, “he might ha' staid longer, and you wouldn't ha' fretted for his company.”

Listeners hear no good of themselves; but I determined to reward the old villain very shortly for his good wishes.

“Gilbert, when there's work to do thou art always readier with thy tongue than with thy fingers. Look! the match has gone out twice,—leave off puffing and fetch the box; I'll manage about the candle.”

I began to feel a strange sensation rambling about me. Gilbert left the room, however, and I applied myself with redoubled diligence to the crevice. My dishonest relation proceeded to revive the expiring sparks; the light shone full upon his hard features. It might be fancy, but guilt—broad, legible, remorseless guilt—seemed to mark every inflection of his visage: his brow contracted,—his eye turned cautiously and fearfully round the apartment, and more than once it rested upon the gap I had made. I saw him strike his hand upon his puckered brow, and a stifled groan escaped him; but as if ashamed of his better feelings, he clenched it in an attitude of defiance, and listened eagerly for the return of his servant. The slow footsteps of Gilbert soon announced his approach, and apparently with some heavy burden. He threw it on

the floor, and I heard a key applied and the rusty wards answering to the touch. The business in which they were now engaged was out of my limited sphere of vision.

“I think, master, the damp will soon ding down the old house: look at the wall; the paper hangs for all the world like the clerk’s wig—ha, ha! If we should burn the house down we’d rid it o’ the ghosts. Would they stand fire, think you, or be off to cooler quarters?”

“Hush, Gilbert; thou art wicked enough to bring a whole legion about us, if any of them are within hearing. I always seemed to treat these stories with contempt, but I never could satisfy myself about the noises that old Gidlow and his wife heard. Thou knowest he was driven out of the house by them. People wondered that I did not come and live here, instead of letting it run to ruin. It’s pretty generally thought that I fear neither man nor devil; but—oh! here it is; here is the will. I care nothing for the rest, provided this be cancelled.”

“Ay, master, they said the ghost never left off scratching as long as anybody was in the room. Which room was it, I wonder?—I never thought on’t to inquire; but— I don’t like this a bit. It runs in my head it is the very place; and behind that wall, too, where it took up its quarters like as it might be just a-back of the paper there. Think you, master, the old tyke has pull’d it down wi’ scratching?”

“Gilbert,” said my uncle solemnly, “I don’t like these jests of thine. Save them, I prithee, for fitter subjects. The will is what we came for. Let us dispose of that quietly, and I promise thee I’ll never set foot here again.”

As he spoke he approached the candle—it was just within my view—and opened the will that it might yield the more readily to the blaze. I watched him evidently preparing to consume a document with which I felt convinced my welfare and interests were intimately connected. There was not a moment to be lost; but how to get possession was no easy contrivance. If I sallied forth to its rescue they might murder me, or at least prevent its falling into my hands. This plan could only prolong its existence a few moments, and would to a certainty ensure its eventual destruction. Gilbert’s dissertation on the occupations and amusements of the ghosts came very opportunely to my aid, and immediately I put into execution what now appeared my only hope of its safety. Just as a corner of the paper was entering the flame I gave a pretty loud scratch, at the same time anxiously observing the effect it might produce. I was overjoyed to find the enemy intimidated at least by the first fire. Another volley, and another succeeded, until even the sceptical Gilbert was dismayed. My uncle seemed riveted to the spot, his hands widely disparted, so that the flame and its destined prey were now pretty far asunder. Neither of the culprits spoke; and I hoped that little more would be necessary to rout them fairly from the field. As yet they did not seem disposed to move; and I was afraid of a rally, should reason get the better of their fears.

“Rats! rats!” shouted Gilbert. “We’ll singe their tails for them.” The scratching ceased. Again the paper was approaching to its dreaded catastrophe.

“*Beware!*” I cried, in a deep and sepulchral tone, that startled even the utterer. What effect it had produced on my auditory I was left alone to conjecture. The candle dropped from the incendiary’s grasp, and the spoil was left a prey to the bugbear that possessed their imaginations. With feelings of unmixed delight, I heard them clear the stairs at a few leaps, run through the hall, and soon afterwards a terrific bellow from Gilbert announced their descent into the avenue.

Luckily the light was not extinct, and I lost no time in taking possession of the document, which I considered of the most importance. A number of loose papers, the contents of a huge trunk, were scattered about; but my attention was more particularly directed to the paper which had been the object of my uncle’s visit to the Manor-house. To my great joy, this was

neither less nor more than my father's will, witnessed and sealed in due form, wherein the possessions of my ancestors were conveyed, absolutely and unconditionally, without entail, unencumbered and unembarrassed, to me and to my assigns. I thought it most likely that the papers in and about the trunk might be of use, either as corroborative evidence, in case my uncle should choose to litigate the point and brand the original document as a forgery, or as a direct testimony to the validity of my claim. I was rather puzzled in what manner to convey them from the place, so as not to excite suspicion, should the two worthies return. I was pretty certain they would not leave matters as they now stood when their fears were allayed, and daylight would probably impart sufficient courage to induce them to repeat their visit. On finding the papers removed, the nature of this night's ghostly admonition would immediately be guessed, and measures taken to thwart any proceedings which it might be in my power to adopt. To prevent discovery, I hit upon the following expedient:—I sorted out the waste paper, a considerable quantity of which served as envelopes to the rest, setting fire to it in such a manner that the contents of the trunk might appear to have been destroyed by the falling of the candle. I succeeded very much to my own satisfaction. Disturbed and agonised as my feelings had been during the discovery, the idea of having defeated the plan of my iniquitous relative gave a zest to my acquisitions almost as great as if I had already taken possession of my paternal inheritance.

Before I left the apartment, I poured out my heart in thanksgivings to that unseen Power whose hand, I am firmly convinced, brought me thither at so critical a moment, to frustrate the schemes and machinations of the enemy.

Bundling up the papers, my knowledge of the vicinity enabled me to reach a small tavern in the neighbourhood without the risk of being recognised. Here I continued two or three days, examining the documents, with the assistance of an honest limb of the law from W——. He entertained considerable doubts as to the issue of a trial, feeling convinced that a forged will would be prepared, if not already in existence, and that my relative would not relinquish his fraudulent claim should the law be openly appealed to. He strongly recommended that proceedings of a different nature should be first tried, in hopes of enclosing the villain in his own toils; and these, if successful, would save the uncertain and expensive process of a suit. I felt unwilling to adopt any mode of attack but that of open warfare, and urged that possession of the real will would be sufficient to reinstate me as the lawful heir. The man of law smiled. He inquired how I should be able to prove that the forgery which my uncle would in all probability produce was not the genuine testament; and as the date would inevitably be subsequent to the one I held, it would annul any former bequest. As to my tale about burning the will, that might or might not be treated as a story trumped up for the occasion. I had no witnesses to prove the fact; and though appearances were certainly in my favour, yet the case could only be decided according to evidence. With great reluctance I consented to take a part in the scheme he chalked out for my guidance; and, on the third day from my arrival, I walked a few miles and returned to the town, that it might appear as if I had only just arrived. On being set down at my uncle's I had the satisfaction to find, as far as could be gathered from his manner, that he had no idea of my recent sojourn in the neighbourhood. Of course the conversation turned on the death of my revered parents, and the way in which their property had been disposed of.

"I can only repeat," continued he, "what I, as the only executor under your father's will, was commissioned to inform you at his decease. The property was heavily mortgaged before your departure; and its continued depression in value, arising from causes that could not have been foreseen, left the executor no other alternative but that of giving the creditors possession. The will is here," said he, taking out a paper, neatly folded and mounted with red tape, from a bureau. "It is necessarily brief, and merely enumerates the names of the mortgagees and

amounts owing. I was unfortunately the principal creditor, having been a considerable loser from my wish to preserve the property inviolate. For the credit of the family I paid off the remaining incumbrances, and the estate has lapsed to me as the lawful possessor."

He placed the document in my hands. I read in it a very technical tribute of testamentary gratitude to M—— S——, Esq., styled therein "beloved brother;" and a slight mention of my name, but no bequest, save that of recommending me to the kindness of my relative, in case it should please Heaven to send me once more to my native shores. I was aware he would be on the watch; guarding, therefore, against any expression of my feelings, I eagerly perused the deed, and with a sigh, which he would naturally attribute to any cause but the real one, I returned it into his hands.

"I find," said he, "from your letter received on the 23d current, that you are not making a long stay in this neighbourhood. It is better, perhaps, that you should not. The old house is sadly out of repair. Three years ago next May, David Gidlow, the tenant under lease from me, left it, and I have not yet been able to meet with another occupant fully to my satisfaction; indeed, I have some intention of pulling down the house and disposing of the materials."

"Pulling it down!" I exclaimed, with indignation.

"Yes; that is, it is so untenantable—so—what shall I call it?—that nobody cares to live there."

"I hope it is not haunted?"

"Haunted!" exclaimed he, surveying me with a severe and scrutinising glance. "What should have put that into your head?"

I was afraid I had said too much; and anxious to allay the suspicion I saw gathering in his countenance—"Nay, uncle," I quickly rejoined; "but you seemed so afraid of speaking out upon the matter that I thought there must needs be a ghost at the bottom of it."

"As for that," said he, carelessly; "the foolish farmer and his wife did hint something of the sort; but it is well known that I pay no attention to such tales. The long and the short of it, I fancy, was, that they were tired of their bargain, and wanted me to take it off their hands."

Here honest Gilbert entered, to say that Mr L——, the attorney, would be glad to have a word with his master.

"Tell Mr L—— to walk in. We have no secrets here. Excuse me, nephew; this man is one of our lawyers. He has nothing to communicate but what you may hear, I dare say. If he should have any private business, you can step into the next room."

The attorney entering, I was introduced as nephew to Mr S——, just arrived from the Indies, and so forth. Standing, Mr L—— made due obeisance.

"Sit down; sit down, Mr L——," cried my uncle. "You need not be bowing there for a job. Poor fellow, he has not much left to grease the paws of a lawyer. Well, sir, your errand?"

I came, Mr S——, respecting the Manor-house. Perhaps you would not have any objections to a tenant!"

"I cannot say just now. I have had some thoughts of pulling it down."

"Sir! you would not demolish a building, the growth of centuries—a family mansion—been in the descent since James's time. It would be barbarous. The antiques would be about your ears."

"I care nothing for the antiquities; and, moreover, I do not choose to let the house. Any further business with me this morning, sir?"

"Nothing of consequence—I only came about the house."

"Pray, Mr L——," said I, "what sort of a tenant have you in view;—one you could recommend? I think my uncle has more regard for the old mansion-house than comports with the outrage he threatens. The will says, if I read aright, that the house and property may be sold, should the executor see fit; but, as to pulling it down, I am sure my father never meant anything so deplorable. Allow me another glance at that paper."

"Please to observe, nephew, that the will makes it mine, and as such I have a right to dispose of the whole in such manner as I may deem best. If you have any doubts, I refer you to Mr L——, who sits smiling at your unlawyer-like opinions."

"Pray allow me one moment," said the curious attorney. He looked at the signature and those of the parties witnessing.

"Martha S——; your late sister, I presume?"

My uncle nodded assent.

"Gilbert Hodgon—your servant?"

"The same. To what purpose, sir, are these questions?" angrily inquired my uncle.

"Merely matters of form—a habit we lawyers cannot easily throw aside whenever we get a sight of musty parchments. I hope you will pardon my freedom?"

"Oh! as for that you are welcome to ask as many questions as you think proper; they will be easily answered, I take it."

"Doubtless," said the persevering man of words. "Whenever I take up a deed, for instance,—it is just the habit of the thing, Mr S——,—I always look at it as a banker looks at a note. He could not for the life of him gather one up without first ascertaining that it was genuine."

"Genuine!" exclaimed my uncle, thrown off his guard. "You do not suspect that I have forged it?"

"Forged it! why, how could that enter your head, Mr S——? I should as soon suspect you of forging a bank-note or coining a guinea. Ringing a guinea, sir, does not at all imply that the payee suspects the payer to be an adept in that ingenious and much-abused art. We should be prodigiously surprised if the payer were to start up in a tantrum, and say, 'Do you suspect me, sir, of having coined it?'"

"Sir, if you came hither for the purpose of insulting *me*"——

"I came upon no such business, Mr S——; but, as you seem disposed to be captious, I *will* make free to say, and it would be the opinion of ninety-nine hundredths of the profession, that it might possibly have been a little more satisfactory to the heir-apparent had the witnesses to this, the most solemn and important act of a man's life, been any other than, firstly, a defunct sister to the party claiming the whole residue: and secondly, Mr Gilbert Hodgon, his servant. Nay, sir," said the pertinacious lawyer, rising, "I do not wish to use more circumlocution than is necessary; I have stated my suspicions, and if you are an honest man, you can have no objections, at least, to satisfy your nephew on the subject, who seems, to say the truth, much astonished at our accidental parley."

"And pray who made you a ruler and a judge between us?"

"I have no business with it, I own; but as you seemed rather angry, I made bold to give an opinion on the little technicalities aforesaid. If you choose, sir," addressing himself to me, "the matter is now at rest."

"Of course," I replied, "Mr S—— will be ready to give every satisfaction that may be required as regards the validity of the witnesses. I request, uncle, that you will not lose one moment in rebutting these insinuations. For your own sake and mine, it is not proper that your conduct should go forth to the world in the shape in which this gentleman may think fit to represent it."

"If he dare speak one word"——

"Nay, uncle, that is not the way to stop folks' mouth now-a-days. Nothing but the actual gag, or a line of conduct that courts no favour and requires no concealment, will pass current with the world. I request, sir," addressing myself to the attorney, "that you will not leave this house until you have given Mr S—— the opportunity of clearing himself from any blame in this transaction."

"As matters have assumed this posture," said Mr L——, "I should be deficient in respect to the profession of which I have the honour to be a member, did I not justify my conduct in the best manner I am able. Have I liberty to proceed?"

"Proceed as you like, you will not prove the testament to be a forgery. The signing and witnessing were done in my presence," said my uncle. He rose from his chair, instinctively locked up his bureau; and, if such stern features could assume an aspect of still greater asperity, it was when the interrogator thus continued:—"You were, as you observe, Mr S——, an eye-witness to the due subscription of this deed. If I am to clear myself from the imputation of unjustifiable curiosity, I must beg leave to examine yourself and the surviving witness apart, merely as to the minutiae of the circumstances under which it was finally completed: for instance, was the late Mr—— in bed, or was he sick or well, when the deed was executed?"

A cadaverous hue stole over the dark features of the culprit; their aspect varying and distorted, in which fear and deadly anger painfully strove for pre-eminence.

"And wherefore apart?" said he, with a hideous grin. He stamped suddenly on the floor.

"If that summons be for your servant, you might have saved yourself the trouble, sir," said his tormentor, with great coolness and intrepidity. "Gilbert is at my office, whither I sent him on an errand, thinking he would be best out of the way for a while. I find, however, that we shall have need of him. It is as well, nevertheless, that he is out of the way of signals."

"A base conspiracy!" roared the infuriated villain. "Nephew, how is this? And in my own house,—bullied—baited! But I will be revenged—I will."

Here he became exhausted with rage, and sat down. On Mr L—— attempting to speak, he cried out—"I will answer no questions, and I defy you. Gilbert may say what he likes; but he cannot contradict my words. I'll speak none."

"These would be strange words, indeed, Mr S——, from an innocent man. Know you that WILL?" said the lawyer, in a voice of thunder, and at the same time exhibiting the real instrument so miraculously preserved from destruction. I shall never forget his first look of horror and astonishment. Had a spectre risen up, arrayed in all the terrors of the prison-house, he could not have exhibited more appalling symptoms of unmitigated despair. He shuddered audibly. It was the very crisis of his agony. A portentous silence ensued. Some minutes elapsed before it was interrupted. Mr L—— was the first to break so disagreeable a pause.

“Mr S——, it is useless to carry on this scene of duplicity: neither party would be benefited by it. *You have forged that deed!* We have sufficient evidence of your attempt to destroy this document I now hold, in the very mansion which your unhallowed hands would, but for the direct interposition of Providence, have levelled with the dust. On one condition, and on one only, your conduct shall be concealed from the knowledge of your fellow-men. The eye of Providence alone has hitherto tracked the tortuous course of your villany. On one condition, I say, the past is for ever concealed from the eye of the world.” Another pause. My uncle groaned in the agony of his spirit. Had his heart’s blood been at stake, he could not have evinced a greater reluctance than he now showed at the thoughts of relinquishing his ill-gotten wealth.

“What is it?”

“Destroy with your own hands that forged testimony of your guilt. Your nephew does not wish to bring an old man’s grey hairs to an ignominious grave.”

He took the deed, and, turning aside his head, committed it to the flames. He appeared to breathe more freely when it was consumed; but the struggle had been too severe even for his unyielding frame, iron-bound though it seemed. As he turned trembling from the hearth, he sank into his chair, threw his hands over his face, and groaned deeply. The next moment he fixed his eyes steadily on me. A glassy brightness suddenly shot over them; a dimness followed like the shadows of death. He held out his hand; his head bowed; and he bade adieu to the world and its interests for ever!

XXI. Clitheroe Castle; Or, The Last Of The Lacies

“By that painful way they pass
Forth to an hill that was both steep and high;
On top whereof a sacred chapel was,
And eke a little hermitage thereby.”

—SPENSER’S *Fairy Queen*.

Clitheroe, *the hill by the waters*, the ancient seat of the Lacies, carries back the mind to earlier periods and events—to a rude and barbarous age—where justice was dispensed, and tribute paid, by the feudatories to their lords, whose power, little less than arbitrary, was held directly from the crown.

The Lacies came over with the Conqueror; and, on the defection of Robert de Poitou, obtained, as their share of the spoil, sixty knights’ fees, principally in Yorkshire and Lancashire. For the better maintainence of their dignity they built two castles, one at Pontefract, the principal residence, and another at Clitheroe. A *great fee*, or great lordship, as Pontefract was a possession of the highest order; an honour, or seignior, like Clitheroe, consisting of a number of manors, was the next in rank; and these manors were severally held by their subordinate lords in dependence on the lord paramount, the lord of the fee or honour.

What was the precise aspect of our county when the Normans possessed themselves of the land, it might be deemed an effort of the imagination perhaps to portray. “Yet,” says Dr Whitaker, in one of his happier moods, “could a curious observer of the present day carry himself nine or ten centuries back, and, ranging the summit of Pendle, survey the forked Calder on one side, and the bolder margins of Ribble and Hodder on the other, instead of populous towns and villages, the castle, the old tower-built house, the elegant modern mansion, the artificial plantation, the park and pleasure ground, or instead of uninterrupted enclosures, which have driven sterility almost to the summit of the fells; how great must then have been the contrast, when, ranging either at a distance or immediately beneath, his eye must have caught vast tracts of forest ground stagnating with bog or darkened by native woods, where the wild ox, the roe, the stag, and the wolf had scarcely learned the supremacy of man—when, directing his view to the intermediate spaces, to the windings of the valleys, or the expanse of plain beneath, he could only have distinguished a few insulated patches of culture, each encircling a village of wretched cabins, among which would still be remarked one rude mansion of wood, scarcely equal in comfort to a modern cottage, yet then rising proudly eminent above the rest, where the Saxon lord, surrounded by his faithful cotarii, enjoyed a rude and solitary independence, owning no superior but his sovereign.

“This was undoubtedly a state of great simplicity and freedom, such as admirers of uncultivated nature may affect to applaud. But although revolutions in civil society seldom produce anything better than a change of vices, yet surely no wise or good man can lament the subversion of Saxon polity for that which followed. Their laws were contemptible for imbecility, their habits odious for intemperance; and if we can for a moment persuade ourselves that their language has any charm, that proceeds less, perhaps, from anything harmonious and expressive in itself, or anything valuable in the information it conveys, than that it is rare and not of very easy attainment; that it forms the rugged basis of our own tongue; and, above all, that we hear it loudly echoed in the dialect of our own vulgar. Indeed,

the manners as well as language of a Lancashire clown often suggest the idea of a Saxon peasant; and prove, with respect to remote tracts like these, little affected by foreign admixtures, how strong is the power of tradition, how faithfully character and propensities may be transmitted through more than twenty generations.”

The Normans were a more polished, a more abstemious people; as scribes and architects they were men to whom this district was greatly indebted. Our only castle, our oldest remaining churches, our most curious and valuable records, are all Norman.

“Such was the state of property and manners when the house of Lacy became possessed of Blackburnshire.” The simplicity of the Saxon tenures was destroyed. A tract of country, which had been parcelled out among twenty-eight lords, now became subject to one; and all the intricacies of feudal dependence, all the rigours of feudal exaction, wardships, reliefs, escheats, &c., were introduced at once. Yet the Saxon lords, though dependent, were not in general actually stripped of their fees. By successive steps, however, the origin of all landed property within the hundred, some later copyholds excepted, is to be traced to voluntary concessions from the Lacies, or their successors of the house of Lancaster; not grants of pure beneficence, but requiring personal service from the owners, and yearly customs or payments, equivalent at that time to their value. Their present worth grew out of the operation of causes little understood in these ages either by lord or vassal—namely, the certainty of the possession, the diminishing value of money, and the perpetuity of the title.

In four generations, or little more than one hundred years, the line of the Lacies became extinct; Roger Fitz-Eustace, lord of Halton and constable of Chester, coming into possession by right of his grandmother Awbrey, uterine sister of Robert de Lacy, the last of this illustrious race. Fitz-Eustace, however, took the title of De Lacy; but in the fourth descent from him the very name was lost. Henry de Lacy, the last and greatest man of his line, dying the 5th February 1310, left one daughter only, who had married, during her father’s lifetime, Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster—and carried along with her an inheritance even then estimated at 10,000 marks per annum. On the earl’s attainder, the honour of Clitheroe, with the rest of his possessions, were forfeited to the crown. After undergoing many changes while it continued a member of the Duchy of Lancaster—that is, until the restoration of Charles II.—that prince, in consideration of the great services of General Monk, whom he created Duke of Albemarle, bestowed it upon him and his heirs for ever. Christopher, his son, dying without issue, left his estates to his wife, daughter and co-heiress of Henry Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle; by her they were bequeathed to her second husband, Ralph, Duke of Montague, whose grand-daughter Mary, married George, Earl of Cardigan, afterwards Duke of Montague. Elizabeth, his daughter, married Henry, Duke of Buccleuch, in whose family the honour of Clitheroe is now vested.

Clitheroe Castle is described by Grose as “situated on the summit of a conical insulated crag of rugged limestone rock, which suddenly rises from a fine vale, in which towards the north, at the distance of half-a-mile, runs the Ribble, and a mile to the south stands Pendle Hill, which seems to lift its head above the clouds.”

In the time of the Commonwealth it was dismantled by order of Parliament; the chapel has totally disappeared; and nothing now remains but the square keep and some portions of the strong wall by which the building was surrounded.⁴⁷ The tower, though much undermined, remains firm as the rock on which it was built, and forms the principal object in our engraving.

⁴⁷ Baines’s *Lancashire*.

It was midnight; and the priest was chanting the service and requiem for the dead in the little chapel or chantry of St Michael, which was built within the walls of Clyderhow or Clitheroe Castle. The *Dies iræ* from the surrounding worshippers rose in a simple monotone, like the sound of some distant river, now caught on the wing of the tempest, and flung far away into the dim and distant void, now rushing on the ear in one deep gush of harmony—the voice of Nature, as if her thousand tongues were blended in one universal peal of praise and adoration to the great Power that called her into being. Many a heart quailed with apprehension, many a bosom was oppressed with doubtful and anxious forebodings. Robert de Lacy, the last of this illustrious race, fourth in descent from Ilbert de Lacy, on whom the Conqueror bestowed the great fee of Pontefract, the owner of twenty-eight manors and lord of the honour of Clitheroe, was no longer numbered with the living; and here in the chapel of this lone fortress, before the dim altar, all that remained of this powerful baron, the clay no longer instinct with spirit, was soon to be enveloped in the dust, the darkness, and the degradation of its kindred earth.

Many circumstances rendered this scene more than usually solemn and affecting. Robert de Lacy had died without issue to inherit these princely domains, the feudal inheritance of a family whose power had so wide a grasp, that it was currently said the Lacies might pass from Clitheroe Castle to their fortress at Pontefract, a journey of some fifty miles, and rest in a house or hostelrie of their own at every pause during their progress.

With him ended the male line of this great family. Failing in issue, he had devised all these vast estates to Awbrey, his uterine sister, daughter of Robert de Lizours, married to Richard Fitz-Eustace, lord of Halton and constable of Chester.

Thus ended the last of his race; and the inheritance had passed to a stranger.

The surrounding worshippers were mostly domestics and retainers of the family, save Robert de Whalley, the dean of that ancient church, supposed to have been founded by Augustine or Paulinus in the seventh century, and then called “The White Church under the Leigh.” No tidings had been heard from the Fitz-Eustace at Halton, and in two days the body was to be carried forth on its last pilgrimage to Kirkstall Abbey, founded by Henry de Lacy, father of the deceased, about forty years prior to this event.

The beginning of February, in the year 1193, when our story commences, was an epoch memorable for the base and treacherous captivity of Richard Coeur de Lion by the Duke of Austria; and for the equally base and treacherous, but short-lived, usurpation of John, the brother of our illustrious crusader. The nation was involved in great trouble and dismay. The best blood of England and the flower of her nobility had perished on the deserts of Palestine, or were pining there in hopeless captivity. The house of Fitz-Eustace, into whose possession the estates of the Lacies were now merged, had themselves been shorn of a goodly scion or two from the family tree during these “holy wars.”

Richard Fitz-Eustace, the husband of Awbrey, died about the 24 Hen. II. (1178), leaving one son, John, who founded the Cistercian Abbey of Stanlaw in Cheshire, the present establishment of Whalley. He was slain at Tyre in the crusade, A.D. 1190, the second of the reign of Richard I., leaving issue, Richard a leper, and Roger, who followed his father to the Holy Land, but of whose fate no tidings had been heard since his departure thence on his return to Europe. Besides these were two sons, Eustace and Peter, and a daughter named Alice.

Roger Fitz-Eustace and his friend William de Bellamonte—from whom are descended the Beaumonts of Whitley-Beaumont, in Yorkshire—had fought side by side at the memorable siege of Acre; but whether alive or dead the certainty was not yet known, though there might

be good grounds for the apprehension generally entertained, that they were held in captivity by infidels or by princes miscalled Christian, the bitterest enemies to the faith they professed.

Clitheroe Castle was built by Roger de Poictou, or, as he is otherwise called, Roger Pictavensis, of a noble family in Normandy, and related to the Conqueror. He led the centre of William's army at the battle of Hastings. King William having given him all the lands between the Mersey and the Ribble, he built several castles and fortresses therein, providing largely for his followers, from whom are descended many families who are still in possession of manors and estates originally granted by this unfortunate relative of the Conqueror. He was twice deprived of his honours, many of them being escheated to the crown, while Clitheroe Castle, together with the great fee of Pontefract, was bestowed on Ilbert de Lacy, a Norman follower of William.

In a country not abounding with strong positions, an insulated conical rock of limestone rising out of the fertile plain between Penhull (Pendle) and the Ribble would naturally attract the attention of the invaders. Here, therefore, we find a fortress erected even earlier than the castle at Lancaster. The summit of this rock was not sufficiently extensive to admit of a spacious building, and probably nothing more was at first intended than a temporary retreat and defence from the predatory incursions of the Scots. The structure was, however, gradually enlarged, and became one of the chief residences of the Lacies. A lofty flanking wall ran along the brink of the rock, enclosing the keep and adjoining buildings, likewise the chapel of St Michael, coeval with the foundation of the castle, and forming part of it, being amply endowed by the founder, and license procured from the Dean of Whalley for the purpose of having divine service performed and the sacraments administered therein, to the household servants, foresters, and shepherds, who occupied these extensive and thinly-inhabited domains.

In this little sanctuary now lay the remains of its lord. The cold February sleet pattered fitfully against the narrow panes; and the shivering mourners muffled themselves in their dark hoods, while they knelt devoutly on the hard bare pavement of the chapel. Oliver de Worsthorn, the old seneschal, knelt at the foot of the bier; his white locks covered his thin features like a veil, hiding their intense and heart-withering expression. He felt without a stay or helper in his last hours—a sapless, worthless stem in this wilderness of sorrow.

Robert, the Dean of Whalley, attended as chief mourner. Being descended from a distant branch of the Lacies, he had long thrown a covetous glance towards the inheritance. A frequent guest at the castle, he had been useful as an auxiliary in the management and control of the secular concerns; the spiritual interests of its head were in the keeping of another and more powerful agent, little suspected by the dean of applying the influence he had acquired to purposes of secular aggrandisement.

It may not be deemed irrelevant that we give a brief outline of the constitution or office of dean, as then held by the incumbents of Whalley. The beautiful abbey, now in ruins, was not as yet built. Some Saxon lord of Ppaellag had, about the seventh century, founded a parish church, dedicated to All Saints, called The White Church under the Leigh. The first erection was of wood, many years afterwards replaced by a plain building of stone. The rectors or deans were also lords of the town, and married men, who held it not by presentation from the patron, but as their own patrimonial estate, the succession being hereditary. In this manner the deanery of Whalley was continued until the Lateran Council, in the year 1215, which, by finally prohibiting the marriage of ecclesiastics, put an end to this order of hereditary succession, and occasioned a resignation of the patronage to the chief lord of the fee, after which the church of Whalley sunk, by two successive appropriations, into an impoverished vicarage.

Long before the Conquest the advowson had become far more valuable than the manor, and the lords, who were also patrons, saw the advantage and convenience of qualifying themselves by inferior orders for holding so rich a benefice; and thus the manor itself in time ceased to be considered as a lay fee, and became confounded with the glebe of the church.⁴⁸

The office of dean, at the period in which our history commences, had for centuries been considered as a dignity rather secular than ecclesiastical, and the pursuits of the incumbent had doubtless assimilated generally with those of his lay associates. Indeed, it is recorded that Dean Liulphus, in the reign of Canute, had the name of Cutwulph, from having cut off a wolf's tail whilst hunting in the forest of Rossendale, at a place called Ledmesgreve, or more properly Deansgreve. Like many other ancient and dignified ecclesiastics, they were mighty hunters, enjoying their privileges unmolested through a vast region of forest land then unenclosed, and were only inferior in jurisdiction to the feudal lords of these domains. "On the whole, then, it appears," says Dr Whitaker, "that the Dean of Whalley was compounded of patron, incumbent, ordinary, and lord of the manor; an assemblage which may possibly have met in later times, and in some places of exempt jurisdiction, but at that time probably an *unique* in the history of the English church."

Robert de Whalley, the incumbent before named, was not a whit behind his progenitors in that laudable exercise of worldly wisdom and forethought, as it regarded matters of a temporal and transitory nature. His bearing was proud, and his aspect keen; his form was muscular, and more fitted for some hardy and rigorous exercise than for the generally self-denying and peaceful offices of the Catholic Church. In his youth he had the reputation of being much disposed to gallantry; and the same proneness to intrigue was yet manifest, though employed in pursuits of a less transitory nature. His disappointment was, in consequence, greatly augmented when these long-coveted possessions were given to another, and his ambitious dreams dissipated. Yet was he not without hope that the succession of the Fitz-Eustace family might be frustrated. The leper would of necessity be passed over, and, Roger being either dead or in captivity, the revenues and usurpation of this distant and almost inaccessible territory might still be enjoyed without molestation or inquiry. Such were the meditations of this plotting ecclesiastic, as he knelt before the altar in that solemn hour, in the chapel of "*St Michael in Castro*."

The walls of the chapel, or rather chantry, were smeared with black; and in front of the screen were portrayed uncouth representations of the arms and insignia of the deceased. A pall was thrown over the body, and a plate of salt, as an emblem of incorruptibility, placed on the corpse—a heathenish custom borrowed from the Druids. The candles burnt dimly at the little altar, and the cold and bitter wind threw the shadows in many a grotesque and startling shape on the dark bare walls which enclosed them. It was an hour and a scene that superstition might have chosen for manifesting her power; and many an anxious glance was thrown towards the dark recesses out of which imagination was ready to conjure some grim spectre, invested with all the horrors that monkish legends had created. The priest who officiated was an unbeneficed clergyman, long known as an inmate of the castle. He was of a quiet and inoffensive disposition, but much attached to his lord; often during the service grief stayed his utterance, and he mingled his loud sobs with those of the surrounding worshippers.

The *dirige* was concluded, and vespers for the dead were now commencing with the "*Placebo Domino*." The priest with his loud rich voice sang or recited the anthem, and the attendants gave the response in a low and muttering sound. Just as he was beginning the fumigation with a sign of the cross, to drive away demons and unclean spirits from the body, suddenly a loud, deep, and startling blast was heard from the horn at the outer gate. The

⁴⁸ Whitaker's *History of Whalley*.

whole assembly started up from their devotions, and every eye was turned towards the dean, as though to watch and take the colour of their proceedings from those of his reverence. He lifted his eyes from the corpse, which lay with the face and shoulders uncovered; and, as if startled from some bewildering reverie, cried aloud—

“What untimely visitor art thou, disturbing the sad offices of the dead?”

He paused, as though the sound of his own voice had disturbed him; while wrapping himself in his cloak, he hastily approached Oliver, who stood irresolute, not knowing how to act in this unexpected emergency. De Whalley pointed towards the door, and the seneschal prepared to obey, accompanied by the porter with a light, and one or two attendants.

Immediately outside the chapel the way led down a steep angle of the rock, which Oliver, by dint of much use and experience, descended without any apparent difficulty, save what arose from the slippery state of the path, which rendered the footing more than usually precarious and uncertain.

Again, the blast brayed forth a louder and more impatient summons, startling the echoes from their midnight slumber, while the deep woods answered from a thousand unseen recesses.

“Hang thee for a saucy loon, whoever thou be! I’ll warrant thee as much impudence in thy face as wind i’ thy muzzle,” said the disturbed seneschal. “Tarry a while, Hugo; ope not the gate without a parley, despite the knave’s untimely summons.”

Oliver, hobbling onward, reached the wicket, just then occupied by Hugo’s broad and curious face prying out cautiously into the misty and unintelligible void, without being a whit the wiser for his scrutiny.

“What a plague do ye keep honest men a-waiting for at the gate,” said a gruff voice from the pitchy darkness without, “in a night that would make a soul wish for a dip into purgatory, just by way of a warming?”

“Hush,” said Oliver, who was a true son of the Church, and moreover, being fresh from the services appointed for the recovery of poor souls from this untoward place, felt the remark of the stranger as peculiarly impious and full of blasphemy—“Hush! thou bold-faced scorner, and learn to furbish thy wit from some other armoury; we like not such unholy jests—firebrands thrown in sport! Thy business, friend?”

“Open the gate, good master priest-poke,” said the other, in a tone of authority.

“Not until thou showest thine errand,” said the equally imperative interrogator within; who, having the unequivocal and somewhat ponderous advantage of a pair of stout-built and well-furnished gates to back, or rather face, him in the controversy, was consequently in a fair way for keeping on the strong side of the argument.

“Now, o’ my troth, but ye be a pair of rude curs, barking from a warm kennel at your betters, who are shivering in the cold, without so much as a bone to pick, or a wisp of straw to their tails! Well, well, ‘tis soon said; every dog, you know,—and ‘twill be my turn soon. I come hither from the castle at Halton, where my Lady Fitz-Eustace would lay your curs’ noses to the grinding-stone; but, rest her soul, she will not long be above ground, I trow. Know then, masters, I am her seneschal, whom she sends with a goodly train to the burying. Quick, old goat-face, or we will singe thy beard to light thee to our discovery.”

The gates were immediately unbolted at this command, opening wide before so dignified a personage, who, as the representative of the Fitz-Eustace, was evidently impressed with a sufficient sense of his own importance, while he and his attendants rode through the grim Norman arch into the courtyard. The uppermost extreme of this illustrious functionary was

surmounted with a sort of Phrygian-shaped bonnet or cap, made of deerskin, suitably ornamented. A mantle or cloak of a dark mulberry colour, fancifully embroidered on the hem, was clasped upon one shoulder by a silver buckle. Underneath was a short upper riding-tunic made of coarse woollen, partly covering an under-vest made of finer materials. A leathern girdle was buckled round his loins, having sundry implements attached thereto, requisite during the performance of so long a journey through a thinly-inhabited region. The upper garment scarcely covered the knee, over which stockings of red cloth were seen, reaching half-way up the thigh; round the leg were bandages or cross-garterings well bespattered with mud; low boots or buskins protected the feet and ankles; to these spurs were fastened, the head being spear-shaped and something crooked in the shank. His beard was forked, and this appendage, apparently the result of a careful and anxious cultivation, he occasionally twisted with one hand whilst speaking. He carried a lance, or rather hunting-spear, which he wielded with an air of great formality and display; his followers were likewise furnished each of them with a cloak and tunic, and a conical cap of coarse felt tied under the chin with a leathern band: a girdle of the same material was buckled round the waist, with a scrip and other necessities for the journey. They rode horses of the Welsh breed, small and stout-built; spoil captured, in all probability, from that rebellious and unruly nation.

The entry of this armed train was more like an act of taking possession than that of a peaceable and formal embassy; and the newly-arrived seneschal soon began to exercise the office of governor or castellan, seizing the reins of government with an iron grasp. He was a square caroty-headed personage, about the middle size, and of a ruddy aspect. He held an office of trust under the Fitz-Eustace, and, spite of his saucy garrulity, in which he indulged on most occasions, he was faithful, and would have challenged and immolated any one who had dared to question the right of the Fitz-Eustace to precedence before any other baron of the land. Long service rendered him more intrusive than would have been thought becoming, or even excusable in any other enjoying less of his mistress's confidence.

"Now, my merry men all," said this authoritative personage, "a long and a weary path have we ridden to-day; and had we not been, as it were, lost in your savage wildernesses—where our guide, whom we forced before us by dint of blows and hard usage, could scarce keep us in the right track—we had been here before sunset. Thanks to this saint of yours, whosoever he be, for we saw the watchlights at times from the chapel, as we guessed, else had we been longer in hitting our mark, and might, peradventure, have supped with the wolves on a haunch of venison. Now for the stables. What! have ye no knaves hereabout to help our followers with the beasts?"

Oliver, much troubled at this loquacious and unceremonious address, replied with some acrimony—

"The household are in the chapel, where it had been better thou hadst let us bide, and given the corpse a quiet watchnight—the vigils for the dead are not ended."

"Go to, master seneschal, for of this post I do adjudge thee, and reverence thine office in respect of mine own, but let dead men make their own lanterns; we must have supper anyhow, and that right speedily."

Oliver, after seeing the gate secured, sent Hugo for help, whilst he led the way himself into the hall of this once formidable fortress. It was high and gloomy, the fire being apparently extinguished. A step on the floor showed where the higher table was placed, prohibiting those beneath a certain rank from advancing upon the skirts of their superiors; an indispensable precaution, when servants and retainers of all sorts ate their meals with the master of the feast. Perches for hawks, in form like unto a crutch, were placed behind his

chair; for these birds were usually taught to sit hoodless in the evening among company undisturbed. Hunting-spears, jackets, chain-armour, shields, and helmets, decorated the walls; and many a goodly heritage of antlers hung, like forest boughs stripped of their verdure. There were two oriels furnished with leaning-stones for the convenience of loungers. Painted glass filled the higher portions of the windows, representing uncouth heads, hands, feet, and bodies of saints, in all the glowing and gorgeous magnificence which the beam of heaven can give to colours of more than earthly brightness, though disposed in forms of more than childish absurdity.

The hall, the usual rendezvous of the household, was now deserted for the dread solemnities of that cheerless night. But the stranger was much discouraged by reason of the coldness and gloom, shivering audibly at the comfortless appearance that was before him.

“St Martin’s malison light on ye—fire, billets, and all—I’ve seen nothing like to warm my bare nose and knuckles since we left Halton, two long days ago. Verily, to my thinking, there’s as much timber burnt there daily as ye would pile here for a winter’s use.”

“Prithee come with me into the kitchen, we may have better quarters peradventure among the fleshpots,” said Oliver, leading the stranger through a small doorway on the left.

This *coquinus* of our ancestors was usually placed near the hall, for the convenience of serving. Here, through a sliding aperture in the panel, the victuals were transferred with safety and despatch. It was built entirely of stone, having a conical roof with a turret at the top for the escape of steam and smoke. A fire was still burning, provided with a large cauldron suspended on a sort of versatile gibbet, by which contrivance it could be withdrawn from the flame. Fire-rakes and fire-jacks were laid on the hearth, and around the walls were iron pots, trivets, pans, kettles, ladles, platters, and other implements of domestic economy. Huge dressers displayed symptoms of preparation for to-morrow’s necessities, and a coarse kitchen-wench was piling fuel on the ever-burning fire.

The envoy, glad to be ensconced so near the blaze, quickly addressed himself to the task of improving it by a dexterous use of a huge faggot by way of poker. He had thrown off his upper clothing; and the grim walls soon reddened with the rising glow. So intent was he on an occupation which he evidently enjoyed, that he was not aware when Oliver departed, the latter slipping off unobserved to the chapel for the purpose of informing the dean of this arrival.

In one part of the kitchen was a long low-roofed recess, accessible only by a ladder, wherein dried meats, consisting of bacon, ham, deers’ tongues, mutton, venison, and other dainties of the like nature, were stored. To this inviting receptacle was the attention of our guest more especially directed. Without ceremony or invitation he ascended, and drawing out a formidable weapon from his belt he commenced a furious attack.

Oliver, on his return, found this worthy usurping the functions of both cook and consumer of the victual with great assiduity. He was accompanied by the dean, who addressed the intruder as follows:—

“How is it that we have none from the noble house of Fitz-Eustace save thou and thy company?”

The messenger looked askance from his occupation, disposing of a large mouthful of the viands with sufficient deliberation ere he vouchsafed a reply.

“Me and my company! As goodly a band, I trow, as ever put foot to stirrup or fist to crupper! yet will I resolve thy question plain as Beeston Castle. My lady is old, and her only son died long ago on a crusade. Her third grandson, now in the office of constable, is out amongst the

Welsh—plague on their fiery blood!—by reason of the absence of his elder brother, Roger, yet abroad in these Holy Wars. Of the eldest born, Richard, we know not but that he is deceased. He left the castle many years ago, sorely afflicted, for he was a leper. So that, peradventure, my lady hath sent the best man she had, inasmuch as I am steward and seneschal, being appointed thereto through her ladyship's great wisdom and discretion."

Here he surveyed himself with an air of indescribable assurance and satisfaction.

"And, saving your presence," continued the deputy, "I come here as castellan, or governor, until he whose right it is shall possess it."

"And how know we that we be not opening our gates and surrendering our castle to some losel knave, whose only title may lie on the tip of his tongue, and his right on the end of his rapier?"

"By this token," said the seneschal haughtily, at the same time drawing out a formal instrument, to which was appended the broad seal of the ancient house of Fitz-Eustace.

The dean cast his eyes over the document, returning it to the messenger without either answer or inquiry, and immediately retired from the presence of this usurper on his long-coveted possessions.

Much chagrined by so unexpected an interference, he left the castle, even at this untimely hour. Yet his footsteps were not bent towards the shadow of his own roof, the deanery at Whalley.

Outside the castle wall, and on the steepest side of the hill, was a little hermitage, wherein dwelt one of those reputed saints that dealt in miracles and prayers for the benefit of the "true believers." Many of these solitaries were well skilled in craft and intrigue; others, doubtless, deceived themselves as well as others in the belief that Heaven had granted them the power to suspend and control the operations of nature. To this habitation, occupied by one of these holy santons of the Church, were the steps of the dean immediately directed. He raised the latch as though accustomed to this familiarity. The chamber, a high narrow cell, scooped out of the rock, was quite dark; but the voice was heard, a deep sepulchral tone, as though issuing from the ground—

"Art thou here so soon, De Whalley?"

"Sir Ulphilas," said the intruder hastily, and with some degree of agitation, "canst work miracles now? The Canaanites are come into the land to possess it; nor will threatenings and conjurations drive them forth."

"I know it," said the hermit, who, though unseen, had not, it seems, been an inattentive observer of the events of the last two hours. A light suddenly shot forth, enkindled as if by magic, showing the tall gaunt form of the "Holy Hermit of the Rock." He was dressed in a long grey garment of coarse woollen. It was said that he wore an iron corslet next his skin, for mortification, it was thought by the vulgar; but whether for this purpose, or for one of a more obvious nature, it would perhaps be easy to surmise. A girdle of plaited horse-hair encompassed his thin attenuated form. His head was uncovered; and he seemed to have just risen from his couch, a board or shelf, raised only a few inches from the rock on which it lay. His eye was wild, quick, and sparkling; but his cheek was deadly pale, and his features collapsed and haggard in their expression.

"I have dreamed a dream," said the visionary.

"And to what end?" inquired his visitor, seating himself with great deliberation.

“Nay, ‘twas not a dream,” continued the hermit: “St Michael stood before me this blessed night, arrayed as thou seest him portrayed in the glass of his holy chapel above. His armour was all bright and glistening, and his sword a devouring flame. He flapped his wings thrice ere he departed, and said unto me, ‘Arise, Ulphilas, and work, for thine hour is come!’”

“And what the better am I,” said the irreverent priest, “for this saintly revelation? I must work too, or “———

“Hold,” said the hermit, laying his hand on the other’s shoulder with great solemnity; “speak not unadvisedly with thy lips; there be created intelligences within hearing that thou little knowest of.”

“Thou didst promise; but verily the substance hath slidden from my grasp: whilst I, fond fool, embraced a shadow. Cajoled by thine assurance, that my blood should be with the proud current that inherits these domains, I forebore, and let thee work. But thou hast been a traitor to my cause I do verily suspect, nay, accuse thee of this fraud. Thy machinations and thy counsel were the cause. By thine accursed arts Robert de Lacy hath left his patrimony to a stranger!”

“True, I counselled him thus. What then?”

“I and mine are barred from the inheritance!”

“Shall the word of the Hermit of the Rock fall to the ground? Have I not promised that thy blood shall be with those that inherit these domains?”

“Promises are slender food for an hungry stomach,” cried the unbeliever.

“If the promise fail, blame thy dastardly fears, and not my power. Thou shalt see the promised land thou shalt not inherit. Thy son shall receive the blessing.”

The dean looked for a moment as though he could have fawned and supplicated for a reversion of the decree; but pride or anger had the mastery.

“And so,” cried he, “thou findest thy predictions run counter to thy schemes, perdie; for thou dost mock me in them with a double sense.”

“How, false one? Have I not wrought for thee? Hath not he, whose corpse now resteth in hope, overwhelmed thee with his favours through my counsel and contrivance? I owed thee a service, for thou wast my stay and sustenance when driven hither an outcast from the haunts of men. But thoughtest thou that I should pander to thy lust, and hew out a pathway to thy desire?”

“To me this!” said the covetous intruder, his voice quivering with rage.

“Yes, to thee, Robert de Whalley,” replied the hermit: “because thou hast not leaped the last height of thine ambition, forsooth—because thou art not lord of these wide domains, through my interest and holy communion with the departed—and because I have not basely sold myself to thee, thou art offended. Beware lest the endowment be wrested from thy grasp, the glebe and manor pass away from thine inheritance.”

“Thou hadst the privy and counsel of the deceased, and a whisper would have made it mine,” said the dean, with great dejection.

“Greedy and unblushing as thou art, know it was I who counselled him, and the deed is in my keeping. I sent a secret message unto Halton with the news, and Roger de Fitz-Eustace will be here anon!”

“Thou dreamest; he is in bondage, or slain at Ascalon.”

“He will reappear,” replied the hermit, “and the banner of the Fitz-Eustace wave on yonder turret. Hence! ungrateful member of our holy communion;—to thy house, and let an old man rest in peace.”

The disappointed priest departed in great haste: terror, of which he could not divest himself, and for which he could not account, overpowered him in the presence of the hermit. He durst not provoke him further; but as he crossed the courtyard again a glimpse of hope shot suddenly on his soul.

“In thy keeping!” He spoke scarcely above his breath; but the walls seemed to give back the sound. He started like some guilty thing at the discovery of its crime.

Before morning light on the following day the castle bell began to toll. Preparations were making for the conveyance of the last of the Ladies to the Abbey of Kirkstall, a journey which would occupy the greater part of two successive days. The pathway over the hills was narrow, and the mode of conveyance difficult, if not dangerous. A sort of litter was made for the corpse, and slung on a pole between two horses, covered, as in a bier, with the pall and trappings. A sword of ceremony was carried in front; the dean rode immediately before the body, the chanters preceding, and a priest with the cross and censer. Behind came the male domestics, and the seneschal of Halton with his train.

Psalms were sung at every halting-place, and in the villages through which they passed, and torches were kept lighted during the greater part of the journey. These were for the purpose of being extinguished in the earth that should finally cover the body.

Thus attired, and thus attended, was this once powerful baron conveyed to his narrow dwelling-house in the dust.

We will not follow them further, nor detail the pomp of the funeral rites, that last mockery of greatness, but return to existing objects and events—man’s ever-gnawing ambition; so vast, when living, that the whole earth is too narrow for its sphere; when dead, the veriest churl hath as wide a possession!

Weeks and months passed away, and the raw February wind grew soft in the warm and joyous impulse of another spring. One night, about the hour of vespers, two men, habited in monkish apparel, came to the cell of the Hermit of the Rock. After the usual salutation they entered, carrying with them staff and scrip, as if bent on a long and weary travel.

“Whence come ye, and whither bound?” said the hermit, surveying the intruders by the light of a solitary lamp that was burning in a niche, wherein stood a skull and crucifix, emblems of our faith and our mortality.

“We are from the Abbey of Stanlaw, on our way to Kirkstall in the morning.”

“Wherefore abide ye here? There is lodging and better cheer withal in the castle above.”

“We are under a vow, and rest not save on holy ground: we crave thy hospitality, therefore, and shelter for the night.”

“Is your errand to Kirkstall hidden, or is it an open embassy?”

“The Lady Fitz-Eustace sendeth greeting by our ministry unto the holy abbot through our superior at Stanlaw, beseeching that he would make diligent inquiry touching the will of Robert de Lacy, once lord of this goodly heritage. She hath had news of his demise, and likewise another message with an assurance that every of these possessions have been devised to the Fitz-Eustace by his last will and testament. Yet this writing she has not yet seen, nor knoweth she into whose custody it hath been given. Apprehending the great favours

which the Cistercian house at Kirkstall hath received from the Lacies, and the close intimacy which the abbot once enjoyed, she doth conjecture that, in all likelihood, the testament is in his keeping."

"Your journey hath need of none other reference, for the will is in my custody."

"In thine, Sir Ulphilas?"

"How! know ye my name already?" said the hermit sharply, and a fierce glance shot from under his high and pallid brow.

"Holy St Agatha! and has not the fame and sanctity of the Hermit of the Rock gone forth to many lands! Where the broad Mersey and the silver Dee roll their bright waters, thou art known by thy holiness and thy faith."

"And how is our good brother Roger, abbot of your monastery at Stanlaw?" inquired the hermit, not deigning to notice their fulsome and flattering epithets.

"Holy Virgin! how knowest thou his name?"

"And hath not the fame of your holy abbot, and the sanctity of your house, reached us even here?" said the hermit, with a look of scrutiny and scorn. The visitors were silent. The hermit seized the lamp, and surveyed their persons with much care and deliberation.

"Holy father," said the abashed intruders, "we crave thy blessing, and moreover a share of thy pittance, for our way hath been long and toilsome: since yesterday our journeying hath been over hills and through deep forests, infested by wolves and noisome beasts, which we had much ado to escape."

The hermit drew a little table from the recess, blowing the wan embers until a cheerful blaze flashed brightly through the cell. He then opened a cupboard scooped out of the solid rock, and took thence a scrap of hard cheese, a barley cake, and a few parched peas, with which the holy men commenced their supper. They ate their meal in silence, washing down the dainties with a draught from the spring. When the repast was finished, one of the brethren thus addressed his host—

"And what shall be thy message to our holy abbot? Wilt thou send the parchments to his grace?"

"Nay, brethren, that is not my purpose."

Another and a brief pause ensued.

"But the message?"

"Say that the will is here,"—he looked towards his bosom as he spoke,—"and at the appointed hour it shall be ready. When Roger de Fitz-Eustace comes hither, his claim shall be duly certified."

"Alas!" said the wayfaring guests, in a tone of deep sorrow and apprehension, "he went on a warfare against the infidels."

"He will return," was the reply.

"The Virgin grant him a safe deliverance! but he tarrieth long, and a rumour hath lately been abroad that he fell at Ascalon."

"'Tis false!" cried the hermit, roused to an unexpected burst of wrath. His eyes kindled with rage, and he darted a glance at the intruders which made them cower and shrink from his

rebuke. In a moment he grew calm, relapsing into his usual moody and thoughtful attitude. Taking courage, they again addressed him.

“Is this thy message to the abbot of Stanlaw? If so, our errand hath but a sorry recompense.”

“And what recompense should fall to the lot of miscreants like ye?” said the hermit, surveying them with a contemptuous glance. “I hear the sound of your master’s feet behind ye. Tell Robert, the proud Dean of Whalley, that when he sends ye next on so goodly an errand, to see that ye con your lesson more carefully, else will ye be known for a couple of errant knaves as ever went a-mousing into an owl’s nest! Hence, begone!” said the hermit, as he drave them from his threshold; and the counterfeit monks went back to Whalley in haste, reporting the ill success of their mission.

“Nevertheless,” said De Whalley, “I have some clue to the search, if the glance of his eye, which these varlets have reported, do show truly where the treasure is hidden. I will foil the old fox yet with his own weapons.”

This comfortable reflection, in all probability, moderated his anger at the unskilful disposition of his messengers, whom he dismissed with little ceremony from his presence.

In the meantime the new castellan was exercising his power with unsparing and immoderate severity. Oliver de Wortshorn was almost heartbroken; the old man suddenly found himself reduced to the condition of a mere dependant on the self-will and caprice of this petty tyrant, his authority having been usurped, and his office wrested from him, by the hand of a stranger. Adam de Dutton⁴⁹ was the name of this new functionary, and he rode it out bravely over the necks of the servants and retainers, discharging some, punishing others, and making the whole community groan beneath the iron yoke of his oppression. Had there been a master-spirit to wield the elements of conspiracy, and unite the several members, so as to act from one common impulse, matters were just ripe for rebellion.

Early in the morning, after a day of more than ordinary discipline, Oliver bent his feeble steps to the hermitage. He laid his complaints before the occupier of the cell, who was ever ready to administer aid and comfort to the afflicted.

“Take little heed of the deputy now,” said the holy man, “his master will be here anon. I hear the tramp of armed men, with the herald’s trumpet. I see the red griffin, and the banner of the Fitz-Eustace.”

“But, holy father, Sir Ulphilas,” replied the ejected steward, “there is no peace either by night or day, and we are nigh worn out with his waywardness and oppression. If it might be that your reverence would come with me, peradventure the churl would grow tame at your presence.”

The hermit, complying with this importunity, accompanied Oliver to the castle.

In the hall Adam de Dutton was about consigning one of the villains, for some venial offence, unto the whipping-post and the stocks. The accused besought his inexorable judge for some remission of the sentence, falling on his knees before him just as the hermit, with great solemnity, entered the hall. His face was partly concealed by a large hood, and little of his

⁴⁹ At the commencement of a list of “Senescalli de Blackburnshire,” occurs the name of “Adam de Dutton, temp. Rog. et Joh. de Lacy.” Dr Whitaker says: “This Adam de Dutton is one of the witnesses to the foundation-charter of Stanlaw, A.D. 1178; and a Dominus Adam occurs as steward in the charters of John de Lacy, who succeeded Roger A.D. 1211; so that, if both these names design the same person, which I believe, he must have held the office of seneschal at least thirty-three years.”

countenance was visible above the long beard which flowed over his bosom, and the fire of his eye, which seemed to glow through the dark shadows beneath.

“Whom bring ye next for our disposal?” inquired the castellan; but there was no answer; every eye was directed to the hermit, who came slowly forward, standing opposite to, and within a very short distance from, the dread arbiter of justice in the castle of the Lacies.

“What brings thee to our presence? Back to thy sanctuary; else we may deal with thee as with other knaves who live by their wits and the witlessness of fools.”

“What hath this man done amiss?” inquired the hermit, in a tone that showed his meekness to be disturbed, and his wrath evidently kindling; nor would the thunder be long ere it followed the flash.

“It is our pleasure!” answered Adam de Dutton, reddening with rage; “and furthermore our pleasure is, that thou get thee to thy cell, or, by the beard of St Michael, my bowmen shall help thee thither when this fellow hath had his allowance at their hands.”

“Fool!” cried the hermit, in a voice which struck terror through the assembly; and even the judge himself started back with amazement.

“Begone, child!” said Ulphilas to the culprit; “I dismiss thee of the punishment; peradventure thou hast deserved to suffer, but I give to this emissary a timely warning thereby.”

The criminal was not loth to obey, disappearing speedily without hindrance, while the spectators were mute with amazement. The hermit, too, was silent before the usurper, who, almost frantic with vexation, cried out—

“Seize him!—help, for the Fitz-Eustace!—treason against our Lady of Halton!”

Uttering many rapid and incoherent expressions, he approached the hermit, who stood unmoved, apparently the only unconcerned spectator in the rising tumult. The seneschal’s guards were already in motion, but Adam was the first who attempted the seizure.

The holy man drew back, as though from some touch of pollution.

“Hold!” cried he, “one touch and ‘tis thy last. Rash fool, thou hast provoked this rebuke!”

The hand of the seneschal had scarcely been put forth, when, lo! the astonished deputy shrank back in dismay. A sudden change came over his angry countenance—a look of surprise mingled with horror, as though he could have wished the earth to gape and hide him from the object of his apprehensions. He stood trembling, speechless, pale as ashes, expecting immediate and condign punishment. So suddenly this change was wrought that the spectators fancied it to be some direct interposition from heaven; concluding that he was smitten for the sacrilegious and profane hand he had dared to stretch toward this holy man. Yet was the change not so sudden but that a quick-eyed observer, if such were there, might have seen the hermit’s outer garment loosened for a moment, and a significant whisper which the other evidently heard with such visible tokens of alarm.

Ulphilas immediately retired to his cell, and from that hour the castellan discharged his official duties evidently under the control of some overmastering influence or apprehension.

Not long afterwards it was rumoured abroad that tidings had been heard from Roger de Fitz-Eustace, who was supposed either to be in captivity or to have fallen at the siege of Ascalon.

The king was still detained in prison by the Emperor Henry VI., and it was only through the remonstrance of the German princes, and a threat of excommunication from the Pope, that Henry, finding he could no longer hold him in durance, concluded a treaty for his ransom at the exorbitant sum of 150,000 marks, about £300,000 of our money; of which sum two-thirds

were to be paid before he received his liberty, and sixty-seven hostages delivered for the remainder. The captivity of the superior lord was one of those cases provided for by the feudal tenures, and all vassals were, in that event, obliged to contribute towards his ransom. Twenty shillings were therefore levied on each knight's fee throughout England; but as this money came in slowly, and was not sufficient for the intended purpose, the voluntary zeal of the people readily supplied the deficiency.

The churches and monasteries melted down their plate to the amount of 30,000 marks; the bishops, abbots, and nobles paid a fourth of their yearly rent; the parochial clergy contributed a tenth of their tithes; and the requisite sum being thus collected, the queen-mother and Walter, Archbishop of Rouen, set out with it to Germany, paid the money to the emperor and the Duke of Austria at Mentz, delivered to them hostages for the remainder, and freed Richard from captivity.⁵⁰

During these important negotiations two messengers arrived at Clitheroe, who in consequence of the deputy's absence for a season, held a secret conference with the Dean of Whalley ere they departed. An order was left that the castle should be forthwith in readiness for the reception of some distinguished guest. In those days tidings travelled slowly in such thinly-populated districts; like the heath-fire, which extends rapidly where the fuel is thickly strewn, but is tardy in spreading where it is less abundant.

The dean, having received the messengers, took special care that the knowledge of their arrival should be kept, if possible, from the ears and eyes of Adam de Dutton, who happened for several days at that season to be hunting in the forest, where a mighty slaughter of game—wolves, bears, and such like—was the result; in which dangerous pastime, Geoffery, the dean's only son, acted a distinguished part. This bold adventurer was accounted the most skilful hunter in the whole range of these vast forests, where the venison was so strictly kept that the life of a man was held in but little estimation, comparatively, with the care and preservation of a beast.

The Deans of Whalley, as we have before seen, were mighty hunters in those days; and a wild and picturesque story is told in Dugdale's *Mon. Angl.* v. i., to which we have before alluded—to wit, that the great-grandfather of the present incumbent, Liwlfus Cutwolp, cut off a wolf's tail whilst hunting, from which he acquired this surname. Geoffery inherited a more than ordinary passion for the chase. With his bow and hunting-spear he had been known to spend many days in these deep and trackless recesses, where the feet of man rarely trod, and the wild roe and the eagle had their almost inaccessible haunts. Adam was often his only companion; the seneschal's partiality for the sport having rendered these dissimilar spirits more akin than their nature had otherwise permitted.

On the evening of a sultry day Ulphilas had thrown himself on his couch, when, without warning or intimation, the Dean of Whalley stood beside him.

"The holy hermit hath betaken himself early to his repose. How fareth he in this hard cell? 'Tis long since we have met."

"Peradventure it might have been longer, had not news travelled to thine ear touching the safety of the Fitz-Eustace and his speedy arrival," said the hermit, without so much as turning his eyes toward his visitor. Robert de Whalley stood silent and aghast. This was a direct and unequivocal testimony to the prescience of the good father, for to no ears but his own had the tidings been communicated.

⁵⁰ Hume.

“Thou knowest of his return?”

“Yes, ere the knowledge was thine,” said the hermit carelessly.

“There is little use in secrecy where the very walls possess a tongue; and seeing that the first part of mine errand is known, it may be thou art as well instructed in the latter, which is the true purport of my visit.”

“I am,” replied the other quickly, now for the first time fixing his eyes on the intruder, “and of the issue too, I trow.”

“Ah!” said the dean, with a long-drawn exclamation of surprise, and a sudden gasp as though he would have held the secret more tightly to his bosom; “and who”—

“Nay, thou art but obeying the impulse of thy nature,” said the hermit, musing. “The brutes ye hunt obey their common instinct—and thou—Yet the ravening wolf and the cunning fox ye follow, and worry to their death.”

“Death!” cried the dean; “what meanest thou?”

“Did I not counsel thee to beware? But thou wilt tumble into thine own pitfall. The trap is laid for thine own feet!”

The hermit sat on the low couch, and he gazed wildly round the cell as though pursuing some object visible only to himself.

“Give me the parchments committed to thy trust by De Lacy, and I will build a house to thy good saint, enriching it with rare endowments.”

“Thou wouldest drive a thrifty bargain with Heaven. Verily thou shouldst have the best on ‘t, though,” replied the hermit, with a contemptuous smile.

“Truly I could but return to Heaven the bounties that it gave; yet would I, peradventure, build, for His honour and glory, to whom all things belong, a habitation, the like whereof hath not been seen for stateliness and grandeur,” said the dean, with affected reverence and humility of spirit.

“Others may do that as well as thou.”

“But will he, whose coming is now at hand, make so costly a sacrifice for the welfare of the Church? I will found an abbey, holy father, consecrate to thy patron, wherein thou shalt be the ruler. I purpose to enrich it with half my possessions, even of those whereby, through thy ministry, I do become entitled from the death of Robert de Lacy.”

“Which meaneth, if I but aid thee to rob another of some large and goodly inheritance, thou wilt give to Heaven, forsooth, a portion of what belongs not to thee.”

“Once thou didst promise me thine aid.”

“To robbery and rapine?”

“I have not wronged *thee*!”

“Nor I”—

“Thou hast; the inheritance is mine; thou hast robbed me of my right, but I will regain these lands or perish on them.”

“And so thou mayest, unblushing traitor.”

“Traitor!—ah! this word to me?”

“Yes, to thee, Robert de Whalley!”

“Thou art in my power, old man; ere I entered thy cell I left a trusty keeper at the door,” cried the dean, with a grin of savage exultation.

“In thy power!—never, miscreant.”

“Give the deed to my keeping, and no harm shall happen thee; refuse, and thou art my prisoner. Force may accomplish my wishes without thy compliance.”

The hermit’s eyes glistened like twin fires in their hollow recesses. He stood erect, confronting his visitor, who, bold in audacity and guilt, repeated his demand.

“Never!” said the hermit.

“Then die, fond dotard!” cried De Whalley; and, sudden as the lightning-stroke, he drew a dagger from his vest, aiming a blow at the hermit’s bosom; but, marvellous to relate, the steel hardly penetrated the folds of his drapery, glancing back with a dull sound, his person remaining uninjured. A look of unutterable scorn curled the features of the charmed, and apparently invulnerable, being before him.

“Cowardly assassin!” he cried, “I hold thy threats at less worth than a handful of this base dust beneath my feet, and utterly defy thy power. I am free as the untrammelled air, and thou mayest as well attempt to grasp the shadow or the sunbeam!”

Swift as the words he uttered the hermit disappeared! The effect was so sudden, aided, in all likelihood, by the dimness and obscurity of the cell, that, to the astonished apprehension of De Whalley, Ulphilas had made himself more impalpable than the air he breathed, sinking like a shadow through the rocky floor.

“Thou hast escaped me, fiend,” said the dean, gnashing his teeth with vexation; “but I will overmatch thy spells: with the aid of this good hand I may yet retrieve the inheritance.”

Saying this, he left the cell, and returned to his home at Whalley.

Early on the morrow the hermit entered the hall where Adam de Dutton was preparing for another expedition to the forest. The seneschal looked uneasy and surprised, but acknowledged his presence with great respect and humility.

“Adam de Dutton, thou hast other work to do,” cried the holy man, “than rambling after these fools i’ the forest! Thy lord will be here anon.”

“How! whom meanest thou?” inquired the castellan, with a vacant stare of astonishment.

“Roger de Fitz-Eustace. He is at hand; see thou prepare to meet him.”

“Surely thou mockest, Roger de”—

“Peace! The last beam of to-morrow’s sun shall see the banner of the Fitz-Eustace beneath the gate.”

“To-morrow! Why—how cometh my lord? Surely thou dreamest—or thy”—

“Once more I warn thee of his coming; see to his reception, or thy lord will be wroth; and Roger with the ready hand was not used to be over-nice, or loth in the administering of a rod to a fool’s back.”

The hermit departed without awaiting the reply.

But great was the stir and tumult in the stronghold of the Lacies on that memorable day. The hurrying to and fro of the victuallers and cooks—the clink of armourers and the din of horses prancing in their warlike equipments—kept up an incessant jingle and confusion. A watchman was stationed on the keep, whose duty it was to give warning when the dust,

curling on the wind, should betoken the approach of strangers. The guards were set, the gates properly mounted, and the drawbridge raised, so that their future lord might be admitted in due form to his possession.

The sun went gloriously down towards the wide and distant verge of the forest, and the brow of Pendle flung back his burning glance. Nature seemed to welter in a wide atmosphere of light, from which there was no escape. Panting and oppressed, the hounds lay basking by the wall, and the shaggy wolf-dog crept, with slouching gait and lolling tongue, from the glare into the shadow of some protecting buttress. The watchman sat beneath the low battlements, hardly able to direct his aching eyes towards the forest path below the hill. The monotony of this dull and weary task was reiterated until the very effort became habitual, and he could scarcely recognise or identify any change of object from the absorption of his faculties by the listlessness it created. One slight curl of dust had already escaped him, another waved softly above the trees where the path wound upwards from the valley. Again it was visible, and the watchman seemed to awaken as from a lethargy or a dream. Strangers were surely approaching, but without retinue, as the wreath of dust, from its slight continuance, would seem to intimate. Just as he came to this conclusion, two horsemen swept into view, where a broad turn of the road was visible, disappearing again rapidly behind the arched boughs of the forest.

Bounding almost headlong down the narrow stair, he ran immediately to the hall, informing the deputy of what he had seen. Scarce had he concluded when a hoarse blast from the horn rang at the outer gate. Adam de Button hurried to the postern, where he saw two horsemen, bearing unequivocal signs of their allegiance to the renowned constable of Chester. They wore what was then considered a great novelty in dress, the tabord or *supertotus*, a sleeveless garment, consisting of only two pieces, which hung down before and behind, the sides being left open.⁵¹ Low-crowned yellow caps covered their heads, and the upper tunic was yellow, richly embroidered, reaching only to the knees. They wore forked beards, well pointed, and gloves and boots of beautiful Spanish leather. Their horses were low, but of an exquisite symmetry, and the beasts were pawing and champing before the gate when Adam hastened down into the courtyard. These were avant couriers or messengers from Roger de Fitz-Eustace, whom they announced as being nigh, and to be expected ere nightfall, with his daughter Maud, a maiden much renowned for her beauty.

As the sun sank deeper into the gloom of the woods, and the shadows grew long on the green and sunny slope of the hill, the wild shrill notes of a clarion rung through the forest glades; a distant burst of martial music was heard, together with the roll of a drum—an instrument borrowed from the Saracens, and in use only after the crusades.

Now went forth Adam de Dutton and his train bareheaded to meet their lord, whom they found riding at a slow pace, conversing familiarly, but attentively, with the Dean of Whalley. Behind him came the blushing Maud on a beautiful white palfrey, and beside her a comely youth, in a fair hunting-suit, the son of De Whalley, who, by his fervid and impassioned glances, showed himself apt in other and nobler exercises than the upland chase and the forest cover could afford.

Roger de Fitz-Eustace, the terror and scourge of the Welsh, and by them called “Hell,” from the great violence and ferocity of his temper, was then about forty years old. He was clothed in a light suit of armour, the hauberk, with the rings set edgewise, reaching down to the knees. His helmet was cylindrical, the *avantaille*, or face-guard, thrown up. He wore a coloured surcoat; a fashion that seems to have originated with the Crusaders, not only for the

⁵¹ Like the knave on playing-cards, who is still depicted in this dress.

purpose of distinguishing the different leaders, but as a veil to protect the armour, so apt to heat excessively when exposed to the direct rays of the sun. It was of a violet colour, without any distinctive mark or badge. His highly-decorated shield was borne behind him, the three garbs and the lions being chiefly conspicuous in the marshalling: the former, the original bearing of Hugh Lupus, was often used by the constables of Chester, in compliment to their chief lord. Its shape was angular, and suspended from the neck by a strap called guige or gige, a Norman custom of great antiquity. A huge broadsword was carried by his armour-bearer, the person of the chief being without any further means of impediment or defence than a French stabbing sword, fastened on one side of his pommel, and a stout battle-axe on the other. The horse was decorated with great and costly profusion. At a short distance rode William de Bellomonte, the baron's inseparable companion. A small train of archers and cross-bowmen brought up the rear of the escort, save the baggage and sumpter horses, laden not only with provisions but cooking utensils, and even with furniture for the household. In those days it was a matter both of economy and necessity for the occupants or lords of several castles to travel with accompaniments of this sort; though possessing many residences, most of them had the means and even conveniences only for the furnishing of one.

The seneschal and his train alighted, doing homage to their lord, who was conducted with great pomp and ceremony into the fortress, now lapsed for ever from the blood and succession of the Lacies; yet Roger de Fitz-Eustace and his descendants, probably in commemoration of the source whence originated their great honours and endowments, were ever afterwards styled by the surname of De Lacy; and, strange as it may appear, his father, John, constable of Chester, who died fifteen years previously to this event, and who founded the Cistercian abbey of Stanlaw, the parent establishment of Whalley, though he had not the slightest pretensions to the name of Lacy, was popularly invested with the name. It is still more singular that the mistake should have been committed by Henry de Lacy, the last of the line of the Fitz-Eustace, third in descent from Roger, in the foundation-charter of Whalley Abbey, where he expressly styles his ancestor "Joh. de Lacy, Const. Cest."

Accompanied by her father and her female attendants, the "gentle" maiden entered the hall. She was stately and beautifully formed, with little show of her lineage except the high forehead and well-formed nose of the Fitz-Eustace. She was enveloped from head to foot in a long gown or habit; over this was cast a richly-embroidered purple silk surcoat or cloak, embellished with those ephemeral absurdities called pocketing-sleeves. These hung from the wrists almost to the ground, showing an opening or pocket which might have supplied the place of a lady's arm-bag in our own era. A wimple or peplus was thrown over the head; a sort of hood, which, instead of covering the shoulders, was brought round the neck beneath the chin like a warrior's gorget, giving an exceedingly stiff and muffled appearance to the upper part of the figure.

Geoffery was unremitting in his attentions, and his father seemed as assiduous in his court to the fierce Crusader, who listened intently to some private intelligence which the dean was evidently much interested in communicating. The following were the only words that could be distinguished at the dismissal of the courteous De Whalley, as he retired a few paces ere he departed:—

"To-morrow be it," said Fitz-Eustace, "after matins, and we will hear thee further in this matter: let him then be conveyed to our presence."

The dean retired, but at dawn he was again present in the chantry of St Michael, within the castle.

Fierce came the beams of the morning sun through the eastern oriel of the hall, and the guards and retainers of this feudal fortress were waiting the appearance of their lord. Lounging idly at the great entrance were those more immediately in attendance on their chief, some playing at *merelles*, or nine-men's morris; others tilting with mimic arms, and twanging the bowstring. The pikemen were drawn up in the courtyard, awaiting orders from their superior. Their glittering weapons flung back the morning light in sharp flashes to the sky; while on the tower the dark pennon hung motionless and drooping in the sultry air.

The news of his arrival had drawn hither not a few of the surrounding peasantry to gaze upon the pomp and to pay homage at the court of their feudal lord; and a crowd of idlers was accumulating beneath the walls of the fortress.

The breakfast meal being over, the baron entered through a side door behind a rude bench, overhung with faded drapery, which formed an elevation for the chief. His cheek was scorched and darkened with the burning suns of Palestine, while his beard seemed to have been whitened in that fiery clime. He was now habited in a rich purple cope or gown, fitting close, without sleeves or armholes, and embellished with a deep gold-coloured border, the Anglo-Saxon mantle being now discarded by persons of distinction. The tunic underneath was of scarlet, bordered with real ermine, which, together with the low square cap or coronet that he wore, gave him something of a regal appearance. A leash of hounds crouched at his feet. Before and below him the heralds and officers of the household arranged themselves, amongst whom Adam de Dutton was conspicuous by his ludicrously-solemn attitude and appearance. The whole scene had the aspect of a military tribunal, especially when Roger de Lacy (by which name we shall now distinguish him) ordered that silence should be proclaimed, and that the Dean of Whalley should be summoned to his presence.

Robert de Whalley immediately presented himself, with arms folded, and an air of great ceremony in his behaviour.

"Thou hast been prompt to our bidding; the lark, I trow, had but newly risen from her bed ere thou wast away from thine," said the baron.

"Three weary miles through this grim forest is good speed ere matins; but I knew the occasion was urgent, and my lord's commands admit not of delay. The palfrey which you so pleasantly noted yestereen is the sole companion of my pilgrimages to and fro for the good of this noble house. I did offer prayers for the soul of the deceased ere matins this morning, in the chapel."

"Hast heard aught of, or communicated with, the traitor thou didst denounce to me privily yesterday?"

"Being holden as one of great sanctity, by common report, peradventure it were dangerous to lay hands on him without an express warranty from our chief."

"He shall be summoned to our court. Adam de Dutton"—

"Stay, my lord," said the wily dean. "I would, with all due submission, urge that caution were best in this matter."

"Caution, De Whalley! and to what end? Are not the Lacies able to execute as well as to command? or is the lax ministration of justice now complained of throughout the realm prevailing here also? By the beard of Hugh Lupus, I will be heard, and obeyed too!"

"In good sooth, my lord, I see nor let nor hindrance in this matter, provided that he whom we seek were of such ordinary capacities that be common to flesh and blood, and subject to the same laws; but when we have to cope with the devil, we must use his subtilty. Pardon me, my

lord,” continued the accuser, seeing symptoms of impatience gathering on the brow of the haughty chieftain, “though I am plain of speech, yet is it the more easily understood. This delinquent of whom we speak hath not, as the general report testifieth, the same nature and existence as our own. He useth magic—I have credible testimony thereto, my lord;—and anointeth his body so that it shall be invisible. The free unconfined air is not more accessible to the scared bird than rocks and walls are to this impalpable mockery of our form; and yet he may be dealt with.”

“Troth, a man of many faculties. How came he thus?”

“The vulgar do imagine that by dint of great maceration and humility, by prayer and fasting, he hath attained communion with angels; but I suspect they be those of the bottomless pit!”

“And why should he withhold the deed?”

“I know not, save that he purposeth by fraud and subtilty to cast these fair possessions into the treasury of the holy church, and build an abbey hereabout, the like whereof hath not been seen for glory and magnificence.”

“Doth he then deny our right to the inheritance? The Lady Fitz-Eustace had a fair copy of the deed, purporting to be sent by the holy confessor who shrived the testator in his extremity. But how hath this canting hermit gotten the writing into his possession?”

“I know not, my lord, unless it be that the like arts have enabled him to appropriate it by other means than those of honesty and good faith. But give me a band of men, together with leave so to deal with him as I shall see fit, and I trust ere long to render a good account of the matter. I will come upon him unawares, ere he can render his body inaccessible, and lay hold of the traitor.”

“Traitor!” echoed a voice from behind a screen at the lower extremity of the hall. Every eye was turned in that direction; when lo! the hermit himself, the end and object of their deliberations, stalked forth, unquestioned and unobstructed.

The baron rose, and his grim eyebrows were fiercely knit and contracted. He looked inquiringly towards the dean, who, for a moment, was confounded by this unexpected event. Yet his presence of mind and fertility of expedient did not forsake him.

“Let him be instantly bound, my lord,” whispered De Whalley, “and holden by main force, or he will escape like a limed bird from the twigs. Let him be led forthwith to the dungeon, where I myself will question him. It is not fitting that this plotter should practise devilish devices upon our assembly.”

At a signal from their chief the soldiers surrounded him; but the hermit, whose features were still hidden by the cowl, took hold of the foremost, and with an incredible strength, dashed him to the ground. The others drew back intimidated.

“Treason, my lord, treason!” cried the dean; “you behold him even in your presence exercising forbidden arts. Away with him to the dungeon! Guards, do your office.”

“Miscreant, beware!” said the hermit. De Whalley, though bold and generally undaunted, started back at the sound.

“What, this lawless intromission to our face, and in our council too?” cried the baron. “Seize that hooded kite, knaves, or I will hang every one o’ ye on the Furca ere the sun be two hours older!”

Roger de Lacy, in a threatening attitude, approached the guards, who now environed the hermit, using more caution than before. Suddenly they rushed upon him, and he was pinioned ere he could make the least resistance.

At this moment, so anxiously hoped for and expected by the dean, the latter pushed towards him. Thrusting his hand into the hermit's bosom, the long-coveted parchment was in his grasp, and in a twinkling it was conveyed to his own.

"How now!" cried the baron, "wherefore in such haste? I trow the deed is ours!"

With a great show of obedience and respect he drew the parchment again from beneath his robe, and holding it cautiously beside him, exclaimed—

"My lord, ere this be read is it not prudent that we convey the traitor to the dungeon, lest by his subtilty the writing be wrested from our grasp?"

The hermit, yet held in close custody of the guards, cried with a loud voice—

"Who is the traitor let the walls of my cell bear witness, when they heard him offer a heavy bribe that this, the only evidence to the right of the Fitz-Eustace, might be destroyed!"

"Fatherest thou the accursed progeny of thine avarice upon me?" cried the dean, apparently indignant at so unjust an accusation.

"Give me the roll," said the constable, "and we will confront him by what he would have withheld. After we have made our own right secure, we adjudge him to his deserts."

The dean was obliged, however unwillingly, to obey; handing forward the parchment, which Roger de Lacy unfolded in the presence of the hermit. But it would be impossible to describe the consternation of the chieftain when he read therein a formal grant, bequeathing the whole of these vast possessions to Robert de Whalley and his heirs for ever.

The dean, apparently with surprise, and a well-feigned indignation at the fraud which the hermit intended to have put upon him, exclaimed—

"I had a grievous suspicion long ago that this hoary hypocrite would play me false; and indeed his great unwillingness to show the deed led me to think that he meditated some deadly wrong."

"But wherefore," inquired the chieftain, "should there be messengers to Halton with news and credentials so explicit that the estate was left without let or encumbrance to the Lady Fitz-Eustace? A web of mystery is here which we will speedily unravel. Who gave thee this deed? and wherefore shouldest thou conceal it?" said he, addressing the hermit.

"Roger de Fitz-Eustace," replied the prisoner, "thine honour is abused. That lying instrument was never in my charge."

"Why hast thou refused to render up the deed?"

"Lest it should fall into the hands of robbers, and thou shouldest be cheated of thine inheritance. This traitor hath long had an eye to the possession."

"'Tis his," returned the constable, sternly, "by this good title."

"'Tis a fraud—a base attempt put forth by this cut-purse to wrest it from thee. Search him, and if thou findest not another, and of a different tenor, hidden about his goodly person, let me die a traitor's death."

"I see not that our power hath need of such a pleasant exercise. Thou art accused by him of treachery; and verily 'tis a vain attempt to rid thee of the charge to throw back the accusation upon him thou hast wronged."

"My Lord de Fitz-Eustace," said the dean,—but Roger looked displeased at this style and address, reminding him so soon of the departure of his lately-assumed title De Lacy,—"your ear and mine have been too long abused by this plotting wizard. He is now subject to my authority. Hereby do I assume my rights, and arraign the culprit before my tribunal."

The ambitious churchman approached the judgment-seat, whereon he was just ascending; but the hermit, with a desperate effort, burst from his bonds, and ere the guards could arrest him, he had grasped his adversary by the throat.

"Traitor, I warned thee beforetime. Now will I unrobe thy villany to its very nakedness."

The hermit, thrusting one hand beneath the garment of his victim, drew forth the real deed, which had been dexterously exchanged by the wily priest for his own fraudulent imposture. He then loosened his grasp, and placed the real instrument in the hands of the baron.

"'Tis a forgery—a base disposal of my rights," roared out the infuriate and detected hypocrite.

But Roger de Lacy immediately saw that the deed was to a similar purport with the copy which had been sent by some unknown hand, immediately on the death of the testator, to Halton Castle.

With a look of devouring and terrible indignation he cried out—

"Though thou wert the holy pontiff himself, and all the terrors of the Church were at thy command, thou shouldst not escape my vengeance, thou daring priest! To the Furca!—his offence is repugnant to my nostrils—'tis rank with treason!"

"Hold!" cried the mysterious hermit; "I have promised him protection, nor shall the promise be foregone."

"Thou!" cried the warrior, with unfeigned astonishment; "and who art thou that seemest here the arbiter of destiny, whether good or evil?"

"A sinful but heaven-destined man," replied the hermit, meekly.

"Our vengeance slumbereth not," said the chief; "the sentence is gone forth, and he dies ere sunset."

"Not so," replied the hermit, again assuming the attitude of command.

"By the beard of Hugh Lupus, he dieth."

"He doth, but not by thy decree."

"How! methinks the fever of disloyalty hath seized you all: the infection hath so tainted your nature that a skilful leech, whom I employ in cases of emergency, will be of service—my headsman, or hangman, as shall seem most fitting. He dies, I tell thee, though the saints themselves were interceding."

"I have promised," said the hermit again, with the confidence of careless superiority.

Adam de Dutton, who had hitherto been waiting anxiously for an opportunity to communicate with his lord, now whispered something in his ear.

"How!" said the bewildered chieftain; "'tis said thou wearest the badge of our house, and art thyself under some surreptitious disguise."

“I wear no disguise,” returned the hermit calmly; “what thou seest is my badge, and will be, Heaven permitting, until I die.”

“Who art thou?”

“A sinful mortal like thyself; but worn down with long vigils and maceration. Lord of as wide inheritance as thou, and yet a tenant only in a narrow cell!”

“Thou speakest riddles;—thy meaning?”

“I was an outcast, though heir to a vast heritage. I vowed that if He, whose prerogative it is, would cleanse me from my stains, my life should thenceforth be His, and consecrate to Heaven. I was a leper; but my prayer was heard. I washed in yonder holy well which gushes from the rock, whose virtues had been reported to me. Washing daily, with faith and prayer, I was healed. I found close by a convenient hermitage; and many caverns and secret chambers, with hidden passages and communications, had been dug therefrom, by which I could pass to and fro, and thus visit the castle unseen. I was the confessor and companion of Robert de Lacy. At my desire, he left the whole of his domains to the Fitz-Eustace. But thou art not the eldest-born of thy father.”

“My eldest brother has long been dead. He was a leper; his cruel disease drove him from the haunts of men. The last we knew of him, he went forth with cup and clapper as they are wont. Soon after news arrived of his decease.”

“Was he not driven forth by rude and cruel taunts, the rather?” said the hermit, gazing with unaverted eye on the haughty chieftain. “This noble birth and heritage are mine! Behold, ‘tis thus I repay your injustice!”

He threw off his cloak; underneath appeared a complete suit of proof armour, and a surcoat, on which was emblazoned the badge of the Fitz-Eustace.

“I am Richard Fitz-Eustace, thine elder brother! Nay, put off that brow of discontent. I claim not my birthright; the vows of Heaven are upon me, and to thee and thine will this good inheritance devolve. One right only do I claim—this prisoner is free. Was he not my stay and sustenance when the fiat of Heaven guided me hither? He sheltered me, and had pity on mine infirmity. Moreover, he had some well-founded expectancy towards these domains, by reason of kindred to the Lacies, had they not been devised by will to the Fitz-Eustace. His blood is noble as our own. He thinks there is injustice in the deed, but not to him shall the atonement come. Thou hast a daughter, and my prescience hath this consequence, that by her this rankling wound shall be healed. If so be that he have found favour in her sight, let her and the son of this ambitious priest be joined together in the bonds of holy wedlock; for my word is gone forth—his blood mingles with ours.”

The whole assembly were aghast with this thrilling discovery. The baron would have embraced his brother; but the gloomy ascetic forbade. He left the hall, returned to his cell, and but a short period elapsed ere the grave he had prepared with his own hands was closed over his corpse—the period of his sojourn having been shortened, no doubt, by the austerities and mortifications he deemed himself called upon to endure.

Maud was shortly afterwards united to Geoffery de Whalley, unto whom her father granted the Villa de Tunley or Townley, and the manor of Coldcoats, with Snodworth, as a marriage portion. From them is descended the present owner of Townley, nephew to that celebrated scholar and antiquary, Charles Townley, the twenty-ninth in descent from Spartlingus, the first Dean of Whalley upon record. The latter was predecessor to Cutwulph, whose exploits in the days of Canute we have before noticed.

Soon afterwards died Robert de Whalley, his departure hastened, it is said, by grief and chagrin at the loss of these long-coveted possessions.

Roger de Lacy died 1st October A.D. 1211, after a long and active life, spent between his arduous wars and invasions of the Welsh, and his no less arduous journeyings to and fro between the castles of Clitheroe and Pontefract, where he spent the latter part of his days. He was succeeded by John de Lacy, his eldest son, who, by marriage with Margaret, daughter and co-heiress of Robert, son of De Quincy, Earl of Winchester, became Earl of Lincoln by patent from Henry III., the monarch having re-granted this title to him and his heirs for ever.

XXII. The Grey Man Of The Wood; Or, The Secret Mine

“Humph. Say, what art thou that talk’st of kings and queens?”

K. Hen. More than I seem, and less than I was born to;

A man at least, for less I should not be;

And men may talk of kings, and why not I?

Humph. Ay, but thou talk’st as if thou wert a king.

K. Hen, Why, so I am, in mind, and that’s enough.

Humph. But if thou be a king, where is thy crown?”

—King Henry VI.

Waddington Hall, the site of the following legend, says Pennant, “is a stone house, with some small ancient windows, and a narrow winding staircase within, now inhabited by several poor families; yet it formerly gave shelter to a royal guest. The meek usurper, Henry VI., after the battle of Hexham, in 1463, was conveyed into this county, where he was concealed by his vassals for an entire twelvemonth, notwithstanding the most diligent search was made after him. At length he was surprised at dinner at Waddington Hall, and taken near Bungerley Hippingstones in Clitherwood. The account which Leland gives from an ancient chronicle concurs with the tradition of the country, that he was deceived—*i.e.* betrayed—by Thomas Talbot, son and heir to Sir Edmund Talbot, of Bashal, and John his cousin, of Colebry. The house was beset; but the king found means to get out, ran across the fields below Waddow Hall, and passed the Ribble, on the stepping-stones, into a wood on the Lancashire side, called Christian Pightle, but being closely pursued, was there taken. From hence he was carried to London, in the most piteous manner, on horseback, with his legs tied to the stirrups. Rymer has preserved the grant of a reward for this service, of the estates of Sir Richard Tunstall, a Lancastrian, to Sir James Harrington, by Edward IV., dated from Westminster, July 9th, 1465.”

At that time Waddington belonged to the Tempests, who inherited it by virtue of the marriage of their ancestor, Sir Roger, in the reign of Edward I., with Alice, daughter and heiress of Walter de Waddington. An alliance had just been made between the Tempests and the Talbots. It may be presumed, that in order to save their estates (which they afterward were suffered quietly to possess), they agreed with Sir James to give up the saintly monarch, which was the reason that the latter had the reward for what the grant calls “his great and laborious diligence in taking our great traitor and rebel, Henry, lately called Henry VI.”

Far different was the conduct of Sir Ralph Pudsey, of Bolton Hall, where the king was concealed for some months prior to his appearance at Waddington. Quitting Bolton, probably from some apprehension that his retreat was in danger of being discovered, he left behind him the well-known relics which are still shown to the curious. These are a pair of boots, a pair of gloves, and a spoon. The boots are of fine brown Spanish leather, lined with deer-skin, tanned with the fur on; about the ankles is a kind of wadding under the lining, to keep out wet. They have been fastened by buttons from the ankle to the knee; the feet are remarkably small (little more than eight inches long); the toes round, and the soles, where they join to the heel, contracted to less than an inch in diameter.

The gloves are of the same material, and have the same lining; they reach up, like women’s gloves, to the elbow; but have been occasionally turned down, with deer-skin outward. The

hands are exactly proportioned to the feet, and not larger than those of a middle-sized woman. In an age when the habits of the great, in peace as well as war, required perpetual exertions of bodily strength, this unhappy prince must have been equally contemptible from corporeal and from mental imbecility.⁵²

A well adjoining to Bolton Hall still retains his name. He is said to have ordered it to be dug and walled round for a bath; and it is much venerated by the country people to this day, who fancy that many remarkable cures have been wrought there.

It is not generally recorded that the science of alchemy was much encouraged by the royal visionary. Though he had commissioned three adepts to make the precious metals, and had not received any returns, his credulity remained unshaken, and he issued a pompous grant in favour of three other alchemists, who boasted that they could not only transmute metals, but could impart perpetual youth, with unimpaired powers both of mind and body, by means of a specific called the *Mother and Queen of Medicines, the Celestial Glory, the Quintessence or Elixir of Life*. In favour of these “three lovers of the truth, and haters of deception,” as they styled themselves, Henry dispensed with the law passed by his grandfather, Henry IV., against the undue multiplication of gold and silver, and empowered them to transmute the precious metals. This extraordinary commission had the sanction of Parliament; and two out of the three adepts were the heads of Lancashire families—viz., Sir Thomas Ashton of Ashton, and Sir Edmund Trafford of Trafford. These worthy knights obtained a patent for changing metals, 24 Hen. VI. The philosophers, probably imposing upon themselves as well as others, kept the king’s expectation wound up to the highest pitch; and in the following year he actually informed his people that the happy hour was approaching when, by means of the *stone*, he should *be able to pay off his debts*⁵³

With regard to the prophecy or denunciation made by him against the Talbots, recorded in our legend, Dr Whitaker observes,—“Something like these hereditary alternations of sense and folly might have happened, and have given rise to a prophecy fabricated after the event; a real prediction to this effect would have negated the words of Solomon,—‘Yea, I have hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me; and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?’

“This, however, is not the only instance in which Henry is reported to have displayed that singular faculty, the *Vaticinium Stultorum*.”⁵⁴

In 798, this place was noted for the defeat of Wada, the Saxon chief, by Aldred, king of Northumberland. He was one of the petty princes who joined the murderers of King Ethelred. After this overthrow he fled to his castle, on a hill near Whitby, and dying, was interred not far from the place. Two great pillars, about twelve feet asunder, mark the spot, and still bear the name of “Wada’s Grave.”

It was on a bright and glorious summer evening, in the year 1464, while the red glare of sunset was still in the west, and a wide blush of purple passed rapidly over the distant fell and the blue and heath-clad mountain, that a group of labourers were returning from their daily toil through the forest glades that skirt the broad and beautiful Ribble below Waddow. Some of them were of that class called hinds, paying the rents of their little homesteads by stated periods of service allotted to each; in this respect differing but little from the serfs and villains of a more remote era, their toil not a whit less irksome, though their liberty, in name at least, was less under the control and caprice of their lord.

⁵² Whitaker’s *Craven*.

⁵³ Pennant.

⁵⁴ *Hist. Whalley*.

Two of the peasants loitered considerably behind the rest, seemingly engrossed by a conversation too interesting or too important for the ears of their companions. The elder of the speakers was clad in a coarse woollen doublet; a belt of untanned leather girt his form; and on his head was a cap of grey felt, without either rim or band. His gait was heavy and slouching. Strong, tall, and muscular, he stooped considerably; but less through age and infirmity than from the laborious nature of his occupations. His companion, younger and more vivacious, was distinguished by a goodly and well-thriven hump, and by that fulness and projection of the chest which usually characterise this species of deformity. His long arms nearly trailed to the ground as he walked; huge and sprawling, they seemed to have been originally intended as an attachment to a frame of much more gigantic proportions. His face had that peculiar form and expression which always, more or less, accompany this kind of malformation. Wide, large, angular; the chin sharp and projecting, supported on the breast; the whole head scarcely rivalling the shoulders in height and obliquity. His disposition was evidently wayward and irascible, and a keen satirical humour lurked in every line of his pallid visage; generally at war with his species, and ready to act on the defensive; snarling whenever he was approached, and always anticipating gibe and insult from his fellows.

“Weary, weary,—ay, as a tom-fool at a holiday feast,” said the hunchback to his companion. “Spade and axe have I lifted these twenty years, and what the better am I o’ the labour? A groat’s worth of wit is worth a pound o’ sweat,’ as my dame says. I’ll turn pedlar some o’ these days, and lie, and cheat, and sell.”

“Ay, Gregory,” interrupted the other, “thee’d sell thy own paws, if so be they’d fetch a groat i’ the market; but then, I warrant, the dame at the hall would lack her henchman at the churn.”

“Tut! I care for nought living but my worthless carcase,” replied the hunchback, surveying his own person. “Why should I? there’s nought living that cares for me. Sure as fate, if a’ waur dead beside, we’d ha’ curran’ baws i’ the pot every day. What a murrain is it to this hungry maw whether Ned Talbot, or Joe Tempest, or any other knave o’ the pack, tumbles into his berth, or is put to bed wi’ the shovel, a day sooner or later. He maun budge some time. Faugh! how I hate your whining—your cat-a-whisker’d faces, purring and mewling, while parson Pudsay says grace over the cold carrion; he cares not if it waur hash’d and stew’d i’ purgatory, so that he gets the shrift-money. Out upon’t, Ralph, out upon it! this mattock should delve a’ the graves i’ the parish, if I could get a tester more i’ my fist.”

“Thou murdering tyke! wouldst dig my grave?”

“Ay,” shouted Gregory with a grin, displaying a huge double crescent of white teeth, portals to a gulf, grim, hideous, and insatiable; “ay, for St Peter’s penny.”

“And leave me to knock at the gate, and never a doit to pay the porter?”

“Thou shouldst cry and howl till doomsday, though my pouch had the keeping of a whole congregation of angels.

“Keep out o’ my way, cub—unlicked brute!” cried the infuriate Ralph; “keep back, I say, or I may send thee first on thine errand to St Peter. Take that, knave, and”—

But the malicious hunchback stepped aside, and the blow, aimed with a hearty curse at this provoking lump of deformity, fell with a murderous force upon a writhen stem, which bore witness to the willing disposition with which the stroke was dealt. Gregory was laughing and mocking all the while at the impotent wrath of his companion.

“A groat’s worth for a penny, I’m not yet boun’ for St Peter’s blessing, though, old crump-face!” cried the learing impertinent, one thumb between his teeth, and the little finger thrust out in its most expressive form of derision and contempt.

“Hush—softly, prithee,” said the offended party, his anger all at once under the influence of a more powerful feeling. He stood still, in the attitude of listening, earnestly bending forward with great solicitude and attention.

He pointed to some object just visible through the arches of the wood, in the dim twilight.

“There is the grey man o’ the mine again, as I live, Gregory; we’d best turn back, for our companions are gone out of hearing.” The terrified rustic was preparing for immediate flight, but Gregory caught him by the belt.

“How now! stand to thy ground, man,” said he; “I’ve had speech at him not long ago. We came upon one another suddenly, to be sure, and I could not well escape, so I stood still. He did the same, shook his pale and saintly face, and, with a wave o’ the hand, bade me pass on.”

“But look thee,” replied the other, “I’m bodily certain he walks without a shadow at his tail. See at that big tree there; why, the boughs bend before he touches ‘em, like as they were stricken wi’ the wind. I declare if the very trees don’t step aside as if they’re afraid of him. I’ll not tarry here, good man.”

Disengaging himself from the other’s gripe, Ralph ran through the wood in an opposite direction, and was soon out of sight. A loud shout from Gregory followed him as he fled, which only served to quicken his speed; and the hunchback was left alone. The figure which was the moving cause of this cowardly apprehension almost immediately disappeared behind a projecting crag, at the base of which grew a thick skirting of underwood; but Gregory pursued cautiously in the same direction. He had heard strange stories of demons guarding heaps of treasure; and it was currently reported that in former times a mine had been secretly worked in these parts for fear of discovery; all mines yielding gold and silver, so as to leave a profit from the working, being considered as “mines royal,” and regarded as the property of the king.⁵⁵ Gregory’s prevailing sin was avarice; and oftentimes this vice put on the

⁵⁵ Webster, in his *Metallographia*, mentions a field called Skilhorn, in the township of Rivington-within-Craven, “belonging to one Mr Pudsay, an ancient esquire, and owner of Bolton Hall, juxta Bolland; who, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, did get good store of silver-ore, and convert it to his own use, or rather coined it, as many do believe, there being many shillings marked with an escallop, which the people of that country call Pudsay shillings to this day. But whether way soever it was, he procured his pardon for it, and had it, as I am certified from the mouths of those who had seen it.” Webster further adds: “While old Basby (a chemist) was with me, I procured some of the ore, which yielded after the rate of twenty-six pounds of silver per ton. Since then, good store of lead has been gotten; but I never could procure any more of the sort formerly gotten; the miners being so cunning, that if they meet with any vein that contains so much ore as will make it a myne royall, they will not discover it.”

Dr Whitaker, in his *History of Craven*, says: “The following papers, lately communicated to me from the evidences of the Pudsays, put the matter out of doubt:—‘Case of a myne royall. Although the gold or silver contained in the base metall of a mine in the land of a subject be of less value than the baser metall, yet if gold and silver doe countervaille the charge of refining, or bee of more value than the baser metall spent in refining itt, this is a myne royall, and as *wel the base metall* as the gold and silver in it, belongs to the crown.

“Edw. Herbert, Attorney-General.

Oliver St John, Solicitor-General.

Orl. Bridgman.

Joh. Glanvill.

Jeoffry Palmer.

Tho. Lane.

Jo. Maynard.

Hdw. Hyde.

J. Glynn.

Harbottle Grimstone,’ &c.

“So favourable at that time were the opinions of the most constitutional lawyers (for such were the greater part of these illustrious names) to the prerogative. But the law on this head has been very wisely altered by two statutes of William and Mary.—Blackstone, iv. 295.

appearance of courage, by rendering him daring for its gratification, though at heart a coward. He thought that if the treasure were once within his grasp neither man nor demon should regain it.

For a short time past this part of the forest had been commonly reported as the haunt of a spectre, in the likeness of a man clad in grey apparel, who by some was supposed to be an impalpable exhalation from a concealed mine existing in the neighbourhood. It is well known that these places are generally guarded by some covetous demon, who, though unable to apply the treasures to their proper use, yet strives to hinder any one else from gaining possession.

Gregory had once encountered it unexpectedly, face to face, but he did not then follow—surprise and timidity preventing him. He, however, resolved that, should another opportunity occur, he would track the spectre to its haunt, and by that means find out the opening and situation of the mine.

He now crept slowly towards the crag, behind which the figure had retired. Looking cautiously round the point, he again saw the dim spectral form only a few yards distant. Suddenly he heard a low whistle, and the next moment the mysterious figure had disappeared—not a vestige could be traced. He thrust his huge head between the boughs for a more uninterrupted survey, but nothing was seen, save the bare escarpment of the rock, and the low bushes, behind which the phantom had, a moment before, been visible. Though somewhat daunted, he crept closer to the spot, but darkness was fast closing around him, and the search was fruitless.

“Humph!” said the disappointed treasure-hunter audibly; “daylight and a stout pole may probe the mystery to the bottom. I’ll mark this spot.”

“Mark this spot,” said another voice at some distance, repeating his words like an echo. The rock was certainly within “striking distance,” and it might have been this accident which lent its aid to the delusion.

Gregory could not withstand so apparently supernatural an occurrence. He took to his heels, driven fairly off the field; nor did he look behind him until safely entrenched before a blazing fire in the kitchen at Waddington Hall.

“Out, ill-favoured hound!” said a serving wench, who was stirring a blubbering mess of porridge for supper. But Gregory was not in the humour to reply: he sat with one long lean hand under his chin, the other hung down listlessly to his heels, which were drawn securely under the stool on which he sat. His thoughts were not on the victuals, though by long use and instinct his eyes were turned in that direction.

“Thee art ever hankering after the brose, thou greedy churl!” continued the wench, wishful to goad him on to some intemperate reply.

But Gregory was still silent. At this unwonted lack of discourse, Janet, who generally contrived to bring his long tongue into exercise, was not a little astonished. It needed no great wit, any time, to set him a-grumbling; for neither kind word nor civil speech had he for kith or kin, for man or maid.

“The other paper is of later date:—’To the King’s most excellent Majestie. The humble petition of Ambrose Pudsay, Esq., sheweth, that your petitioner having suffered much by imprisonment, plunder, &c., for his bounden loyalty, and having many years concealed a myne royall, in Craven, in Yorkshire, prayeth a patent for digging and refining the same.’”

Looking steadfastly towards him, she struck her dark broad fists upon her hips, and, in a loud and contemptuous laugh, abruptly startled the cynic from his studies. He eyed her with a grin of malice and vexation.

“Thou she-ape, I wonder what first ye’arn made for; the plague o’ both man and beast,—the worst plague that e’er Pharaoh waur punished wi’. Screech on; I’ll ha’ my think out, spite o’ thy caterwauling.”

“Thou art a precious wonder, Master Crab. Squirt thy verjuice, when thou art roasting, some other way. I wonder what man-ape thy mother watch’d i’ the breeding. She had been special fond o’ children, I bethink me.”

“And what knowest thou o’ my dame’s humours, thou curl-crop vixen?” said Gregory, unwarily drawn forth again from his taciturnity. “How should her inclinations be subject to thy knowledge?”

“She rear’d thee!” was the reply.

Two other hinds belonging to the household, who were watching the issue of the contest, here joined in a loud clamour at the victory; and Gregory, dogged with baiting, became silent, scowling defiance at his foe.

Waddington Hall was at that period a building of great antiquity. Crooks, or great heavy arched timbers, ascending from the ground to the roof, formed the principal framework of the edifice, not unlike the inverted hull of some stately ship. The whole dwelling consisted of a thorough lobby and a hall, with a parlour beyond it, on one side, and the kitchens and offices on the other. The windows were narrow, scarcely more than a few inches wide, and, in all probability, not originally intended to contain glass.

The chimneys and fireplaces were wide and open; the apartments, except the hall, low, narrow, and inconvenient, divided by partitions of oak, clumsy, and ill-carved with many strange and uncouth devices. The hall was, on the right of the entrance, lighted by one long low window; a massy table stood beneath. The fireplace was on the opposite side, occupying nearly the whole breadth of the chamber. A screen of wainscot partitioned off the lobby, carved in panels of grotesque workmanship. Beyond the hall was the parlour, furnished as usual with an oaken bedstead, standing upon a ground-floor paved with stone. In this dormitory, the timbers of which were of gigantic proportions, slept Master Oliver and Mistress Joan Tempest,—the latter not a little given to that species of uxorious domination which most wives, when they apply themselves heartily to its acquisition, rarely fail to usurp.

“Here,” says Dr Whitaker (this being the general style of building for centuries, and scarcely, if at all, deviated from),—“here the first offspring of our forefathers saw the light; and here too, without a wish to change their habits, fathers and sons in succession resigned their breath. It is not unusual to see one of these apartments now transformed into a modern drawing-room, where a thoughtful mind can scarcely forbear comparing the past and present,—the spindled frippery of modern furniture, the frail but elegant apparatus of a tea-table, the general decorum, the equal absence of everything to afflict or to transport, with what has been heard, or seen, or felt, within the same walls,— the logs of oak, the clumsy utensils, and, above all, the tumultuous scenes of joy or sorrow, called forth, perhaps, by the birth of an heir, or the death of an husband, in minds little accustomed to restrain the ebullitions of passion.

“Their system of life was that of domestic economy in perfection. Occupying large portions of his own domains; working his land by oxen; fattening the aged, and rearing a constant supply of young ones; growing his own oats, barley, and sometimes wheat; making his own

malt, and furnished often with kilns for the drying of corn at home, the master had pleasing occupation in his farm, and his cottagers regular employment under him. To these operations the high troughs, great garners and chests, yet remaining, bear faithful witness. Within, the mistress, her maid-servants, and daughters, were occupied in spinning flax for the linen of the family, which was woven at home. Cloth, if not always manufactured out of their own wool, was purchased by wholesale, and made up into clothes at home also.”⁵⁶

This is a true picture of the simple habits of our ancestors, and will apply, with little variation, to the scene before us.

Here might be seen the carved “armoury,”—the wardrobe, bright, clean, and even magnificent. On the huge rafters hung their usual store of dried hams, beef, mutton, and flitches of bacon. In the store-room, great chests were filled to the brim with oatmeal and flour. All wore the aspect of plenty, and an hospitality that feared neither want nor diminution.

In one corner of the hall at Waddington sat Mistress Joan, her only daughter Elizabeth, and two or three female domestics.

They had been spinning, trolling out the while their country ditties with great pathos and simplicity.

Being nigh supper-time, the group were just loitering in the twilight ere they separated for the meal.

“Come, Elizabeth,” said her mother, “lay thy gear aside; the strawberries are in the bowl, and the milk is served. Supper and to bed, and a brisk nap while morning.”

The dame who addressed her was a perfect specimen of the good housewife in the fifteenth century. She wore a quilted woollen gown, open before, with pendant sleeves, and a long narrow train; a corset, fitted close to the body, unto which the petticoats were attached, and a boddice laced outside. She wore the horned head-dress so fashionable towards the close of the fourteenth century, and at that time still in use, giving the head and face no slight resemblance to the ace of hearts. An apron was tied on with great care, ornamented with embroidery of the preceding century. Her complexion, was dark but clear, and her eyebrows high and well-arched. Her mouth was drawn in, raised slightly on one side,—a conformation more particularly apparent when engaged in scolding the maids, or in other similar but indispensable occupations.

Her gait was firm, and her person upright. Her age—ungallant historians we must be—was verging closely upon sixty; yet her hair, turned crisp and full behind her head-dress, showed slight symptoms of the chill which hoar and frosty age, sooner or later, never fails to impart.

Elizabeth Tempest was young, but of a staid and temperate aspect, almost approaching to that of melancholic. Her complexion, pale and sallow; her eye full, dark, and commanding, though occasionally more languor was on it than eyes of that colour are wont to express. She wore a long jacket of russet colour, and a crimson boddice. Her hair, turned back from her brow, hung in dark heavy ringlets below the neck, which, though not of alabaster, was exquisitely modelled. In person she was tall and well-shapen, and her whole manner displayed a mind of no ordinary proportions. She was well-skilled in household duties, her mother having an especial desire that her daughter should be as notable and thrifty as herself in domestic arrangements.

⁵⁶ *Hist. of Whalley*, p. 504.

“Elizabeth,” or “Elspet,” as she was indiscriminately called, cared little about her reputation touching these important functions. She could sing most of the wild legendary ballads of the time; her rich full voice had in it a sadness ravishingly tender and expressive, more akin to woe, and the deep untold agony of the spirit, than to lightness and mirth, in which she rarely indulged.

“Give us one of thy ditties ere supper,” said the dame, who was just then laying aside her implements in the work-press. “I wonder thy father does not return. The roofs of Bashall ring with louder cheer than our own, I trow. He is playing truant for the nonce, which is dangerous play at best.”

“Is he now at our cousin Talbot’s?” inquired the maiden, with a look of more than ordinary interest.

“If he be not on the way back again,” returned the dame, as though wishful to repress inquiry.

“The woods are not safe so late and alone. Comes he alone, mother?”

“Alone! Ay,—and why spierest thou?” The dame looked wistfully, though but for a moment, on her daughter; then changing her tone, as if to recommend a change of subject, she cried—

“Come, ha’ done, Elspet; we will wait no longer than grace be said. Now to thy song.”

The maiden began as follows:—

1.”There sits three ravens on yon tree,
Heigho!

There sits three ravens on yon tree,
As black, as black, as they can be.
Heigho, the derry, derry, down, heigho.

2.”Says the first raven to the other,
Heigho!
Says the first raven to the other,
‘We’ll go and eat our feast together.’
Heigho, &c.

3.”‘It’s down in yonder grass-grown field,
Heigho!
It’s down in yonder grass-grown field,
There lies a dead knight just new killed.’
Heigho, &c.

4.”There came a lady full of woe,
Heigho!
There came a lady full of woe,
And her hands she wrung, and her tears did flow.
Heigho, &c.

5.”She saw the red blood from his side,
Heigho!
She saw the red blood from his side,—
‘And it was for me my true love died!’
Heigho, &c.

6.”‘Oh, cruel was my brother’s sword,
Heigho!
Oh, cruel, cruel, was his sword,
But sharper the edge of one scornful word.’
Heigho, &c.

7. She laid her on his bosom cold,
 Heigho!
 She laid her on his bosom cold,
 While adown his cheek her tears they rolled.
 Heigho, &c.
 8. "No word she spake, but one sob gave she,
 Heigho!
 No word she spake, but one sob gave she:
 Said the ravens, 'Another feast have we,
 And long shall thy rest and thy slumbers be.'
 Heigho, the derry, derry, down, heigho!"

At the concluding stanza in walked Oliver Tempest, who, as if to avoid notice, sat down, without uttering a word, in a dark corner at the opposite side of the hall. He looked moody, and wishful to be alone. Joan, for a while, forbore to interrupt his reverie, and the females finished their evening repast in silence.

"Is Sir Thomas Talbot yet returned from the Harringtons?" inquired the dame soon after, with an air of assumed carelessness.

"He returned an hour only ere I departed."

Another pause ensued.

"And his son Thomas, comes he back from the Pudsays of Bolton? Does the gentle Florence⁵⁷ look on him kindly, or is the wedding yet delayed?"

"I know not," was the brief reply. After a short pause he continued—"The wanderer has left Bolton, I learn, and, 'tis said, he bides at Whalley."

Here he cast a furtive look at the domestics, and then at his wife, as though wishful to ascertain if others had understood this intimation.

"Nay, some do boldly affirm that he has been seen i' these very woods," continued he, lowering his voice to a whisper.

"Which Heaven forefend!" said the wary dame. "I would not that he should draw us down with him to the same gulf wherein his fortune is o'erwhelmed. No luck that woman ever brought him from o'er sea, and now she's gone"—

"They say that she hath escaped to Flanders," said Oliver, hastily interrupting her.

"I wish he had been so fortunate," said the dame; "what says our cousin Talbot?"

"Hush, dame; our plans are not yet ripe. But more of this anon."

Elizabeth listened with more interest than usual. Every word was eagerly devoured, and with the last sentence she could not forbear inquiring—

"And Edmund?—surely Edmund Talbot is not"—

"What?" sternly inquired her father; "what knowest thou of—? Said I aught whereby thou shouldst suspect us?"

⁵⁷ This lady, whose attractions or good fortune must have been uncommon, says the historian of Craven, was daughter to Henry Pudsay of Bolton. She married, first, Sir Thomas Talbot of Bashall, who died 13 Henry VII.; after which she became the second wife of Henry, Lord Clifford, the shepherd; and, after his decease, by the procurement of Henry VIII., gave her hand to Richard Grey, youngest son of Thomas, Marquis of Dorset.

“Hush, thou foolish one,” said the more cautious dame; “thy thought alone was privy to it, and so no more. There be others listening.”

The moonbeams now crept softly into the chambers, whither, too, crept the weary household; the master and his wife remaining for a short time together in the hall, apparently in earnest discussion. But Elizabeth retired not to her couch. She passed softly through the courtyard, looking round as though in search of some individual. This proved to be the hunchback Gregory, whom she found esconced behind a peat-stack in marvellous profundity of thought. With a soft step, and one finger raised to her lips, she gently tapped him upon the shoulder.

Looking round, he saw her gesture and was silent.

“Gregory, art thou honest?” she inquired, in a whisper.

“Why, an’ it be, Mistress Elspeth, when it suits with my discretion; that is, if discretion be none the worse for it, eh?”

“Thou art ever so, Gregory; and yet”—

“If ye want honesty, eschew a knave, and catch a fool by the cap. None but fools worry and distemper themselves with this same pale-faced whining jade, that will leave ‘em i’ the lurch at a pinch, Dame Honesty, forsooth. More wit, more wisdom; and there is a plentiful lack of wit in your honest folk,” continued the cynic, as though pursuing a train of thought to its ultimate development.

“Gregory, thou art not the rogue thee seems. I think beneath that rough and captious speech there lurks more honesty than thou art willing to acknowledge. Thou hast been angered with baiting until thou wouldst run at every dog that comes into the paddock, though he fawned on thee, and were never so trusty and well-behaved.”

Gregory was silent. He looked upwards to the bright moon and the quenched orbs that lay about her path. Again Elizabeth whispered, first looking cautiously around—

“Wilt do me a service?”

“Ay, for hire,” he quickly answered.

“If thine errand is done faithfully, thou mayest get more largess than thou dream’st of.”

“Ye want a spoon belike, that ye soil not your delicate fingers?”

“Ay, Gregory, an’ thou wilt, we ‘ll first use thee.”

“And then the spoon shall be broken, I trow. Well, if I am a spoon, I’ll be a golden one, and I shall be worth something when I’m done with. Understand ye this, fair mistress?”

“Yes, knave; and thou shalt have thy reward.”

“What! I shall swing the highest, eh?”

“Peace; I want a messenger. Take this.”

“Not treason, I trow,” said Gregory, as he eyed the billet with a curious but hesitating glance.

“Go by the nearer path to the wood. Where the road divides to the ford and the farther pastures; take the latter, then turn to the right, where the old fir-tree rises above the rock. Walk carefully through the bushes at the base of the crag. Near unto a sharp angle of the rock thy path will be stayed by a fallen tree. Grasp this with both hands, and whistle thrice. I know thou canst be trusty and discreet. Yet remember thy life is in my power shouldst thou fail.” She paused, pointing significantly at the billet. “Now hasten. Bring back, and to me only, what shall be committed to thy care. I will expect thee at my window by midnight.”

Now it so happened that this precise spot was identified to Gregory's apprehensions with the very place where his attention had that night been directed by the mysterious disappearance of the grey man of the mine. He would certainly have preferred making his second visit by daylight; but needs must when a woman drives, especially when that woman is a mistress, and gold is the goad. Besides he might perchance get a glimpse of the treasure; and his pockets were wide and his gripe close. Thus stimulated to the adventure, he addressed himself to perform her behest.

The night was singularly clear, and the shadows lay on his path, still and beautifully distinct. As he hastened onwards the wood grew darker and more impervious. Here and there the moonbeams crept fantastically through the boughs, like fairy lamps glimmering on his path. Sometimes, preternaturally bright, the wood seemed lit up as though for some magic festival. He followed the directions he had received, pausing not until he saw the dark fir-tree rearing its broad crest and gigantic arms into the clear and twinkling heaven. It looked like the guardian genius of the place,—a huge monster lifting its terrific head, as though to watch and warn away intruders. Beside this was the rock where his adventure must terminate.

With more of desperation than courage he scrambled through the bushes. Not daring to look behind him—for he felt as though his steps were dogged, an idea for which he could not account—he made his way with difficulty by the crag until he came to a fallen tree that had apparently tumbled from the rock. Laying hold of the trunk he whistled faintly. It was answered; an echo, or something even more indistinct, gave back the sound. His heart misgave him; but he stood committed to the task, and durst not withdraw. Again he whistled, but louder than before, and again it was repeated. With feelings akin to those of the condemned wretch when he drops the fatal handkerchief, he sounded the last note of the signal. His breath was suspended. Suddenly he felt the ground give way beneath his feet, and he was precipitated into a chasm, dark, and by no means soft at the nether extremity.

This was a reception for which he was not prepared. He had sustained a severe shock; but luckily his bones were whole. Recovering from his alarm, he heard a low jabbering noise, and presently a light, which, it seems, had been extinguished by his clumsiness, was again approaching.

The intruder saw, with indescribable horror, a hideous black dwarf bearing a torch. He was dressed in the Eastern fashion. A soiled turban, torn and dilapidated, and a vest of crimson, showed symptoms of former splendour that no art could restore. This mysterious being came near, muttering some uncouth and unintelligible jargon; while the unfortunate captive, caught like a wolf in a trap, looked round in vain for some outlet whereby to escape. The only passage, except the hole through which he had tumbled, was completely filled by the broad, unwieldy lump of deformity that was coming towards him. The latter now surveyed him cautiously, and at a convenient distance, croaking, in a broken and foreign accent—

“What ho! Prisoner, by queen's grace. Better stop when little door shall open. Steps, look thee, for climb; hands and toes; go to.”

Gregory now saw that steps, or rather holes, were cut in the sides of the pit wherein he had fallen, or rather been entrapped. These he ought to have used when the trap-door was let down; and he remembered his mistress's caution, to hold fast by the tree. There were, however, no means of escape that way, as the door had closed with his descent.

The ugly thing before him was ten times more misshapen than himself; and at any other time this flattering consideration would have restored him to comparative good-humour.

He was not in the mood now to receive comfort from any source. He felt sore and mightily disquieted. Limping aside, he angrily exclaimed—

“Be’st thou the de’il, or the de’il’s footman, sir blackamoor? I’d have thee tell thy master to admit his guests in a more convenient fashion. Hang me, if my bones will not ache for a twelvemonth. My back is almost broke, for certain.”

Here the other bellowed out into a loud laugh, pointing to Gregory’s back, then surveying himself, and evidently with congratulation at his own more imaginary prepossessing appearance.

“Sir knight,” said the black dwarf, “what errand comes to our mighty prince?”

“Tut! if it be his infernal kingship ye mean, I bear not messages to one of his quality.”

“Thee brings writing in thy fist. Go to!”

“From a woman, fallen in love wi’ thee, belike. Well, quit me o’ woman’s favours, say I, if this be of ‘em.”

“Well-a-day, sir page,” cried the grinning Ethiop, whose teeth looked like a double row of pearls set in a border of carnelian, “my mistress be a queen: I do rub the dust on thy ugly nose if that red tongue wag more, for make bad speech of her. Go to, clown!”

“Ill betide thee for a blackamoor ape,” said Gregory, his courage waxing apace when his fears of the supernatural began to subside; “and wherefore? Look thee, Mahound, though my mistress sent me to such a lady-bird as thou art, Master Oliver shall know on’t. Thou hast won her with spells and foul necromancie; but I’ve commandment from him to catch all that be poaching on his lands. Thou art i’ the mine, too, as I do verily guess; therefore I arrest thee i’ the king’s name, as a lifter of his treasure, and a spoiler of our good venison.”

Gregory, being stout-limbed, and of a more than ordinary strength for his size, proceeded forthwith to execute his threat; but the dwarf, with a short shrill scream, gave him a sudden trip, which again laid the officious dispenser of justice prostrate, without either loosing the torch from his hand, or seeming to use more exertion than would have thrown a child.

“Ah, ah, there be quits. Lie still; go to; lick thy paws. Know, dog, I’m body to the queen!”

“Body o’ me, I think thee be’st liker fist and crupper. I would I had thee in a cart at holiday-time, and a rope to thy muzzle,” said the astonished Gregory. He had dropped his billet in the scuffle, which the dwarf seized, opening it without ceremony.

“A message. Good; stay here, garbage; I be back one, two, t’ree,” and away straddled the black monster along the passage. Turning suddenly, before he was aware, into another avenue, leading apparently far into the interior, Gregory was left once more in total darkness. He heard the sound of retreating footsteps, but not a glimmer was visible, and he feared to follow lest he might be entangled in some inextricable labyrinth. He recollected to have heard a vague sort of tradition, that a subterraneous passage once led from the hall to the Ribble bank, whereby the miners had in former days kept their operations secret.

These were the haunts, too, of poachers and deer-stalkers, who made use of such hiding-places to screen their nocturnal depredations. He might be gotten unknowingly into one of their retreats, and he knew the character of such men too well to venture farther into their privy places without leave. But it was strange this ugly and insane thing should be kept here. Its outlandish accent, too, as far as Gregory could distinguish, was still more unaccountable; and that his young mistress should hold any intercourse with such a misshapen mockery of the human form was a mystery only to be resolved by a woman! After all, his first conjecture might be true, and this delicate sprite the ministering demon to some magician who brooded over the treasure.

He grew more timorous in the dark. His own breathing startled him. He revolved a thousand plans of escape; but how was it possible to climb to the pit-mouth without help, and in total darkness? The door, too, would probably defy his attempts to remove it. Suspense was not to be endured. He would have been glad to see the ugly dwarf again, rather than remain in his present evil case.

He now tried to grope out his way, from that sort of undefinable feeling which leads a person to identify change of place with improvement in condition.

Ere he had gone many yards from the spot, however, he saw a light, and presently the flaming torch was visible, with the ugly form he desired.

“Sir messenger, allez. Make scrape and go backward. Bah! What for make lady chuse ugly lout as thee for page?—not know, not inquire. Up, this way; now mind the steps. Bah, not that, fool!”

With some difficulty Gregory was initiated into the mysteries of the ascent. The torch was brandished high above his head, and with fear and trepidation he prepared to obey.

“But, master sooty-paws, my mistress will be a-wanting of some token; some reply. Hast thou no memory of her sweet favours?”

“Begone, slave-dog, begone! Say we be snug as the fox that will keep in the hole when dogs go hunt. We not go up again till lady sends leave. Go to!”

Gregory mounted with great difficulty. When he approached the mouth, looking upward for some mode of exit, he saw the trap-door slowly open, and he leapt forth into the free air; the cool atmosphere and the quiet moonlight again upon his path. He soon cleared the bushes, and once more was on his way to the house. Elizabeth met him at the gate.

“What ho, sirrah!” said she, “hast thou been loitering with my message? I left my chamber to look out for thee. What answer? Quick.”

“Why, forsooth, ‘tis not easy to say, methinks, for such jabber is hard to interpret. By my lady’s leave, I think”—

Here he paused; but Elizabeth was impatient for the expected reply. “Softly, softly, mistress. I but thought your worship were ill bestowed on yonder ugly image.”

“Tut, I’m not i’ the humour for thine. What message, simpleton?”

“None, good mistress; but that they be snug until further orders.”

“‘Tis well; to rest; but hark thee, knave, be honest and discreet; thou shall win both gold and great honours thereby.”

“What! shall I ha’ my share o’ the treasure?” inquired Gregory, his eyes glistening in the broad moonlight.

“What treasure, thou greedy gled?”

“Why they say ‘tis a mine royal, and”—

“How! knowest thou our secret?”

“Ay, a body may guess. I’ve not found the road to the silver mine for nought. If I get my grip on’t, the king may whistle for his share belike.”

“The king! what knowest thou of the king?” said the maiden sharply.

“Eh! lady, I know not on him forsooth. Marry it would be hard to say who that be now-a-days; for the clerk towed me”—

“Peace! whom sawest thou?”

“Why the ugliest brute, saving your presence, lady, that my two een ever lipped on.”

“None else?”

“No, no; I warrant ye, the miners wouldna care to let me get a glint o’ the gowd. I only had a look at the hobgoblin, who they have set, I guess, to watch the treasure.”

“Oh! I see,—ay, truly,” said the maiden thoughtfully; “the mine is guarded, therefore be wary, and reveal not the secret, lest he crush thee. Remember,” said she at parting, “remember the demon of the cave. One word, and he will grind thy bones to grist.”

Gregory did remember the power of this mysterious being, who, he began to fancy, partook more of the supernatural than he had formerly imagined.

Wearied with watching, he slept soundly, but his dreams were of wizards and enchanters; heaps of gold and fairy palaces, wherein he roved through glittering halls of illimitable extent, until morning dissipated the illusion.

Some weeks passed on, during which, at times, Gregory was employed by his mistress, doubtless to propitiate this greedy monster, in conveying food secretly to the mouth of the chasm. He did not usually wait for his appearance, but ran off with all convenient speed when his errand was accomplished. Still his hankering for the treasure seemed to increase with every visit. He oft invented some plan for outwitting the demon, thereby securing to himself the product of the mine. Some of these devices would doubtless have been accomplished had not fear prevented the attempt. He had no wish to encounter again the hostility of that fearful thing in its unhallowed abode.

His mistress, however, would, at some period or another, no doubt, be in possession of all the wealth in the cave, and he should then expect a handsome share. He had heard, in old legends, marvellous accounts of ladies marrying with these accursed dwarfs for gold, and if he waited patiently he might perchance have the best of the spoil.

He brooded on this imagination so long that he became fully convinced of its truth; but still the golden egg was long in hatching.

One night he thought he would watch a while. He had just left a large barley-cake and some cheese, a bowl of furrnety, and a dish of fruit.

“This monster,” thought he, “devours more victuals than the worth of his ugly carcase.”

He hid himself behind a tree, when presently he heard a rustling behind him. Ere he could retreat he was seized with a rude grasp, and the gruff accents of his master were heard angrily exclaiming—

“How now, sir knave?—What mischief art thou plotting this blessed night? Answer me. No equivocation. If thou dost serve me with a lie in thy mouth I’ll have thee whipt until thou shall wish the life were out o’ thee.”

Gregory fell on his knees and swore roundly that he would tell the truth.

“Quick, hound; I have caught thee lurching here at last. I long thought thou hadst some knavery agoing. What meanest thou?”

Gregory pointed towards the provision which was lying hard by.

“Eh, sirrah! what have we hear?” said his master, curiously examining the dainties. “Why, thou cormorant, thou greedy kite, is’t not enough to consume victuals and provender under my own roof, but thou must guttle ‘em here too? I warrant there be other company to the work, other grinders at the mill. Now, horrible villain, thou dost smell fearfully o’ the stocks!”

“O master, forgive me!—It was mistress that sent me with the stuff, as I hope the Virgin and St Gregory may be my intercessors.”

“Thy mistress!—and for whom?”

“Why, there’s a hole close by, as I’ve good cause to remember.”

“Well, sirrah, and what then?”

“As ugly a devilkin lives there as ever put paw and breech upon hidden treasure. ‘Tis the mine, master, that I mean.”

“The mine! What knowest thou of the mine?”

“I’ve been there, and”—

Here he related his former adventure; at the hearing of which Oliver Tempest fell into a marvellous study.

“Hark thee,” said he, after a long silence; “I pardon thee on one condition, which is, that thou take another message.”

Here the terrified Gregory broke forth into unequivocal exclamations of agony and alarm.

“Peace,” said his master, “and listen; thou must carry it as from my daughter. I suspect there’s treason lurks i’ that hole.”

“Ay, doubtless,” said Gregory: “for the neibours say ‘tis treason to hide a mine royal.”

“A mine royal! Ay, knave, I do suspect it to be so. By my troth, I ‘ll ferret out the foulmarts either by force or guile. And yet force would avail little. If they have the clue we might attempt to follow them in vain through its labyrinths, they would inevitably escape, and I should lose the reward. Hark thee. Stay here and I’ll fetch the writing for the message. Stir not for thy life. Shouldst thou betray me I’ll have thy crooked bones ground in a mill to thicken pigs’ gruel.”

Fearful was the dilemma; but Gregory durst not budge.

The night grew dark and stormy, the wind rose, loud gusts shaking down the dying leaves, and howling through the wide extent of the forest. The moan of the river came on like the agony of some tortured spirit. The sound seemed to creep closer to his ear; and Gregory thought some evil thing was haunting him for intruding into these unhallowed mysteries.

He was horribly alarmed at the idea of another visit to the cave, but he durst not disobey. He now heard a rustling in the bushes by the cavern’s mouth. He saw, or fancied he saw, something rise therefrom and suddenly disappear. It was the demon, doubtless, retiring with his prey. He scarcely dared to breathe lest the hobgoblin should observe and seize him likewise. But his presence was unnoticed. He, however, thought that the blast grew louder, and a moan more melancholy and appalling arose from the river. Again Oliver Tempest was at his side.

“Take this, and do thy bidding.” He thrust the billet into his hand, which the unfortunate recipient might not refuse.

Trembling in every limb, he approached the place of concealment; but he was too wary now to let go his hold of the fallen trunk.

He whistled thrice, and the ground again seemed to give way. A light glared from beneath, and he cautiously descended the pit.

The grim porter was waiting for him below. He fell as though rushing into the very jaws of the monster, who was but whetting his tusks ere he should devour him.

“Here again!” croaked the ugly dwarf; “what brings thy long legs back from Christendom?”

“I know not, master; but if you are i’ the humour to read, I’ve a scrap in my pouch at your high mightiness’ service.”

Gregory paid more deference to him now than aforetime, having conceived a most profound respect for his attributes, both physical and mental, since his former visit.

“He is himself either some wondrous enchanter,” thought he, “or, at any rate, minister or familiar to some mighty wizard, who hath his dwelling-place in this subterraneous abode.”

“I have a message here to my lord,” said he aloud, handing him the billet at arm’s length, with a mighty show of deference and respect. The uncourteous dwarf took the writing, and left Gregory in darkness again to await his return. He shook at every joint, while the minutes seemed an age. Again the light flickered on the damp walls, and the mysterious being approached. He addressed the envoy with his usual grin of contempt.

“Tell the lady, my master be glad. He will leap from his prison by to-morrow, as she say, and appear at dinner.”

“The dickons he will,” said Gregory, as he clambered up the ascent, not without imminent jeopardy, so anxious was he to escape.

“This is a fearful message to master,” thought he, as he leapt out joyfully into the buoyant air: “but at any rate I’ll now be quit o’ the job.” And the messenger gave his report, for Oliver Tempest was impatiently awaiting his return.

“‘Tis well,” said he; “and now, hark thee, should one syllable of this night’s business bubble through thy lips, thou hadst better have stayed in the paws of the hobgoblin. Away!”

Gregory needed no second invitation, but scampered home with great despatch, leaving his master to grope out the way as he thought proper.

There was more bustle and preparation for dinner than usual on the morrow. Oliver Tempest had sent messengers to Bashall and Waddow; but the guests had not made their appearance. About noon the hall-table was furnished with a few whittles and well-scoured trenchers. Bright pewter cups and ale-flagons were set in rows on a side-table, and on the kitchen hearth lay a savoury chine of pork and pease-pudding. In the great boiling pot, hung on a crook over the fire, bubbled a score of hard dumplings, and in the broth reposed a huge piece of beef—these dainties being usually served in the following order—broth, dumpling, beef, according to the old distich—

“No broth, no ba’;

No ba’, no meat at a’.”

Dame Joan of Waddington was the presiding genius of the feast, the conduit-pipe through which flowed the full stream of daily bounty, dispensing every blessing, even the most minute. In that golden age of domestic discipline it was not beneath the dignity of a careful housewife to attend and take the lead in all culinary arrangements.

The master strode to and fro in the hall, and Elizabeth was humming at her wheel. He looked anxious and ill at ease, often casting a furtive glance towards the entrance, and occasionally a side-look at his daughter. She sometimes watched her father's eye, as though she had caught his restless apprehensions, and would have inquired the cause of his uneasiness. Suddenly a loud bay from a favourite hound that was dozing on the hearth announced the approach of a stranger. Oliver advanced with a quick step into the courtyard, and soon re-entered leading in a middle-sized, middle-aged personage, slightly formed, whose pale and saintly features looked haggard and apprehensive, while his eye wavered to and fro, less perhaps with curiosity than suspicion.

He was wrapped in a grey cloak; and a leathern jerkin, barely meeting in front, displayed a considerable breadth of under garment in the space between hose and doublet. These were fastened together with tags or points, superseding the use of wooden skewers, with which latter mode of suspension not a few of our country yeomen were in those days supplied. His legs were protected by boots of fine brown Spanish leather, lined with deer-skin, tanned with the fur on, and buttoned from the ankle to the knee. He had gloves of the same material, reaching to the elbow when drawn up, but now turned down with the fur outwards. The hands and feet were remarkably small, but well shapen. A low grey cap of coarse woollen completed the costume of this singular visitor. There was, at times, in the expression of his eye, an indescribable mixture of imbecility and enthusiasm, as though the spirit of some Eastern fakir had reanimated a living body. A gleam of almost supernatural intelligence was mingled with an expression of fatuity, that in less enlightened ages would have invested him with the dangerous reputation of priest or prophet in the eyes of the multitude.

Oliver Tempest led the way with great care and formality. To a keen-eyed observer, though, his courtesy would have appeared over acted and fulsome; but the object of his assiduities seemed to pay him little attention, further than by a vacant smile that struggled around the corners of his melancholy and placid mouth.

Dame Joan Tempest now came forth, bending thrice in a deep and formal acknowledgment. The stranger stayed her speech with a look of great benignity.

"I know thy words are what our kindness would interpret, and I thank thee. Your hospitality shall not lose its savour in my remembrance, when England hath grown weary of her guilt,—when the cry of the widow and the fatherless shall have prevailed. I am hunted like a partridge on the mountains; but, by the help of my God, I shall yet escape from the noisome pit, and from the snares of the fowler."

Yet the look which accompanied this prediction seemed incredulous of its purport. He heaved a deep sigh, and his eyes were suddenly bent on the ground. Being introduced into the hall, the seat of honour was assigned him at the table.

Elizabeth, when she saw him, uttered an ill-suppressed exclamation of surprise, and her pale countenance grew almost ghastly. Her lips were bloodless, quivering with terror and dismay. Agony was depicted on her brow—that agony which leaves the spirit without support to struggle with unknown, undefined, uncomprehended evil. Not a word escaped her; she hurried out of the hall, as she thought, without observation; but this sudden movement did not escape the eye of her father. Triumph sat on his brow; and his cheek seemed flushed with joy at the result of his stratagem.

The servitors appeared; and the smoking victuals were disposed in their due order. The joints were placed at the upper end of the board, while broth and pottage steamed out their savoury fumes from the lower end of the table. At some distance below the master and his dame sat

the male domestics, then the females, who occupied the lower places at the feast, except two, who waited on the rest.

The master blessed the meal, the whole company standing. The broth was served round to the lower forms, and the meat and dainties to the higher; but Elizabeth was still absent.

When she left the hall it was for the purpose of speaking to Gregory, whom she found skulking and peeping about the premises.

“Gregory, why art thou absent from thy nooning?” inquired Elizabeth, with a suspicious and scrutinising glance.

“I’m not o’er careful to bide i’ the house just now. Is there aught come that—that”—Here he stammered and looked round, confirming the suspicions of the inquirer.

“Gregory, thou art a traitor; but thou shalt not escape thy reward. I’ll have thee hung—ay, villain, beyond the reach of aught but crows and kites.”

“Whoy, mistress, I’d leifer be hung nor stifled to death wi’ brimstone and bad humours.”

“None o’ thy quiddities, thou maker of long lies and quick legs. Confess, or I’ll”—

“Whoy, look ye, mistress, you’ve been kind, and pulled me out of many an ugly ditch.”

“Why dost thou hesitate, knave? I’m glad thy memory is not so treacherous as thy tongue.”

“Nay, mistress, I’ve no notion to sup brose wi’ t’ old one: those that dinner wi’ him he may happen ask to supper; and he’d need have a long whittle that cuts crumbs wi’ the de’il.”

“Art thou at thy riddles again? Speak in sober similitudes, if thou canst, sirrah.”

“Your father sent me on a message to the little devilkin last night. I was loth enough to the job; but he caught me as I went wi’ the victuals.”

“A message!—and to what purport?”

“Nay, that I know not. The invitation was conveyed in a scrap of writing, and I’m not gifted in clerkship an’ such like matters.”

A ray of intelligence now burst upon her. She saw the imminent danger which threatened the fugitive, who had been hitherto concealed principally by her contrivances. Gregory watched the rapid and changing hues alternating on her cheek. She saw the full extent of the emergency; and, though her father was the traitor, she hesitated not in that trying moment.

No time was to be lost, and measures were immediately taken to countervail these designs.

“What answer sent he?” she hastily inquired.

“The de’il’s buckie said his master would be at the hall by dinner-time; and I’ll not be one o’ the guests where old Cloutie has the pick o’ the table.”

“Thou witless runnion, haste, or we are lost! It is the king! I would I had trusted thee before with the secret. Mayhap thy wit would have been without obscuration. Supernatural terrors have taken thy reason prisoner. Haste, nor look behind thee until thou art under the eaves of Bashall. This to my cousin, Edmund Talbot; he is honest, or my wishes themselves are turned traitors,” said the maiden wistfully. She scrawled but one line, with which Gregory departed on his errand.

Oliver Tempest grew uneasy at his daughter’s absence. He inquired the cause, but all were alike ignorant. The king inquired too, with some surprise; and a messenger was despatched with a close whisper in his ear.

The meal was nigh finished, when all eyes were turned towards the entrance. A little blackamoor page came waddling in. He made no sign nor obeisance, but took his station, without speaking, behind his master's chair.

"Why, how now, my trusty squire?" said the disguised monarch; "thou wast not bidden to this feast."

The dwarf cast a scowling glance at the master of the house, and he replied, while a hideous grin dilated his thick stubborn features—

"This be goodly wassail, methinks. I am weary of lurching and torchlight."

"Tempest," said the king, "I would crave grace for this follower of mine. He is somewhat fearsome and forbidding, but of an unwearied fidelity."

"Troth," said Tempest, still wishful to maintain the king's incognito, "the Turks having now taken Byzantium, the great bulwark of Christendom, I did fear me that the first of the tribe from that great army of locusts had descended upon us."

"Fear not," said the unfortunate monarch, with a smile; "this poor innocent will do no ill. His mistress brought him for me a present from her father's court; and, to say the truth, he has been a great solace in my trouble. He hath not forsaken me when they who fattened on my bounty—who dipped their hands with me in the dish—have been the first to betray me. The knave is shrewd and playful, but of an incredible strength, being, as ye may observe, double-jointed. Madoc, let them behold some token of thy power."

The cunning rogue obeyed in a twinkling. He seized the host's chair with one hand, lifting its occupant without difficulty from the ground. With the other he laid hold on him by the throat, and would certainly have strangled him but for the king.

The assault was so sudden and unexpected that the domestics stood still a moment, as though rendered powerless by surprise.

The next instant they all fled pell-mell out of the hall, every one struggling to be foremost, apprehending that the great personification of all evil was there, bodily, behind them, and in the very act of flying off with their master.

In vain Joan shouted after the cowardly villains; her threats but increased their speed.

"Fly, King Henry," cried the dwarf, in a voice that sounded like the roar of some infuriated beast; "the rascal curs are barking; the stag is in the net. This traitor"—Here he became at a loss for words; but his gesticulations were more vehement. "Fly!" at length he shouted, in a louder voice than before; "I've seen sword and armour glittering in the forest."

But the king was irresolute, as much amazed as any of the rest. He saw the imminent danger of his host, whose face was blackening above the grip of this fierce antagonist, and he cried out—

"Leave go, Madoc; let the curs bark, we fear them not in this good house. Let go, I command thee."

With a look of pity and of scorn the savage loosened his hold, saying—

"Thou be'st not king now; but Henry with the beads and breviary; and here come thy tormentors."

A loud whistle rang through the hall, and in burst a band of armed men, led on by Sir Thomas Talbot of Bashall, and his oldest son of the same name, together with Sir James Harrington.

Tempest, recovered from his gripe, made a furious dart at the king; but ere he had accomplished his purpose, Edmund Talbot rushed between, at the peril of his life, opening a way for the terrified monarch through the band that had nearly surrounded him.

The king fled through the passage made by his deliverer; and the dwarf, keeping his enemies at bay, heroically and effectually covered his retreat.

“Edmund Talbot, art thou traitor to thy kin?” said Sir Thomas, from the crowd. “Let me pass; ‘tis thy father commands thee. ‘Tis not thy king, he is a coward and a usurper.”

“I care not,” said the retreating and faithful Edmund. “My arm shall not compass with traitors. Cowards attack unarmed men at their meals.”

“Then take thy reward.” It was the eldest brother of Edmund who said this, whilst he aimed a terrific blow; but the dwarf caught his arm ere it descended, and a swinging stroke from a missile which he had picked up in the fray would have settled accounts between the heir of Bashall and posterity had he not stepped aside.

This unequal contest, however, could not long continue, though time, the principal object, was gained, and the king was fast hastening again towards the cavern. In the courtyard he met Elizabeth, who implored him to step aside into another place of concealment; but he was too much terrified to comprehend her meaning. Fear seemed to have bewildered him, and the poor persecuted monarch sped on to his own destruction. In the hurry and uncertainty of his flight, he unfortunately took the wrong path, which led by a circuitous route to the ford; and, as he stepped out of the wood, two of his enemies, having broken through the gallant defence of his adherents, had already gained, and were guarding, the stepping-stones over the river, called “Brunckerley Hipples.” Terrified, he flew back into the wood, but was immediately followed; and again his evil destiny seemed to prevail. He took another path, which led him back to the ford. Here he crossed, and, whilst leaping with difficulty over the stones, the pursuers came in full view. Having gained the Lancashire side, he fled into the wood, but his enemies were now too close upon him for escape, and the royal captive was taken, bound, and conveyed to Bashall. Many cruel indignities were heaped upon him; and he was conveyed to London in the most piteous plight, on horseback, with his legs tied to the stirrups. Ere he departed, it is said that he delivered a singular prediction—to wit, that nine generations of the Talbot family, in succession, should consist of a wise and a weak man by turns, after which the name should be lost.

END OF VOLUME ONE

XXIII. The Fairies' Chapel

Farewell, rewards and fairies!
 Good housewives now may say;
 For now foule sluts in dairies,
 Doe fare as well as they:
 And though they sweepe their hearths no less
 Than mayds were wont to doe,
 Yet who of late, for cleanness,
 Finds sixe-pence in her shoe?"

—*Percy's Reliques.*

The ancient mansion of Healey Hall was a cumbrous inconvenient dwelling of timber; but the spirit of improvement having gone forth in the reign of Elizabeth, an ordinary hall-house of stone was erected, about the year 1620, by Oliver Chadwick. On the south front was a projecting wing and three gables, with a large hall-window. The north front had two gables only, with a projecting barn. The north entrance, covered by a porch, was a thorough passage, answering to the screens of a college, having on one side the hall and parlour beyond; on the other were the kitchen, buttery, &c. On the river below was a corn-mill; this and a huge barn being necessary appendages to the hospitable mansions and plentiful boards of our forefathers. Over the front door was this inscription—

C. C. DOC. T: R. C: I. C. A. C: R. B.
 ANO. DOM'I. 1168.

About the year 1756 the east wall gave way, and a considerable fishure appeared on the outside. This event was considered by many as the usual foretokening that its owner, Charles Chadwick, of Healey and Ridware, would speedily be removed by death from the seat of his ancestors; and so it proved, for in the course of a few months he died at Lichfield, *aged eighty-two*. His great age, though, will be thought the more probable token, the surer presage of approaching dissolution.

On a stone near the top of the building, on the north side, a human head was rudely carved in relief, which tradition affirms to have been a memorial of one of the workmen, accidentally killed while the house was building.

In 1773, the existing edifice was built, on the ancient site, by John Chadwick, grandfather to the present owner

In Corry's *Lancashire* is the following document, furnished by the recent possessor, Charles Chadwick, Esq. It relates to the foregoing John Chadwick, his father—

"In 1745, at the rebellion, when the Pretender's son and his Highlanders reached Manchester, having obtained a list of the loyal subscribers, they began (of course) to enforce the payment of the money for their own use. An officer of the belted plaid, of the second division, came to the house of Mr C., in King Street, whilst the master of it was with his father at Ridware, and, on being told that he was from home, and his lady ill in bed, he went up-stairs, and opening the chamber-door, where she was then lying-in, beckoned her sister to come to him on the stairs, where he told her (in a mild but decided tone) that the money before mentioned must be paid quickly for the use of 'the prince (who lodged at the house in Market Street, now called the Palace Inn), or the house would be burnt down.' In this dilemma, the man-midwife

calling first, and afterwards the physician, were both consulted by the ladies; when the former (a Tory) advised to send the money after them, whilst the latter (a Whig) thought it better to keep it till called for; consequently, never being called for in their hasty retreat, the money was not paid. It may be proper to add, Captain Lachlan MacLachlan, of the first division (afterwards one of the proscribed), being quartered in the same house, behaved with the greatest civility and politeness. On a party of horse coming to the door for quarters, he called for a lanthorn, and, though he had a cold (for which white wine whey was offered him, which he called ‘varra good stuff’), walked as far as Salford, and there quartered them; two of his Highlanders, in the meantime, were dancing reels in the kitchen, and in the morning gave each of the maids sixpence at parting.”

The name Healey Dene denotes a valley or dale, *convallis*, enclosed on both sides with steep hills; *dene* being a Saxon word, signifying a narrow valley, with woods and streams of water convenient for the feeding of cattle. Here the river Spodden, which now keeps many fulling-mills and engines at work, formerly turned one solitary corn-mill only. It was built in the narrow dingle below the hall, for the supply of the hamlet. The feudal owners of most mansions usually erected corn-mills (where practicable) within their own demesnes. After the family had removed to the more mild and temperate climate of Mavesyn-Ridware, in Staffordshire, about the year 1636, Healey Mill was converted into a fulling-mill, so that one of the principal features in our story no longer exists.

About two miles north from Rochdale lies the hamlet of Healey, a high tract of land, as its Saxon derivation seems to imply, *heazg*, *high*, and *leaz a pasture*, signifying the “*high pasture*.”

Our Saxon ancestors chiefly occupied their lands for grazing purposes; hence the many terminations in *ley*, or *leaz*. Pasturage is still called a “*ley*” for cattle in these parts.

In this remote hamlet dwelt a family, probably of Saxon origin, whose name, De Heley, from their place of residence, had, in all likelihood, been assumed soon after the Norman conquest. Their descendants, of the same name, continued to reside here until the reign of Edward III., holding their lands as abbey lands, under the abbot of Stanlaw, soon after the year 1172, in the reign of Henry II., and subsequently under the abbot of Whalley, from the year 1296.⁵⁸ In 1483, John Chadwyke, or (*Ceddevyc*, from the common appellation *Cedde*, and *vyc*, a mansion or vill, signifying Cedde’s fort, peel, or fortified mansion) married Alice, eldest daughter and co-heir of Adam Okeden of Heley; and in her right settled at the mansion of Heley (or Healey) Hall, then a huge unsightly structure of wood and plaster, built according to the fashion of those days. An ancestor of Adam Okeden having married “*Hawise, heir of Thomas de Heley*,” in the reign of Edward III., became possessed of this inheritance.

The origin of surnames would be an interesting inquiry. In the present instance it seems clear that the name and hamlet of Chadwick are derived from Cedde’s *vyc*, or Chad’s *vyc*. This mansion, situated on the southern extremity of Spotland, or Spoddenland, bounded on the east by that stream, and southward by the Roche, was built on a bold eminence above the river, where Cedde and his descendants dwelt, like the Jewish patriarchs, occupied in the breeding of sheep and other cattle.

“But though this hamlet had been named *Ceddevic*, from its subordinate Saxon chief, he himself could not have adopted it for his own surname; because surnames were then scarcely, if at all, known here. He must have continued, therefore, to use his simple Saxon name of *Cedde* only, and his successors likewise, with the addition of Saxon *patronymics* even

⁵⁸ Whitaker’s *Hist. Whalley*, p. 441.

down to the Norman conquest, when the Norman fashion of local names or surnames was first introduced into England.”

But though the Norman addition of surnames “became general amongst the barons, knights, and gentry, soon after the Conquest, yet Saxon patronymics long continued in use amongst the common people, and are still not unusual here. Thus, instead of John Ashworth and Robert Butterworth, we hear of Robin o’ Ben’s and John o’ Johnny’s,”—meaning Robert the son of Benjamin, and John the son of John, “similar to the Norman Fitz, the Welsh Ap’, the Scotch Mac, and the Irish O’; and this ancient mode of describing an individual sometimes includes several generations, as Thomas O’ Dick’s, O’ Ned’s, O’ Sam’s,” &c.

But besides patronymics, nicknames (the Norman soubriquets) have been used in all ages and by all nations, and are still common here; some of them coarse and ludicrous enough: the real surname being seldom noticed, but the nickname sometimes introduced, with an alias, even in a law instrument. And why are not Poden, Muz, Listing, &c., as good as “the Bald,” “the Fat,” “the Simple,” &c., of the French kings; or “the Unready,” “the Bastard,” “Lackland,” “Longshanks,” &c., of our own? A lad named Edmund, some generations back, attended his master’s sons to Rochdale school, who latinised his name into “Edmundus;” then it was contracted into “Mundus,” by which name his descendants are best known to this day: some probably knowing “Tom Mundus” well who are ignorant of his real surname. Within late years individuals have been puzzled on hearing themselves inquired after by their own surname. At Whitworth you might have asked in vain for the house of “Susannah Taylor,” though any child would have taken you straight to the door of “Susy O’ Yem’s, O’ Fair-off’s at top o’ th’ rake.”⁵⁹

Another derivation of the surname De Heley, not at all improbable, has been suggested—viz., that Hely Dene may have been an early corruption of Holy Dene, having formerly belonged to the Church, and possibly, in remote ages, dedicated to the religious rites of the Druids. A clear rock-spring, in a gloomy dell below the Hall, is still called “the Spaw,” and often frequented by youths and maidens on May mornings. Hence some have imagined that this Dene and its Spaw may have given to the river running through it the name of Spodden, or Spaw-Dene. Another spring, higher up, is called Robin Hood’s Well, from that celebrated outlaw, who seems to have been the favourite champion of these parts, and who, according to some authorities, lies buried at Kirklaw, in the West Riding of York.⁶⁰

Such holy wells were, in more superstitious if not happier ages, the supposed haunts of elves, fairies, and other such beings, not unaptly denominated the rabble of mythology.

A warm sequestered dingle here conducts the Spodden through a scene of wild, woodland, and picturesque beauty. Drayton, in his *Polyolbion*, has thus immortalised it:—

“First Roche, a dainty rill, which Spodden from her springs,
A petty rivulet, as her attendant, brings.”

From the mansion of Healey, built on an elevated slope above the dell, opens out an extensive prospect. Limepark in Cheshire, Cloud End in Staffordshire, with the Derbyshire hills, may be distinctly seen. Over the smoke of Manchester, the banks of the Mersey are visible; and upon the horizon rises up the barn-like ridge of Hellsby Tor,⁶¹ in the forest of Delamere. Towards the west may be seen, far out, like a vast barrier, the Welsh mountains, *Moel Famma* (mother of mountains), with the vale of Clwyd, like a narrow cleft in the blue hills,

⁵⁹ Corry’s *Lancashire*.

⁶⁰ *Mag. Britan.* York, p. 391.

⁶¹ Here vulgarly called the Tearn Barn (tithe-barn) in Wales; distinctly seen in showery weather, but invisible in a settled season.

which extend until the chain of Penmaenmawr and the Isle of Anglesey abruptly terminate in the sea. Few situations, without the toil of a laborious ascent, show so commanding a prospect; while under the very eye of the spectator, nature assumes an aspect of more than ordinary beauty.

One wild scene, the subject of our legend, the pencil, not the pen, must describe. It would be impossible, in any other manner, to convey an adequate idea of its extreme loveliness and grandeur. It is here known by its Saxon appellation, “the Thrutch,” or Thrust, signifying a narrow, but deep and rugged channel in the rocks. Through this cleft the Spodden bursts with great force, forming several picturesque falls, which, though of mean height, yet, combined with the surrounding scenery, few behold without an expression of both wonder and delight.

The ancient corn-mill was here situated, just below the mansion. From the “Grist Yate,” by the main road to Rochdale, a winding horse-way, paved with stones set on edge, led down the steep bank and pointed to the sequestered spot where for ages the clack of the hopper and the splash of the mill-wheel had usurped a noisy and undisputed possession.

In the reign of our fourth Edward—we know not the precise year—an occurrence, forming the basis of the following legend, is supposed to have taken place,—when fraud and feud were unredressed; when bigotry and superstition had their “perfect work;” when barbaric cruelty, and high and heroic deeds, had their origin in one corrupt and common source, the passions of man being let loose, in wild uproar, throughout the land; when the wars of the Roses had almost desolated the realm, and England’s best blood flowed like a torrent. Such was the aspect of the time to which the following events relate.

It was in the beginning of the year, at the close of an unusually severe winter. The miller’s craft was nigh useless, the current of the rivulet was almost still. Everything seemed so hard and frost-bound, that nature looked as though her fetters were rivetted for ever. But the dark and sterile aspect she displayed was bedizened with such beauteous frost-work, that light and glory rested upon all, and winter itself lost half its terrors.

Ralph Miller often looked out from his dusty, dreary tabernacle, watching the icicles that accumulated on his wheel, and the scanty current beneath, the hard surface of the brook scarcely dribbling out a sufficient supply for his daily wants.

Every succeeding morn saw the liquid element becoming less, and the unhappy miller bethought him that he would shut up the mill altogether, until the reign of the frozen king should expire.

A seven-weeks’ frost was rapidly trenching on the fair proportions of an eighth of these hebdomadal inconveniences, and still continued the same hard, ringing sound and appearance, as if the sky itself o’ nights had been frozen too—fixed and impervious—and the darkness had become already palpable. Yet the moon looked out so calm, so pure and beautiful, and the stars so spark-like and piercing, that it was a holy and a heavenly rapture to gaze upon their glorious forms, and to behold them, fresh and undimmed, as when first launched from the hands of their Creator.

Want of occupation breeds mischief, idleness being a thriftless carle that leaves the house empty, and the door open to the next comer—an opportunity of which the enemy is sure to avail himself. The miller felt the hours hang heavily, and he became listless and ill-humoured.

“‘Tis an ill-natured and cankered disposition this,” said he one night, when sitting by the ingle with his drowsy helpmate, watching the sputtering billets devoured, one after another, by the ravening flame: “‘Tis an ill-natured disposition that is abroad, I say, that will neither

let a man go about his own business, nor grant him a few honest junkets these moonlight nights. I might have throttled a hare or so, or a brace of rabbits; or what dost think, dame, of a couple of moor-cocks or a cushat for a pie?"

"Thy liquorish tooth will lead thee into some snare, goodman, ere it ha' done watering. What did Master Chadwyck say, who is to wed Mistress Alice, our master's daughter, if nought forefend? What did he promise thee but a week ago, should he catch thee at thy old trade again?"

"A murrain light on the snivelling bully! Let him stay at his own homestead, and not take mastership here, to trouble us with his humours ere the portion be his. His younger brother Oliver is worth a whole pack of such down-looking, smooth-faced hypocrites. Oliver Chadwyck is the boy for a snug quarrel. His fingers itch for a drubbing, and he scents a feud as a crow scents out carrion. The other—mercy on me!—is fit for nought but to be bed-ridden and priest-ridden like his father and his mother to boot."

"Hush, Ralph," said the cautious dame; "let thine hard speeches fall more gently on thy master's son, that is to be. His own parents too—methinks the son of Jordan and Eleanor Chadwyck should earn a kinder word and a lighter judgment from thy tongue."

"Whew! my courteous dame. How now! and so because they are become part of the movables of Holy Church, I trow, they must be handled softly, forsooth! Tut, tut, beldame, they are—let me see, so it runs; the old clerk of St Chad's rang the nomine in my ears long enough, and I am not like to forget it. They be 'Trinitarians,' said he, 'of the house of St Robert near Knaresborough, admitted by Brother Robert, the minister of the Holy Trinity, for the redemption of captives imprisoned by the pagans, for the faith of Jesus Christ.' Gramercy, what a bead-roll of hard words! They say we are like to have a '*Holy War*' again, when we have settled our own reckonings; and the blood and groats of old England are again to be spent for the purchase of '*Holy Land*.' O' my halidome, wench, but I would let all the priests and friars fight for it. Cunning rogues! they set us together by the ears, and then run away with the pudding."

No doubt this profane speech rendered him easier of access to the tempter, and the powers of evil; who, ever watchful for the slips of silly mortals, report such unholy words at headquarters, where Satan and his crew are assembled in full council.

The dame groaned deeply at this reply from her graceless husband.

"Some time or another," said she, "thou wilt rue these wicked speeches; and who knows whether these very words of thine may not have been heard i' the Fairies' Chapel, or whispered away beyond the forest to the witches' tryst!"

"I care not for all the imps and warlocks i' th' parish, hags and old women to boot. Let them come face to face. Here am I, honest Ralph the miller, who never took toll from an empty sack, nor e'er missed the mouth of a full one. Tol-de-rol."

Here he stood, with arms akimbo, as if daring the whole fellowship of Satan, with their abettors and allies. This speech, too, was doubtless reported at the Fairies' Chapel hard by; for the dame vowed ever after that she heard, as it were, an echo, or a low sooning sound, ending with an eldritch laugh, amongst the rocks in that direction. This well-known haunt of the elves and fays, ere they had fled before the march of science and civilisation, was but a good bowshot from the mill, and would have terrified many a stouter heart, had not familiarity lulled their apprehensions, and habit blunted the edge of their fears. Strangers often wondered that any human being dared to sojourn so near the haunts of the "good

people,” and were sure that, sooner or later, the inhabitants would rue so dangerous a proximity.

A few evenings after this foolhardy challenge Ralph had been scrambling away, far up the dingle, for a supply of firewood. The same keen tinkling air was abroad, but the sky, where the sun had thrown his long coronal of rays, was streaked across with a mottled and hazy light, probably the forerunner of a change. Ralph was labouring down the steep with his load, crashing through the boughs, and shaking off their hoary burdens in his progress. Suddenly he heard the shrill and well-known shriek of a hare struggling in the toils. At this joyful and refreshing sound the miller’s appetite was wonderfully stimulated; his darling propensities were immediately called forth; he threw down his burden, and, rushing through the brake, he saw, or thought he saw, in the soft twilight, an unfortunate puss in the noose. He threw himself hastily forward expecting to grasp the prize, when lo! up started the timid animal, and limping away, as if hurt, kept the liquorish poacher at her heels, every minute supposing he was sure of his prey. Rueful was the pilgrimage of the unfortunate hunter. The hare doubled, and sprang aside whenever he came within striking distance, then hirpling onward as before. Ralph made a full pause where a wide gap displayed the scanty waterfall, just glimmering through the mist below him. The moon, then riding out brightly in the opposite direction, sparkled on the restless current, tipped with foam. It was the nearest cut to the “Fairies’ Chapel,” which lies behind, and higher towards the source of the waterfall. The unlucky hare paused too for a moment, as though afraid to leap; but she looked back at her pursuer so bewitchingly that his heart was in his mouth, and, fearless of consequences, he rushed towards her; but he slipped, and fell down the crumbling bank. When sufficiently recovered from the shock, he saw the animal stealing off, between the edge of the stream and the low copsewood by the brink, towards the Fairies’ Chapel. He made one desperate effort to lay hold of her before she set foot upon enchanted ground.

He seized her, luckily as he thought, by the scut; when lo! up started something black and “uncanny,” with glaring eyes, making mouths, and grinning at him, as though in mockery. He felt stupefied and bewildered. Fascinated by terror, he could not refrain from following this horrible appearance, which, as if delighted to have ensnared him, frisked away with uncouth and fiendish gambols, to the very centre of the Fairies’ Chapel.

Ralph, puissant and valorous upon his own hearthstone, felt his courage fast oozing out at elbows when he saw the cold moonlight streaming through the branches above him, and their crawling shadows on the grotesque rocks at his side.

He was now alone, shivering from cold and fright. He felt as though undergoing the unpleasant process of being frozen to the spot, consciously metamorphosing into stone, peradventure a sort of ornamental fixture for the fairies’ apartment. His great hoofs were already immovable; he felt his hair congealing; his locks hung like icicles; and his whole body seemed like one solid lump of ice, through which the blood crept with a gradually decreasing current. Suddenly he heard a loud yelping, as though the hounds were in full cry. The sound passed right through the midst of the Fairies’ Hall, and almost close to his ear; but there was no visible sign of their presence, except a slight movement, and then a shiver amongst the frost-bitten boughs above the rocks. He had not power to bethink him of his Paternosters and Ave Marias, which, doubtless, would have dissolved the impious charm. Ralph had so neglected these ordinances that his tongue refused to repeat the usual nostrums for protection against evil spirits. His creed was nigh forgotten, and his “*salve*” was not heard. Whilst he was pondering on this occurrence, there started through a crevice a single light, like a glow-worm’s lantern. Then a tiny thing came forth, clad in white, like a miniature

of the human form, and, peeping about cautiously, ran back on beholding the unfortunate miller bolt upright in the narrow glen.

Ralph now saw plainly that he had been enticed hither by some evil being for no good. It might be for the malicious purpose of drawing down upon him the puny but fearful vengeance of those irritable creatures the fairies; and soon he saw a whole troop of them issuing out of the crevice. As they came nearer he heard the short sharp tread of this tiny host. One of them mounted the little pillar called the "Fairies' Chair," round which multitudes gathered, as if waiting for the fiat of their king. It was evident that their purpose was to inflict a signal chastisement on him for his intrusion.

Ralph watched their movements with a deplorable look. Horrible indeed were his anticipations. The elf on the pillar, a little wrinkled being with a long nose, bottle-green eyes, and shrivelled yellowish-green face, in a shrill squeaking tone, addressed him courteously, though with an ill-suppressed sneer, inquiring his business in these regions. But Ralph was too terrified to reply.

"How lucky!" said the old fairy: "we have a mortal here, just in the nick of time. He will do our bidding rarely, for 'tis the stout miller hard by, who fears neither fiend nor fairy, man nor witch, by his own confession. We'll put his courage to the proof."

Ralph was now thawing through terror.

"We would have punished this thine impertinent curiosity, had we not other business for thee, friend," said the malicious little devilkin. "Place thy fingers on thy thigh, and swear by Hecate, Merlin, and the Fairies' Hall, that within three days thou wilt fulfil our behest."

Ralph assented, with a hideous grimace, glad upon any terms to escape.

The whole company disappeared, but a faint, sulphur-like flame hovered for a while over the spot they had left.

Soon he heard the following words, in a voice of ravishing sweetness:—

Mortal I must cease to be,
If no maiden, honestly,
Plight her virgin troth to me,
By yon cold moon's silver shower,
In the chill and mystic hour,
When the arrowy moonbeams fall
In the fairies' festive hall.
Twice her light shall o'er me pass,
Then I am what once I was,
Should no maid, betrothed, but free,
Plight her virgin vow to me."

The music ceased for a short space; then a voice, like the soft whisper of the summer winds, chanted the following lines in a sort of monotonous recitation:—

Mortal, take this unstained token,
Unpledged vows were never broken;
Lay it where a Byron's hand
This message finds from fairy-land,—
Fair Eleanor, the love-sick maid,
Who sighs unto her own soft shade:—
Bid her on this tablet write

What lover's wish would e'er indite;
 Then give it to the faithful stream
 (As bright and pure as love's first dream)
 That murmurs by,—'twill bring to me
 The messenger I give to thee.

"But the maiden thou must bring
 Hither, to our elfin king,
 Ere three days are come and gone,
 When the moon hath kissed the stone
 By our fairy monarch's throne.
 Shouldst thou fail, or she refuse,
 Death is thine; or thou may'st choose
 With us to chase the moonbeams bright,
 Around the busy world. Good night!"

He now felt something slipped into his hand.

"Remember," said the voice, "when that shadow is on the pillar, thou must return."

Immediately his bodily organs resumed their office, and the astonished miller was not long in regaining his own threshold.

But he was a moody and an altered man. The dame could not help shuddering as she saw his ashen visage, and his eyes fixed and almost starting from their sockets. His cheeks were sunken, his head was bare, and his locks covered with rime, and with fragments from the boughs that intercepted his path.

"Mercy on me!" cried she, lifting up her hands, "what terrible thing has happened? O Ralph, Ralph, thy silly gostering speeches, I do fear me, have had a sting in their tail thou hast little dreamed of!"

Here she crossed herself with much fervour and solemnity. She then turned to gaze on the doomed wretch, who, groaning heavily, seated himself on the old settle without speaking.

"He has seen the fairies or the black dog!" said the dame in great terror. "I will not upbraid thee with thy foolish speeches, yet would I thou hadst not spoken so lightly of the good people. But take courage, goodman; thou art never the worse yet for thy mishap, I trow; so tell me what has befallen thee, and ha' done snoring there, like an owl in a barn rigin'."

A long time elapsed ere the affrighted miller could reveal the nature and extent of his misfortunes. But woman's wits are more fertile in expedients, and therefore more adroit for plots and counterplots than our own. The dame was greatly terrified at the recital, yet not so as to prevent her from being able to counsel her husband as to the plan he should pursue.

We now leave our honest miller for a space, while we introduce another personage of great importance to the further development of our story.

Oliver Chadwyck was the second son of Jordan Chadwyck before-named, then residing at their fort or peel of the same name, nearly two miles from Healey. Oliver had, from his youth, been betrothed to Eleanor Byron, a young and noble dame of great beauty, residing with her uncle, Sir Nicholas Byron, at his mansion, two or three miles distant. Oliver was a hot-brained, amorous youth, fitted for all weathers, ready either for brotherhood or blows, and would have won his "ladye love" at the lance's point or by onslaught and hard knocks.

Eleanor seemed to suffer his addresses for lack of other occupation. She looked upon him as her future husband; but she would rather have been wooed to be won. The agonies of doubt

and suspense, the pangs of jealousy and apprehension, would have been bliss compared to the dull monotony of the “betrothed.” The lazy current would have sparkled if a few pebbles had been cast into the stream. Her sensitive spirit, likewise, shrank from contact with this fiery and impetuous youth; her heart yearned for some deep and hallowed affection. Strongly imbued with the witcheries of romance, she would rather have been sought by blandishments than blows, which, from his known prowess in the latter accomplishment, the youthful aspirant had no necessity to detail in the ears of his mistress. She liked not the coarse blunt manner of her gallant, nor the hard gripe and iron tramp for which he was sufficiently distinguished.

Yet was Oliver Chadwyck reckoned the best-looking cavalier in the neighbourhood, and, moreover, an adherent to the “Red Rose,” under whose banner he had fought, and, even when very young, had gained distinction for his bravery—no mean recommendation, truly, in those days, when courage was reckoned a sure passport to a lady’s favour, the which, it might seem, whoever held out longest and stuck the hardest was sure to win.

One evening, about the time of the miller’s adventure in the Fairies’ Chapel, Eleanor was looking through her casement listlessly, perhaps unconsciously. She sighed for occupation. The glorious hues of sunset were gone; the moon was rising, and she watched its course from the horizon of long dark hills up to the bare boughs of the sycamores by the banks of the little stream below. Again she sighed, and so heavily that it seemed to be re-echoed from the walls of her chamber. She almost expected the grim panels to start aside as she looked round, half-wishing, half-afraid that she might discover the intruder.

Disappointed, she turned again to the casement, through which the moonbeams, now partially intercepted by the branches, lay in chequered light and darkness on the floor.

“I thought thou wert here. Alas! I am unhappy, and I know not why.” While she spoke a tear trembled on her dark eyelashes, and as the moonlight shone upon it, the reflection glanced back to the eye-ball, and a radiant form apparently glided through the chamber. But the spectre vanished as the eyelid passed over, and swept away the illusion. She leaned her glowing cheek upon a hand white and exquisitely formed as the purest statuary: an image of more perfect loveliness never glanced through a lady’s lattice. She carelessly took up her cithern. A few wild chords flew from her touch. She bent her head towards the instrument, as if wooing its melody—the vibrations that crept to her heart. She hummed a low and plaintive descant, mournful and tender as her own thoughts. The tone and feeling of the ballad we attempt to preserve in the following shape:—

SONG.

1.

“It is the stream,
Singing to the cold moon with babbling tongue;
Yet, ah! not half so wildly as the song
Of my heart’s dream.
Is not my love most beautiful, thou moon?
Though pale as hope delayed;
Methought, beneath his feet the wild-flowers played
Like living hearts in tune.

2.

“We stood alone:
Then, as he drew the dark curls from my sight,
Through his transparent hand and arm of light,

The far skies shone.
 List! 'twas the dove.
 It seemed the echo of his own fond tone;
 Sweet as the hymn of seraphs round the throne
 Of hope and love!"

But the moon was not the object of her love. Ladies are little apt to become enamoured of such a fit emblem of their own fickle and capricious humours; and yet, somebody she loved, but he was invisible! Probably her wild and fervid imagination had created a form—pictured it to the mind, and endowed it with her own notions of excellence and perfection: precisely the same as love in the ordinary mode, with this difference only—to wit, the object is a living and breathing substance, around which these haloes of the imagination are thrown; whereas, in the case of which we are speaking, the lady's ideal image was transferred to a being she had never seen.

It was but a short period before the commencement of our narrative that Eleanor Byron was really in love, and for the first time; for though her cousin Oliver, as she usually called him, had stormed, and perchance carried the outworks, yet the citadel was impregnable and unapproached. But she knew not that it was love. A soft and pleasing impression stole insensibly upon her, then dejection and melancholy. Her heart was vacant, and she sighed for an object, and for its possession. It was a silly wish, but so it was, gentle reader; and beware thou fall not in love with thine own dreams, for sure enough it was but a vision, bright, mysterious, and bewitching, that enthralled her. Love weaves his chains of the gossamer's web, as well as of the unyielding adamant; and both are alike binding and inextricable. She saw neither form nor face in her visions, and yet the impalpable and glowing impression stole upon her senses like an odour, or a strain of soft and soul-thrilling music. Her heart was wrapped in a delirium of such voluptuous melody, that she chided the morning when she awoke, and longed for night and her own forgetfulness. Night after night the vision was repeated; and when her lover came, it was as though some chord of feeling had jarred, some tie were broken, some delicious dream were interrupted, and she turned from him with vexation and regret. He chided her caprice, which he endured impatiently, and with little show of forbearance. This did not restore him to her favour, nor render him more winning and attractive; so that the invisible gallant, a rival he little dreamt of, was silently occupying the heart once destined for his own.

One evening, Ralph, in pursuance of the commands he had received, arrayed in his best doublet, his brown hose, and a huge waist or undercoat, beneath which lay a heavy and foreboding heart, made his appearance at the house of Sir Nicholas Byron, an irregular and ugly structure of lath and plaster, well ribbed with stout timber, situated in a sheltered nook near the edge of the Beil, a brook running below Belfield, once an establishment of the renowned knights of St John of Jerusalem, or Knights Templars.

Ralph was ushered into the lady's chamber; and she, as if expecting some more distinguished visitant, looked with an eye of disappointment and impatience upon the intruder as he made his homely salutation.

"Thine errand?" inquired she.

"Verily, a fool's, lady," replied Ralph, "and a thriftless one, I fear me, into the bargain."

"Stay thy tongue. Yet I bethink me now," said she, looking earnestly at him, "thou art from my cousin: a messenger from him, I trow."

"Nay," said the ambiguous hind, "'tis from other guess folk, belike; but—who—I—Like enough that the Lady Eleanor will go a fortune-hunting with such a simpleton as I am."

“Go with thee?” said the lady in amazement.

“Why, ay—I was bid to bring you to the Fairies’ Chapel, beyond the waterfall in the wood by Healey, and that ere to-morrow night. But I am a doomed and a dying man, for how should the Lady Eleanor Byron obey this message?”

Here the unhappy miller began to weep; but the lady was dumb with astonishment.

“Forgive me, lady, in this matter; but I was in a manner bound to accomplish mine errand.”

“And what if I should accompany thee? Wouldest thou be my champion, my protector from onslaught and evil?”

Here he opened his huge grey eyes to such an alarming extent that Eleanor had much ado to refrain from smiling.

“If you will go, lady, I shall be a living man; and you”—a dead woman, probably he would have said; but the denunciation did not escape his lips, and the joy and surprise of the wary miller were beyond utterance.

“But whence thy message, friend?” said the deluded maiden, eyeing him suspiciously.

“Why; the message was whispered in my ear. A stranger brought it together with a dismal threat should I not bring you at the time appointed.”

Here the miller again became uneasy and alarmed. A cold shudder crept over him, and he looked imploringly upon her.

“But they say, my trusty miller, that this chapel of the fairies may not be visited, forbidden as it is to all catholic and devout Christians, after nightfall.”

At this intimation the peccant miller displayed his broad thumbs, and looked so dolorous and apprehensive, sprawling out his large ungainly proportions, that Eleanor, though not prone to the indulgence of mirth, was mightily moved thereto by the cowardly and dismal aspect he betrayed.

“Nay, lady, I beseech you,” he stammered out. “I am a dead dog—a piece of useless and unappropriated carrion, if you go not. Ha’ pity on your poor knave, and deliver me from my tormentors!”

“Then to-morrow I will deliver thee,” said the maiden, “and break thine enchantment. But the hour?”

“Ere the moonbeam touches the pillar in the Fairies’ Hall.”

“Agreed, knave. So begone. Yet—and answer truly for thy life—was no pledge, no token, sent with this message?”

Ralph unwillingly drew forth the token from his belt. Fearful that it might divulge more than he wished, the treacherous messenger had kept back the tablets entrusted to him. He suspected that should she be aware it was the good people who were a-wanting her, he would have but a slender chance of success.

She glanced hastily, anxiously, over the page, though with great surprise.

“How now?” said she, thoughtfully. “Here is a pretty love-billet truly. The page is fair and unspotted—fit emblem of a lover’s thoughts.”

“You are to write thereon, lady, your lover’s wish, and throw it into the brook here, hard by. The stream, a trusty messenger will carry it back to its owner.”

Ralph delivered his message with great reluctance, fearful lest she might be alarmed and retract her promise.

To his great joy, however, she placed the mystic token in her bosom, and bade him attend on the morrow.

This he promised faithfully; and with a light heart he returned to his abode.

Eleanor watched his departure with impatience. She took the tablets from her bosom. Horror seemed to fold his icy fingers round her heart. She remembered the injunction. Her mind misgave her, and as she drew towards the lamp it shot forth a tremulous blaze and expired. Yet with desperate haste, bent, it might seem, on her own destruction, she hastily approached the window. The moonbeam shone full upon the page as she scrawled with great trepidation the word "Thine." To her unspeakable horror the letters became a track of fire, but as she gazed a drop of dark blood fell on them and obliterated the writing.

"Must the compact be in blood?" said she, evidently shrinking from this unhallowed pledge. "Nay then, farewell! Thou art not of yon bright heaven. My hopes are yet there, whatever be thy doom! If thou art aught within the pale of mercy I am thine, but not in blood."

Again, but on another page, she wrote the word "Thine." Again the blood-drop effaced the letters.

"Never, though I love thee! Why urge this compact?" With a trembling hand she retraced her pledge, and the omen was not repeated. She had dared much; but her hope of mercy was yet dearer than her heart's deep and overwhelming passion. With joy she saw the writing was unchanged.

Throwing on her hood and kerchief, she stole forth to the brook, and in the rivulet, where it was yet dark and unfrozen, she threw the mystic tablet.

The following night she watched the moon, as it rose above the huge crags, breaking the long undulating horizon of Blackstone Edge, called "Robin Hood's Bed," or "Robin Hood's Chair."⁶²

One jagged peak, projected upon the moon's limb, looked like some huge spectre issuing from her bright pavilion. She rose, red and angry, from her dark couch. Afterwards a thin haze partially obscured her brightness; her pale, wan beam seemed struggling through a wide and attenuated veil. The wind, too, began to impart that peculiar chill so well understood as the forerunner of a change. A loud sough came shuddering through the frozen bushes, moaning in the grass that rustled by her path. Muffled and alone, she took her adventurous journey to the mill, where she arrived in about an hour from her departure. Ralph was anxiously expecting her, together with his dame.

"Good e'en, lady," said the latter, with great alacrity, as Eleanor crossed the threshold. She returned the salutation; but her features were lighted up with a wild and deceptive brightness, and her glowing eye betrayed the fierce and raging conflict within.

"The shadow will soon point to the hour, and we must be gone," said the impatient miller.

⁶² On a bleak moor, called Monstone Edge, in this hamlet, is a huge moor-stone or outlier, which (though part of it was broken off and removed some years ago) still retains the name of Monstone. It is said to have been quoited thither by Robin Hood, from his bed on the top of Blackstone Edge, about six miles off. After striking the mote or mark aimed at, the stone bounced off a few hundred yards and settled there. These stones, however, in all probability, if not Druidical, were landmarks, the ancient boundary of the hamlet of Healey; and, as was once customary, the marvellous story of this ancient outlaw might be told to the urchins who accompanied the perambulators, with the addition, probably, of a few kicks and cuffs, to make them remember the spot.

“Lead on,” replied the courageous maiden; and he shrank from her gaze, conscious of his own treachery and her danger.

The hard and ice-bound waters were dissolving, and might be heard to gurgle in their deep recesses; drops began to trickle from the trees, the bushes to relax their hold, and shake off their icy trammels. Towards the south-west lay a dense range of clouds, their fleecy tops telling with what message they were charged. Still the moon cast a subdued and lingering light over the scene, from which she was shortly destined to be shut out.

Ralph led the way silently and with great caution through the slippery ravine. The moonlight flickered through the leafless branches on the heights above them, their path winding through the shadows by the stream.

“We must hasten,” said her guide, “or we may miss the signal. We shall soon take leave of the moonlight, and perhaps lose our labour thereby.”

They crept onwards until they saw the dark rocks in the Fairies’ Chapel. The miller pointed to a long withered bough that flung out its giant arms far over the gulph from a great height. The moon threw down the shadow quite across to the bank on the other side, marking its rude outline on the crags.

“The signal,” said Ralph; “and by your favour, lady, I must depart. I have redeemed my pledge.”

“Stay, I prithee, but within hearing,” said Eleanor. “I like not the aspect of this place. If I call, hasten instantly to my succour.”

The miller promised, but with a secret determination not to risk his carcass again for all the bright-eyed dames in Christendom.

She listened to his departing footsteps, and her heart seemed to lose its support. An indescribable feeling crept upon her—a consciousness that another was present in this solitude. She was evidently under the control of some invisible agent; the very freedom of her thoughts oppressed and overruled by a power superior to her own. She strove to escape this thralldom, but in vain. She threw round an apprehensive glance, but all was still—the dripping boughs alone breaking the almost insupportable silence that surrounded her. Suddenly she heard a sigh, and a rustling at her ear; and she felt an icy chillness breathing on her. Then a voice, musical but sad, whispered—

“Thou hast rejected my suit. Another holds thy pledge.”

“Another! Who art thou?” said the maiden, forgetting her fears in the first emotion of surprise.

“Thou hast been conscious of my presence in thy dreams!” replied the mysterious visitor. She felt her terrors dissipated, for the being whom she loved was the guardian of her safety.

“I have loved thee, maiden,” said the voice; “I have hovered round thee when thou slept, and thou hast answered my every thought. Wherefore hast thou not obeyed? Why not seal thy compact and our happiness together?”

“Because it was unhallowed,” replied she firmly, though her bosom trembled like the leaf fluttering from its stem.

“Another has taken thy pledge. Yet is it not too late. Renew the contract, even with thy blood, and I am thine! Refuse, and thou art his. If this hour pass, I am lost to thee for ever!”

“To whom,” inquired Eleanor, “has it been conveyed?”

“To thy first, thy betrothed lover. He found the pledge that I would not receive.”

The maiden hesitated. Her eternal hopes might be compromised by this compliance. But she dreaded the loss of her insidious destroyer.

“Who art thou? I fear me for the tempter!”

“And what boots it, lady? But, listen. These elves be my slaves; and yet I am not immortal. My term is nigh run out, though it may be renewed if, before the last hour be past, a maiden plight her hopes, her happiness to me! Ere that shadow creeps on the fairy pillar thou art irrevocably mine, or his whom thou darest.”

Eleanor groaned aloud. She felt a cold hand creeping on her brow. She screamed involuntarily. On a sudden the boughs bent with a loud crash above her head, and a form, rushing down the height, stood before her. This unexpected deliverer was Oliver Chadwyck. Alarmed by the cries of a female, as he was returning from the chase, he interposed at the very moment when his mistress was ensnared by the wiles of her seducer.

“Rash fool, thou hast earned thy doom. The blood be on thine own head. Thou art the sacrifice!”

This was said in a voice of terrible and fiendish malignity. A loud tramp, as of a mighty host, was heard passing away, and Oliver now beheld the form of his betrothed.

“Eleanor! Here! In this unholy place!” cried her lover. But the maiden was unable to answer.

“There’s blood upon my hand!” said he, holding it up in the now clear and unclouded moonlight. “Art thou wounded, lady?”

“I know not,” she replied; “I was alone. Yet I felt as though some living thing were nigh—some unseen form, of terrible and appalling attributes! Was it not a dream?”

“Nay,” said Oliver, pensively; “methought another was beside thee!”

“I saw him not.”

“How camest thou hither?”

“Let us be gone,” said she, trembling; “I will tell thee all.”

She laid her head on his shoulder. It throbbed heavily. “I am now free. The accursed links are broken. I feel as though newly awakened from some horrible dream! Thou hast saved me, Oliver. But if thine own life is the price!”

“Fear not; I defy their devilish subtilty—in their very den too: and thus, and thus, I renounce the devil and all his works!”

He spat thrice upon the ground, to show his loathing and contempt.

“Oh! say not so,” cried Eleanor, looking round in great alarm.

Oliver bore her in his arms from that fearful spot. He accompanied her home; and it was near break of day when, exhausted and alone, she again retired to her chamber. By the way Oliver told her that he had found a mysterious tablet on the edge of the brook the same morning. He had luckily hidden it in his bosom, and he felt as though a talisman or charm had protected him from the spells in the “Fairies’ Chapel.”

Spring-tide was past, and great was the stir and bustle for the approaching nuptials between Oliver Chadwyck and the Lady Eleanor. All the yeomanry, inhabitants of the hamlets of Honorsfield, Butterworth, and Healey, were invited to the wedding. Dancers and mummers were provided; wrestlers and cudgel-players, with games and pastimes of all sorts, were

appointed. The feasts were to be holden for three days, and masks, motions, and other rare devices, were expected to surpass and eclipse every preceding attempt of the like nature.

Eleanor sat in her lonely bower. It was the night before the bridal. To-morrow would see her depart in pageantry and pomp—an envied bride! Yet was her heart heavy, and she could not refrain from weeping.

She sought rest; but sleep was denied. The owl hooted at her window; the bat flapped his leathern wings; the taper burned red and heavily, and its rays were tinged as though with blood; the fire flung out its tiny coffin; the wind sobbed aloud at every cranny, and wailed piteously about the dwelling.

“Would that I might read my destiny,” thought she. Her natural inclination to forbidden practices was too powerful to withstand.

Now there was formerly an ancient superstition, that if, on the night before marriage, a taper were burned, made from the fat of a young sow, and anointed with the blood of the inquirer, after sundry diabolical and cabalistical rites at midnight, a spirit would appear, and pronounce the good or evil destiny of the querent.

Eleanor had prepared the incantation ere she laid her throbbing head on the pillow. Whether or not she slept, is more than we can divulge. Such, in all probability, was the case; dreams being the echo only of our waking anticipations.

She thought there came a rushing wind. The door flapped to and fro, the curtains shook, and the pictures glared horribly from the wall. Suddenly—starting from the panel, with eyes lighted up like bale-fires, and a malignant scowl on her visage—stalked down one of the family portraits. It was that of a female—a maiden aunt of the house of Byron, painted by one of the court artists, whom the king had brought from France, and patronised at a heavy cost. This venerable dame appeared to gaze at the spectator from whatsoever situation she was beholden. The eyes even seemed to follow you when passing across the chamber. A natural consequence though, and only marvelled at by the ignorant and illiterate.

This ancient personage now advanced from her hanging-place, and standing at the foot of the bed, opened out a fiery scroll with these ominous words:—

“Maid, wife, and widow, in one day,
This shall be thy destiny.”

Eleanor struggled hard, but was unable to move. She laboured for utterance, but could not speak. At length, with one desperate effort, a loud cry escaped her, and the vision disappeared. She slept no more, but morning disclosed her haggard cheek and sunken eye, intimating that neither hope nor enjoyment could have been the companion of her slumbers.

It was a bright morning in June. The sun rode high and clear in the blue heavens. The birds had “sung their matins blythe” ere the bridegroom arrived with his attendants. Merrily did the village choristers acquit themselves in their vocation, while those that were appointed strewed flowers in the way. The bells of St Chad trolled out their merry notes when the ceremony was over, and the bride, on her snow-white palfrey, passed on, escorted by her husband, at the head of the procession. Gay cavaliers on horseback, and maidens prancing by their side, made the welkin ring with loud and mirthful discourse. The elder Byron rode on his charger by the side of Jordan Chadwyck and his eldest son, with whom rode the vicar, Richard Salley, nothing loath to contribute his folly to the festival.

As the procession drew nigh to the hall, a messenger rode forward in great haste, whispering to Byron, who, with angry and disordered looks, shouted aloud to Oliver—

“Away—away! The cowardly Traffords are at our threshold. They have skulked out, like traitors as they be, knowing our absence at the feast. ‘Tis an old feud, and a bloody one. Who is for Byron? Down with the Traffords!”

The old man here put spurs to his horse, and galloped off with his attendants.

“A Byron—a Byron!” shouted Oliver, as he followed in full cry, first leaving his wife under a suitable and safe escort. Soon they routed the enemy, but the prediction was complete; for Eleanor became

“Maid, wife, and widow, in one day!”

her husband being slain during the battle.

The blood of man was held of little account in those days, if we may judge by the following award on the occasion:—

“In virtue of a writ of appeal of death, sued out against Sir John Trafford, Knight, his tenants and servants, the sum of sixty pounds was deemed to be paid by Trafford to Biroun, to be distributed amongst the cousins and friends of the late Oliver C., in the parish church of Manchester, on the award of Sir Thomas Stanley, Knight, *Lord Stanley*—viz. ten marks at the nativity of John the Baptist, and ten marks at St Martyn, yearly, until the whole was paid, and all parties to be fully friends. Dated London, 24th March, 20 Edward IV. 4018.”

XXIV. The Luck Of Muncaster

K. Hen.—"From Scotland am I stolen, even of pure love,
To greet mine own land with my wishful sight."

King Henry VI.

It shall bless thy bed, it shall bless thy board,
They shall prosper by this token;
In Muncaster Castle good luck shall be,
Till the charmed cup is broken."

Gamel de Pennington is the first ancestor of the family of whom there is any recorded account; he was a person of great note and property at the time of the Conquest, and the family, having quitted their original seat of Pennington in Lancashire (where the foundation of a square building called the Castle is still visible), he fixed his residence at Mealcastre, now called Muncaster. It is said that the family originally resided nearer the sea, at a place not far from the town of Ravenglass, where at present are the ruins of an old Roman castle, called Walls Castle. The old tower of the present mansion-house at Muncaster was built by the Romans, to guard the ford called St Michael's Ford, over the river Esk, when Agricola went to the north, and to watch also the great passes into the country over the fells, and over Hard Knot, where is the site of another fortress constructed by them, apparent from the traces existing to this day.

Muncaster and the manor of Muncaster have long been enjoyed by the Penningtons, who appear to have possessed it about forty years before the Conquest, and ever since, sometimes collaterally, but for the most part in lineal descent by their issue male, to this very time.

There is a room in Muncaster Castle which still goes by the name of Henry the Sixth's room, from the circumstance of his having been concealed in it at the time he was flying from his enemies in 1461, when Sir John Pennington, the then possessor of Muncaster, gave him a secret reception.

The posts of the bed in which he slept, which are of handsome carved oak, are also in the same room in good preservation.

When the period for the king's departure arrived, before he proceeded on his journey, he addressed Sir John with many kind and courteous acknowledgments for his loyal reception, lamenting, at the same time, that he had nothing of more value to present him with, as a testimony of his good-will, than the cup out of which he crossed himself. He then gave it into the hands of Sir John, accompanying the present with the following blessing:—"The family shall prosper as long as they preserve it unbroken;" which the superstition of those times imagined would carry good fortune to his descendants. Hence it is called "*The Luck of Muncaster.*" It is a curiously-wrought glass cup, studded with gold and white enamel spots. The benediction attached to its security being then uppermost in the recollection of the family, it was considered essential to the prosperity of the house at the time of the usurpation that the Luck of Muncaster should be deposited in a safe place; it was consequently buried till the cessation of hostilities had rendered all further care and concealment unnecessary. Unfortunately, however, the person commissioned to disinter this precious jewel let the box fall in which it was locked up, which so alarmed the then existing members of the family, that they could not muster courage enough to satisfy their apprehensions. It therefore (according to the traditionary story still preserved in the family) remained unopened for more than forty

years, at the expiration of which period a Pennington, more hardy or more courageous than his predecessors, unlocked the casket, and exultingly proclaimed the safety of the Luck of Muncaster.

When John, Lord Muncaster (the first of the family who obtained a peerage), entered into possession of Muncaster Castle, after his elevation in 1793, he found it still surrounded with a moat, and defended by a strong portcullis. The family having of late years entirely resided upon their estate of Wartee in Yorkshire, the house was in so very dilapidated a state that Lord Muncaster was obliged to rebuild it almost entirely, with the exception of Agricola's Tower, the walls of which are nine feet thick. The elevation of the new part is in unison with that of the Roman tower, and forms altogether a handsome castellated building. The situation is eminently striking, and was well chosen for commanding the different passes over the mountains. It is surrounded with mountain scenery on the north, south, and east; while extensive plantations, a rich and cultivated country, with the sea in the distance, makes a combination of scenery than which it is scarcely possible to imagine anything more beautiful or more picturesque.

We are tempted to conclude this description with the words of John, Lord Muncaster, who himself so greatly contributed to its renovation. Upon being requested to give an outline of its beauties, he replied that it consisted of "wood, park, lawn, valley, river, sea, and mountain."

The reason or excuse we give for introducing within our Lancashire series this tradition, of which the occurrences took place in a neighbouring county, is, that the family was originally native to our own. By the village of Pennington, situated about midway between Dalton and Ulverstone, is the Castle Hill, the residence of this family before the Conquest. The area of the castle-yard appears to have been an octagon or a square, with obtuse angles, about forty-five yards in diameter. The south and east sides have been defended by a ditch about ten yards wide, and by a vallum of earth, still visible. There are no vestiges of the ancient building. It stood apparently on the verge of a precipice, at the foot of which flows a brook with great rapidity. The side commands an extensive view of the sea-coast and beacons, and was excellently situated for assembling the dependants in cases of emergency. The name is diversely written in ancient writings, as Penyngton, Penington, Pennington, and in Doomsday Book *Pennegetun*, perhaps from *Pennaig*, in British "a prince or great personage," to which the Saxon termination *tun* being added, forms *Pennegetun*, since smoothed into Pennington.

PART FIRST.

"Come hither, Sir John de Pennington,
Come hither, and hearken to me;
Nor silver, nor gold, nor ladye-love,
Nor broad lands I give unto thee."

"I care not for silver, I care not for gold,
Nor for broad lands, nor fair ladye;
But my honour and troth, and my good broadsword,
Are the king's eternally."

"Come hither, Sir John, thou art loyal and brave,"
Again the monarch spake;
"In my trouble and thrall, in the hour of pain,
Thou pity didst on me take."

"The white rose withers on every bough,
And the red rose rears its thorn;

But many a maid our strife shall rue,
And the babe that is yet unborn.

“I’ve charged in the battle with horse and lance,
But I’ve doffed the warrior now;
And never again may helmet of steel
Bind this burning, aching brow!

“Oh, had I been born of a simple churl,
And a serving-wench for my mate,
I had whistled as blithe as yon knave that sits
By Muncaster’s Castle gate!

“Would that my crown were a bonnet of blue,
And my sceptre yon shepherd’s crook,
I would honour, dominion, and power eschew,
In this holy and quiet nook.

“For England’s crown is a girdle of blood,
A traitor is every gem;
And a murderer’s eye each jewel that lurks
In that kingly diadem!

“Hunt on! hunt on, thou blood-hound keen;
I’d rather an outcast be,
Than wade through all that thou hast done,
To pluck that crown from thee!”

“Then tarry, my liege,” Sir John replied,
“In Muncaster’s Castle gate;
No foeman shall enter, while sheltered here
From Edward’s pride and hate.”

“I may not tarry, thou trusty knight,
Nor longer with thee abide;
Ere to-morrow shall rise on these lordly towers,
From that gate shall a monarch ride.

“For a vision came to my lonely bed,
And that vision bade me flee;
And I must away, ere break of day,
O’er the hills to the south countrie.

“But take this cup,—’tis a hallowed thing,
Which holy men have blessed;
In the church of the Holy Sepulchre
This crystal once did rest;

“And many a martyr, and many a saint,
Around its brim have sate;
No water that e’er its lips have touched
But is hallowed and consecrate.

“‘Tis thine, Sir John; not an empire’s worth,
Nor wealth of Ind could buy

The like, for never was jewel seen
Of such wondrous potency.

“It shall bless thy bed, it shall bless thy board,
They shall prosper by this token;
In Muncaster Castle good luck shall be,
Till the charmed cup is broken!”

Sir John he bent him on his knee,
And the king’s word ne’er did err,
For the cup is called, to this blessed hour,
“The Luck of Muncaster.”

PART SECOND.

“Oh haste, Sir William of Liddislee
My kinsman good at need,
Ere the Esk’s dark ford thou hast passed by,
In Muncaster rest thy steed;

“And say to my love and my lady bright,
In Carlisle I must stay,
For the foe is come forth from the misty north,
And I cannot hence away;

“But I must keep watch on Carlisle’s towers
With the banner of Cumberland;
Then bid her beware of the rebel host,
Lest they come with sword and brand.

“But bid her, rather than house or land,
Take heed of that cup of grace,
Which King Henry gave to our ancestor,
The ‘Luck’ of our noble race.

“Bid her bury it deep at dead of night,
That no eye its hiding see.
Now do mine errand, Sir William,
As thou wouldst prosperous be!”

Sir William stayed nor for cloud nor shrine,
He stayed not for rest nor bait,
Till he saw the far gleam on Esk’s broad stream,
And Muncaster’s Castle gate.

“From whence art thou in such fearful haste?”
The warder wondering said;
“Hast thou ‘scaped alone from the bloody fight,
And the field of the gory dead?”

“I am not from the bloody fight,
Nor a craven flight I flee;
But I am come to my lady’s bower,
Sir William of Liddislee.”

The knight to the lady's bower is gone:

"A boon I crave from thee,
Deny me not, thou lady bright,"
And he bent him on his knee.

"I grant thee a boon," the lady said,
"If it from my husband be;"
"There's a cup of grace," cried the suppliant knight,
"Which thou must give to me."

"Now foul befa' thee, fause traitor,
That with guile would our treasure win;
For ne'er from Sir John of Pennington
Had such traitrous message been."

"I crave your guerdon, fair lady,
'Twas but your faith to try,
That we might know if the 'Luck' of this house
Were safe in such custody.

"The message was thus, thy husband sent;
He hath looked out from Carlisle wa',
And he is aware of John Highlandman
Come trooping down the snaw;

"And should this kilted papistry
Spread hither upon their way,
They'll carry hence that cup of grace,
Though thou shouldst say them nay.

"And thy lord must wait for the traitor foe
By the walls of merry Carlisle;
Else he would hie to his lady's help,
And his lady's fears beguile.

"Thy lord would rather his house were brent,
His goods and his cattle harried,
Than the cup should be broken,—that cup of grace,
Or from Muncaster's house be carried."

The kinsman smiled on that fond lady,
And his traitor suit he plied:
"Give me the cup," the false knight said,
"From these foemen fierce to hide."

The lady of Muncaster oped the box
Where lay this wondrous thing;
Sir William saw its beauteous form,
All bright and glistering.

The kinsman smiled on that fond lady,
And he viewed it o'er and o'er.
"Tis a jewel of price," said that traitor then,
"And worthy a prince's dower.

“We’ll bury the treasure where ne’er from the sun
One ray of gladness shone,
Where darkness and light, and day and night,
And summer and spring are one:

“Beneath the moat we’ll bury it straight,
In its box of the good oak-tree;
And the cankered carle, John Highlandman,
Shall never that jewel see.”

The kinsman took the casket up,
And the lady looked over the wall:
“If thou break that cup of grace, beware,
The pride of our house shall fall!”

The kinsman smiled as he looked above,
And to the lady cried,
“I’ll show thee where thy luck shall be,
And the lord of Muncaster’s pride.”

The lady watched this kinsman false,
And he lifted the casket high:
“Oh! look not so, Sir William,”
And bitterly she did cry.

But the traitor knight dashed the casket down
To the ground, that blessèd token;
“Lie there,” then said that false one now,
“Proud Muncaster’s charm is broken!”

The lady shrieked, the lady wailed,
While the false knight fled amain:
But never durst Muncaster’s lord, I trow,
Ope that blessèd shrine again!

PART THIRD.

The knight of Muncaster went to woo,
And he rode with the whirlwind’s speed,
For the lady was coy, and the lover was proud,
And he hotly spurred his steed.

He stayed not for bog, he stayed not for briar,
Nor stayed he for flood or fell;
Nor ever he slackened his courser’s rein,
Till he stood by the Lowthers’ well.

Beside that well was a castle fair,
In that castle a fair lady;
In that lady’s breast was a heart of stone,
Nor might it softened be.

“Now smooth that brow of scorn, fair maid,
And to my suit give ear;

There's never a dame in Cumberland,
Such a look of scorn doth wear."

"Haste, haste thee back," the lady cried,
"For a doomed man art thou;
I wed not the heir of Muncaster,
Thy '*Luck*' is broken now!"

"Oh say not so, for on my sire
Th' unerring doom was spent;
I heir not his ill-luck, I trow,
Nor with his dool am shent."

"The doom is thine, as thou art his,
And to his curse, the heir;
But never a luckless babe of mine
That fearful curse shall bear!"

A moody man was the lover then;
But homeward as he hied,
Beside the well at Lord Lowther's gate,
An ugly dwarf he spied.

"Out of my sight, thou fearsome thing;
Out of my sight, I say:
Or I will fling thine ugly bones
To the crows this blessed day."

But the elfin dwarf he skipped and ran
Beside the lover's steed,
And ever as Muncaster's lord spurred on,
The dwarf held equal speed.

The lover he slackened his pace again,
And to the goblin cried:
"What ho, Sir Page, what luckless chance
Hath buckled thee to my side?"

Up spake then first that shrivelled thing,
And he shook his locks of grey:
"Why lowers the cloud on Muncaster's brow,
And the foam tracks his troubled way?"

"There's a lady, the fairest in all this land,"
The haughty chief replied;
"But that lady's love in vain I've sought,
And I'll woo none other bride."

"And is there not beauty in other lands,
And locks of raven hue,
That thou must pine for a maiden cold,
Whose bosom love ne'er knew?"

"Oh, there is beauty in every land,"
The sorrowing knight replied;

“But I’d rather Margaret of Lonsdale wed,
Than the fairest dame beside.”

“And thou shalt the Lady Margaret wed,”
Said that loathly dwarf again;
“There’s a key in Muncaster Castle can break
That maiden’s heart in twain!”

“Oh never, oh never, thou lying elf,
That maiden’s word is spoken:
The cup of grace left a traitor’s hand,
Proud Muncaster’s *‘Luck’* is broken.”

Then scornfully grinned that elfin dwarf,
And aloud he laughed again:
“There’s a key in thy castle, Sir Knight, can break
That maiden’s heart in twain!”

The knight he turned him on his steed,
And he looked over hill and stream;
But he saw not that elfin dwarf again,
He had vanished as a dream!

The knight came back to his castle hall,
And stabled his good grey steed;
And he is to his chamber gone,
With wild and angry speed.

And he saw the oaken casket, where
Lay hid that cup of grace,
Since that fearful day, when the traitor foe
Wrought ruin on his race.

“Thou cursed thing,” he cried in scorn,
“That ever such *‘Luck’* should be;
From Muncaster’s house, ill-boding fiend,
Thou shalt vanish eternally.”

He kicked the casket o’er and o’er
With rage and contumely;
When, lo! a tinkling sound was heard—
Down dropped a glittering key!

He remembered well the wondrous speech
Of the spectre dwarf again,
“There’s a key in Muncaster Castle can break
A maiden’s heart in twain!”

He took the key, and he turned the lock,
And he opened the casket wide;
When the cause of all his agony
The lover now espied.

The holy cup lay glistening there,
And he kissed that blessed token,

For its matchless form unharmèd lay,
The “Luck” had ne’er been broken!

The loud halls rung, and the minstrels sung,
And glad rolled the Esk’s bonny tide,
When Lonsdale’s Lady Margaret
Was Muncaster’s winsome bride!

Now prosper long that baron bold,
And that bright and blessèd token:
For Muncaster’s Luck is constant yet,
And the crystal charm unbroken!

XXV. The Peel Of Fouldrey

“True, treason never prospers; what’s the reason?

“When treason prospers, ‘tis no longer treason!”

The ancient castle of Peel of Fouldrey, the island of fowls, stands a little beyond the southern extremity of the isle of Walney. The castle and its site belong to the ladies of the liberty of Furness.

The ruins, seen from the heights above Rampside, are beautifully picturesque. Though the sea has wasted part of the outworks, yet the remains exhibit a complete specimen of the principles and plan upon which these ancient defences were usually constructed. It may not be thought out of place to give the reader some account of its present appearance. West, in his *Antiquities of Furness*, inserts the following account of his visit to this delightful spot; and as it is detailed with a good deal of graphic simplicity, if not elegance of style, we prefer it to our own record of an expedition to this place.

“Choosing a proper time of the tide,” says he, “for our excursion, we set out from Dalton, early on a pleasant summer’s morning, and having crossed the sands in Walney channel, we followed the eastern shore of the isle of Walney from the small village of Northscale, by the chapel, to Bigger. Leaving this hamlet, and crossing over a small neck of land by a narrow lane winding amongst well-cultivated fields, smiling with the prospect of a plenteous harvest of excellent grain, but principally of wheat, which the land in Walney generally produces of a superior quality, we again came to the shore, and having a pretty distinct view of several parts of the ruinous fabric which was the object of our excursion, we took the distant castle for our guide, and entered upon a trackless sand, which, by the route we pursued, is about two miles and a half over. It is soft and disagreeable travelling in many places; but there is no quicksand. Those, however, who are unacquainted with the road to the Peel of Fouldrey should take a guide from Bigger.

“About half-way over the sand, the mouldering castle, with its extensive shattered walls and ruined towers, makes a solemn, majestic appearance. Having arrived on the island, which is destitute of tree or shrub, except a few blasted thorns and briers, we left our horses at a lonely public-house, situated close by the side of the eastern shore, and proceeded to inspect the ruins of the castle. The main tower has been defended by two moats, two walls, and several small towers. We crossed the exterior fosse or ditch, and entered the outer bayle or yard, through a ruinous guard-tower, overleaning a steep precipice formed by the surges of the sea. The ancient pass, where the drawbridge over the outer ditch was fixed, has been long washed away. The greater part of the outer wall is also demolished, for in those places which are out of the reach of the tide the stones have been removed for various purposes.

“The drawbridge over the exterior ditch of these castles used commonly to be defended by a fortification consisting of a strong high wall with turrets, called the barbican or antemural; the great gate or entrance into the outer bayle or yard was often fortified by a tower on each side, and by a room over the intermediate passage; and the thick folding-doors of oak, by which the entrance was closed, were often strengthened with iron, and faced by an iron portcullis or grate, sliding down a groove from the higher part of the building.

“A chapel commonly stood in the outer bayle: accordingly, just at our entrance into that part we saw the ruins of a building which is said to have been the chapel belonging to this castle.

“At the inside of the yard we came to the inner fosse, moat, or ditch, and arriving at the place where the drawbridge had been fixed, we entered the inner bayle or court by the ancient passage through the interior wall, the entrance whereof had evidently been secured by a portcullis, and defended by a room over the passage.

“We now proceeded to the entrance into the main tower or keep; but the doorway into the porch, which precedes it, being walled up, we were obliged to creep into the edifice by a narrow aperture. The entrance has been secured by a portcullis. The main tower has consisted of three storeys, each divided into three oblong apartments by two interior side walls being carried from bottom to top.

“The rooms on the ground-floor have been very low, and lighted by long apertures, extremely narrow, at the outside of the walls, but a considerable width in the inside, perhaps so constructed for the use of the bow. The apartments have communicated with each other; and there has been a winding staircase leading from one of them to the rooms above, and to the top of the castle. Under the ground-floor of these ancient castles used commonly to be dark and dismal apartments, or dungeons, for the reception of prisoners, but nothing of the kind is known to be here. The porch is called the dungeon.

“The second floor has been on a level with the first landing at the principal entrance. The rooms have been lofty, and lighted by small pointed windows, and many of them have had fireplaces. The apartments on the third floor have been apparently similar to those on the second. The side apartments have been lighted by several small pointed windows, but those in the middle have been very dark and gloomy.

“The great door of the castle opens into one of these intermediate apartments. On the left-hand side of the entrance has been a spiral staircase, leading to the rooms above and to the top of the castle, which has had a flat roof, surrounded by a parapet and several turrets. The walls of this tower are very strong and firm; a deep buttress is placed at each corner, and one against the middle of each side wall. A small square tower has stood at the southern corner, but the greater part of it has been thrown down by the sea. The foundation of one side wall is also undermined the whole of its length, and as it in some places overhangs the precipice formed by the waste of the sea, and as the castle is not situated upon a rock, but upon hard loamy soil, this side must inevitably fall in a few years.

“Many huge fragments of the wasted walls are scattered upon the shore, under the cliff from whence they have fallen; and notwithstanding the concussion they have received in falling from a great height, and the frequent surges of the sea, they are as firm as ever, and in many places exhibit the shape of the edifice.

“The corners and doorcases of the guard-towers, the buttresses, window-frames, and several parts of the main tower, are constructed with red freestone; but all the other parts of the walls which in general are about six or seven feet in thickness, are formed of round stones collected from the adjacent shores. The inside of the walls has been constructed with small stones, and plenty of fluid mortar to fill the interstices.

“To this mode of construction, to the excellent binding quality of the stones, and to the slow drying of the grout-work in the inside, may be attributed the great tenacity of the walls of this fabric, more than to any uncommon or unknown method of composing the mortar.

“The roofs of the numerous guard-houses in the surrounding walls of this castle have apparently been flat. Upon these, and along the walls, which in most castles were topped by a parapet and a kind of embrasure called crennels, the defenders of the castle were stationed during a siege, and from thence discharged arrows, darts, stones, and every kind of annoyance they could procure, upon their enemies.

“There were often subterraneous passages leading from the lowest part of the main tower to a great distance; and by these the besieged could make their escape in time of imminent danger, when the outworks were carried by storm.

“On the north-east side of the outworks of this castle has been a large pond or reservoir for supplying the ditches with water in cases of sudden emergency. There has also been a fish-pond on the north-west side.

“Though many variations were made in the structure of castles, as the plan was often modified by the architect according to the site occupied by the edifice, yet the most perfect and magnificent were generally constructed with all the different parts we have mentioned.

“The walls contain no decorations of art, and are equally destitute of all natural embellishments; the rugged outlines of dilapidation, associating with the appearance of past magnificence, are the qualities which chiefly interest the imagination, while comparing the settled tranquillity of the present with the turbulent ages that are past, and contemplating the view of this mouldering fabric.

“The island of Fouldrey has certainly been much larger at the erection of the castle than it is at present; but the sea, having reduced it to its present small compass, has abated the rapid career of its destruction. It now wastes the western shore of Walney, and forms a new tract out of the ruins, which proves a barrier to its progress upon the Peel of Fouldrey, and at some future period may be an accession to this island, in place of the land which it has lost.”

The period when it was reduced to ruins is not well ascertained, but it is probable that this was one of the fortresses which fell under the dismantling orders of the Commonwealth.

The port is very large and commodious, and would float a first-rate ship of war at low water.

In 1789 a body of commissioners and trustees, appointed to improve the navigation of the river Lune, built a lighthouse on the south-east end of the isle of Walney. It is an octagonal column, placed upon a circular foundation of a little more than twenty feet in diameter. At the plinth, its diameter is eighteen feet, and diminishes gradually with the elevation through fifty-seven feet to fourteen. The ascent from the bottom to the lantern is by a staircase, consisting of ninety-one steps, winding up the inside of the pillar. The whole height is about sixty-eight feet. At the base of the column there is a small dwelling for the keeper and his family.

It was in the “merry month of May,” in the year 1487, scarcely two years after Richard’s overthrow at Bosworth, and Earl Richmond’s usurpation of the English crown by the title of King Henry the Seventh, that a great armament, landing on the barren island of Fouldrey, took possession of the castle, a fortress of great strength commanding the entrance to the bay of Morecambe, and a position of considerable importance to the invaders. It occupied, with the outworks and defences, nearly the whole area of the island (a few acres only), two or three fishermen’s huts at that time being irregularly scattered on the beach below. Built by the monks of Furness in the first year of Edward III., as a retreat from the ravages of the Scots, and a formidable barrier against their approaches by sea, it was now unexpectedly wrested from its owners, becoming a point of resistance from whence the formidable power of Henry might be withstood, and in the end successfully opposed.

A royal banner floated from the battlements: the fortress had been formally taken into possession by the invaders in the name of their king, previously proclaimed at Dublin by the title of Edward the Sixth. The youth was crowned there with a diadem taken from an image of the Virgin, priests and nobles espousing his cause with more than ordinary enthusiasm; and Henry, in the second year of his reign, was threatened, from a source as unexpected as it was deemed contemptible, with the loss of his ill-gotten sovereignty.

Lambert Simnel, according to some historians, was the real name of this “pretender;” but there be others who scruple not to assert, that he was in reality the unfortunate Earl of Warwick, son to Clarence, elder brother of Richard III., and that he had made his escape from the Tower, where he long suffered an ignominious confinement by the cruel policy of Henry. The prior claims of this young prince to the English crown could not be doubted, and Margaret, the “bold” Duchess of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV., had furnished the invaders with a body of two thousand chosen Flemish troops, commanded by Martin Swartz, a brave and experienced officer. With them came the Earl of Lincoln, related to Edward IV. by intermarriage with Elizabeth, the king’s eldest sister.

This nobleman had long entertained ambitious views towards the crown; his uncle Richard, it is said, in default of issue to himself, having expressed the intention of declaring Lincoln his successor. The Lord Lovel, too, a bitter enemy of the reigning prince, who had fled to the court of Burgundy beforetime for protection, was entrusted with a command in the expedition. To these were joined the Earl of Kildare, the king’s deputy for Ireland, with several others of the nobility from the sister kingdom. The countenance thus unexpectedly given to the rebellion by persons of the highest rank, and the great accession of military force from abroad, raised the courage and exultation of the Irish to such a pitch that they threatened to overrun England, nothing doubting but their restless and disaffected spirit would be fully met by a similar disposition on the part of those whom they invaded. In supposing that the inhabitants in the north of England, and especially in Lancashire, would immediately join their standard, they had not calculated wisely. The king, in crushing the hopes of the Yorkists, had made himself, at that period, too popular in the county; the reluctance, too, which it may be supposed that Englishmen would feel in identifying themselves with a troop of foreign adventurers, as well as their general animosity against the Irish, to whom the “northerns” never bore any good-will, being too near neighbours to agree,—these circumstances taken into account, the ultimate failure of the expedition might have been easily prognosticated. Sir Thomas Broughton, a gentleman of some note in Furness, was the only person of weight and influence in the county who joined their standard, and he soon found himself a loser by his defection.

This brief preliminary statement we have thought essential to the right understanding and development of our plot.

The evening was dark and lowering, the sky broken into wild irregular masses of red and angry clouds. The sun, after throwing one fierce look over the broad and troubled sea, had sunk behind a hard, huge battlement of cloud, on the round waving edges of which ran a bright burning rim, that looked like a train of fire ignited by the glowing luminary behind.

The beach round the little island of Fouldrey is mostly covered with pebbles thrown up by the tide, occasionally intermingled with rock and patches of dark verdure. A few boats may be seen with their equipments, and two or three straggling nets upon the shore. A distant sail occasionally glides across the horizon; but the usual aspect is that of solitude, still and uninterrupted, the abode of sterility and sadness. Now, the narrow bay by the island was glittering with gallant streamers. Ships of war, in all their pride and panoply, majestically reposed upon its bosom. All was bustle and impatience. The trumpet-note of war brayed fiercely from the battlements. Incessant was the march of troops in various directions. Tents were pitched before the castle. Guards were appointed; and this hitherto peaceful and solitary spot resounded with the din of arms, and the hoarse clang of preparation for the approaching strife.

Messengers were constantly passing to and from the mainland. The insignia of royalty were ostentatiously displayed, and the captains and leaders within the fortress fulfilled the duties of this mimic and motley court in honour of their anticipated sovereign.

Under a steep cliff, washed by the sea at high water, but of no great height, and above which the higher walls of the castle or keep might be discovered, sat two fishermen, the owners, or rather occupiers, of one of the cottages built under the very walls of the fortress, where these peaceful inhabitants had placed their little nests, protected and covered by the wing of their loftier but more exposed and dangerous neighbour.

The place they had chosen for their conference was secluded from general observation, and their low and heavy speech was concealed from the prying sentinels above by the hoarse and impetuous voice of the retiring waves. Not many paces distant was the inlet to a subterraneous passage, supposed to lead under the deepest foundations of the castle; but its termination was now a mystery, at any rate, to the present occupiers and inhabitants of the place. Many strange and horrible stories were told and believed, of its uses and destination in times past. Being burdened with a bad name—"some uncleansed murder stuck to it"—the place ran little risk of disturbance or intruders. When the tides ran high this outlet was inaccessible, being partly flooded by the sea. From neglect and disuse an accumulation of sand and pebbles, washed by the violence of the waves into the cavity, was deposited there, so that the entrance, which, according to tradition was once wide and sufficiently lofty for a person to walk upright, was now dwindled into a narrow and insignificant-looking hole, scarcely big enough to admit an urchin.

"Thee hasna seen it thysel', then?" said one of the fishermen to his companion.

"Nea; I waur it' hoose man when it cam'; but"—the speaker looked wistfully towards the dark entrance we have named,—"but I'se sure Dick wouldna seay sae if"——

"Dick's a starin' gowk, and a coward too. I'se warrant there waur plenty o' room 'twixt his carcase and the wa'. That I'd bin there i'stead! There shouldn't ha' bin room to cram a herrin' tail atween me an' the ghost's substance. I would ha' hedged him up thus, an' then master ghost, taken aback, says, 'Friend, by yere sweet leave I would pass;' but I make out elbows, and arms this'n, facing till him so. Help! murder!"

This sudden change in the voice and attitude of the speaker, this sudden exhalation of his courage, unfortunately arose from the parties having, in the heat and interest of the discourse, turned their backs to the haunted entrance, and, so intent was Davy in accommodating the action to the valiant tenor of his speech, that it was only on turning round, for the purpose of showing to his companion the way in which he would have disputed a passage with the ghost, that he was aware for the first time of the presence of that terrible thing, and within a very few inches too of his own person. They stayed not for any further exemplification of this theory of ghost-laying, but in an instant were beyond observation, bounding over the beach, nor once looking behind them until safe in their little hut, and the door fastened against the fearful intruder. Davy, being foremost in the race, sat down, followed by his companion George, who, maugre his great apprehensions, could not forbear laughing heartily at the sudden melting away of the big-mouthed valour of this cowardly boaster.

"Praised be our lady of Furness," said the merry taunter, with many interruptions from laughter and want of breath; "thy heels are as glib as thy tongue: for which—oh, oh! I am breathed—blown—dispossessed of my birthright, free quaffing o' the air. Ha, ha! I cannot laugh. Oh! what a mouth didst thou make at old blacksleeves. Gaping so, I wonder he mistook not thy muzzle for one of the vents into his old quarters. A pretty gull thee be'st, to swallow yon black porpoise."

"I tell thee, messmate," returned the other, gravely, "thou hast miss'd thy tack. It waur but a slip, maybe a kin' of a sudden start which took me, as they say, by the nape. I jumped back, I own—a foul accident, by which he took advantage. He comes behind me, thou sees, and with a skip 'at would have seated him upo' the topmost perch o' the castle, he lights whack, thump, fair upo' my shoulders. I ran but to shake the whoreson black slug fro' my carcass. Saints ha' mercy, but his legs waur colder than a wet sheet. I soon unshipp'd my cargo, though—I tumbled him into the sea, made a present of old blacksleeves to the fishes!"

"Thou lying chub," said George, angrily, "did not I watch thee? Why, thou cub, thou cormorant, thou maker of long lies and quick legs, didst not o'ershoot me, ay, by some fathoms? I followed hard i' thy wake, but I see'd nought of all this bull-scuttering of thine. Faith, but thou didst ply thy courses with a wet sail!"

"Go to, Geordie—go to; a juggle, I tell thee; sheer malice of the enemy, fow' an' fause as he be." Here he spat on the floor to show his detestation and contempt; but George, either too ignorant or too idle to reply, took down a dried fluke from the chimney, and warming it on the glowing turf for a few minutes, was soon occupied in disposing of this dainty and favourite repast. Their hut was of the rudest construction. The walls were of boulder stones from the beach, loosely set up with mud and slime, and in several places decidedly deviating from the perpendicular. The roof was thatched with rushes, and shaped like unto a fish's back, having a marvellous big hump in the middle, upon which grew a fair tuft of long lank herbage, while bunches of the biting yellow stone-crop clung in irregular patches of bright green verdure about the extremities. The interior was lighted by a single casement, showing an assemblage of forms the most homely and primitive in their construction. The floor, paved with blue pebbles; the fireplace, a huge hearth-flag merely, on which lay a heap of glowing turf, an iron pot depending from a crook above. The smoke, curling lazily through a raft of fish drying a few feet above the flame, and acquiring the requisite flavour, with considerable difficulty reached a hole in the roof, where the adverse and refractory wind not unfrequently disputed its passage, and drove it down again, to assist the colds and rheums by its stimulating propensities. A broken chair, a three-legged stool, and a table with no greater number of supporters, a truckle-bed, and an accumulation of nets, oars, and broken implements of the like nature, were the usual deposits about the chamber. The two fishermen were partners in their gainful trade, and not having tasted the bliss of conjugal comforts, enjoyed a sort of negative good from the absence of evil, and lived a tolerably quiet and harmonious life in these outskirts of creation.

The few simple and primitive inhabitants of the island had been so bewildered and confounded by the turmoil and disorder consequent upon the invasion of their hitherto peaceful and quiet resting-place, that some half-dozen of them, for the first time in their lives, had quitted their homes; others, secure from their poverty and insignificance, still remained, though much disturbed with wonder and silly surmises, and ready to catch at any stray marvels that fell in their way. The subterraneous and half-concealed passage in the rock, or rather shale, on which the castle stands, always under the ban of some vague and silly apprehension, had been reported of late as manifesting more than equivocal symptoms of supernatural possession. Dick Empson, or long-nebbed Dick, a sort of shrewd, half-witted incarnation, it might be, of the goblin or elfin species, a runner of errands from the abbey of Furness to the castle, and a being whose pranks and propensities to mischief were well known in the neighbourhood, had affirmed, but a few hours before, that he saw a black figure on the previous night issuing from the hole; and that there was no connection or understanding between this ghostly appearance and the present occupiers of the castle, was evident from the mystery and secrecy that attended its movements. This was doubtless the phantom or goblin that, from time immemorial, had been the cause of such sinister dispositions towards the

“haunted passage.” Davy and his friend had unexpectedly stumbled upon its track, for they had not calculated on its appearance, at any rate before midnight.

In the Castle, Peel, or Pile of Fouldrey, on that night too, there was a mighty disturbance, not unaccompanied with vexation and alarm. It was soon after the first watch. The new-made monarch was asleep in his chamber—an ill-furnished apartment on the second floor of the main tower or keep, looking out by a narrow window towards the sea. The next, or middle chamber, was on a level, and communicating with the first landing, or principal entrance. The latter apartment, in which were the guards and others immediately about the king’s person, served the purposes of an ante-room to the presence-chamber.

The room opposite—for there were three divisions on each floor—was subdivided into several parts, and occupied by the Earl of Lincoln and his attendants; the rooms above being devoted to Swartz, Lovel, and Fitzgerald, with their trains. Below were the guard-rooms and offices assigned to the staff, with the war stores and munitions belonging to the expedition.

In the same chamber with the king lay his confessor and chief adviser, one Simon, a wily and ambitious priest, who was the prime agent, if not mover, in this attempt to overturn the reigning power. No other individual was suffered to remain through the night in the king’s apartment.

It was about the first watch, as before mentioned, when the guards and attendants were alarmed by loud cries from the royal chamber. They hastened to the door, but it was bolted, and their apprehensions for that time were allayed by the voice of the priest assuring them that the king was safe, but that an ugly dream had awakened him. Lincoln, whom this tumult had quickly brought to the spot, retired grumbling at so unseasonable a disturbance. Scarcely had an hour elapsed ere the cries were repeated. Unsheathing his sword, the proud Earl of Lincoln marched angrily to the door, and swore a loud broad oath that he would see the king or burst open the barrier. With him came others from the rooms overhead, so that the priest was forced, however unwillingly, to open the door, and Lincoln, accompanied by his friends, beheld the young pretender in bed, pale, and with a rueful countenance, still retaining the traces of some deadly horror.

“What hath disturbed your highness? We would fain know the cause of this alarm, and punish, ay punish home, the traitor!” said Lincoln, darting a furious look at the confessor, to whom he bore no good-will.

“Nay, friends, I shall—I shall be well presently. I beseech you be not disturbed. ‘Tis a dream,—a vision that hath troubled me. I thought I was in the Tower—in my prison chamber—and the tyrant came and grasped me by the throat. With that I jumped up, and as Heaven is my witness, I saw a dark figure slip through the floor by yon grim buttress, behind which is the private staircase to the summit.”

Every eye was turned towards the corner of the chamber near the bed, on the outside of which a winding staircase ran up from below, but they were ignorant of any communication from these stairs into the king’s chamber. Lincoln examined the buttress with his sword, and Swartz, the Fleming, with his fingers, but there was no apparent opening or crevice that could betoken any outlet or concealment. The floor was examined, and with the same result; so that they were fain to depart, little doubting that the whole was the effect of some mental disturbance.

With the morning dawn came Sir Thomas Broughton. A grand council was appointed for that day, in which the final arrangement of their plans was to be discussed. A royal banquet was prepared, and the Flemish gunners were to give a specimen of their craft from the battlements.

The forenoon came on chill and squally, with a low scud driving rapidly from the west. A drizzling rain was the result, which increased with the coming tide.

The little island was covered with tents, forming an encampment of no mean extent and appearance.

Sir Thomas, with a few attendants, after being ferried over the channel which separates the island of Fouldrey from the mainland, was conducted through avenues of tents and armed men. The Flemish soldiers, fierce and almost motionless, looked like an array of grim statues. The Irish levies, in a state of more lax discipline, were collected in merry groups, whiling away the time in thriftless and noisy discourse.

Sir Thomas Broughton, descended from an Anglo-Saxon family of great antiquity, was by virtue of this hereditary and aboriginal descent, of a proud and pompous bearing. Being allied to most of the principal families in these parts, he was won over by solicitation from the Duchess of Burgundy, as one of the confederates in her attempt to restore the line of York to the English crown. Fond of show, and careful as to his own personal appearance, he was clad in a steel coat of great beauty; this ponderous form of defence having been brought to great perfection in the preceding reign. His sword-belt was so disposed that the weapon remained in front, while a dagger was attached to the right hip. Over his armour he wore a scarlet cloak, and as he strode proudly up the avenues to the gate, he looked as though he felt that on his fiat alone depended the very existence of those he beheld. After he had passed the first drawbridge into the outer court or bayle, a band of archers, drawn up in full array, opened their ranks to receive this puissant chieftain. These were the most efficient of the troops, and partly English, having been brought from Ireland by the deputy. They were clad in shirts of chain mail, with wide sleeves, over which was a small vest of red cloth, laced in front. They had tight hose on their legs, and braces on their left arms. Behind them, and on each side, were part of the infantry, consisting of billmen and halberdiers; but the most formidable-looking soldiers were the Flemish gunners, or *harquebusiers*, so named from the barbarous Latin word *arcusbusus*, evidently derived from the Italian *arcabouza*—*i.e.*, a bow with a tube or hole. It was made with a stock and trigger, in imitation of the crossbow. The match, no longer applied by the hand to the touchhole, was fixed into a cock, which was brought down to the pan by the motion of the trigger. This being at the time a recent invention, excited no little curiosity and admiration.

At the inner court, and near the main entrance to the keep, Sir Thomas was received in great state by the Earl of Lincoln, whose high, but easy and pleasant bearing, bespoke him to have been long the inmate and follower of courts, while the stiff attitudes and formal demeanour of Sir Thomas were rendered more apparent by the contrast.

“Welcome, Sir Thomas, to our court in this fair haven. Your presence, like your fidelity, hath a goodly savour in it, being always before and better than our expectation or our fears. How faireth our cousin, and our pretty dames in Furness?”

“My lord, I thank you for your good word. My poor services are repaid tenfold in their acceptance by the king,” said Sir Thomas, bending, but with an ill grace, by reason of little use in that excellent art.

“Into our council-chamber, Sir Thomas, where you shall render homage to the king in person.”

This council-chamber was none other than the king’s bedroom, whither, with great ceremony, Sir Thomas was conducted. In this mimic court there was a marvellous show of ceremony, and a great observance of, and attention to, forms and royal usages—ridiculous enough where a few acres formed the whole of the monarch’s territory, and an ugly ill-contrived castle his

palace. But his followers behaved as though England's sovereignty were theirs, being well inclined to content themselves with the shadow, having little hold or enjoyment of the substance.

Before a long narrow table, near the bed, and on a high-backed oaken chair, sat the young pretender. He was dressed in a richly-embroidered gown, the sleeves wide, and hanging down from the wrists like lappets. On his head was a low cap surmounted by long waving feathers, and his manners and appearance were not devoid of grace and gentility. He displayed considerable self-possession, and wore his kingly honours with great assurance. He was of a fair and sanguine complexion, pale rather than clear, and his hair clustered in heavy ringlets on his shoulders. A rapid and somewhat uncertain motion of the eye, and his mouth not well closed, showed that although he might have been schooled to the exhibition, and could wear the outward show of firmness and decision, yet in the hour of emergency, and in the day of trial, his fortitude would in all likelihood forsake him.

At his right hand sat the priest in a white cassock and scapulary. A black hood, thrown back upon his shoulders, exhibited the form and disposition of his head to great advantage. His features were large, expressive, and commanding. The fire of a brilliant grey eye was scarcely tempered by his overhanging brows, though at times the spirit seemed to retire behind their grim shadows, to survey more securely and unobservedly the aspect and appearances without.

Swartz, the Flemish general, a blunt military chieftain, was at his side. A black bushy beard, some inches in advance of his honest good-humoured face, was placed in strong contrast with the wary, pale, and somewhat dubious aspect of the priest.

Kildare, the Irish deputy, and Lovel, with several of the senior officers and captains, were assembled round the table.

The room was lofty, lighted by a small pointed window, and contained the luxury of a fireplace, in which lay some blazing embers; a grateful and refreshing sight in that chill and ungenial atmosphere.

The needful ceremonies being gone through, Sir Thomas was honoured with a place at the board near to where it rested against the buttress before mentioned, the priest addressing him as follows:—

“My Lord Abbot of Furness, Sir Thomas, what news of him? Hath he yet signified his adherence to our cause? We hope you bring tidings of such auspicious import.”

“He doth yet procrastinate, I hear, until he have news from the court,” replied Sir Thomas; “yet I trust his want of zeal and obedience will not hinder our march.”

“And the proud nobles of Lancashire, how stand they affected towards our good prospering?”

“Truly, they are, as one may say, neither cold nor hot; but of a moderate temperature, midway, it would seem”——

“Which is an indication of neither zeal nor obedience,” said Swartz, suddenly cutting short the tedious verbosity of Sir Thomas's intended harangue. “Open enemies before lukewarm friends!”

“Prithee, general,” said the priest, with a placid smile, during which his eyes seemed to shrink within their dim sockets, “be not over-hasty. We cannot reasonably hope that they should flock to our standard almost ere we unfurl it for their gathering.”

“Your speech hath a reasonable property in it,” replied Sir Thomas, “and, as we may say, savoureth of great judgment, which, being of an excellent nature in itself, doth thereby control and exercise, in its own capacity, the nature and excellence of all others.”

This formidable issue of words was delivered with much earnestness of enunciation; but of its use or meaning, probably, the speaker was fully as ignorant as his hearers. Even at the fountain-head his ideas were sufficiently obscure, but when fairly rolling forth from the spring, they sometimes begat such a froth and turbidity in their course, that no reasonable discernment could fathom their depth or bearing.

A short silence was the result, which none, for a while, cared to disturb, lest he should betray his lack of understanding in dark sentences.

“We know your loyalty,” said the king, “which hath a sufficient impress on it to pass current without scrutiny. Your example, Sir Thomas, will be of competent weight, without the casting or imposition of vain words into the scale. We acknowledge your ready zeal in our just cause.”

“Your highness’ grace, my liege,” said Lincoln, ere Sir Thomas could gather words for a fitting reply, “doth honey your confections well. Men swallow them without wincing or wry faces.”

Sir Thomas would not thus be deprived of his right to a reply; and was just commencing with a suitable attitude for the purpose, when lo! the trenchant knight, who sat on a small stool beside the corner buttress, with a loud cry, suddenly disappeared, and a gaping cavity in the floor sufficiently accounted for the precipitate mode of his departure. Uprising on the ruins of Sir Thomas, started forth a grotesque figure from the chasm, clad in coarse attire, a ludicrous solemnity on his strange and uncouth visage, as, with a shrill and squeaking tone, he cried—

“Ay, ay, masters; but my master will gi’e me a blessing for the finding o’ this mouse-nest; and a priest’s blessin’ is worth a king’s curse any time; and so good-morrow, knaves.”

“Stay,” said Lincoln, seizing the intruder, none other than our light-witted acquaintance, “lang-nebbit Dick,” whose prying propensities were notorious, and who had taken upon himself, that morning, the arduous task of exploring the subterraneous passage into which he had seen the mysterious figure insinuate itself. After many perils and impediments, he had come to a flight of steps, ascending which, his progress was interrupted by a trap-door overhead. He soon discovered a wooden bolt, the unloosing of which led to the precipitation of Sir Thomas through the aperture. Dick’s light was struck from his hand; escaping himself, however, he left Sir Thomas to his fate, and emerged, as we have seen, into the council-chamber. They were much alarmed by this unexpected disturbance, and, looking down, they beheld a narrow flight of steps, at the bottom of which lay the unfortunate knight, sore bruised by his fall.

“If the abbot catch ye here,” said Dick, with a vacant grin, “he’ll gi’e every one o’ ye a taste o’ the gyves, and so pray ye gang awa’, and let me gang too. As for that calf beastie, that baas so at the bottom, gi’e me a groat, and I’ll gather him up again sune.”

Here Dick held out a paw that would not have disgraced the extremities of a bruin for size and colour.

“Holloa, guards,” cried Lincoln, “take this knave to the dungeon by the porch, and keep him safe until we have need of him.”

The prying vagabond was removed without ceremony, kicking all the way, and bellowing out threats and vengeance against his enemies, while Sir Thomas and his bruises were brought to light.

“‘Tis the good hand of Providence that hath revealed to us, through the means of this crack-brained intruder, so dangerous an outlet by which our sovereign’s life might have been brought into jeopardy. To show unto us that He works not by might nor by strength, does Heaven employ the feeblest instruments for our ruin or our deliverance.” The priest, after this profane speech, resumed his station at the board, whence the king, with a proper and becoming dignity, had not arisen. But the council did not proceed in their deliberations after this interruption. Contenting themselves with devising precautions against another surprise, they separated, hoping that to-morrow would bring them despatches from abroad, for which they began to feel somewhat anxious and impatient.

The sun was now some hours past meridian. The broad sea and the breakers were foaming on. A wide and impetuous phalanx of waves appeared upon the horizon. Gouts of muddy foam were beginning to froth among the blue pebbles on the beach. The tide was rapidly filling the channels, and patches of dark sand were vanishing beneath the waves, when the two fishermen, launching their little boat into a narrow bay between the rocks, prepared for their daily toil.

“Lords o’ the court they be,” said David, to some inquiry from his more ignorant companion, as he generally affected to consider him. Indeed, with but little wit and less valour, he wished to foist himself upon one possessing both, as a being of extraordinary wisdom and fortitude. And truly, if loud words and big lies could have done this, he would have had no lack either of courage or discretion.

“Didst never see a lord to his shirt?” continued this indomitable boaster.

“Nea, marry, but I’ve seen ‘em to their shifts, for one of ‘em couldna loup owre t’ stones here without help.”

“Help thy silly face, thou be’st hardly company fit for they ‘at have seen knowledge, as ‘t waur, to its verra nakedness. I tell thee I’ve looked on lords’ flesh; an’ no more like thine than thee be’st like fish.”

“Some of ‘em will cudgel thy leeing out o’ thee, I hope. Thou could’stna speak truth to save thy neck fro’ the rope. Didst get any o’ the crumbs at the dinner to-day? for I ken thou throw’d up thy greasy cap, and cried out ‘Hurrah for the king.’ Thy tongue would ever wag faster at a feast than thy fist at a fray.”

“I tell thee, George, ‘ware thy gibes an’ gallimaufreys. A man can but bear what he can, thee knows; an’ so stop thy din. Let me see, I heard as I cam’ doon that this same ghost ‘at frightened thee sae appeared to the king an’ the lords at the feast; an’ they waur fain to run for it, as thee did last night, thee knows, for verra fearsomeness, an’”——

Here he looked round, as though fearing a visit of the like nature.

“They say he came an’ gobbled up more nor his share; an’ he sent the guests a-packing like a bream of short-sized kippers from a creel. We looked for our share of the victuals, but they told me old bl—bl”——Again he hesitated, evidently afraid that some “unsonsy” thing was behind him. His voice sunk down to a tremulous whisper. “They said that old split-feet brought a whole bevy of little devilkins with him that cleared decks in the twinkling of a bowsprit.”

“And yet thou durst not say him nay, though thy crew were as empty as my basket. Come, bear a hand, or we shall lose the tide; it is already on the rocks.”

The invading fleet were still moored in the harbour, yet the fishermen shot past unheeded by these leviathans of the deep. As they came nearer to the opposite shore, they saw an individual making signals, as though he would be taken across. His monkish garb was a passport to their obedience; and the friar was received on board with great reverence and respect. With a sullen air he demanded, rather than requested, to be conveyed to the castle, which the simple fishermen undertook with great alacrity and good humour. Left to the care of the guards below the ramparts, he was speedily forwarded through ranks of iron men, and the barriers flew open at his presence; an embassy from the abbot of Furness was not to be lightly entreated.

Again was there a summons that the council should assemble, and the chiefs, already risen from the banquet, prepared to give him audience. With a proud and firm step he approached the table; and though, from habit, he repressed the natural feelings and bias of the temper, yet there was an evident expression of hostility against the intruders, accompanied with a glance of unequivocal meaning towards their sovereign.

Simon, rising to receive this ambassador from the abbot, watched his demeanour with a cautious and keen observance, though betraying little of that really intense interest with which his presence was regarded.

“Thrice welcome!” he cried; “we hail your presence as an omen of good import. How fareth my lord abbot, whom we hope to number with our friends in this glorious cause?”

“The abbot of Furness hath no message of that similitude. He doth ask by what right, privy, or pretence, ye appear within his castle or stronghold upon this island? upon whose advice or incitement ye have thus taken possession? and furthermore, under whose authority ye do these things?”

This short address, uttered in a firm voice, and in a tone of menace rather than inquiry, daunted the hearers, who had hoped for a more propitious message from the abbey of Furness. Simon, however, without betraying his chagrin, unhesitatingly replied—

“The right by which we hold this fortress is the will of our king, and our authority is from him.”

“I crave your honest regards,” returned the monk, looking round with a glance of conscious power and superiority; “this good inheritance is ours, and whosoever disporteth himself here must answer for it to the lord of Furness, whose delegate and representative I am.”

Choler was rising in the assembly; but Simon, with that intuitive and inexplicable control which superior minds possess, almost unknowingly, over their associates, quelled the outburst of the flame by a single glance. Another look was directed to the royal pupil at his side, when the latter spoke as follows:—

“Our presence here, it should seem, is a sufficient answer to the questions of our lord abbot. Being lawful heir to the English crown, we might command the allegiance, if not the homage, of your head; but we would rather win with fair entreaty than command our unwilling subjects, and to this end have we sent messengers to the superior of your house, urging his help and submission.”

This reply was given with a dignity and an assurance denoting that either he was the individual he personated, or that he had been well schooled in his craft.

A murmur of applause was heard through the assembly, but the monk was unmoved to any show of recognition or even respect. Waiting until he could be heard, the envoy again inquired—

“And who art thou? and by what pretence claimest thou this right?”

“By hereditary descent. Knowest thou Edward, Earl of Warwick, now thy king?”

“I have heard of him,” continued the monk in the same dubious and inflexible tone; “but his bodily appearance hath not been vouchsafed unto me.”

“See him here!” said the royal claimant, rising with great majesty and condescension. But the churchman neither did homage, nor in any way testified his loyalty to, or apprehension of, so exalted a personage.

“Truly it is a marvellous thing,” replied he, “that the Earl of Warwick should so order his appearance, at one and the same time, both in London and at our good fortress here in Fouldrey!” A slight curl of the lip was visible as he spoke.

“The Earl of Warwick,” said Simon, “cannot now be abiding where thou sayest, insomuch as the bodily tabernacle, his dwelling in the flesh, is before thee.”

“But we have a messenger from thence, even with a writing from the hands of the holy prior of St Alban’s, who sendeth us the news, lest we should be beguiled. Father Anselm hath seen the earl, who was brought forth from the Tower by command of the king, being conducted publicly through the principal thoroughfares of the city, that the people should behold, and not in any wise be led astray through the evil reports and machinations of the king’s enemies.”

Here he paused, folding his arms with a haughty and reserved look; but Simon, no wise disconcerted by this terrible, unexpected, and apparently fatal exposure of their plot, replied with a smile of the most intrepid assurance—

“We knew of this, and were prepared for the wiles of the usurper. Know then, that, through the agency and good offices of that renowned princess, Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, the king’s escape from the Tower was accomplished; but not by might, nor by human power nor device, but by faith and prayer, was the work wrought out, which holy communion her enemies do maliciously report as the practice of sorcery and the forbidden art. Howbeit the king hath escaped, as thou seest, the fangs of the executioner. Stay, I perceive what thou wouldest urge in reply, but listen for a short space. In order to deter them from pursuit on finding his escape, and with a view likewise to lull them into vain confidence and carnal security, another was left in his place, whom they, of necessity, imagine to be their captive; but it is not a real thing of flesh and blood, though to them it may so appear. When his time shall be accomplished, the form will vanish, to the downfall and confusion of the usurper and the utter overthrow of our enemies.”

Here the assembly gave a loud and unanimous token of their exultation by shouts and exclamations of loyalty and obedience.

After a short reverie, the monk replied—

“We know of a surety that the Princess Margaret, as well as her royal brother, Edward the Fourth, did use to practise in forbidden arts; but we must have testimony indisputable to the truth of your claim, ere it be that we render our belief. Surely the power that wrought thy deliverance would not, if need were, leave thee without the means of proving thine identity. How know we that thou art he whom thou hast represented, and not the impostor Simnel, as thine enemies do not scruple openly to affirm?”

“We are not without either the means or the power to prove and to assert our right,” said the priest, rising. He drew a phial from his bosom.

“One drop of this precious elixir,” continued he, “if it touch the form of yon changeling, will dissolve the charm: on the real person of the king it becomes harmless.”

“Truly, ‘tis a proof not to be gainsaid; but over-long i’ the making, and too far for the fetching,” replied the monk scornfully.

“‘Tis bootless to attempt the salvation of those who will not believe: nevertheless, they shall perish through their own devices, and be caught in their own snares.”

Simon threw a threatening glance at the monk, which he received with a cool and undaunted aspect.

“Verily, your blood be on your own heads,” cried Simon, with a loud voice, “and your reward in your right hand. Behold, thou scourner, and tremble; for your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, and he in whom you trust shall be as the stubble which the fire devoureth.”

The enthusiast, as he spoke, struck a heavy blow on the floor with his foot, when there came a low rumbling sound like the roar of the wind through some subterranean abyss, or the distant moan of the sea, driven on by the rushing tempest. The whole assembly stood aghast, save the king and the two disputants.

“Shall I strike once more?”

“Do as seemeth to thee good,” said the monk deliberately; “but think not to intimidate me with thy fooleries.”

“Then beware. I obey, but it is with awe and reluctance.”

It is said that Simon’s heart failed him as he gave the blow, or the effects would have been more terrific. But the castle shook as with an earthquake; even the incredulous monk looked amazed and confounded.

“Shall I repeat the stroke?” said Simon, when the disturbance had in some measure subsided. “But remember, I will not answer for the result. Only in cases of the greatest difficulty and trial it was that the duchess made me resort to so dangerous a resource.”

Most of his hearers besought him to desist. Simon yielded at once to their entreaties, and the uplifted foot fell softly on the floor. Soft and noiseless though it was, yet they saw a lurid mist roll upward; and a form, apparently of gigantic size, was faintly visible in the dark vapour, as it swept slowly through the apartment. Even Simon and his royal pupil showed symptoms of agitation and alarm.

The assembly was suddenly dissolved. The proud ambassador of a prouder prelate was astonished and bewildered, and hastily took his leave to report these occurrences to his master.

The whole of these proceedings, in all probability, were but the artful contrivance of an ambitious priest; and yet, connected as they were with a female whose well-known predilection for the occult sciences, and herself no mean adept therein, they assumed in those ages of credulity and superstition more the character of miraculous events than as happening in the common course and established order of nature. The alarm of the king, too, evidently at the appearance of the figure, caused some to say that it was the arch-enemy himself to whom these conspirators had sold themselves.

In the meantime, Dick, having been delivered over to the tormentors, was transferred to the prison or dungeon by the porch. He bore his mishap with wondrous fortitude and equanimity.

Many a strange inquiry and silly speech did he make as he heard the sound of footsteps pass the door, through which a few chinks admitted a doubtful glimmer into his cell.

"I seay—hears to me, lad?" shouted he to a gruff Fleming, as he passed to and fro before the entrance to his prison-house; but the guard heeded him not. Dick listened; then, repeating his demand, muttered certain conventional expressions, not over-nice either in their form or application. He then began to sing, performing a series of *cantabile* movements in the most ludicrous manner possible; sometimes chanting a *Miserere* or an *Ave*, then breaking into some wild northern ballad or roundelay of unintelligible import. It was in the midst of a cadence which he was terminating with great earnestness and effect that the first deep rumble, the result of Simon's appeal to the truth and justice of their cause, interrupted Dick's vocal dispositions for a while; but when the second concussion took place, shaking the very stones in their sockets and the hard floor under his feet, Dick ran whooping and bellowing round his den as though he had been possessed, laughing, amid the wild uproar, like some demon sporting fearlessly in the fierce turmoil of the troubled elements. The sentinel ran, terrified, from the door, and the whole camp and garrison were flying to arms, in fear and consternation. Dick, drumming with his fist, found the door yield to his efforts, and he marched forth without let or molestation. His besetting sin was curiosity, which oftentimes led him into difficulties and mishaps. Though just now a prisoner, and escaping by means little less than miraculous, yet, instead of making the best use of this opportunity for escape, he commenced a sort of prying adventure on his own account—a temptation he could not resist—by walking, or rather shuffling, into the guard-room, where his own peculiar crab-like sinuosities were particularly available. A number of soldiers were jabbering some unintelligible jargon, too much occupied with their own clamour to notice Dick's proceedings.

Through a confused jumble of warlike implements, intermingled with camp-kettles and cooking utensils, some steaming with savoury preparations for the evening's repast, and others nearly ready for the service, Dick insinuated himself, until he came to a little door in the corner, the entrance to a staircase communicating with the leads above. Through this door marched the incorrigible intruder—the sentry from the summit having just issued therefrom, fearful lest the castle should tumble about his ears. Dick's course was therefore unimpeded; and after sundry gyrations and stoppages, now and then, to peep through the loopholes, he emerged into broad daylight on the roof of the tower. Here he paused for some time, entranced with the sudden change he beheld. The bustle and animation around and below him; the vessels, with their brave and gallant equipments, anchored in the bay;—all this amused Dick vastly for a while. But the most heart-ravishing delights end ultimately in satiety and disgust, greater, and probably more keenly felt, the more they have been relished and enjoyed. Dick began to feel listless and tired with his day's work. He laid his head upon a groove or niche in the battlements, and fell fast asleep. It seems the sentinel did not return; for Dick remained undisturbed, and when he awoke it was completely dark, save that there was a wan gleam from a dull watery moon, just dipping into a stratum of dark clouds over the sea. His ideas, not over-lucid in broad daylight, would necessarily be still more hazy and obscure in his present situation. Unable to extricate them, he rubbed his eyes and made faces; yawned and groped about for his usual dormitory, in a little cell behind the kitchen at the abbey. But the vision of the moon—which, by reason of the confined glen wherein the abbey was built, rarely blessed the sight of a night-watcher—was a wondrous and puzzling appearance. He had some confused recollection that he had mounted a flight of steps, and that, by contrary motion, descending would be the next consequent movement. To this end he diligently sought an opening, and, naturally enough, took the first that presented itself. Creeping round the angle of a turret, he came to a flight of steps, which he descended. It was

not long ere he perceived a faint light through an aperture or chink in the wall. He pressed against the side cautiously, when the wall itself appeared to give way, and he entered, through a narrow door, into a large room, lighted by a few turf embers, that flickered dimly on the hearth. A tester bed was near him, whose grim shadow concealed the objects under its huge canopy. It was the king's chamber; but so softly and cautiously was the entrance effected that Dick's footsteps did not awake him. He was heard, nevertheless, by the priest Simon, who, being concealed by the curtains on the other side, was not seen by the intruder. Dick stood still, on being addressed in a low and suppressed voice as follows:—

“Thou art early, Maurice; but thy despatches are ready. They are on the chair at thy right hand. Thou hast had thy instructions. Be speedy and discreet. On the third day, ere sunset, we look for thy return.”

Dick put out his hand and laid hold of a sealed packet, which he took with becoming gravity, and luckily in silence.

“The same password, ‘Warwick,’ will convey thee hence; a boat is in waiting, and so God speed,” said the priest.

Dick returned by the way he came, and descending the turret staircase, found a sentry standing at the outlet into the guard-chamber. It was dark, and Dick's person was not recognised. With a sort of blundering instinct he gave the word and passed on. This magic sound conveyed him safely through bars, bolts, and all other impediments. The drawbridge was lowered, and Dick, in a little time, found himself again upon the beach, where a boat was waiting to carry him to the opposite shore.

“Who goes there?” inquired a gruff voice from the skiff.

“Why Dick—Warwick,” cried the blundering knave, nigh mistaking his cue.

“Hang thee,” said the ferryman, “what art’ ganging o’ this gait for? If I’d ken’d it waur thee ‘at I’d orders to lie by in shore for, thou might ha’ waited a wee for aught ‘at I’d ha’ brought.”

“Hush!” said Dick, full of importance from his newly-acquired diplomatic functions; “I’m message to the king yonder.”

“Ill betides him that has need o’ thee,” said the boatman, surlily;—“come, jump in. They’d need of a hawk, marry, to catch a buzzard.”

Just as Dick was preparing to step in, a low, slight-made figure passed by whom the boatman immediately challenged.

“Warwick!” said he, and would have passed on.

“Nay, nay,” said Dick; “I’m Warwick, ma lad; there’s no twa on us; they gied me that name i’ the castle yon, just now. I’se butter’d if thou shall ha’t too.” Dick was a powerful fellow, and he collared the other in a twinkling. “Thou’rt a rogue, I tell thee, an’ about no good; an’ I’ve orders from the governor yonder to tak’ thee. Bear a hand, boatie, and in wi’ him. There—there.”

Spite of his struggles and imprecations, the stranger was impounded in the boat, and Dick soon forced him to be quiet. They pushed off, and in a short time gained the other shore. Here Dick, with that almost instinctive sagacity which sometimes accompanies a disturbed state of the intellects, would not allow his prisoner either to go back to the island or remain in the boatman’s custody, but secured him to his own person, setting off at a brisk pace towards the abbey. In vain the stranger told him that he had business of great moment at the castle; that he

was a page of the court, and on the eve of a secret mission from the priest, who was now waiting for him with the despatches. Dick resolved, with his usual cunning it seems, to conceal his possession of these documents, and, at the same time, to prevent the real messenger from revealing the deception by his appearance at the castle.

It was past midnight; yet the abbot and several of the brethren were still assembled in close council. The importance of the events that were unfolding, and in which their own line of conduct was to be firmly marked out and adhered to, necessarily involving much deliberation and discussion, had kept them beyond their usual hour of retirement.

A bell rung at the outer gate, and shortly afterwards one of the brotherhood in waiting announced that two men were without, craving audience, and that one of them, when asked his name, answered "Warwick."

"Ah!" said the bewildered abbot, with a sudden gleam of wonder and gladness on his countenance—"does he come hither? then is our deliverance nearer than we hoped for, even from the special favour and interference of Heaven. Admit them instantly."

But in a little while the messenger came back in great dudgeon to say that the knave who had demanded admittance with such a peremptory message was none other than Dick Empson, the errand boy to the abbey. "What can possess him," continued the monk, "I greatly marvel; for he still persists in demanding audience, saying that he is 'Warwick.' He refers to some message from the castle with which he is charged, but he refuses to deliver it save into the hands of the reverend abbot himself. Furthermore, he has brought a prisoner, he sayeth, and will have him taken into safe custody."

"Why, bring him hither," said the abbot; "there's little harm can come by it. He has a shrewd and quick apprehension at times, under that silly mask, which I have thought he wears but for purposes of knavery and concealment."

The monk folded his hands and retired. Returning, he was followed by Dick, who assumed a very grave and solemn demeanour before this august and reverend assembly.

"Why art thou abroad in these evil times, and at such improper hours too? To the meanest of our servants it is not permitted. Speak. Thine errand?"

The abbot looked towards the offender with an air of displeasure; but Dick, hitching up his hosen with prodigious fervour, gave a loud and expressive grunt.

"Dick is a fool," said he; "but he ne'er begged benison of an abbot, a bone from a starved dog, or a tithe-pig from a parson."

"What is the message wherewith thou hast presumed upon our audience?"

"If ye rear your back to a door, see to it that it be greatly tyned, or ye may get a broken head for trust."

"And is this thy message, sirrah? Hark ye, let this fool be put i' the stocks, and well whipped."

"And who'll be the fule body then?" said Dick, leering. "I ken ye be readier wi' a taste o' the gyves than oatmeal bannocks; an' sae I'se gang awa' to my mither."

"Thou shalt go to the whipping-post first."

"Haud off," shouted Dick, who flung aside the person that would have seized him with the most consummate ease, at the same time placing himself in the attitude of defence; "haud off, as ye are true men," said he; "I'm cousin to the king, and I charge ye with high treason!"

“Enough,” said the abbot; “we may pity his infirmity; but let him be sent to the mill for punishment. Now to business, which I fear me hath suffered by this untimely interruption.”

“Happen you’ll let me be one of the guests,” said the incorrigible Dick, thrusting himself forward, even to the abbot’s chair, which so discomposed his reverence that he cried in a loud and authoritative tone—

“Will none of ye rid me of this pestilence? By the beard of St Cuthbert, I will dispose of him, and that presently!”

Seizing him by the shoulder, the abbot would have thrust him forth, but Dick slipped dexterously aside. Taking out the packet, he broke open the seals, and immediately began to tumble about the contents, seating himself at the same time in the vacant chair of the abbot, with great solemnity, and an air of marvellous profundity in his demeanour. It was the work of a few moments only; a pause of silent astonishment ensued, when the abbot’s eye, catching, from their appearance, something of the nature of the documents, he started forward with great eagerness and surprise. He snatched them from the hands of their crack-brained possessor, and soon all other matters were forgotten. The abbot in breathless haste ran through the contents. The assembly was all eye and ear, and some were absolutely paralysed with wonder. There was not an indifferent observer but Dick, who, with a chuckling laugh, rubbed his hands, and fidgeted about in the chair with a look of almost infantile delight.

“I’ve done it brawly, ha’n’t I? Dick wi’ the lang neb! an’ I’ll hae two messes o’ parritch an’ sour milk, an’ a barley-cake; I’m waesome hungry i’ the waum here.”

The abbot was too deeply involved in the subject before him to heed a craving appetite. Dick’s stomach, however, was not to be silenced by diplomatic food; not having tasted anything for a considerable time, his wants immediately assumed the language of inquiry.

“Old dad, ha’ ye any bones to pick? I’d like to have a lick at the trencher.”

The abbot made signals that he should not be disturbed; but Dick was not to be put off or convinced by such unsubstantial arguments, and they were fain to rid themselves from further annoyance by ordering him into the kitchen, where he was speedily absorbed in devouring a pan of browis, left there for morning use—the breakfast of the labourers about the abbey.

During this interval matters of the deepest importance were discussed, the contents of the packet having furnished abundant materials for deliberation. When the bearer was effectually replenished, he was led into the council-chamber again, where the abbot, in a tone of deep and serious thought, thus addressed him:—

“Who gave thee these despatches? It is plain they were not meant for our eyes; but Heaven, by the weakest instrument, often works the mightiest and most important events. Where and how came they into thy keeping?”

Dick looked cunningly round the apartment ere he replied, surveying the floor, the walls, and the ceiling; even the groinings of the roof did not escape a minute and accurate examination; whether to give time for the contriving of a suitable reply, or merely to gratify his own peevish humour, is of little consequence that we should inquire. After a long and anxious silence on the part of his auditors, he replied—

“I told ye when ye spiered afore.” Another pause. The abbot was fearful that Dick’s ideas, if not carefully handled, might get so entangled and confused that he would be unable to give any intelligible account of the matter. He therefore addressed him coaxingly as follows—

“Nay, nay, Dickon, thou hast not; answer me now, and thou shalt have the fat from the roast to-morrow, and a sop to season it withal.”

Dick leered again at this prospective dainty, as he replied—

“I tou’d ye, and ye heeded not, belike; and who’s the fool now? Come, I’ll set you my riddle again. If ye set your back to a door, see that it be tynd, or ye may get a broken head, and then”——

Here he paused, and looked round with a vacant eye; but they wisely forbore to interrupt the current of his ideas, hoping that ere long they might trickle into the right channel.

“There was a big room, and a bed in it,” he continued, “and a priest, which the fule body has cheated. A fule’s wit is worth more nor a wise man’s folly.”

A vague apprehension of the truth crossed the abbot’s mind. Being now on the right scent, he no longer forbore to follow up the chase, but endeavoured to hasten the development by a gentle stimulating of his pace in the required direction.

“The priest yonder at the castle gave it thee?” said the abbot carelessly.

“Well, and if he did,” replied Dick sharply, “he didna ken I was a-peeping into his chamber, as I’ve done many an unlucky time here in the abbey, and gotten a good licking for my pains.”

“To whom was it sent?”

“Ask the bairn yon’, that I ha’ brought by th’ scut o’ th’ neck. He woudna come bout tugging for.”

“Was he the messenger?” asked Roger, the abbot’s secretary and prime agent.

“Help thine ignorant face, father!—I was peeping about, you see, in the dark. The priest thought it waur the laddy yonder, a-comin’ for his bag; so he gied it me, and tou’d me to carry it safe, but forgot to grease my pate forbye wi’ the direction. I ken’d ye could read aught at the abbey here, and so ye may e’en run wi’ it to the right owner for yere pains.”

The cunning knave glossed over his treachery with this excuse; for he evidently knew better, and had a notion that he should serve his masters by this piece of diplomatic craft.

“Thou mayest depart, and ere morrow we will give thee a largess for thy dexterity.”

Dick did not care to be long a-snuffing the chill air of the vaults and passages after his dismissal, but in a warm cell near the kitchen fire he was soon wrapped in the delights of oblivion. Such, however, was the importance of the documents he had so strangely intercepted, that a messenger was immediately despatched to London with a packet for the Privy Council.

The same morning, with the early dawn, the abbot and his secretary were together in the cloisters. It was a fitting place and opportunity either for intrigue or devotion, and many a masterstroke of church policy has issued from those dim and sepulchral arches in “the Glen of the deadly Nightshade.”

“Craft is needful, yea laudable,” said the abbot, “when we would cope with worldly adversaries, unless we could work miracles for our deliverance. But since in these degenerate ages of the church they have, I fear me, ceased, we must e’en employ the means that Heaven has put into our hands: and if I mistake not, this envoy of ours will be a skilful craftsman for the purpose. Under that garb of silly speech there’s a cunning and a wary spirit. Thou didst note well his ready-witted contrivance last night.”

“Yea, and the skill too with which he compassed his expedients, and the ingenuity that prevented the disclosure of his treachery, in arresting the real messenger, and thus keeping

them in the dark at the castle yonder until we have had time to countervail their plots. Could he be made to play his part according to our instructions, an agent like him were worth having. Besides he knows every chink and cranny about the castle, so that he could jump on them unawares."

"I am not much given to implicit credence in supernatural devices," said the abbot, "or visible manifestations of the arch-enemy; yet have our chronicles not scrupled to give their testimony to the truth of such appearances; and it is, moreover, plain, from the papers we have read, that the conspirators themselves believe in the existence of some supernatural presence amongst them, by which they are holpen."

He drew a billet from his bosom:—"I have kept this writing alone, as thou knowest," continued the abbot, "for our guidance. Listen again to the confessions of yonder rebellious and it may be credulous priest:—

"We are sure of success. The noble Margaret hath, by her wondrous art, together with the exercise of prayer and fasting, fenced us about as with a triple barrier, that no earthly might shall overcome. A power attends us that will magnify our cause, and lay our foes prostrate. 'Tis a mystery even to us, but a being appears unexpectedly at times, and by his counsels we are guided. We know not whence he comes, nor whither he goes; but his path is with us, and his presence, though generally invisible, not without terror, even to ourselves."

"'Tis a strange delusion this, if it be one; for it is plain they have been ably counselled. Whilst they retain the castle their position may be reckoned as impregnable. It is a powerful support, on which they have placed the lever of their rebellion."

"And in what way purpose you to entice them from it? Methinks it were in vain to make the attempt, if guarded and counselled by supernatural advisers."

"I believe in no such improbabilities. Listen. We have heard, as thou knowest, that a strange figure, muffled in close garments, steals forth, at times, by the southern cliff into the passage there, under the foundations. This, doubtless, will be the emissary referred to in the despatch. 'Tis of a surety some person about the camp, concealed, in all likelihood, even from the leaders themselves; but employed by yonder ambitious restless woman, to control and direct their operations by a pretendedly miraculous and supernatural influence. It is the way in which the vulgar and the superstitious are most easily led. Fanaticism is a powerful engine wherewith to combine and wield the scattered energies of the multitude. Besides, their plans are well laid, as we have seen by the despatches, and many and powerful are the helps by which they hope to accomplish their designs. Should they succeed, our destruction is certain. Yet could we draw them forth from our fortress, we might look to the issue undisturbed. The king will then dispose of them, and few will dare to interrupt us in the quiet possession of our privileges."

"How purpose you to entice them forth?" again inquired the secretary.

"If properly tutored, our messenger from the kitchen, Dick Empson, will doubtless be a fitting agent for this deed. He must be well furnished with means and appliances against discovery."

"Leave him to my care. I can work with untoward tools, and make them useful too upon occasion."

"The prisoner, whom he so craftily seized and brought hither, is yet safe in the dungeon?"

"He is, my lord."

"There he must lie, at any rate, until our plans be accomplished."

“We know not yet unto whom these communications were to have been conveyed.”

“No; but doubtless, from their tenor, to some person of great note. It may have been to one even about the person of royalty itself, for this treason hath deep root, and its branches are widely spread throughout the land.”

“Shall we put him to the question?”

“Nay, let present difficulties be brought to issue first; afterwards we shall be able to inquire, and with more certainty, as to the line of examination we should pursue.”

The speakers separated, one to communicate with Dick Empson, and prepare him for the important functions he would have to perform; the other to his lodgings, where he might ruminate undisturbed on the events then about to transpire, and of which he hoped, finally, to reap the advantage.

It was past midnight, and the flickering embers threw a doubtful and uncertain gleam, at intervals, through the royal chamber, as it was then called, in the Castle of Fouldrey. All around was so still that the tramp of the sentry sounded like the tread of an armed host; sounds being magnified to a degree almost terrific, in the absence of others by which their intensity may be compared. Even the dash of the waves below the walls was heard in the deep and awful stillness of that portentous night.

Simon started from the pallet whereon he lay, beside the couch of his master, at times looking wildly round, as though just rousing from some unquiet slumber, expecting, yet fearful of alarm. He lay down again with a deep sigh, muttering an Ave or a Paternoster as he closed his eyes. Again he raised his head, and a dark figure stood before him.

“What wouldest thou?” inquired he, with great awe and reverence.

“Ye must depart!” said a voice, deep and sepulchral.

“Depart!” repeated the priest, with an expression of doubt and alarm.

“Yes,” said the mysterious figure; “wherefore dost thou inquire?”

“Our only resting-place, our point of support, our sustenance and our refuge! Are we to leave this, and buffet with the winds and waves of misfortune, without a haven or a hiding-place? Surely”——

“I have said it, and to-morrow ye must depart!”

“Whither?” inquired the priest; his opinion evidently controlled by the belief that a being of a superior nature was before him.

“Beyond the Abbey of Furness. Choose a fitting place for your encampment, and there abide until I come.”

“It doth appear to my weak and unassisted sense,” said the priest, in great agony of spirit, arising from his doubt and unbelief, “that it were the very utmost of madness and folly to give up this strong and almost impregnable position for one where our little army may be outflanked, and even surrounded by superior strength and numbers.”

“Disobey, and thy life, and all that are with thee, shall be cut off!”

“And to-morrow! Ere we have news from our partisans in the south? Maurice will be here the third day at the latest.”

"I have said it," replied the figure, peremptorily; when suddenly, and, as it were, formed immediately at his side, appeared another figure, similar to the first, assuming nearly the same attitude and manner, save that the latter looked something taller and more majestic.

"St Mary's grace and the abbot's, there 's twa of us!" cried the first figure, no less a personage than Dick Empson, who had been daring enough to adopt this disguise, according to the instructions he had received at the abbey. He uttered the words in a tone of thrilling and horrible apprehension, like the last shriek of the victim writhing in the fangs of his destroyer.

The terrible apparition cried out to his surreptitious representative—"Nay, miscreant; but one. This thou shalt know, and feel too. Fool and impostor, thy last hour is come!"

As he spake he seized on the miserable wretch in their presence, swinging him round by the waist like an infant, and bore him off, up the turret stairs, to the summit. Ere he disappeared he uttered this terrible denunciation—

"Your ruin is at hand. Flee! This fool hath betrayed ye, and I return no more!"

Darting up the staircase, the shrieks of Dick Empson were heard, as if rapidly ascending to the summit. A wilder and more desperate struggle—then a heavy plunge, and the waters closed over their prey!

Dick's body was cast up by the waves, but the terrible unknown did not return; nor was he ever seen or heard of again, save, it is said, that when the priest received his death-wound, soon afterwards, on the field of battle, this awful form appeared to rise up before him, and with scoff and taunt upbraided him as the cause of his own ruin, and the downfall of his hopes.

The next day, from whatever cause, the troops began to move from their post. Ere the second evening, they had completely evacuated the castle and the island, which the wary Abbot of Furness soon turned to his own advantage, occupying the place with some of his armed vassals. The rebels, proved to be such by their ill success, took up a tolerably advantageous position upon Swartz Moor, in the neighbourhood of Ulverstone, where, waiting in vain for the expected reinforcements, they found themselves obliged to move forward, or be utterly without the means either of subsistence or defence. Sir Thomas Broughton, and a few more of little note, accompanied them to Stokeford, near Newark, where, engaging the king's forces on the 6th of June 1487, they maintained an obstinate and bloody engagement, disputed with more bravery than could have been expected from the inequality of their forces. The leaders were resolved to conquer or to perish, and their troops were animated with the same resolution. The Flemings, too, being veteran and experienced soldiers, kept the event long doubtful; and even the Irish, though ill-armed and almost defenceless, showed themselves not deficient in spirit and bravery. The king's victory was purchased with great loss, but was entirely decisive. Lincoln, Swartz, and, according to some accounts, Sir Thomas Broughton, perished on the field of battle, with four thousand of their followers. As Lovel was never more heard of, he was supposed to have undergone the same fate. Simnel, apart from his followers, was too contemptible to be an object either of apprehension or resentment on the part of the king. He was pardoned, and, it is said, made a scullion in the royal kitchen, from which menial office he was afterwards advanced to the rank of falconer.

Thus ended this strange rebellion, which only served to seat Henry more securely on his throne, extinguishing, finally, the intrigues and anticipations of the house of York.

XXVI. A Legend Of Bewsey

“Yestreen I dreamed a doleful dream,
I fear there will be sorrow!
I dreamed I pu’d the heather green
With my true love on Yarrow.

“She kissed his cheek, she kaimed his hair,
She searched his wounds all thorough,
She kissed them till her lips grew red,
On the dowie howms of Yarrow.”

Warrington is described by Camden as remarkable for its lords, surnamed Butler, or Boteler, of Bewsey. This name was derived from their office, Robert le Pincerna having discharged the duties of that station under Ranulph, Earl of Chester, in 1158, hence taking the surname. Almeric Butler, his descendant, having married Beatrice, daughter and co-heir of Matthew Villiers, Lord of Warrington, became possessed of the barony.

A MS. in the Bodleian Library gives the following statement, which, though manifestly incorrect in respect of names and particulars, may yet be relied on with regard to the main facts, corroborated by tradition, which still preserves the memory of this horrible event.

“Sir John Butler, Knt., was slaine in his bedde by the procurement of the Lord Standley, Sir Piers Leigh and Mister William Savage joining with him in that action (corrupting his servants), his porter setting a light in a window to give knowledge upon the water that was about his house at Bewsey (where your way to ... comes). They came over the moate in lether boats, and so to his chamber, where one of his servants, named Houlcrofte, was slaine, being his chamberlaine; the other basely betrayed his master;—they payed him a great reward, and so coming away with him, they hanged him at a tree in Bewsey Parke;—after this Sir John Butler’s lady prosecuted those that slew her husband, and ... £20 for that suite, but, being married to Lord Grey, he made her suite voyd, for which reason she parted from her husband and came into Lancashire, saying, If my lord will not let me have my will of my husband’s enemies, yet shall my body be buried by him; and she caused a tomb of alabaster to be made, where she lyeth on the ... hand of her husband, Sir John Butler.

It is further stated in the MS. that the occasion of this murder was because of a request from Earl Derby that Sir John would make one of the train which followed him on his going to meet King Henry VII., and which request was discourteously refused.

The following extract from Froissart may not be deemed uninteresting, as a record of one of our Lancashire worthies, Sir John Butler of Bewsey, relating how he was rescued from the hands of those who sought his life at the siege of Hennebon:—

“The Lord Lewis of Spain came one day into the tent of Lord Charles of Blois, where were numbers of the French nobility, and requested of him a boon for all the services done to him, and as a recompense for them the Lord Charles promised to grant whatever he should ask, as he held himself under many obligations to him. Upon which the Lord Lewis desired that the two prisoners, Sir John Boteler and Sir Mw. Trelawney, who were in prison of the Castle of Faouet, might be sent for, and delivered up to him, to do with them as should please him best.

“‘This is the boon I ask, for they have discomfited, pursued, and wounded me; have also slain the Lord Alphonso, my nephew, and I have no other way to be revenged on them than to have them beheaded in sight of their friends who are shut up in Hennebon.’

“The Lord Charles was much amazed at this request, and replied, ‘I will certainly give you the prisoners since you have asked for them; but you will be very cruel, and much to blame, if you put to death two such valiant men; and our enemies will have an equal right to do the same to any of our friends whom they may capture, for we are not clear what may happen to any one of us every day. I therefore entreat, dear sir and sweet cousin, that you would be better advised.’

“Lord Lewis said that if he did not keep his promise he would quit the army, and never serve or love him as long as he lived.

“When the Lord Charles saw that he must comply, he sent off messengers to the Castle of Faouet, who returned with the two prisoners, and carried them to the tent of Lord Charles.

“Neither tears nor entreaties could prevail on Lord Lewis to desist from his purpose of having them beheaded after dinner, so much was he enraged against them.

“All the conversation, and everything that passed between the Lord Charles and Lord Lewis, relative to these two prisoners, was told to Sir Walter Manny and Sir Amauri de Clisson, by friends and spies, who represented the danger in which the two knights were. They bethought themselves what was best to be done, but after considering schemes, could fix on none. At last Sir Walter said, ‘Gentlemen, it would do us great honour if we could rescue these two knights. If we should adventure it and should fail, King Edward would himself be obliged to us, and all wise men who may hear of it in times to come will thank us, and say we had done our duty. I will tell you my plan, and you are able to undertake it, for I think we are bound to risk our lives in endeavouring to save those of two such gallant knights.

“I propose, therefore, if it be agreeable to you, that we arm immediately, and form ourselves into two divisions,—one shall set off, as soon after dinner as possible, by this gate, and draw up near the ditch, to skirmish with and alarm the enemy, who, you may believe, will soon muster to that part, and, if you please, you, Sir Amauri de Clisson, shall have the command of it, and shall take with you 1000 good archers to make those that may come to you retreat back again, and 300 men-at-arms. I will have with me 100 of my companions, and 500 archers, and will sally out at the postern on the opposite side, privately, and coming behind them will fall upon their camp, which we shall find unguarded.

“I will take with me those who are acquainted with the road to Lord Charles’s tent, where the two prisoners are, and will make for that part of the camp. I can assure you that I and my companions will do everything in our power to bring back in safety these two knights, if it please God.’

“This proposal was agreeable to all, and they directly separated to arm and prepare themselves. About an hour after dinner Sir Amauri and his party set off; and having had the principal gate of Hennebon opened for them, which led to the road that went straight to the army of Lord Charles, they rushed forward, making great cries and noise, to the tents and huts, which they cut down, and killed all that came in their way. The enemy was much alarmed, and putting themselves in motion, got armed as quickly as possible, and advanced towards the English and Bretons, who received them very warmly. The skirmish was sharp, and many on each side were slain.

“When Sir Amauri perceived that almost the whole of the army was in motion and drawn out, he retreated very handsomely, fighting all the time, to the barriers of the town, when he

suddenly halted: then the archers, who had been posted on each side of the ditch beforehand, made such good use of their bows that the engagement was very hot, and all the army of the enemy ran thither except the servants.

“During this time Sir Walter Manny, with his company, issued out privily by the postern, and, making a circuit, came upon the rear of the enemy’s camp. They were not perceived by any one, for all were gone to the skirmish upon the ditch. Sir Walter made straight for the tent of Lord Charles, where he found the two knights, Sir John Boteler and Sir Mw. Trelawney, whom he immediately mounted on two coursers which he had ordered to be brought for them, and retiring as fast as possible, entered Hennebon by the same way as he sallied forth. The Countess of Montfort came to see them, and received them with great joy.”—*Froissart*, by Col. Johnes, vol. ii. p. 9.

The Butlers continued to occupy Bewsey till the year 1603, when Edward Butler sold this estate to the Irelands of Hale. It then passed from the Irelands to the Athertons, and is now enjoyed by Thomas Powis, Lord Lilford, of Lilford, Northamptonshire, in virtue of the marriage of his father, in the year 1797, with Henrietta Maria, daughter and heiress of Robert Vernon Atherton, of Atherton Hall, Esq.—*Vide Baines’s Lancashire*.

Oh listen to my roundelay,
Oh listen a while to me,
And I’ll tell ye of a deadly feud
That fell out in the north countrie.

The summer leaves were fresh and green
When Earl Derby forth would ride;
For King Henry and his company
To Lathom briskly hied.

A bridge he had builded fair and strong,
With wondrous cost and pain,
O’er Mersey’s stream, by Warrington,
For to meet that royal train.⁶³

And lord, and knight, and baron bold,
That dwelt in this fair countrie,
With the Derby train a-riding were,
Save Sir John of proud Bewsey.

“Now foul befa’ that scornfu’ knight,”
Cried Stanley in his pride;
“For he hath my just and honest suit
Discourteously denied:

“Such hatred of our high estate,
This traitor sore shall rue;
I’ll be avenged, or this good sword
Shall rot the scabbard through!”

He swore a furious oath, I trow,
And clenched his iron hand,

⁶³ “Thomas, first Earl of Derby, as a compliment to his royal relative, Henry VII., on his visit to Lathom and Knowsley in 1496, built the bridge at Warrington; and by this munificent act conferred a benefit upon the two palatine counties, the value of which it is not easy to estimate.”—Baines’s *Lancashire*.

As he rode forth to meet his son,
The monarch of merry England.

The summer leaves were over and gone,
But the ivy and yew were green,
When to Bewsey hall came a jovial crew
On the merry Christmas e'en.

It was mirth and feasting in hall and bower
On that blessed and holy tide,
But ere the morning light arose,
There was darkness on all their pride!

Dark wonne the night, and the revellers gay
From the laughing halls are gone;
The clock from the turret, old and grey,
With solemn tongue tolled one.

The blast was moaning down the glen,
Through the pitch-like gloom it came,
Like a spirit borne upon demon wings
To the pit of gnawing flame!

But Sir John was at rest, with his lady love,
In a pleasant sleep they lay;
Nor felt the sooning, shuddering wind
Round the grim, wide welkin play.

Their little babe, unconscious now,
Lay slumbering hard by;
And he smiled as the loud, loud tempest rocked
His cradle wondrously.

There comes a gleam on the billowy moat
Like a death-light on its wave,
It streams from the ivied lattice, where
Sits a grim false-hearted knave.

He saw it on the soft white snow,
And across the moat it passed:
“‘Tis well,” said that false and grim porter,
And a fearsome look he cast.

A look he cast so wild and grim,
And he uttered a deadly vow;
“For thy dool and thy doom this light shall be,
Thy foes are hastening now!

“Sleep on, sleep on, thou art weary, Sir John;
Thy last sleep shall it be:
Sleep on, sleep on, with thy next good sleep
Thou shalt rest eternally!”

The traitor watched the waters dance,
In the taper's treacherous gleam;

And they hissed, and they rose, by the tempest tossed
Through that pale and lonely beam.

What hideous thing comes swift and dark
Athwart that flickering wave?
A spectre boat there seems to glide,
With many an uplift glaive.

The bolts are unslid by that grim porter,
And a gladsome man was he,
When three foemen fierce strode up the stair,
All trim and cautiously.

"Now who be ye," cried the chamberlain,
"That come with stealth and staur?"
"We come to bid thy lord good den,
So open to us the door."

"Ere I will open to thieves like ye,
My limbs ye shall hew and hack.
Awake, Sir John! awake and flee;
These blood-hounds are on thy track!"

"We'll stop thy crowing, pretty bird!
Now flutter thy wings again:"
With that they laid him a ghastly corpse,
And the red blood ran amain.

"Oh help!" the lady shrieked aloud;
"Arise, Sir John, and flee;
Oh heard you not yon cry of pain
Like some mortal agony?"

"I hear it not," Sir John replied,
For his sleep was wondrous strong;
"But see yon flashing weapons, sure
To foemen they belong!"

The knight from his bed leaped forth to flee,
But they've pierced his body through;
And with wicked hands, and weapons keen,
Him piteously they slew!

But that porter grim, strict watch he kept,
Beside the stair sate he;
When lo! comes tripping down a page,
With a basket defterly.

"Now whither away, thou little page,
Now whither away so fast?"
"They have slain Sir John," said the little page,
"And his head in this wicker cast."

"And whither goest thou with that grisly head?"
Cried the grim porter again,

“To Warrington Bridge they bade me run,
And set it up amain.”

“There may it hang,” cried that loathly knave,
“And grin till its teeth be dry;
While every day with jeer and taunt
Will I mock it till I die!”

The porter opened the wicket straight,
And the messenger went his way,
For he little guessed of the head that now
In that basket of wicker lay.

“We’ve killed the bird, but where’s the egg?”
Then cried those ruffians three.
“Where is thy child?” The lady moaned,
But never a word spake she.

But, swift as an arrow, to his bed
The lady in terror sprung;
When, oh! a sorrowful dame was she,
And her hands she madly wrung.

“The babe is gone! Oh, spare my child,
And strike my heart in twain!”
To those ruthless men the lady knelt,
But her piteous suit was vain.

“Traitor!” they cried to that grim porter,
“Whom hast thou suffered forth?
If thou to us art false, good lack,
Thy life is little worth!”

“There’s nought gone forth from this wicket yet,”
Said that grim and grisly knave,
“But a little foot-page, with his master’s head,
That ye to his charges gave.”

“Thou liest, thou grim and fause traitor!”
Cried out those murderers three;
“The head is on his carcase yet,
As thou mayest plainly see!”

When the lady heard this angry speech,
Her heart waxed wondrous fain;
For she knew the page was a trusty child,
And her babe in his arms had lain.

“Where is the gowd?” said that grim porter,
“The gowd ye sware unto me?”
“We’ll give thee all thine hire,” said they;
“We play not false like thee!”

They counted down the red, red gold,
And the porter laughed outright:

“Now we have paid thy service well,
For thy master’s blood this night;

“For thy master’s blood thou hast betrayed,
We’ve paid thee thy desire;
But for thy treachery unto us,
Thou hast not had thine hire.”

They’ve ta’en a cord, both stiff and strong,
And they sought a goodly tree;
And from its boughs the traitor swung;—
So hang all knaves like he!

But the lady found her pretty babe;—
Ere the morning light was nigh,

To the hermit’s cell⁶⁴ that little page
Had borne him craftily.

And the mass was said, and the requiem sung,
And the priests, with book and stole,
The body bore to its cold still bed,
“Gramercy on his soul!”

⁶⁴ The Butlers, it is conjectured, were patrons of the priory of the hermit friars of St Augustine, founded before 1379, near the bridge. In 32 Henry VIII., this institution was dissolved, and its possessions were granted to the great monastic grantee, Thomas Holcroft.—*Vide* Tanner’s *Not. Mon.* About forty years ago the remains of a gateway of the priory stood on Friar’s Green, and some years after that period a stone coffin was dug up near the same place.

XXVII. The Blessing

“I had most need of blessing, and amen
Stuck in my throat.”

—*Macbeth*.

We have been unable to identify the spot where the occurrence took place, the subject of the following ballad. It is in all likelihood one of those wild and monkish legends that may be fitted or applied to any situation, according to the whim of the narrator. Many such legends, though the number is lessening daily, are still preserved, and an amusing volume might be made of these unappropriated wanderers that possess neither a local habitation nor a name.

The chase was done—the feast was begun,
When the baron sat proudly by;
And the revelry rode on the clamouring wind,
That swept through the hurtling sky.

No lordly guest that feast had blessed,
No solemn prayer was said;
But with ravenous hands, unthankfully,
They brake their daily bread.

The chase was done—the feast was begun,
When a palmer sat in that hall;
Yet his pale dim eye from its rest ne’er rose,
To gaze on that festival!

The crackling blaze on his wan cheek plays,
And athwart his gloomy brow;
While his hands are spread to the rising flame,
And his feet to the embers’ glow.

For the blast was chill, o’er the mist-covered hill,
And the palmer’s limbs were old;
And weary the way his feet had trod,
Since the matin-bell had tolled.

The baron spake—”This morsel take,
And yon pilgrim greet from me;
Tell him we may not forget to share
The joys of our revelry!”

Then thus began that holy man,
As he lowly bent his knee—
“I may not taste of the meat unblest;
I would ‘twere so with thee.”

“Then mumble thy charm o’er the embers warm,”
That baron proud replied;
“No boon from my hand shalt thou receive,
Nor foaming cup from my side.”

The palmer bowed, the giddy crowd,
 With mirth and unseemly jest,
 His meekness taunt, when he answered not,
 The gibe of each courtly guest.

The minstrel sang, the clarions rang,
 And the baron sat proudly there,
 And louder the revelry rode on the wind,
 That swept through the hurtling air.

“What tidings for me from the east countrie?
 What news from the Paynim land?”
 As the baron spake, his goblet bright
 He raised in his outstretched hand.

“There’s tidings for thee from the east countrie,”
 The pilgrim straight replied;
 “A mighty chief, at a mighty feast,
 There sat in all his pride.”

“’Twas wondrous well;—and what befell
 This chief at his lordly feast?”
 “A goblet was filled with the red grape’s blood,
 And he pledged each rising guest.”

“’Tis gladsome news;—but did they refuse
 The pledge they loved so well?”
 “Oh no; for each cup mantling forth to the brim,
 Did the harp and the clarion tell.”

“And where didst thou such tidings know?”
 “A pilgrim told it me:
 And he sat on the hearth at this unblessed feast,
 Where he shared not the revelry,

“For ere was quaffed each sparkling draught,
 Or the foam from the ruby wine,
 He dashed the cup from that baron’s lip,
 As now I do from thine!”

And the palmer passed by, as each goblet on high
 Was waved at their chief’s command,
 But ere the cup had touched his lip,
 It was dashed from his lifted hand!

“A boon from thee, on my bended knee,”
 The palmer boldly cried;
 “Seize first with speed yon traitor page
 Who bore the cup to thy side.”

And the page they have bound on the cold, cold ground,
 And his treason he hath confessed;
 He had poisoned the cup with one subtle drop,
 Which he drew from his crimson vest.

And the palmer grey his treachery
Had watched, when all beside
In the feast were gaily revelling,
Nor danger there espied.

“Say where didst thou the treason know?”
The troubled chieftain cried;
“I had blessed thy bread, I had blessed thy bowl,”
The hoary man replied.

“And the blessing was given—the boon from heaven;
Or this night from thy lordly bed
Thy spirit had passed with the shuddering blast,
With the loud, shrill shriek of the dead!

“Oh! never taste the meat unblessed;
Remember the palmer grey;
Though he wander afar from thy castle gate,
Yet forget not thy feast to-day.”

And the pilgrim is gone from that gate alone,
When prayer and vow were said;
And the blessing thenceforth from that house was heard
Ere they broke their daily bread.

XXVIII. The Dule Upo' Dun

“Wae, wae is me, on soul an' body,
Old Hornie has lifted his paw, man;
An' the carle will come, an' gallop me hame,
An' I maun gae pipe in his ha', man!”

—*Old Ballad.*

For the tradition upon which the following tale is founded, the author is indebted to *The Kaleidoscope*, an interesting weekly miscellany, published by Messrs Smith and Son at Liverpool.

Barely three miles from Clitheroe, as you enter a small village on the right of the high road to Gisburne, stands a public-house, having for its sign the title of our story. On it is depicted his Satanic majesty, curiously mounted upon a scraggy dun horse, without saddle, bridle, of any sort of equipments whatsoever—the terrified steed being off and away at full gallop from the door, where a small hilarious tailor, with shears and measures, appears to view the departure of him of the cloven foot with anything but grief or disapprobation.

The house itself is one of those ancient, gabled, black and white edifices, now fast disappearing under the giant march of improvement, which tramples down alike the palace and the cottage, the peasant's hut and the patrician's dwelling. Many windows, of little lozenge-shaped panes set in lead, might be seen here in all the various stages of renovation and decay: some stuffed with clouts, parti-coloured and various; others, where the work of devastation had been more complete, were wholly darkened by brick-bats, coble-stones, and many other ingenious substitutes and expedients to keep out the weather.

But our tale hath a particular bearing to other and more terrific days—“the olden time,” so fruitful in marvels and extravagances—the very poetry of the black art; when Satan communed visibly and audibly with the children of men—thanks to the invokers of relics and the tellers of beads—and was so familiar and reasonable withal, as to argue and persuade men touching the propriety of submitting themselves to him, as rational and intelligent creatures; and even was silly enough, at times, to suffer himself to be outwitted by the greater sagacity and address of his intended victims. For proof, we cite the following veracious narrative, which bears within it every internal mark of truth, and matter for grave and serious reflection.

“Little Mike,” or more properly Michael Waddington, was a merry tailor of some note in his day, who formerly, that is to say, some eight or nine score years ago—dwelt in this very tenement, where he followed his profession, except when enticed by the smell of good liquor to the village alehouse—the detriment, and even ruin, of many a goodly piece of raiment, which at times he clipped and shaped in such wise as redounded but little to the credit of either wearer or artificer. Mike was more alive to a merry troll and graceless story, in the kitchen of mine host “at the inn,” than to the detail of his own shopboard, with the implements of his craft about him, making and mending the oddly assorted adjuncts of the village churls. Such was his liking for pastime and good company that the greater part of his earnings went through the tapster's melting pot; and grieved are we, as veritable chroniclers, to state that it was not until even credit failed him, that he settled to work for another supply of the elixir vitæ—the pabulum of his being. It may be supposed that matters went on but indifferently at home, where want and poverty had left indelible traces of their presence. Matty Waddington, his spouse, would have had hard work to make both ends meet had she

not been able to scrape together a few pence and broken victuals by selling firewood, and helping her neighbours with any extra work that was going forward. Yet, in general, she bore all her troubles and privations with great patience and good humour—at any rate in the presence of her husband, who, though an idler and a spendthrift, was, to say the truth, not viciously disposed towards her, like many beastly sots, but, on the contrary, he usually behaved with great deference and kindness to his unfortunate helpmate in all things but that of yielding to his besetting sin; having an unquenchable thirst for good liquor, which all his resolutions and vows of amendment could not withstand.

One evening the little hero of our story was at his usual pastime in the public-house, but his “cup was run low,” and his credit still lower. In fact, both cash and credit were finished; his liquor was within a short pull from the bottom; and he sat ruminating on the doleful emergencies to which he was subject, and the horrible spectres that would assail him on the morrow, in the shape of sundry riven doublets and hose, beside rents and repairs innumerable, which had been accumulating for some weeks, to the no small inconvenience and exposure of their owners and former occupiers.

“I wish I were the squire’s footman, or e’en his errand-boy, and could get a sup of good liquor without riving and tuggin’ for’t,” thought he aloud. Scarce were the words uttered, when there came a mighty civil stranger into the company, consisting of village professors of the arts, such as the barber, the blacksmith, and the bell-ringer, together with our knight of the iron thimble. The new-comer was dressed in a respectable suit of black; a wig of the same colour adorned his wide and ample head, which was again surmounted by a peaked hat, having a band and buckle above its brim, and a black rose in front. He looked an elderly and well-ordered gentleman, mighty spruce, and full of courtesy; and his cane was black as ebony, with a yellow knob that glittered like gold. He had a huge beaked nose, and a little black ferrety eye, which almost pierced what it gazed upon. Every one made way for the stranger, who sat down, not in the full glare of the fire to be sure, but rather on one side, so that he might have a distinct view of the company, without being himself subject to any scrutinising observances.

“Pleasant night abroad,” said the new-comer.

“Pleasanter within though,” responded every thought.

“It’s moonlight, I reckon,” said Mike, who was just meditating over his last draught, and his consequent departure from this bibacious paradise.

“Nay, friend,” said the black gentleman, “but the stars shine out rarely; and the snow lies so bright and crisp like, ye may see everything afore ye as plain as Pendle. Landlord, bring me a cup of the best; and put a little on the fire to warm, with some sugar, for it’s as cold as a raw turnip to one’s stomach.”

“Humph!” said mine host, testily; “it’s a good-for-nothin’ belly that’ll not warm cold ale.”

“It’s good-for-nothin’ ale, Giles, thee means, that’ll not warm a cowl belly,” said one of the wits of the party, a jolly young blacksmith, an especial favourite amongst the lasses and good fellows of the neighbourhood.

“Nay, the dickens!” said another; “Giles Chatburn’s ale would warm the seat of old cloven-foot himsel’;” and with that there were roars of laughing, in which, however, the stranger did not participate. Mike wondered that so good a joke should not have its due effect upon him; and many other notable things were said and done which we have neither space nor inclination to record, but the stranger still maintained his grave and unaccountable demeanour. Mike ever and anon cast a glance towards him, and he always observed that the

stranger's eye was fixed upon his own. A dark, bright, burning eye, such as made the recreant tailor immediately look aside, for he could not endure its brightness.

Mike began to grow restless and uncomfortable. He changed his place, but the glance of the stranger followed him. It was like the gaze of a portrait, which, in whatever situation the beholder may be placed, is always turned towards him. It may readily be supposed that Michael Waddington, though not averse to being looked at in the ordinary way, did not relish this continued and searching sort of disposition on the part of the gentleman in black. Several times he was on the point of speaking, but his heart always failed him as the word reached his lip.

His liquor was now done, but he was not loth to depart as beforetime; for at any rate, he should be quit of the annoyance he had so long endured. He arose with less regret assuredly than usual; and just as he was passing the doorway he cast a look round over his shoulder, and beheld the same fixed, unflinching eye gazing on him. He jumped hastily over the threshold, and was immediately on his road home. He had not been gone more than a few minutes when he heard a sharp footstep on the crisp snow behind him. Turning round, he saw the dark tall peak of the stranger's hat, looking tenfold darker, almost preternaturally black, on the white background, as he approached. Mike felt his hair bristling through terror. His knees, usually bent somewhat inwards, now fairly smote together, so that he could not accelerate his pace, and the stranger was quickly at his side.

"Thou art travelling homewards, I trow," said he of the black peak. Mike made some barely intelligible reply. "I know it," returned the other. "But why art thou leaving so soon?"

"My money's done, an' credit too, for that matter," tardily replied the tailor.

"And whose fault's that?" returned his companion. "Thou mayest have riches, and everything else, if thou wilt be advised by me."

Mike stared, as well he might, at the dark figure by his side. The idea of wealth without labour was perfectly new to him, and he ventured to ask how this very desirable object might be accomplished.

"Listen. Thou art a poor miserable wretch, and canst hardly earn a livelihood with all thy toil. Is't not a pleasant thing and a desirable, however procured, to obtain wealth at will, and every happiness and delight that man can enjoy?"

Michael's thirsty lips watered at the prospect, notwithstanding his dread of the black gentleman at his elbow.

"I was once poor and wretched as thou. But I grew wiser, and—unlimited wealth is now at my command."

There was an awful pause; the stranger apparently wishful to know the effect of this mysterious communication. The liquorish tailor listened greedily, expecting to hear of the means whereby his condition would be so wonderfully amended.

"Hast thou never heard of those who have been helped by the powers of darkness to"——

"Save us, merci"——

"Hold!" said the peremptory stranger, seizing Mike rudely by the wrist. "Another such outcry, and I will leave thee to thy seams and patches; to starve, or linger on, as best thou mayst."

Michael promised obedience, and his companion continued—

“There is no such great harm or wickedness in it as people suppose. Quite an ordinary sort of proceeding, I assure thee; and such an one as thou mayst accomplish in a few minutes, with little trouble or inconvenience.”

“Tell me the wondrous secret,” said Michael eagerly, who, in the glowing prospect thus opened out to him, felt all fear of his companion giving way.

“Well, then; thou mayst say two aves, the creed, and thy paternoster backwards thrice, and call upon the invisible demon to appear, when he will tell thee what thou shalt do.”

Michael felt a strange thrill come over him at these fearful words. He looked at his companion, but saw not anything more notable than the high-peaked hat, and the huge beaked nose, as before. By this time they were close upon his own threshold, and Michael was just debating within himself upon the propriety of asking his companion to enter, when his deliberations were cut short by the other saying he had business of importance a little farther; and with that he bade him good night.

Michael spent the remaining hours of darkness in tossing and rumination; but in the end the gratifying alternative between wealth and poverty brought his deliberations to a close. He determined to follow the advice and directions of the stranger. There could be no harm in it. He only intended to inquire how such wealth might be possessed; but if in any way diabolical or wicked, he would not need to have anything further to do in the matter. Thus reasoning, and thus predetermined how to act, our self-deluded stitcher of seams bent his way, on the following forenoon, to a solitary place near the river, where he intended to perform the mighty incantation. Yet, when he tried to begin, his stomach felt wondrous heavy and oppressed. He trembled from head to foot, and sat down for some time to recruit his courage. The words of the stranger emboldened him.

“‘Quite an ordinary business,’” said he; and Mike went to work with his lesson, which he had been conning as he went. Scarcely was the last word of this impious incantation uttered, when a roaring clap of thunder burst above him, and the arch enemy of mankind stood before the panic-stricken tailor.

“Why hast thou summoned me hither?” said the infernal monarch, in a voice like the rushing wind or the roar of the coming tempest. But Michael could not speak before the fiend.

“Answer me—and truly,” said the demon. This miserable fraction of a man now fell on his knees, and in a most piteous accent exclaimed—

“Oh! oh! mercy. I did not—I—want—nothing!”

“Base, audacious slave! Thou art telling me an untruth, and thou knowest it. Show me thy business instantly, or I will carry thee off to my dominions without further ado.”

At this threat the miserable mortal prostrated himself, a tardy confession being wrung from him.

“Oh! pardon. Thou knowest my poverty and my distress. I want riches, and—and”—

“Good!” said the demon, with a horrible smile. “‘Tis what ye are ever hankering after. Every child of Adam doth cry with insatiate thirst, ‘Give—give!’ But hark thee! ‘tis thine own fault if thou art not rich, and that speedily. I will grant thee *three* wishes: use them as thou wilt.”

Now the rogue was glad when he heard this gracious speech, and in the fulness of his joy exclaimed—

“Bodikins! but I know what my first wish will be; and I’se not want other two.”

“How knowest thou that?” said the demon, with a look of contumely and scorn so wild and withering that Michael started back in great terror.

“Before this favour is granted though,” continued the fiend, “there is a small matter by way of preliminary to be settled.”

“What is that?” inquired the trembling novice with increasing disquietude and alarm.

“A contract must be signed, and delivered too.”

“A contract! Dear me; and for what?”

“For form’s sake merely; no more, I do assure thee—a slight acknowledgment for the vast benefits I am bound to confer. To wit, that at the end of seven years thou wilt bear me company.”

“Me!” cried the terrified wretch; “nay, then, keep thy gifts to thyself; I’ll none o’ them on this condition.”

“Wretched fool!” roared the infuriate fiend; at the sound of which the culprit fairly tumbled backward. “Sign this contract, or thou shalt accompany me instantly. Ay, this very minute: for know, that every one who calls on me is delivered into my power; and think thyself well dealt with when I offer thee an alternative. Thou hast the chance of wealth, honour, and prosperity if thou sign this bond. If thou do not, I will have thee whether or no—that’s all. What sayest thou?” and the apostate angel spread forth his dark wings, and seemed as though ready to pounce upon his unresisting victim.

In a twinkling, Michael decided that it would be much better to sign the bond and have the possession of riches, with seven years to enjoy them in, than be dragged off to the burning pit immediately, without any previous enjoyment whatsoever. Besides, in that seven years who knew what might turn up in his favour.

“I consent,” said he; and the arch-enemy produced his bond. A drop of blood, squeezed from the hand of his victim, was the medium of this fearful transfer; and instantly on its execution another clap of thunder announced the departure of Satan with the price of another soul in his grasp.

Michael was now alone. He could hardly persuade himself that he had not been dreaming. He looked at his finger, where a slight wound was still visible, from which a drop of blood still hung—a terrible confirmation of his fears.

Returning home, sad and solitary, he attempted to mount to his usual place, but even this exertion was more than he could accomplish. One black and burning thought tormented him, and he sat down by his own cheerless hearth, more cheerless than he had ever felt before. Matty was preparing dinner; but it was a meagre and homely fare—a little oaten bread, and one spare collop which had been given her by a neighbour. Scanty as was the meal, it was better than the humble viands which sometimes supplied their board. Matty knew not the real cause of her husband’s dumps, supposing it to be the usual workings of remorse, if not repentance, to which Mike was subject whenever his pocket was empty and the burning spark in his throat unquenched. She invited him to partake, but he could not eat. He sat with eyes half-shut, fixed on the perishing embers, and replied not to the remonstrances of his dame.

“Why, Mike, I say,” cried the kind-hearted woman, “what ails thee? Cheer up, man, and finish thy collop. Thou mayest fret about it as thou likes, but thou cannot undo a bad stitch by wishing. If it will make thee better for time to come, though, I’ll not grumble. Come, come, goodman, if one collop winna content thee, I wish we’d two, that’s all.”

Scarce was the last word from her lips, when lo! a savoury and smoking rasher was laid on the table by some invisible hand. Michael was roused from his lethargy by this unlucky wish. Darting a terrified look on the morsel, he cried out—

“Woman, woman! what hast thou done? I wish thou wert far enough for thy pains.”

Immediately she disappeared—whisked off by the same invisible hands; but whither he could not tell.

“Oh me—oh me!” cried the afflicted tailor at this double mishap; “what shall I do now? I shall assuredly starve; and yet I’ve one wish left. Humph, I’d better be wary in making it though. Best take time to consider, lest I throw this needlessly after the rest.”

Mike could not make up his mind as to what he would have, nor indeed could he bend down his thoughts steadfastly to any subject. He was in a continual flutter. His brain was in a whirl. He looked round for some relief. The house was in sad disorder, and he thought on his absent wife.

“Dear me,” thought he, as he fetched a scrap of wood to the fire, “I wish Matty were here;” and his wife was immediately at his side.

Mike, now grown desperate, revealed to her the fearful cause of these disasters, and the utter failure of any beneficial results from the three wishes.

“We be just as we were,” said he, “save that I’ve sold mysel’, body and soul, to the Evil One!”

Here he began to weep and lament very sore; and his wife was so much overcome at the recital that she was nigh speechless through the anguish she endured.

At length her tears began to lose their bitterness.

“It’s no use greetin’ at this gait,” said she; “hie thee to the parson, Michael, an’ see if he canna quit thee o’ this bond.”

“Verily,” said the poor tailor, with a piteous sigh, “that would be leapin’ out o’ t’ gutter into t’ ditch. I should be burnt for a he-witch an’ a limb o’ the de’il. I’ve yet seven years’ respite from torment, an’ that would be to throw even these precious morsels away. E’en let’s tarry as we are, an’ make the best on’t. This comes of idleness and drink; but if ever I put foot across Giles’s doorstep again, I wish—nay, it’s no use wishing now, I’ve had enough o’ sich thriftless work for a bit. But I’ll be sober an’ mind my work, and spend nothing idly, an’ who knows but some plan or another may be hit on to escape.”

Now his disconsolate wife was much rejoiced at this determination, and could not help saying—

“Who knows? perhaps it was for good, Mike, that this distress happened thee.”

He shook his head; but his resolution was made, and he adhered to it in spite of the sneers and temptations of his former associates, who often tried to lead him on to the same vicious courses again. He had received a warning that he never forgot. The memory of it stuck to him night and day; and he would as soon have thought of thrusting his hand into the glowing coals as have entered Giles Chatburn’s hovel again. He was truly an altered man, but his wife was the first to feel benefited by the change. He had plenty of work, and money came in apace. The house was cleaned and garnished. There was abundance of victuals, and a jug of their own brewing. He rarely stirred out but to wait upon his customers, and then he came home as soon as the job was completed. But there was an appearance of melancholy and

dejection continually about him. He looked wan and dispirited. Time was rapidly passing by, and the last of the seven years was now ebbing away.

One night, as they were sitting a while after supper, he fetched a heavy sigh.

"It is but a short time I have to live," said he.

"Nay," said the dame, let's hope that Heaven will not let thee fall a prey to His enemy and ours. Besides thou hast gotten nothing from him for thy bargain. It cannot be expected, therefore, that the old deceiver can claim any recompense."

Mike shook his head, and looked incredulous.

"Sure as there's wind i' Meg's entry he'll come for his own. I've been considering that I'd best go to the old man that lives in the cave by Sally. He'll maybe give me some advice how to act when the time comes."

This suggestion met with his wife's approval; and the next morning our disconsolate hero was on his way to the "hermit" of the cave. The holy recluse had been long famed through that region for his kindness and attention to the wants of those who sought help and counsel; and Michael thought no harm could come of it, even though he might be unable to circumvent the designs of the arch-enemy.

His dwelling was by the river-side, in a little hut, the back of which, the goodman's oratory, was scooped out in a circular form from the bank.

"Holy father," said the tailor, on entering the cell, "I crave thy benison."

The anchorite, who was on his knees before a crucifix, did not speak until he had finished his devotions. He then rose and pronounced the usual benedictory welcome.

"So far all is well," thought Mike; "I've got one blow at the devil anyhow."

The holy father was very old, but he was hale and active. His white silky beard almost touched his girdle, and his sharp though rheumy eyes peered inquisitively on the person of his guest.

"What is thine errand, my son?" inquired the recluse.

"I have fallen into a grievous temptation, and would crave your succour and advice."

"Heaven wills it oft, my son, that we fall into divers extremities to humble us, and to show the folly and weakness of our hearts. What is thy trouble and thy petition?"

"Alas!" said the other, weeping, "I have been face to face with the father of lies, and I have suffered much damage therefrom."

"Thou hast not been tampering with forbidden arts, I hope?"

"Truly, that have I, and to my soul's cost, I fear," said the tailor, with a groan of heartrending despair.

"Thy sin is great, my son; but so likewise is the remedy. Heaven willeth not a sinner's death, if he turn again to Him with repentance and contrition of spirit. I trust thou hast not trifled with thy soul's welfare by taking and using any of the gifts whereby the old serpent layeth hold on the souls of men?"

"Verily, nay; but he frightened me into the signing of a terrible bond, wherein I promised, that after seven years were past and gone I would be his!"

“Thy danger is terrible indeed. But he gave thee some equivalent for the bargain? thou didst not sell thyself for nought?” said the hermit, fixing his eye sternly on the trembling penitent; “and now, when thou hast wasted the price of thy condemnation, thou comest for help; and thou wouldest even play at cheatery with the devil!”

“Nay, most reverend father,” said Michael, wiping his eyes; “never a gift have I had from the foul fiend, save a bacon collop, and that was cast out untouched.” And with that he told of the manner in which he was inveigled, and the scurvy trick which the deceiver had played him.

“Verily, there is hope,” said the holy man, after musing a while; “yet is it a perilous case, and only to be overcome by prayer and fasting. If thou seek help sincerely, I doubt not that a way will be made for thine escape. Listen;—it is never permitted that the enemy of our race should reap the full benefit of the advantage which otherwise his superior duplicity and intelligence would enable him to obtain. There was never yet bond or bargain made by him, but, in one way or another, it might be set aside, and the foul fiend discomfited. It may be difficult, I own; and advice is not easily rendered in this matter: but trust in the power of the All-powerful, and thou shalt not be overcome. Wisdom, I doubt not, shall be vouchsafed in this extremity, if thou apply anxiously and earnestly for it, seeking deliverance, and repenting of thy great wickedness which thou hast committed.”

With these and many other gracious words did the benevolent enthusiast encourage this doomed mortal; and though heavy and disconsolate enough, he returned more light-hearted than he came.

The time now drew near. The very week—the day—the hour, was come; and when the sun should have climbed to the meridian Michael knew that he would have to face the cunning foe who had beguiled him.

His wife would have tarried; but he peremptorily forbade. He would not be disturbed in his intercessions.

All that morning, without intermission, he supplicated for wisdom and strength in the ensuing conflict. He had retired to a little chamber at one end of the house, and here he secured himself to prevent intrusion.

Noon was scarcely come when, true to the engagement, a loud thunder-clap announced the approach and presence of this terrific being.

“I am glad to find,” said he, “that thou art ready.”

“I am not ready,” replied the trembling victim.

“How!” roared the sable chief, with a voice that shook the whole house, like the passage of an earthquake; “dost thou deny the pledge? darest thou gainsay this bond?”

“True enough,” replied the debtor, “I signed that contract; but it was won from me by fraud and dishonest pretences.”

“Base, equivocating slave! how darest thou mock me thus? Thou hadst thy wishes; the conditions have been fulfilled, ay, to the letter.”

“I fear me,” again said the victim, who felt his courage wonderfully supported, “that thou knewest I should never be a pin the richer or better for thy gifts; and thine aim was but to flatter and to cheat. It is not in thy power, I do verily believe, to grant me riches or any great thing that I might wish; so thou didst prompt, and, in a manner, force me to those vain wishes, unthinkingly, by which I have been beguiled.”

“Dost thou doubt, then, my ability in this matter? Know that thy most unbounded wishes would have been accomplished, else I release thee from this bond.”

“I say, and will vouch for ‘t, that all thy promises are lying cheats, and that thou couldst not give me a beggarly bodle, if thou wert to lay down thy two horns for it; so I demand my bond, according to thy pledge.”

“To show thee that I can keep this bond, even conformably to the terms of my own offer just now, and thy pitiful carcase to boot, I’ll e’en grant thee another wish, that thou mayest be satisfied thou art past all hope of redemption. Said I not, that if I could not fulfil any wish of thine, even to the compass of all possible things, and the riches of this great globe itself, I would release thee from this bond?”

“Yea,” said Michael, with an eager assent.

“Then wish once more; and mind that it be no beggarly desire. Wish to the very summit of wealth, or the topmost pinnacle of thy ambition, for it shall be given thee.”

“Then,” said the tailor hastily, as though fearful the word would not come forth quick enough from his lips, “I wish thou wert riding back again to thy quarters on yonder dun horse, and never be able to plague me again, or any other poor wretch whom thou hast gotten into thy clutches.”

The demon gave a roar loud enough to be heard to the very antipodes, and away went he, riveted to the back of this very dun horse, which Michael had seen through the window grazing quietly in the lane, little suspecting the sort of jockey that was destined to bestride him.

The tailor ran to the door to watch his departure, almost beside himself for joy at this happy riddance. Dancing and capering into the kitchen, where his wife was almost dying through terror, he related, as soon as he was able, the marvellous story of his deliverance.

He relapsed not into his former courses, but lived happily to a good old age, leaving behind him at his death good store of this world’s gear, which, as he had no children, was divided amongst his poorer relatives. One of them having purchased the house where the tailor dwelt, set up the trade of a tapster therein, having for his sign “*The Dule upo’ Dun*,” which to this day attests the truth of our tradition, and the excellence of “mine host’s” cheer.

XXIX. Windleshaw Abbey

“Adieu, fond love; farewell, you wanton powers;
 I’m free again.
 Thou dull disease of bloud and idle hours,
 Bewitching pain,
 Fly to fools that sigh away their time:
 My nobler love to heaven doth climb;
 And there behold beauty still young,
 That time can ne’er corrupt, nor death destroy;
 Immortal sweetness by fair angels sung,
 And honoured by eternity and joy:
 There lies my love, thither my hopes aspire;
 Fond loves decline, this heavenly love grows higher.”

—Beaumont and Fletcher.

This ruined chapel—”abbey” it is generally styled—is about a mile distant from St Helen’s. Little remains now but the belfry, with its luxuriant covering of dark ivy, still preserving it from destruction. More than half a century ago, some ruffian hand nearly severed the stem from the root, but happily without material injury, the incision being incomplete. The burial-ground, formerly open, is now enclosed by a stone wall; and on the south side is a stone cross with three steps. The whole area has a reputation of great sanctity; many of those who die in the Romish faith, even beyond the immediate neighbourhood, being brought hither for interment.

There are no records, that we can find, of its foundation; but it may be suspected that the place was dedicated to St Thomas; for close by is a well of that name, unto which extraordinary virtues are ascribed.

The chapel was but small; not more than twelve yards in length, and about three in width; the tower scarcely eight yards high. Its insignificance probably may account for the obscurity in which its origin is involved.

It fell into disuse after the Dissolution; and its final ruin took place during the civil wars of Charles I.

Autumn was lingering over the yellow woods. The leaves, fluttering on their shrivelled stems, seemed ready to fall with every breath. Dark and heavy was the dull atmosphere—a melancholy stillness that seemed to pervade and surround every object—a deceitful calm, forerunner of the wild and wintrystorms about to desolate and to destroy even these flickering emblems of decay. At times a low murmur would break forth, dying away through the deep woods, like some spirit of past ages waking from her slumber, or the breath of hoary Time sighing through the ruin he had created.

There is something indescribably solemn and affecting in the first touches and emblems of the year that has “fallen into the sear and yellow leaf.” Like the eventide of life, it is a season when the gay and glittering promises of another spring are past; when the fervour and the maturity of summer are ended; when cold and monotonous days creep on; and we look with another eye, and other perceptions, on all that surrounds us. Yet there is a feeling of gladness and of hope mingling with our regrets in the one case, which cannot exist in the other.

Autumn, though succeeded by the darkness and dreariness of winter, is but the womb of another spring. That bright season will be renewed; our own, never!

Perhaps it might be feelings akin to these which arrested the footsteps of an individual, who, though little past the spring-tide and youthful ardour of his existence, was yet not disinclined to anticipate another period characterised by the autumnal tokens of decay visible on every object around him.

He stood by the deserted chapel of Windleshaw. Time had then but just begun to show the first traces of his power. The building was yet uninjured, save the interior, which was completely despoiled, the walls grey with lichen, and hoary with the damps of age. The ivy was twining round the belfry, but its thin arms then embraced only a small portion of the exterior. A single yew-tree threw its dark and gloomy shade over the adjacent tombs; the long rank herbage bending over them, and dripping heavily with the moist atmosphere. An ancient cross stood in the graveyard, of a date probably anterior to that of the main building. A relic or commemoration, it might be, of some holy man who had there ministered to the semi-barbarous hordes, aboriginal converts to the Catholic faith.

It was in the autumn of the year 1644. Wars and tumults were abroad, and Lancashire drained the cup of bitterness even to the dregs. The infatuated king was tottering on his throne; even the throne itself was nigh overturned in the general conflict. A short time before the date of our story, the Earl of Derby and Prince Rupert, having brought the siege of Bolton and Liverpool to a satisfactory issue—shortly after the gallant defence of the Countess at Lathom House—were then reposing from their toils at that fortress. The prince, remotely allied to the noble dame, lay there with his train; and was treated not only with the respect and consideration due to his rank, but likewise with a feeling of gratitude for his timely succour to the distressed lady and her brave defenders. After a short stay, the prince marched to York, which was closely besieged by the Earl of Manchester and Sir Thomas Fairfax, and as vigorously and obstinately defended by the Marquis of Newcastle. On the approach of Prince Rupert, the Parliamentary generals raised the siege, and, drawing off their forces to Marston Moor, offered battle to the Royalists. Here the prince, whose martial disposition was not sufficiently tempered with prudence, unfortunately accepted the enemy's challenge, and obscured the lustre of his former victories by sustaining a total overthrow, thereby putting the king's cause into great jeopardy. The following extract from the "Perfect Diurnall" of the 9th of July 1644, will show the estimation in which this great victory was held by the Parliament, and the extent and importance of the results:—

"This day Captain Stewart came from the Leaguer at York with a letter of the whole state of the late fight and routing of Prince Rupert, sent by the three generals to the Parliament. The effect whereof was this:—'That, understanding Prince Rupert was marching against them with 20,000 men, horse and foot, the whole army arose from the siege, and marched to Long Marston Moor, four or five miles from York; and the prince, having notice of it, passed with his army the byway of Burrow Bridge; that they could not hinder his passage to York, whereupon our army marched to Todcaster, to prevent his going southward; but before the van was within a mile of Todcaster, it was advertised that the prince was in the rear in Marston Moor, with an addition of 6000 of the Earl of Newcastle's forces, and was possessed of the best places of advantage both for ground and wind. The right wing of our horse was commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, which consisted of his whole cavalry and three regiments of the Scots horse; next unto them was drawn up the right wing of the foot, consisting of the Lord Fairfax and his foot and two brigades of the Scots foot for a reserve: and so the whole armies put into a battalia. The battle being begun, at the first some of our horse were put into disorder; but, rallying again, we fell on with our whole body, killed and took their chief

officers, and took most part of their standards and colours, 25 pieces of ordnance, near 130 barrels of powder, 10,000 arms, two waggons of carbines and pistols, killed 3000, and 1500 prisoners taken.””

Prince Rupert with great precipitation drew off the remains of his army, and retired into Lancashire. In a few days York was surrendered to the Parliamentary forces, and the garrison marched out with all the honours of war. Fairfax, occupying the city, established his government through the county, and sent 1000 horse into Lancashire to join with the Parliamentary forces in that quarter, and attend the motions of Prince Rupert. The Scottish army marched northwards after their victory, in order to join the Earl of Calendar, who was advancing with 10,000 additional forces; and likewise to reduce the town of Newcastle, which they took by storm. The Earl of Manchester, with Cromwell,—to whom the fame of this great victory was chiefly ascribed, and who was wounded in the action,—returned to the eastern association in order to recruit his army.⁶⁵

Such were some of the fruits of this important victory, and such the aspect of affairs at the time when our narrative commences;—the fortunes and persons of the Royalists, or *malignants* as they were called by the opposite party, being in great jeopardy, especially in the northern counties.

The individual before-named was loitering about in the cemetery of the chapel, where the bodies of many of the faithful who die in the arms of the mother church are still deposited, under the impression or expectancy that their clay shall imbibe the odour of sanctity thereby. The stranger, for such he appeared, was muscular and well-formed. His height was not above, but rather below, the middle size. A bright full eye gave an ardour to his look not at all diminished by the general cast and expression of his features, which betokened a brave and manly spirit, scorning subterfuge and disguise, and almost disdaining the temporary concealment he was forced to adopt. A wide cloak was wrapped about his person, surmounted by a slouched high-crowned hat, with a rose in front, by way of decoration. His boots, ornamented with huge projecting tops, were turned down just below the calf of the leg, above which his breeches terminated in stuffed rolls, or fringes, after the fashion of the time. A light sword hung loosely from his belt; and a pair of pistols, beautifully inlaid, were exhibited in front. Despite of his somewhat grotesque habiliments, there was an air of dignity, perhaps haughtiness, in his manner, which belied the character of his present disguise. He walked slowly on, apparently in deep meditation, till, on turning round the angle of the tower, he was somewhat startled from his reverie on beholding an open grave, at a short distance, just about to be completed. Clods of heavy clay were at short intervals thrown out by the workman, concealed from observation by the depth to which he had laboured. After a moment's pause, the cavalier cautiously approached the brink, and beheld a strange-looking being, with sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, busily engaged in this interesting and useful avocation.

“Good speed, friend!” said the stranger, addressing the emissary of death within. The grim official raised his head for a moment, to observe who it was that accosted him; but without vouchsafing a reply, he again resumed his work, throwing out the clods with redoubled energy, to the great annoyance of the inquirer.

“Whose grave is this?” he asked again, perseveringly, determined to provoke him to an answer.

⁶⁵ Hume.

“The first fool’s that asks!” shouted the man from below, without ceasing from his repulsive toil.

“Nay, friend; ye do not dig for a man ere he be dead in this pitiful country of thine?”

“And why not? there’s many a head on a man’s nape to-day that will be on his knees to-morrow!”

“Then do ye rig folks out with graves here upon trust?”

“Nay,” said the malicious-looking replicant, holding up a long lean phalanx of bony fingers; “pay to-day, trust to-morrow, as t’ old lad at the tavern says.”

“What! is thy trade so dainty of subjects? Are men become weary o’ dying of late, that ye must need make tombs for the living? I’ll have thee to the justice, sirrah, for wicked malice aforethought, and misprision.”

Here this hideous ghoul burst forth with a laugh so fearful and portentous that even the cavalier was startled by its peculiarly fierce and almost unearthly expression. The mouth drawn to one side, the wide flat forehead, projecting cheek-bones, and pointed chin, sufficiently characterised him as labouring under that sort of imbecility not seldom unmixed with a tact and shrewdness that seem to be characteristic of this species of disease and deformity. He set one foot on the mattock, ceasing from his labours whilst he cried out, winking significantly with half-shut eyes—

“When the owl hoots, and the crow cries caw,
I can tell a maiden from a jackdaw.”

Here he began whistling and humming by turns, with the most consummate and provoking indifference. The stranger was evidently disconcerted by this unexpected mode of address, apparently meditating a retreat, from where even victory would have been a poor triumph. He was turning away, when a drop of blood fell on his hand! This disastrous omen, with the grave yawning before him—the narrow dwelling, which, according to the prediction of the artificer, was preparing for his reception—discomposed the cavalier exceedingly, and, in all likelihood, rendered him the more easily susceptible to subsequent impressions.

“Art boun’ for Knowsley?” inquired the hunchbacked sexton.

“Peradventure I may have an errand thither; but I am a wayfaring man, and have business with the commissioners in these parts.” There was a tone of conscious evasion in this reply which did not pass unheeded by the inquirer.

“If thou goest in at the door,” said he, “mind thee doesn’t come out feet foremost, good master wayfarer!” He quickly changed his tone to more of seriousness than before. “Thou art not safe. Hie thee to Lathom.”

“‘Tis beleaguered again. The earl being away at his kingdom of Man, the hornets are buzzing about his nest. There seems now no resting-place, as aforetime, for unlucky travellers.”

“For who?” shouted the sexton, climbing out of his grave with surprising agility. He fixed his eyes on the cavalier, as though it were the aspect of recognition. He then hummed the following distich, a favourite troll amongst the republican party at that period:—

“The battle was foughten; the prince ran away.
Did ever ye see sic’ a race, well-a-day?”

The stranger, turning from his tormentor, was about to depart; but he was not destined to rid himself so readily from the intruder.

“And so being shut out from Lathom, thou be’st a cockhorse for Knowsley. Tush! a blind pedlar, ambling on a nag, might know thee while he was a-winking.”

“Know me!” said the cavalier;—”why—whom thinkest thou that I be? Truly there be more gowks in our good dukedom of Lancaster than either goshawks or hen-sparrows. I am one of little note, and my name not worth the spelling.” He assumed an air of great carelessness and indifference, not unmingled with a haughty glance or two, whilst he spoke; but the persevering impertinent would not be withstood. Another laugh escaped him, shrill and portentous as before, and he approached nearer, inquiring in a half-whisper—

“Where’s thine uncle?”

“Whom meanest thou?”

“He waits for thee at Oxford, man; but he may wait while his porridge cools, I trow: and so good den.”

The cunning knave was marching off with his mattock, when the cavalier, recovering from his surprise, quickly seized him by the higher shoulder.

“Stay, knave; thou shalt tarry here a while, until thou and I are better acquainted. Another step, and this muzzle shall help thee on thine errand.”

“And who’ll pay the messenger?” said the undaunted and ready-witted rogue, not in the least intimidated by the threat, and the mouth of a huge pistol at his breast. “Put it by—put it by, friend, and I’ll answer thee; but while that bull-dog is unmuzzled thou shalt get never a word from Steenie Ellison.”

“Thou knowest of some plot a-hatching,” said the stranger, putting aside the weapon. Another drop fell on his hand.

“I know not,” said the sexton, doggedly.

“Thy meaning, then?” returned the stranger, with great vehemence; “for, o’ my life, thou stirrest not until thou hast explained the nature of these allusions.”

With a shrill cry and a fleet footstep the other bounded away from his interrogator like some swift hound, and was out of sight instantly. Retreating with some precipitation, the cavalier bent his steps from the graveyard towards a little hostelry close by, where it appears he had taken up his abode for a few days along with a companion, whose sole use and business on their journey seemed to be that of protecting a huge pair of saddle-bags and other equipments for their travel, under a mulberry-coloured cloak of more than ordinary dimensions. They had journeyed from Preston thitherwards; their intended route being for Knowsley, and so forward to the coast. Whether their motive for so long a stay at this obscure and homely tavern could be traced to the bright eyes and beautiful image of mine host’s daughter—a luminary round which they were fluttering to their own destruction—or that they merely sought concealment, it were difficult to guess. The ostensible object of their journey was to take shipping for Ireland, being bound thither on some commercial enterprise, for the furtherance of which they expected to pass unmolested, being men of peaceable pursuits, who left the trade of fighting to those that hoped to thrive thereby. Such was the general tenor of their converse; but there were some who suspected that the widely-extolled beauty of Marian might have some remote connection with the continuance of these guests; and their long stay at the inn was regarded with a jealous eye. So well known was the beauteous Marian, “the fair maid of Windleshaw,” that the present residence of the cavaliers, if such they were, was the worst that could have been chosen for concealment; inasmuch as her fame drew many

customers to the tap who otherwise would have eschewed so humble a halting-place as that of Nathan Sumner.

Thoughtful, and with a show of vexation upon his features, the stranger entered the house, where breakfast was already prepared, and awaiting his return. In the same chamber were the tapster and his dame; for privacy was not compatible either with “mine host’s” means or inclination.

“We have been watching for thee, Egerton,” said his companion. “Didst thou meet with a bundle of provender in the graveyard that thy stomach did not warn thee to breakfast?”

“Prithee heed it not,” was the reply; “I care little thus early for thy confections. Besides, I have been beset by a knave, whose vocation verily remindeth man of his latter end. I’ve been bandying discourse with the sexton yonder, as I believe.”

“Heh! mercy on us! Ye have seen Steenie, belike,” said the dame, lifting up one hand from her knee, which had been reposing there as a protection from the fervid advances of a glowing fire before which she sat.

“Truly, I do suspect this trafficker in ready-made tombs to be none other,” said Egerton.

“An’ howkin’ at a grave?”

“Ay! and with right good will, too.”

“Then look well to your steps, Sir Stranger, that ye fall not into’t; for Stephen never yet made grave that lacked a tenant ere long.”

“‘Tis strange!” said the cavalier, anxiously. “Do ye dig graves here by anticipation? or”——

“He scents death like a carrion crow, I tell ye; an’ if he but digs a grave, somebody or other always contrives to tumble in; an’ mostly they ‘at first see him busy with the job. He’s ca’d here ‘the live man’s sexton.’”

The cavalier sat down before a well-covered stool, on which was spread a homely but plentiful breakfast of eggs, cheese, rashers of bacon, a flagon of ale, and a huge pile of oat-cake; but he did not fall to with the appetite or relish of a hungry man.

“Let me reckon,” said the host, beginning to muster up his arithmetic. “There was”——;

“Nathan Sumner, I say; thou’rt al’ays out wi’ thy motty if a body speaks. Doesn’t the beer want tunning, and thou’rt leeing there o’ thy haunches; at thy whys and thy wise speeches. Let me alone wi’ the gentles, and get thee to the galkeer. Besides, you see that he knoweth not how to disport himsel’ afore people of condition—saving your presence, masters,” said the power predominant, as her husband meekly retreated from the despotic and iron rule of his helpmate.

“Peradventure he doth himself provide tenants for his own graves,” said the cavalier, thoughtfully; “but I’ll split the knave’s chowl, if he dare”——;

“You know not him whom you thus accuse,” said a soft musical voice from an inner chamber. “I know those who would not see him with his foot in a new-made grave for the best rent-roll in Christendom!”

The speaker, as she came forward, bent a glance of reproof towards the stranger.

“And wherefore, my bonny maiden?” inquired he.

“Does he not scent the dying like a raven? When once his eye is upon them they shall not escape. There be some that have seen their last o’ this green earth, and the sky, and yonder bright hills. I trust the destroying angel will pass by this house!”

“By’r lady,” replied the other hastily, “the varlet, when I asked whose lodging it should be, answered, mine! holding forth his long skinny paw that I might pay him for the job.”

The maiden listened with a look of terror. She grew pale and almost ghastly; wiping her brow with the corner of her apron, as though in great agitation and perplexity.

There was usually a warm and healthy blush upon her cheek, but it waned suddenly into the dim hue of apprehension, as she replied in a low whisper—

“Ye must not go hence; and yet”——She hesitated, and appeared as though deeply revolving some secret source of both anxiety and alarm.

The cavalier was silent too, but the result of his deliberations was of a nature precisely opposite to that of his fair opponent.

“Our beasts being ready, Chisenhall,” said he to his companion, “we will depart while the day holds on favourable. We may have worse weather, and still worse quarters, should we tarry here till noontide, as we purposed. But”——and here he looked earnestly at the maiden——“we shall come again, I trust, when they that seek our lives be laid low.”

She put one hand on his arm, speaking not aloud, but with great earnestness—

“Go not; and your lives peradventure shall be given you for a prey. There is a godly man hereabout, unto whom I will have recourse; and he shall guide you in this perplexity.”

“We be men having little time to spare, and less inclination—higlers too, into the bargain,” replied he, with a dubious glance toward his friend Chisenhall, who was just despatching the last visible relics of a repast in which he had taken a more than equal share of the duty; “we are not careful to tarry, or to resort unto such ghostly counsel. We would rather listen to the lips of those whose least word we covet more than the preaching of either priest or Puritan; but the time is now come when we must eschew even such blessed and holy”——

“There’s a time for all things,” said Chisenhall hastily, and as soon as his mouth was at rest from the solid contents with which he had been successfully, and almost uninterruptedly, occupied for the last half-hour; wishful, also, to abate the impression which his companion’s indiscreet intimation of dislike to psalm-singers and Puritans might have produced. “There is a time to buy and to sell, and to get gain; a time to marry, and a time to be merry and be glad:” here he used a sort of whining snuffle, which frustrated his attempts at neutralising the sarcasms of his friend. “Being in haste,” he continued, “we may not profit by thy discourse; but commend ourselves to his prayers until our return, which, God willing, we may safely accomplish in a se’nnight at the farthest.”

“If ye depart, I will not answer for your safe keeping.”

“And if we stay, my pretty maiden, I am fearful we *shall* be in safe keeping.” An ambiguous smile curled his lip, which she fully understood. Indeed, her manner and appearance were so much superior to her station, that no lady of the best and gentlest blood might have comported herself more excellently before these gay, though disguised cavaliers. There was a natural expression of dignity and high feeling in her demeanour, as if rank and noble breeding were enclosed in so humble a shrine, visible indeed, but still through the medium of a homely but bewitching grace and simplicity. This, in part, might be the consequence of an early residence at Lathom, where, in a few years, she had risen, from a station among the lower domestics to a confidential place about the person of the countess. Here she excited no small

share of admiration; and it was partly to avoid the fervid advances of some vivacious gallants that she resolved on quitting so exposed and dangerous a position; the more especially as the lowering aspect of the times, and the uncertain termination of the coming struggle, might have left her without a protector, and at the mercy of the lawless ruffians who were not wanting on either side. Retiring home without regret, she had imbibed, from the ministrations of a zealous and conscientious advocate of the republican party, a relish for the doctrines and self-denying exercises of the Puritans, with whom she usually associated in their religious assemblies.

“Do ye purpose, then, for Knowsley to-day?” she inquired, after a short silence.

“Yea; unless our present dilemma, and the obstruction thereby, turn aside the current of our intent.”

“Pray Heaven it may!” said the maiden, with great fervour; “for I do fear me that some who are not of a godly sort are abiding there—even they with whom righteous and well-ordered men should not consort withal.”

“Heed not. Being of them who are not righteous overmuch, we can bear unharmed the scoffs of prelatists and self-seekers.”

“There be others,” replied she; but the appearance of the dame, who had been overlooking the operations of her helpmate, interrupted the communication. The horses, too, were at the door, led forth by a lubberly serving-lad; and they seemed eager to depart, pawing, as though scarcely enduring a momentary restraint. The cavalier, after giving some order about the beasts, would have bidden farewell to the maiden in private; but she had departed unperceived. He was evidently chagrined, lingering long in the house, in hopes of her reappearance, but in vain. He was forced to depart without the anticipated interview.

Out of sight and hearing, the cavaliers began to converse more freely.

“Right fain I am,” said Egerton, “of our escape from yonder house; for I began to fear me we were known, or, at any rate, suspected by one, if not more, of our good friends behind.”

“By one fair friend, peradventure,” said Chisenhall drily; “but, on the word of a soldier, I may be known, and little care I, save that it may be dangerous to be found in my company. In the last siege yonder, at Lathom, I have beaten off more rogues than flies from my trencher; and I would we had but had room and fair play at York; we would have given your”——

“Hold; no names; remember that I am plain Master Egerton: there may be lurkers in these tall hedges; so, both in-doors and out, I am—what mine appearance doth betoken.”

“Well, Master Egerton, good wot, though a better man than myself, which few be now-a-days, for these strait-haired Roundheads do thin us like coppice-trees, and leave but here and there one to shoot at. I would the noble lord had been within his good fortress yonder, I think it would have been too hot to handle, with cold fingers, by the host of Old Nick, or Parliament, I care not which.”

“It was partly at my suggesting that he retired to his island of Man. There were heart-burnings and jealousies amongst the courtiers on his account, which were but too readily given ear unto by the king.”

“Grant it may not be for our hurt as well as his own. I had no notion that these wasps would have been so soon again at the honeycomb. Could we and our bands have made entry, we would have shown them some of the old match-work, and given them a psalm to sing that they would not readily have forgotten. As it is, we are just wanderers and vagabonds, without e’er a house or a homestead to hide us in, should our friends be driven from Knowsley, and

our way be blocked up to the coast. What is worse, too, our supplies are nigh exhausted, and our exchequer as empty as the king's. I would we had not tarried here so long, waiting for advices, as thou didst say, Master Egerton; but which advices, I do verily think, were from a lady's lip; and the next tall fellow, with a long face and a fusee, may tuck us under his sleeve, and carry us to his quarters, like a brace of springed woodcocks."

"Fear not, Chisenhall. We will make directly for the coast, and to-morrow, if we have luck, be under weigh for Ireland. If, as I do trust, we get our levies thence, down with the Rump and the Roundheads, say I, and so"——

"We are not bound for Knowsley, then?"

"No, believe me, I have a better nose than to thrust it into the trap, after the foretokenings we have had. The knave who elbowed me i' the graveyard, as well as the maiden yonder, warned us of some danger at Knowsley, where, I do verily suspect, the rogues are in ambush, waiting for us; but we will give them the slip, and away for bonny Waterford."

The morning was yet raw and misty. A dense fog was coming on, which every minute became more heavy and impervious to the sight. Objects might be heard, long ere they were seen. The rime hung like a frost-work from branch and spray, showing many a fantastic festoon, wreathed by powers and contrivances more wonderful than those by which our vain and presumptuous race are endowed. The little birds looked out from their covers, and chirped merrily on, to while away the hours till bedtime. The rooks cawed from their citadel—to venture abroad was out of the question, lest the rogues should be surprised in some act of depredation, and suffer damage thereby. So chill and searching was the atmosphere that the travellers wrapped their cloaks closely about their haunches, to defend themselves from its attacks. They were scarcely a mile or two on their road when, passing slowly between the high coppice on either hand, Egerton stayed his horse, listening; whilst thus engaged, another blood-drop fell on his hand.

"There be foes behind us," said he, softly. His practised and ever-watchful ear had detected the coming footsteps before his friend.

"'Tis a fortunate screen this same quiet mist, and so let us away to cover." Without more ado he leaped through a gap in the fence, followed by his companion; and they lay concealed effectually from the view of any one who might be passing on the road. They were not so far from the main path but that the footsteps of their pursuers could be heard, and voices too, in loud and earnest discourse. The latter kept their horses at a very deliberate pace, as if passing forward at some uncertainty.

"I say again, heed it as we may, this mist will be the salvation of our runaways. After having dogged them to such good purpose from Lathom, it will be a sorry deed should they escape under this unlucky envelope."

"Tush, faint heart—thinkest thou these enemies of the faith shall triumph, and our own devices come to nought? Nay, verily, for the wicked are as stubble, and the ungodly as they whom the fire devoureth."

"But I would rather have a brisk wind than all thy vapours, thy quiddities, and quotations. Yet am I glad they have not ta'en the turn to Knowsley."

"Which way soever they turn, either to the right hand or to the left, we have them in the net, and snares and pitfalls shall devour them."

The remainder of this comfortable assurance was inaudible, and the cavaliers congratulated themselves on their providential escape.

“How stand ye for Knowsley now, Sir Captain?” said Chisenhall.

“Why, of a surety, friend, there be many reasons why we may pray for a safe passport from this unhappy land; but it seemeth as though our purposes were to be for ever crossed. Towards Knowsley, now, it doth appear that we must proceed, our haven and hiding-place; these rogues having got wind that we did not intend to pass by thither, we must countermine the enemy, or rather double upon their route.”

“But how shall we be enabled to proceed?”

“Forward to the right,” said Egerton, “and we shall be sure to hit our mark, if I mistake not the bearing. ‘Tis, I believe, scarcely two miles hence; and under this friendly cover we cannot be observed, though we should mistake our way.”

Changing their course, they now attempted, at all hazards, a running chase along and across hedges and enclosures, in the supposed direction of their retreat. After a somewhat perilous journey for at least an hour in this thick mist, without discovering any object by which they could ascertain their relative situation, Chisenhall at length espied something like a dark square tower before them.

“Plague, pestilence, and all the saints! why if yonder be not that same old ugly grim tower dodging us!” He rubbed his eyes, hardly satisfied that his morning indulgences were ended.

“We are fairly on our way for the grave again, sure enough,” said Egerton; “or it may be as thou sayest, the graveyard itself is following us.” He tried to rally into a smile, but was unable to disport himself in this wise, and it became needful that some way should be hit upon for their extrication, and that speedily. Occupied in earnest discourse, they were not aware of the presence of a third person until a thin squeaking voice accosted them from behind.

“Back again so soon?—wi’ the de’il at your crupper too!”

“Foul fa’ thee, thou screech-owl,” said Egerton, starting back at that ill-omened sound; “we shall ne’er be rid o’ this pestilence!” He attempted to spring aside from the object of his abhorrence; but in a moment his horse was holden by the bridle with almost more than human strength; and the malicious creature set up an exulting and triumphant laugh that was anything but agreeable in their present evil condition.

“Let go—or, by thy master’s hoofs, I will send thee to him in the twinkling of a trigger!” said Egerton, drawing forth his pistol.

“Hoo, hoo!” shouted his tormentor, mocking and making faces, with an expression of fiendish delight—“thee ‘ill be first though, nunky.”

Egerton pointed the weapon; but his horse, goaded in all probability by the strange being beside him, made a sudden spring, and, as ill-luck would have it, stumbled and fell, both horse and rider sprawling in the dust. The cause of this foul accident scampered off with great activity: Chisenhall dismounted, extricating his friend from the trappings. He was bleeding profusely from the nostrils, and appeared insensible. Judging it the wisest plan, though at the risk of their captivity, to procure help, he galloped away to the tavern for assistance.

Much to the surprise of the family was Chisenhall’s reappearance, but no time was lost in useless explanations; the host and his daughter immediately proceeded to the spot, with means and appliances for Egerton’s removal and recovery; but to their astonishment and dismay the body was removed. His horse was grazing quietly on the herbage, yet there was no trace of Egerton’s disappearance. Chisenhall was almost beside himself with distress and

consternation; but Marian, though much concerned, seemed to possess some clue to this enigma.

“Steenie, thou sayest, was the cause of this untoward disaster?”

“Ay; that cursed fiend. I wish all his”——

“Nay, nay, friend, thou speakest like to the foolish ones, vain and impious men, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. We had best return; I will think on this matter, and ere the morrow we may have tidings of thy friend; but”——Here she looked significantly aside as she spoke, but not in her father’s hearing. “Keep snug here in thy quarters, friend; for since ye left there came divers of the people to inquire, and as He would have it, from me only. Ye be sons of Belial, they said, and cavaliers withal. But ye have eaten and drunken in our dwelling, and though red with the blood of the saints, I cannot deliver you into the hand of your pursuers.”

Chisenhall reluctantly complied, having no other resource, and judging it best not to stir abroad, as it might be compromising the safety of both parties, without leading to any beneficial result.

The horses were unharnessed and turned out to graze, whilst Chisenhall was disposed of in an upper chamber above one of the outhouses. His anxiety for his friend allowed him but little rest, and often he was on the point of issuing forth in quest of intelligence; but happily prudence prevented him from sacrificing his own and another’s life to a vain and fruitless impatience.

During Chisenhall’s concealment Marian was by no means in the same state of idleness and inactivity. She threw on her hood and kerchief; and a clean white apron, girt about her waist, fully displayed the symmetry of her form. Her cloak was adjusted but with little regard to outward show; and an hour was scarcely past ere she sallied forth, as she was often wont, to the dwelling of Gilgal Snape, a person of great note as a preacher and leader of the faithful in these parts. He was, in truth, a worthy and zealous man, sincerely devoted to the cause he espoused, and the service of his Maker—one widely distinguished from the hypocrites and fanatics of that turbulent era, which, like our own, produced, though in a more exaggerated form, from the stimulus then abroad, the same rank and noxious weeds of hypocrisy and superstition; for man, like a mathematical problem, circumstances and conditions being the same, brings out, invariably, the same results. No form of worship, however ludicrous or revolting, but hath its advocates and supporters; and there is nothing which the proud mind and unsubdued heart of man will not put forth, when that heart is made the hot-bed of unholy and unsanctified feelings—all monstrous and polluted things ripening, even beneath the warm and blessed sun that revives and beautifies all else by its splendour.

Gilgal had, however, his figments and his fancies, inseparable perchance from the times and dispositions by which they were engendered. When men, awaking as from a dream, shaking off the deep slumber of bigotry, but not intolerance, through the medium of their yet unpractised sense saw “men as trees walking,” regarding trivial and unimportant objects as paramount and essential, while others, whose nature was vital and supreme, were hardly discerned, or at best but slightly noticed or understood;—when minds long tinctured by superstition brought the whole of their previous habits and instincts to bear upon the newly-awakened energies that were heaving and convulsing the moral fabric of society, and the ground of preconceived notions and opinions on which they stood, they could hardly be persuaded that the kingdom of heaven “cometh not by observation;” that special miracles, and visible manifestations of divine favour, were not again to be vouchsafed to the “elect;” and that their faith and prayers were not sufficient to remove mountains, and to conquer and

subdue every obstacle. There was more pride in these expectations than they were willing to allow, or even to suspect; and in many it was the very pride and “naughtiness of their hearts;” whilst in others it was but the operation of remaining ignorance, unsubdued lusts, and unsanctified affections.

Gilgal was famous in his day for dealing with “spiritual wickedness in high places.” The “prince of the power of the air” was subject unto him. In other words, it was said of him that he had cast out devils and healed the possessed. When others failed, Gilgal had wrestled and prevailed. One of the first-fruits of this outpouring of his soul was “Steenie Ellison,” who, from his childhood, was subject to periodical and violent affections of the body—contortions that gave him, in the eyes of many, an appearance of one possessed. Stephen had a considerable share of cunning, a sort of knavish sagacity and ready impertinence, peculiar to most of his kind. He was an orphan, early left to the care of chance or charity, and being a follower of bell-ringers, grave-diggers, and the like, assumed a sort of semi-official attitude at all funerals, weddings, and merry-makings in the neighbourhood. He was generally suspected of holding intercourse with the powers of evil, and when suffering from disease, the unclean spirit whom he had offended was supposed to be afflicting him, having entered into his body to buffet and torment him for his contumacy and disobedience. So partial was he to the art and occupation of grave-making, that he was observed at times to hew out a habitation for the dead ere a tenant was provided. It was always remarked, nevertheless, that the narrow house failed not ere long to receive an inhabitant; and this apprehension considerably heightened the terror with which he was regarded, and rendered him celebrated throughout the country by the name of “the live man’s sexton.”

But the worthy minister being much moved with compassion towards this child of Satan, his bowels yearned for him, that he might cast out the unclean spirit, and deliver him from his spiritual bondage. He accordingly girded himself to the work, and a great name did he get throughout the land by this mighty achievement, for the possessed became docile as a little child before him, and was subsequently a sort of erratic follower of the party unto which Gilgal was allied; but he would at times forsake the assemblies of the faithful, when, it is said, the dark spirit of divination again came over him, and he would wander among the tombs, showing symptoms of a disordered intellect, though not of the same violent character as before.

Towards the dwelling of Gilgal Snape did Marian direct her steps; it was but a short mile from her own. Often had she been a visitant to the house, where she imbibed the doctrines and instructions of this sincere and zealous confessor of the faith. She frequently mingled in the devotions that were there offered up; but her piety was of a more moderate and amiable cast—less violent and ascetic, not unmixed with love and pity for her enemies and the persecutors of the truth.

Her object in this visit was not so much to partake of the crumbs from the good man’s spiritual banquet, as to gain some intelligence through him respecting Egerton’s disappearance. She recognised the individuals who were in pursuit of him to be scouts from the republican leaders, with whom the divine was in constant communication. Of the real rank of Egerton she was still ignorant; but she more than suspected his disguise, and scarcely hesitated to conclude, from the anxiety shown for his apprehension, that he was of no little importance in the estimation of his opponents.

Musing and much troubled, by reason of many conflicting emotions, she took no note of the lapse of time until her arrival at the habitation of this devout minister of the word. It was built in a sequestered glen, by a narrow brook near to a couple of black, shapeless, scraggy firs, whose long lean arms were extended over the roof. A low porch guarded the door, in which

dairy utensils and implements of husbandry were usually placed. The short casement windows were rendered still more gloomy, and in places screened from light, by the creeping woodbine throwing its luxuriant and unrestricted foliage about their deep recesses. A little wicket admitted the visitor into the court, on each side of which was a homely garden, where nothing ornamental was suffered to intrude or encroach upon the space devoted to objects of usefulness rather than indulgence.

Marian lifted up the latch, entering upon the precincts of this hallowed abode. She passed on, through the large cold cheerless apartment generally called the house; turning thence towards a little chamber, used as an oratory, she heard a loud voice within. She tapped first upon the door, which she slowly opened, and beheld the good man with the sacred volume spread out before him. He raised his eyes for a moment as she entered, but refrained not from his exercise, nor altered in the least the strenuous tone of his orisons.

“And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and smote Eglon, the King of Moab, so that he died. Thus perish the ungodly and the oppressor, even as Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal, on whom the Almighty rendered the curse of Jotham his brother, and all his wickedness that he had committed, and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God return upon their own heads.” Here he raised his eyes, closing the book with a devout aspiration of compliance to the will of Heaven. “I have sought counsel,” he continued, “and been much comforted thereby. The wicked shall be utterly cut off, and the ungodly man shall fall by the sword. We may not spare, nor have pity, as Saul spared Agag, whom Samuel hewed in pieces; for the land is cursed for their sakes!”

“Hath Steenie yet returned from vain idols, and the abominations he hath committed?” inquired the maiden.

“He doth yet hunger after the flesh-pots of Egypt; but my bowels yearn towards him, even as my first-born. I do sorrow lest he be finally entangled in the snares of the evil one.”

“Knowest thou where he abideth, or if he doth attend the outpouring of the word hereabout?”

“Verily, nay,” said the divine; “but I have heard from Sarah and Reuben Heathcote that he hath been seen in the house of ungodly self-seekers, and notorious Papists and malignants, even with our enemies at Garswood. He hath likewise been found resorting unto that high place of papistry, Windleshaw, of late; despising—yea, reviling—the warnings and godly exhortations of the Reverend Master Haydock, who did purpose within himself to win, peradventure it might be to afflict with stripes, this lost one from the fold, that he might bring him back. But he hath sorely buffeted and evil-entreated this diligent shepherd with many grievous indignities; such as tying him unto a gate, and vexing him with sundry of Satan’s devices. Yet we would fain hope that he is a chosen vessel, though now defiled by the adversary. He will return, peradventure, as heretofore, when the day of his visitation is past.” The good man did, indeed, yearn over this erring sinner, and lifting up his voice he wept aloud.

“There came two men to our habitation, where they abode certain days,” said Marian.

“And they departed this morning,” said the minister, sharply; “knowest thou that these be enemies of our faith, and contemnors of the word?”

“I knew them not,” she replied, “save that I suspected them as such, ere they departed.”

“Thou wouldest not have them taken with thee in the house, and in that thou judgedst wisely; for I care not that a maiden’s thoughts were so soon disposed for deeds like these, which be fitter for iron hearts and brazen hands. Though Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, slew Sisera in her tent, and Rahab the harlot received the spies in peace; yet thou didst, I doubt not, point

out the way by which they went to the spies sent by the council of the holy state, to follow after these sons of Belial, and deliver them into their hands.”

“I know not the path they took,” said Marian, evasively.

“Heed not, for the men shall be delivered unto us; even now are they pursued, and, I doubt not, overtaken. Which way soever they turn, their steps are holden, and a snare is laid for their feet; for they shall surely die!” The preacher lifted up his eyes in righteous indignation. They have made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints.”

“Will not their lives be given them for a prey?” inquired Marian, apparently in great alarm.

“I have sought counsel, I tell thee; and the Philistine and the Canaanite shall be destroyed utterly from the land.”

“I fear me they be other than I had imagined,” returned the maiden weeping; “yet still, and I trust I shall be forgiven, I could not betray them who have abided with us, and eaten of our bread.”

“Thou knowest them not, wench,” said Gilgal; “and ‘tis perhaps well thou shouldest not.” Here he looked fiercely from under his brows, as though he would have pierced the very inmost recesses of her soul. “Beware,” continued he, “for thou art comely, and these men do use devilish and subtle devices to allure and to betray.”

Marian was silent. A swollen tear, the overflowing of an overwhelmed and oppressed heart, slowly wandered down her cheek. It was the very crisis of the conflict; and the old man forbore to break the bruised reed. She seemed uneasy and anxious to depart; but he hindered her for a space.

“Wilt thou not, as thou art wont, approach with me to the footstool of Him who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men?”

Marian felt the rebuke, though it was so finely tempered, and administered so tenderly. She was one of his earlier converts, and his love for her was that of a spiritual parent. Bending the knee, she covered her burning cheeks, and poured out her heart with him in fervour and sincerity. Whether both of them had precisely the same object in view as the end of their supplications, or whether the maiden’s fears and inclinations might not lead her to offer up a sincere petition for the safety of others besides those of the household, we will not take upon ourselves to determine; but on leaving the dwelling of Gilgal Snape a suppressed sigh and an involuntary whisper escaped her—“He may yet be spared.” She raised her eyes in thankfulness, and a gleam of hope, but not of happiness, irradiated her heart; for she now felt that a great gulf separated them for ever.

She had ascertained by her converse with the Puritan, who was well informed in all matters connected with his party, that they were yet unacquainted as to the ulterior proceedings of the strangers; and it seemed probable, from this circumstance alone, that at any rate Egerton had not fallen into their hands. Her next object was to find out “Steenie,” and to elicit from him the knowledge of the stranger’s fate; for unless this mischievous personage had in some wild erratic freak or another conveyed him off, she could not tell what mishap could have befallen him. Despite of her prejudices and the true bent of her disposition, which, though it partook not of the furious and headlong intolerance of the times, was yet sufficiently imbued with the spirit of her sect, the cavalier had won so unsuspectingly upon her kindness that she started as though she would have escaped from her own thoughts, when she felt the deep and agonising shudder which crossed her at the bare possibility that he might fall into the hands of the avenger of blood. At a glance she saw the fearful involutions and the almost inextricable toils by which the fugitives were encompassed. Unaided, she was well aware that their attempts

would be fruitless. She knew not the intentions of the crazy sexton on this point. The wayward and apparently capricious movements of this strange compound of Puritanism and Papistry were too dangerous and uncertain to allow any hope for ultimate safety under his management. Whether or not he had a hand in Egerton's removal was still a matter of conjecture. She felt, in addition to this uncertainty, no slight degree of awe and apprehension in her approaches to this solitary being; and a sort of undefined notion that, however modified and controlled by circumstances, yet his communications with the world of spirits were still in operation, imparting to his converse and communion with his fellow-men a strange and dubious character, which even strangers did not fail to perceive, and to shrink from contact with a being of such doubtful qualities. His predictions and dark sayings were often quoted, and much more importance was attached to them than their real and obvious meaning should have warranted. They derived greater credence, perhaps, from their usually vague and ambiguous character suiting any accident and condition, according to the fancy of the hearer, however remotely allied in their meaning and application. Whatsoever might be the event, there was little difficulty in shaping out an appropriate or equivalent prediction; and it did seem at times sufficiently marvellous that few occurrences should take place which could not be traced to some dark foretokening enveloped in one or other of these mystical revelations. Events happen to ourselves that do occasionally, and not unfrequently, rush back upon our minds with unaccountable and almost appalling force, as though, however novel in reality, they were but facts and feelings with which we had long ago been familiar, yet in what manner we are unable to determine. It might seem that they had suddenly, and for a moment, started forth from the Lethe which divides our present existence from some past state of being; that a sudden light had flashed from the portals of oblivion, too rapid or too dazzling, perhaps, to be apprehended or defined.

As she returned the shadows of evening were coming on dim and softly over the quiet glades and dewy meadows. The noisy rooks, having lately ventured forth, were cawing cheerily on their homeward flight, "beguiling the way with pleasant intercourse." The lesser birds were flitting towards the bushes; and through the lingering mist-wreath, floating still and tranquilly on the moist meadows, came forth at times a solitary twitter, as though the lark had alighted softly and joyously on her nest. The glow and the brightness of evening were gone when Marian passed the threshold of her home, uncertain yet as to the fate of Egerton and the course she should pursue. She allayed, as well as she was able, the fretfulness and impatience of Chisenhall, entreating that he would remain quiet until the morrow, after which it was possible that something would transpire with regard to his friend. The irresistible conclusion, that by venturing forth he would compromise the safety of all parties, alone rendered him tractable, and prevented the consequences of any rash exposure.

Too much occupied in resolves and plans for to-morrow's enterprise, the maiden on retiring to her chamber felt no inclination for repose, and her little couch was left vacant. It was a low room within the thatch, into which a narrow window, projecting from the roof, admitted the clear mellow radiance of the moon, now shining uninterruptedly from above. So lovely and inviting was the aspect of the night, that, after a long and anxious train of thought, she resolved to enjoy the calm and delicious atmosphere, free and unconfined, hoping to feel its invigorating effects upon her exhausted spirits.

It might be within a short half-hour of midnight when she tripped lightly down the stairs, and was soon across the stile which led to the deserted chapel of Windleshaw. Attracted by the beauty and the reviving freshness of all around her, fearing no evil and conscious of no alarm, she proceeded, wandering without aim or purpose into the quiet cemetery.

In the dark shadow of the building she walked on, fearless and alone. Her bosom had been hitherto the abode of happiness and peace. To the stranger's appearance might be attributed the source of her present disquiet. She would have breathed after communion with heavenly things, but earthly objects mingled in her aspirations; charity, peradventure, for those of another creed, and anxiety for another's fate. But she was not satisfied that this was the sole cause of her unhappiness; and the pang of separation, too, came like a barbed arrow into her soul. She felt alarmed, amazed at the sudden change. She feared that her weak and wandering heart was going back to the world, and resting for support on its frail and perishing interests. Tossed and buffeted with temptation, she still passed on; when, turning the angle of the grey tower, she emerged again into the clear, unbroken moonlight—the little hillocks and upright gravestones alone disturbing the broad and level beam. She was startled from her reverie by dull and heavy sounds near her, as though a pickaxe were employed by invisible hands in disturbing the ground close to where she stood. She paused a moment and listened; the blows were still falling, and she felt the ground vibrating beneath her feet. A sudden thought crossed her—it might be “Steenie,” even at this untimely hour, plying his accustomed vocation. He had been retarded probably by the accidents of the day; and the occasion being urgent, according to his own anticipations, had led him to labour so late for its completion. It was doubtless the grave which had been so mysteriously assigned to the lot of Egerton. A cold tremor crept upon her; she remembered the denunciation and the uncertain fate of the victim. Even now he might be hastening to his final account, and this horrid *ghoul* might be scenting the dissolution of the body that he was preparing to entomb.

“Graciously forbid it, Heaven!” she inwardly ejaculated, approaching the grave; but so softly, that her footsteps were not heard by the invisible workman, who was deep in the abyss of his own creating. The blows had ceased, and the mattock was now in requisition. Shovelfuls of earth were thrown out; thick and heavy clods were hurled forth in rapid succession. The scene would have driven back many a timid girl; and even some stout hearts and fierce stomachs would have shrunk from the trial. She was within range, and almost within the grasp, of a being whose evil dispositions were known and acknowledged—a being whose mysterious connection with intelligences of an unfriendly nature was universally admitted. A grave, dug in secret, peradventure during some baneful and preternatural process, yawned before her. Midnight, too, was nigh; and she was not devoid of apprehension—that inherent dread of the invisible things of darkness universally bound up with our feeble and fallen nature. Since the day of his first estrangement, man never, even in imagination or apprehension, approaches the dark and shadowy threshold of a world unseen without terror, lest some supernatural communication should break forth; it seems a feeling coeval with the curse on our first parents, when they heard “the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, and were afraid.” This apprehension still clings to us; but, though surrounded in light, as well as in darkness, by a world of disembodied spirits, whose attributes and capacities are inconceivably superior to our own, our nature is so material, and our very essence so engrossed and identified with earth, that it is only when the startling realities of their existence become manifest in those visible emblems of their nature—darkness and death—that we shrink back in horror, lest our very being should suffer contact with spiritual and eternal things.

Concealed from view, Marian stood still at a very short distance from the grave. Steenie was humming a plaintive ditty, or rather dirge; for it partook of a double character, something between an alehouse roundelay and a funeral chant.

She soon perceived that each spadeful, as it was thrown out, was accompanied by a separate distich, the meaning of which she could distinctly gather from some uncouth and barbarous rhymes—the remnants, probably, of a more superstitious age—almost cabalistic in their form

and acceptance. The following may serve as a specimen, though we have taken the precaution to render them a little more intelligible:—

“Howk, hack, and dig spade;
Tenant ne’er grumbled that grave was ill made.”

Then came a heavy spadeful of earth again from the narrow house. Another shovelful produced the following doggerel:—

“Housen, and castles, and kings decay;
But the biggins we big last till doomus-day.”

Some more coarse and less intelligible jargon followed, which it is not needful that we repeat. Again he threw forth a burden of more than ordinary bulk, resting from his labours during the following more elaborate ditty:—

“Dark and dreary though it be,
Thou shalt all its terrors dree:
Dungeon dark, where none complain,
Nor ‘scape to tell its woe and pain.”

Again he bent him to his task, and again the earth went rolling forth, accompanied by something like the following verse:—

“Though I dig for him that be living yet,
O’er this narrow gulf he shall never get;
The mouth gapes wide that ‘Enough’ ne’er cries;
Each clod that I fling on his bosom lies;
In darkness and coldness it rests on thee,
With the last stroke that falls thy doom shall be!”

With increasing energy did he work on, as though to accelerate the fate of his victim. Marian felt herself on the brink of the tomb, and its icy touch was perceptible through every part of her frame.

The mystic chant was again audible, and more distinct than before—

“The charm is wound, and this stroke shall be
The last, when it falls, of his destiny;
Save he sell to another his birthright here,
Then the buyer shall buy both grave and bier.”

Uttering this malediction, he scrambled out of the grave, and suddenly stood before the astonished maiden, who shuddered as she beheld the unshapely outline of a form which she instantly recognised.

He did not seem a whit surprised or startled, though he could not have been aware previously that a listener was nigh.

“What ho, wench!” said he; “art watching for a husband?” His sharp shrill voice grated on her ear like the cry of the screech-owl.

“I came to meet thee!” said she firmly. He broke forth into a loud laugh at this reply, more terrible than the most violent expression of hate or malignity. No wonder, in those ages, that it was supposed to be the operation of some demon, animate in his form, controlling and exercising the bodily functions to his own malignant designs.

“Where is he whom I seek?” inquired the maiden.

“Ask the clods of the valley, and the dust unto which man departs!” he replied, pointing significantly to the gulf at his feet.

“Nay,” said Marian, apparently to humour the fantastical turn of his ideas; “thou knowest if he sell that grave to another, he shall escape, and the doom shall be foregone.”

“Ay, lassie; but there be no fools now-a-days, I wot, to buy a man’s grave over his head for the sake of a bargain!”

“I warrant thee now, Steenie, but thou hast hidden him hereabout.” She said this in as careless and indifferent a tone as she could well assume.

“I am but a-keeping of him safe till his time comes. Neither priest nor Presbyterian shall cheat me out of him. He’s mine as sure as that grave gives not back its prey.”

“He is living, I trow?”

“Good wot, I reckon so; but living men may die; and this pick never, for man or woman, opened a mouth that was left to gape long without victuals.”

“Thou wouldst not harm him?”

“I’d not hurt the hair on a midge-tail, though it stung me. But his doom was shown me yesternight,” said he, lowering his voice to a whisper; “and I would have him laid here in consecration, that the devil get not his bones to pick, for neither priest nor Puritan can bless the ground now-a-days like unto this.”

Whether the cause of his anxiety was really a wish to provide a hallowed resting-place for the cavalier, or this pretence was merely to cover some ulterior purposes of his own, the maiden was left without a clue to form any plausible conjecture. She had heard sufficient, however, to ascertain that he was in some way or another accessory to the disappearance of Egerton, and that in all likelihood he knew the retreat of the unfortunate captive.

A woman’s wits are proverbially sharpened by exigencies, and Marian was not slow in obeying their impulse.

“Where art thou abiding? I would fain speak with thee to-morrow touching thy condition, for thou hast been much estranged from us of late.”

He pointed to the ivied belfry, where a grated loophole formed a dark cross on the wall.

“A man may sleep if the wind will let him; but such fearsome visions I have had of late, that I ha’ been just nigh ‘reft o’ my wits. Wilt be a queen or a queen-mother, Marian? Something spake to me after this fashion; but I was weary with watching. The spirit passed from me, and I comprehended him not.”

She was silent, apprehensive that his wits were at present too bewildered for her purpose, being always subject to aberration under any peculiar excitement of either mind or body.

“I will visit thee yonder to-morrow,” said Marian.

“Me!” he shouted, in a tone of surprise. “Bless thy pretty face, Marian, I have bolted him in. He is but waiting for his dismissal.”

“Whither?”

Again he pointed to the grave.

“Tush,” said Marian; “he will not, maybe, get his passport thither so soon, unless, indeed, thou shouldst starve him to death.”

“Starve him! Nay, by”——He stopped just as he was on the point of uttering some well-remembered but long quiescent oath.

“I thought not of that before, Marian: he will want some food. Ay—ay, bless thy little heart, I did not think on ‘t. But for thee, Marian, I should ha’ kept him there, and he might ha’ starved outright; though he will not need it long, I trow, poor fool!” said he, with a sigh, ludicrous enough under other circumstances, but now invested with all the solemnity of a supernatural disclosure.

“I will away for victuals,” said Marian: “stay here until I return.” A short time only elapsed ere she came again, laden with provisions and other restoratives, judging that the captive stood in need of some refreshment.

Stephen was waiting for her in a deep and solemn fit of abstraction before the low door leading to a staircase at the foot of the tower. He spoke not until she stood beside him.

“My brain, Marian—Oh! my brain. Here, here!” Seizing her hand, he pressed it hurriedly over his brow, which was hot, almost scorching. The blood beat rapidly through his throbbing temples. Fearful lest the approaching hallucination might prevent her benevolent designs, she soothed and coaxed him to lead the way, which had the desired effect; muttering as he went on, at times unintelligibly, at others speaking with peculiar emphasis and vehemence.

“The foul fiend came again, though he was cast out; and I—I yielded. He promised me gold, if I would dig for ‘t. And I digg’d, and digg’d; but it always shaped itself into a grave—another’s grave—and I never found any. Yea, once. Look thee, wench,” said he, pulling out a bright Jacobus from his belt, and holding it in the beam that shot through a loophole of the ascent. “Yes; this—this! the devil brought it that tempted me. No, no; I sold my own grave for ‘t. Would it were mine again: I had been where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Nay; there will be no rest for me. I am an apostate—a castaway—the devil that seduced me hath said it again and again—for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness, and the noisome pit for ever! But as long, look thee, as I keep this gold, I die not. No! though twice ten thousand were on my track; for I sold my grave to a doomed one; nor, till I buy another with the same piece of gold, shall death and hell prevail against me. So sayeth the fiend.”

Marian felt actually as though in the presence of the Evil One, so completely had the frenzy of this poor deluded idiot developed itself in this short interval. Some violent paroxysm was evidently approaching; and her object was, if possible, to procure the liberation of Egerton before her guide should be rendered either unwilling or incapable. He suddenly assumed a more calm and consistent demeanour, while, to her great joy, she heard him climbing the stair. She followed as closely as the darkness would permit, and heard him pause after ascending a few steps. Then a bolt was withdrawn, her hand was seized, and she was led hastily through the aperture. It was the entrance to a small chamber in the tower, lighted by the grating before named, through which the moonlight came softly, like a wizard stream, into the apartment.

By this light she saw something coiled up in a corner, like a human form in the attitude of repose. It was the prisoner Egerton, fast asleep. Nature, worn out with suffering, was unconsciously enjoying for a season the bliss of oblivion. He heard not the intruders, until Marian gently touched him, when, starting up, he cried—

“Is mine hour come? so soon! I thought”——

“Here be victuals; thy grave’s not ready yet,” said the maniac.

Soon the soft voice of the maiden fell calmly and quietly on his bosom: and in that hour Egerton felt how noble, how self-denying, was the spirit guiding the hand that ministered to him in the hour of danger and distress. Her disinterestedness was now manifest. Of another creed, and fully aware, perhaps, that he had been one of the most zealous persecutors of those who aforetime were hunted like the wild roe upon the mountains; he found that she had knowledge of him, generally, as belonging to the Royalist party, though not individually as to his rank and character.

If she had set herself to win his favour by draughts and love-philtres, she could not have compassed her design more effectually. His impetuous nature was alike impatient of restraint either in love or in war; but in the latter instance the flame had burnt so rapidly that it was nigh extinguished. This maiden being renowned through the whole neighbourhood for her beauty, as well as the natural and engaging simplicity and gentleness of her manners, appertaining to one of high birth, nurtured in courts, rather than in so humble a station, the cavalier had beforetime looked on her with a favourable glance, but not with eyes at which the god Hymen would have lighted his torch. Now, so strange and wayward is that capricious passion which men call love, that when beset with dangers, his life in jeopardy, and threatened with death on every hand, he seemed to cling even to this lowly one as though his soul were bound to hers. Love, that mighty leveller, for a season threw down every barrier—the pride of birth, and the rank and sphere which were his birthright—nor did a licentious thought find a resting-place in his bosom. Young and ardent, he had spoken to her beforetime, though not explicitly, on the subject; and Marian, knowing none other but that he was a wayfaring man, of little note—so he represented himself—regarded his handsome person, his kindness, and his attentions, with still less appearance of disfavour.

“Thou shouldest be mine, Marian,” said he, “were I”——

“Never!” she replied, interrupting him; but a sudden heaving of the breast showed the anguish that one hopeless word cost her.

Stephen was in the chamber, still hurrying to and fro, too fully absorbed in his own abstractions to understand or attend to what was passing.

“And wherefore?” inquired the cavalier, with some surprise.

“Wherefore? Ask your own nature and condition; your pride of station, which I have but lately known; your better reason, why; and see if it were either wise or fitting that one like yourself—though of your precise condition I am yet ignorant—should wive with the daughter of a poor but honest tapster. Suffer this plainness; I might be your bauble to-day, and your chain to-morrow.”

“Thou dost wrong me!” said the cavalier; and he took her hand tenderly, almost unresistingly, for a moment. “I would wear thee as my heart’s best jewel, and inlay thee in its shrine. It is but fitting that the life thou hast preserved should be rendered unto thee.”

“Nay, sir,” said she, withdrawing her hand, “my pride forbids it; ay, pride! equal, if not superior to your own. I would not be the wife of a prince on these terms; nor on any other. ‘Be not unequally yoked.’ Will not this wholesome precept hold even in a carnal and worldly sense? I would not endure the feeling of inferiority, even from a husband. ‘Twould but be servitude the more galling, because I could neither persuade myself into an equality, nor rid me of the chain.”

“Thou dost reason wondrously, maiden. ‘Tis an easy conquest, when neither passion nor affection oppose our judgment; when the feelings are too cold to kindle even at the spark which the Deity himself hath lighted for our solace and our blessing in this valley of tears.”

“Mine!—Oh! say not they are too cold, too slow to kindle. They are too easily roused, too ardent, too soon bent before an earthly idol; but”—here she laid her hand on his arm—”but the right hand must be cut off, the right eye plucked out. I would not again be their slave, under the tyranny and dominion of these elements of our fallen nature, for all the pomps and vanities which they would purchase. There be mightier obstacles than those of expediency, as thou dost well imagine, to thy suit; but these are neither coldness nor indifference.” Here her voice faltered with emotion, and her heart rose, rebelling against her own inflexible purpose, in that keen, that overwhelming anguish of the spirit. She soon regained her composure, as she uttered firmly: “They are—my altar and my faith!”

Egerton felt as though a sudden stroke had separated them for ever—as though it were the last look of some beloved thing just wrenched from his grasp. This very feeling, had none other prompted, made him more anxious for its recovery; and he would have urged his suit with all the energy of a reckless desperation, but the maiden firmly resisted.

“Urge me not again: not all the inducements I trust that even thou couldest offer would make me forget my fealty! No more—I hear thee not. The tempter I know hath too many allies within the citadel—worldly vanities and unsubdued affections—to suffer me to parley with the traitors and listen to their unholy suggestions. Again I say, I hear thee not.”

Finding it was in vain, he forbore to persecute her further; and after having merely tasted of the cordial, and partaken of a slight refreshment, he listlessly inquired if the term of his imprisonment would soon expire.

“Tarry here for a season, until the heat and energy of the pursuit be overpast, or at least abated. We could not find a more fitting place of concealment.”

“Being straitened for moneys until we can obtain succour from our friends, I cannot reward your hospitality as I would desire; but if we are brought forth and delivered safely from this thrall, thy father’s house shall not be forgotten.”

“We will not touch the least of all thy gifts,” said the maiden: “forbid that we sold our succour to the distressed, though it were to the most cruel and bitter of our enemies!”

A sudden thought excited this noble-hearted female. She cautiously approached her companion, who, having discontinued his perambulations, had seated himself in a corner, awaiting the termination of their interview. Knowing that he had generally a hoard of moneys about his person—for covetousness was ever his besetting sin—she ventured to solicit a loan, either for herself or the stranger, judging that Egerton’s escape would be much impeded, if, as he had just confessed, his finances were hardly sufficient for his ordinary expenditure.

“And so I must give my blood and my groats to nourish thy sweethearts, wench,” said the surly money-lender. “I have saved this prelatist and malignant from his adversaries, and now”—He considered a while, muttering his thoughts and arguments to himself with a most confused and volatile impetuosity of ratiocination. In a short time he seemed to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion through all this obscurity, and drew out a handful of coin, of some low denomination, apparently by the sound, and placed it in the hands of his fair suitor.

“There—there—one, two, three. Never mind, wench; I could have counted ‘em once with the best clerkman i’ the parish; and for the matter of that, I’ve told ‘em oft enough, though,—but the count always seems to slip from me. It is all I have, save the price of my life; and I would not part with that for a world’s worth; for what should it profit me, when with it I had bought my grave?”

Marian immediately transferred the long-hoarded treasure into the hands of the cavalier.

“Thanks; yea, better than these, for they were a poor recompense, my peerless maiden. I scruple not to receive this loan at thine hands, because it is part of the means thou dost employ for my escape. Yet doubt not of my willingness and ability to repay thee tenfold. Thou wilt not deny me this silly suit.”

As he said this, he, with the greatest gallantry and devotedness, kissed the hand held forth to supply his exigency. He was accompanying the movement with some fair and courtly speech when a loud and terrible cry startled him. It was more like the howl of some ravenous beast than any sound which human organs ever uttered. Curses followed—horrible, untold—the suggestion of fiends in their bitterness and malignity. Then came the cry, or rather shriek—

“Lost! lost!” at irregular intervals.

The cavalier and his companion were much alarmed by this unexpected occurrence. They doubted not that the foul fiend was before them, bodily, in the form of this poor maniac. After a short interval of silence, he cried, approaching them fiercely—

“Ye have sold me, soul and body, to the wicked one. May curses long and heavy light on ye! The coin! the coin! Oh, that accursed thing! I have bought thy grave, stranger; and my day of hope is past!”

The latter part of the speech was uttered in a tone of such deep and heartrending misery that pity arose in place of terror in the bosom of his auditors. Marian ventured to address him, hoping she might assuage or dissipate the fearful hallucination under which he laboured.

“There is yet hope for the repenting sinner. The hour of life is the hour of grace: for that, and that only, is life prolonged. Turn to Him from whom thou hast backslidden, nor add unto thy crime by wilfully rejecting the free offers of His mercy.”

“Mercy!—Life!” Here he laughed outright. “Hearest thou not my tormentor?—Life!—I am dead, wench; and my grave is waiting for me, dug by these accursed fingers. That grave I digged for thee is now mine. Unwittingly have I bought it, and the coin is in thy purse!”

It seems the poor maniac, in replacing the mysterious coin to which, from some cause or other, he attached such importance, had unthinkingly added it to the common hoard, and in this manner conveyed it to the stranger, whose grave he persisted he had bought by this transfer; and nothing could shake his belief in so marvellous a conclusion.

The cavalier attempted to comfort him; and in order to make the delusion subservient to the removal of its terrors, he offered to restore the coin, or even the whole of what he had received, that the simple gravedigger might be certain he had it in possession.

“‘Tis needless; the token, once from my grasp and in the fingers of another whose grave I have digged, would never change my doom by its return. Keep what thou hast; and may it serve thee more faithfully than it hath served me! But remember—let me say it while my senses hold together, for I feel the blast coming that shall scatter them to the four winds—remember, if thou part therefrom, as I have done, to some doomed one, thou shalt go to the grave in his stead. But a charmed life is thine as long as it is in thy possession. Away—leave me—the master will be here presently for his own. Leave me, I say; for when the fiend cometh, he’ll not tarry. But be sure you make fast the door, lest I escape, and mischief happen, should I get abroad.”

“Stephen!” said Marian, “slight not the mercy of thy God, nor dishonour His name, by hearkening to the suggestions of the enemy. His arm is not shortened, nor His ear heavy.”

“I know it; but when the fiend came, and found the house swept and garnished, did he not take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and was not the latter end of that man worse than the first?”

“Yet,” said Marian, “would he have been delivered if he had cried out to the strong man armed.”

“But he would hear no refutation, persisting in the thought that his crime was unpardonable, since he had relapsed after the devil was cast out.” During the present paroxysm, it was in vain to thwart him further; indeed their stay was attended with some hazard, of which, it seems, he felt aware, inasmuch as he drove them forth without ceremony. Availing themselves of his suggestion they bolted the door on the outside, thus preventing any further mischief. Here was a perplexing and unforeseen dilemma; and how to dispose of the cavalier was a question of no slight importance. At present the only alternative was to convey him to his fellow-traveller, Chisenhall, who, comfortably established in his narrow loft, was quite unconscious of the events that were passing so near him.

As they left the cemetery they heard the groans and cries of the unfortunate victim, suffering, as he imagined, from the resistless power of his tormentor.

Early, with the early dawn, Marian again sought the dwelling of Gilgal Snape. She earnestly entreated him that he would make all speed to the chapel—again exercising his peculiar gift in “binding the strong man armed,” or, in other words, dispossessing the demoniac.

The benevolent divine instantly accompanied her, and forthwith proceeded to the relief of the possessed. Howls and shrieks accosted him as he ascended the stair.

“I must be alone,” said he; “no earthly witness may be nigh. Strong in faith, by the grace that is given me, I doubt not that this also thou wilt vouchsafe to thine unworthy dust,”—he raised his eyes toward Heaven;—“yet should I fail, He will not let me be overcome, nor fall into the snare of the wicked one; for I know, and am assured, that this trial shall turn out to the furtherance of His glory!”

Marian left him at the entrance. But, with the minister’s appearance in the chamber, the agony of the deluded sufferer seemed to quicken, as if the sight of him who was the herald of mercy only added fresh fuel to his torments. Marian was fain to depart; her ears almost stunned with the cries and howlings of the demoniac. She withdrew in great agitation, her knees almost sinking under their burden. Hardly conscious of the removal, she reached her own chamber, where, covering her face with both hands, she wept bitterly. This outburst of tears relieved her; though she still suffered from the recent excitement. Her former resolutions were strengthened by the terrible example she had just witnessed; and the backsliding impenitent she looked upon as a watchlight to warn her from the rocks whereon he had made shipwreck.

Some hours passed on, but no tidings came from the “abbey.” She often looked out across the path, and towards the stile which led to the ruins; but all was undisturbed. The sun shining down, bright and unclouded, all was harmony and peace—“all, save the spirit of man, was divine”—all fulfilling their Maker’s ordinances, and his behest.

The sun was creeping down towards the dark low tower of the chapel; and Marian was still at the door, gazing out anxiously for intelligence. She saw a figure mounting the stile. It was—she could not be mistaken—it was the reverend and easily-recognised form of Gilgal Snape. She ran down the path to meet him; and she could not help noticing that he looked more sedate than usual, appearing harassed and disquieted, betraying more obviously the approach of age and infirmities.

“Have you wrestled with the adversary and prevailed?” inquired she, anxiously.

“I have had a fearful and a perilous struggle. The fight was long; but, by the sword of the Spirit, I *have* prevailed.”

“Has the backslider been brought again to the fold?”

“He hath, I trust, been found of the Good Shepherd; and he now sleepeth in Abraham’s bosom!”

“Dead! Hath the grave so soon demanded its prey?”

“I left him not until the spirit was rendered unto Him who gave it. He entreated me sore that I would not leave him until I had watched his dismissal from the body.”

“Then do I know of a surety that the evil spirit was cast out, and the lost one restored.”

“There was joy in heaven over a repentant sinner this day. When the dark foe was vanquished, his spirit came again as a little child, and the leprosy of his sin was healed. Verily, the evil one, ere he was overthrown, did utter many strange words touching things to come, and our present perplexities. There seemed to be a spirit of divination within him which did prophesy. Marian,” continued the divine, with a scrutinising look, “he did tell of thy dealing with our enemies, and that thou dost even now nourish and conceal those of whom we are in search.”

“If thine enemy hunger”——But Marian was hastily interrupted in her plea.

“But of the secrets which, by virtue of mine office and godly vocation, men do entrust to my safe keeping, I may not use, even to the hurt of our enemies and the welfare of the Church, yet buffeted by Satan in the wilderness. Nevertheless, I was sore troubled that thou, even thou, shouldest harbour and abet these wicked men, who have broken the covenant and plucked up the seed of the kingdom. Truly, I wot not where the afflicted Church shall find succour when her foes be they of her own household.”

“I knew not that they were enemies when first they sought our habitation. They had eaten and drunken at our board, and the”——

“These sons of Belial found favour in thy sight, even the chief captain of the king’s host. I would not accuse or blame thee rashly; but verily thou hast not judged wisely in this matter, for now must they depart, inasmuch as I cannot use, even to the advantage of our just cause, the knowledge I have gained; nor wilt thou render them up, I trow; but mark me, the avenger of blood is behind them, and though the city of refuge be nigh, they shall not escape!——Yet there be other marvels this wicked one did set forth,” said the minister, with a searching eye directed to the maiden. “One of these uncircumcised Philistines did woo thee for his bride. What answer gavest thou?”

“Such answer as becometh one who seeketh not fellowship with the works of darkness.”

“‘Tis well. Now lead me to this Joab the son of Zeruiah, this captain of the king’s host; for I have a message unto him also.”

Following the astonished and trembling maiden, the divine, fraught with some weighty commission, was admitted into the temporary concealment of the fugitives. It was a narrow and inconvenient loft above one of the outbuildings—the roof so low that it was only in some places the upright figure of the minister might be sustained. The light penetrated through an aperture in the roof, showing the guests within seated, and enjoying a frugal, but sufficient repast.

“I am one of few words,” said the divine, “and so much the rather as that I now stand in the presence of mine enemies. What sayest thou, Prince Rupert, the persecutor of God’s heritage, who didst not stay thine hand from the slaughter even of them that were taken captive? What sayest thou that the word should not go forth to kill and slay, even as thou didst smite and not spare, but didst destroy utterly them who, when beleaguered by thine armies in Bolton, were delivered into thine hand?”

“Ha!” said the Prince; “thou—a cockatrice to betray me!”

“She hath not betrayed thee. Yonder poor and afflicted sinner, when in bondage unto Satan, led captive by him at his will, did reveal it by the spirit of prophecy that was in him. But we take not advantage of this to thine hurt; we may not use the devil’s works for the building up and welfare of the Church, even though she were mightily holpen thereby. But listen: thou hast wooed this maiden to be the wife of thy bosom. In the dark roll of destiny it is written—so spake the unclean spirit—that if thou shouldst wed, a son springing from thy loins shall sit upon the throne of this unhappy realm. He shall govern the people righteously, every one under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid. Surely it would not be a vain and an evil thing should the maiden be—yet—this is my temptation. Get thee behind me, Satan. May the thought and the folly of my heart be forgiven me! No! proud and cruel persecutor, this maiden is a pearl of rare price which thou shalt not win—a chosen one who hath had grace given unto her above measure, even above that vouchsafed unto me. I do loathe and abhor myself for the iniquity of my heart, and the unsubdued carnality of my spirit.”

“Your Highness had need of great meekness and patience to endure this grievous outpouring,” said Chisenhall to the silent and bewildered Prince. “Shall I thrust him through, and make sure of his fidelity?”

“Hurt him not,” said his Highness to this effectual admonisher unto secrecy. “And what if I should not wed?” continued he, addressing the divine, and at the same time looking tenderly on the damsel.

“To this point too was the prophecy accordant. The sceptre shall nevertheless be given to one of thy race; thy sister’s son shall carry down the line of kings to this people; and the Lord’s work shall still prosper. Now, daughter of many prayers—for I have yearned over thee with more than a father’s love—choose thee without constraint this day. Thou hearest the words of this prophecy: wilt thou be the mother of kings, or the lowly and despised follower of God’s heritage?”

“I will not grasp the bubble of ambition. It bursts—a hollow vapour when possessed. Let me choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than obtain all the treasures of Egypt. But tempt me not again, for my soul cleaveth to the dust—flesh and blood shrink from the trial!”

She sobbed aloud, and threw herself on the old man’s neck, who scarcely refrained from joining in her tears.

“Thou hast come forth as gold from the furnace—thou hast kept the faith, and holden fast thy profession,” said the divine, with a glance of triumph. Marian held out her hand to the Prince, who grasped it with fervour. She seemed more like to some holy and heavenward thing than a denizen of this polluted earth—more like a type of the confessors and martyrs of the primitive church than a disciple of our own, nurtured in the lap of carnal security, with little show of either zeal or devotion.

“Your Highness must depart—but whither?” said she, with an anxious and inquiring glance directed to the minister.

“Take no thought for their safety; thy constancy hath earned their deliverance. My safe-conduct will carry them unharmed beyond the reach of their enemies; but let them not return. It is at their own peril if they be found again harboured in this vicinage, and their blood be on their own heads!”

They departed, and the subsequent history of the gallant Rupert is well known. He joined the king at Oxford, and helped him to retrieve his defeat at Newbury, bringing off his artillery left at Dunnington Castle in the very face of the enemy. At the decisive Battle of Naseby we find him performing feats of extraordinary valour; but, as before, his headlong and precipitate fury led him into the usual error; and though the loss of the battle was not to be attributed entirely to his imprudence, yet a little more caution would have altered materially the results of that memorable conflict. Harassed and dispirited, he threw himself with the remainder of his troops into Bristol, intending to defend it to the last extremity; but even here his constitutional fortitude and valour seemed to forsake him: a poorer defence was not made by any town during the whole war, and the general expectations were extremely disappointed. No sooner had the Parliamentary forces entered the lines by storm, than the Prince capitulated, and surrendered the place to General Fairfax. A few days before, he had written a letter to the King, in which he undertook to defend it for four months, if no mutiny obliged him to surrender it. Charles, who was forming schemes and collecting forces for the relief of the city, was astonished at so unexpected an event, which was little less fatal to his cause than the defeat at Naseby. Full of indignation, he instantly recalled all Prince Rupert’s commissions, and sent him a pass to go beyond sea.⁶⁶

Several years afterwards we find him in command of a squadron of ships, entrusted to him by Charles II, when an exile in Normandy. Admiral Blake received orders from the Parliament to pursue him. Rupert, being much inferior in force, took shelter in Kinsale, and escaping thence, fled toward the coast of Portugal. Blake pursued and chased him into the Tagus, where he intended to attack him; but the King of Portugal, moved by the favour which throughout Europe attended the royal cause, refused Blake admission, and aided the Prince in making his escape. Having lost the greater part of his fleet off the coast of Spain, he made sail towards the West Indies; but his brother, Prince Maurice, was there shipwrecked in a hurricane. Everywhere his squadron subsisted by privateering, sometimes on English, sometimes on Spanish, vessels. Rupert at last returned to France, where he disposed of the remnants of his fleet, together with his prizes.⁶⁷

He was never married; peradventure the remembrance of the noble and heroic maiden marred his wiving; he cared not for the presence of those courtly dames by whom he was surrounded, though a soldier, and a brave one. By one of his race the crown of these realms was inherited; and the same line is yet perpetuated in the person of our gracious monarch, whom God preserve! The sister of Rupert, Princess Sophia, by marriage with the Elector of Hanover, became the mother of George I.; and thus was that singular prediction of the supposed demoniac strangely and happily verified. Of Marian little remains to be told; the lives of the virtuous and well-doing furnish little matter for the historian; their deeds are not of this world; the bright page of their history is unfolded only in the next.

⁶⁶ Clarendon.

⁶⁷ Hume.

XXX. Clegg Hall

“Is there no exorcist
Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?
Is’t real that I see?”

—Shakespeare.

Clegg Hall, about two miles N.E. from Rochdale, is still celebrated for the freaks and visitations of a supernatural guest, called “Clegg-Hall Boggart.”

So desultory and various are the accounts we have heard, and many of them so vague and unintelligible, that it has been a work of much difficulty to weave them into one continuous narrative, and to shape them into a plot sufficiently interesting for our purpose. The name and character of “Noman” are still the subject of many an absurd and marvellous story among the country chroniclers in that region.

Dr Whitaker says it is “the only estate within the parish which still continues in the local family name.” On this site was the old house built by Bernulf de Clegg and Quenilda his wife as early as the reign of Stephen. Not a vestige of it remains. The present comparatively modern erection was built by Theophilus Ashton of Rochdale, a lawyer, and one of the Ashtons of Little Clegg, about the year 1620.

Stubley Hall, mentioned in our tale, was built by Robert Holt in the reign of Henry VIII. The decay of our native woods had then occasioned a pretty general disuse of timber for the framework of dwelling-houses belonging to this class of our domestic architecture. Dr Whitaker says—“It is the first specimen in the parish of a stone or brick hall-house of the second order—that is, with a centre and two wings only. Long before the Holts, appear at this place a Nicholas and a John de Stubley, in the years 1322 and 1332; then follow in succession John, Geoffrey, Robert, and Christopher Holt; from whom descended, though not in a direct line, Robert Holt of Castleton and Stubley, whose daughter, Dorothy, married in the year 1649, John Entwisle of Foxholes. Robert, who built Stubley, and who was grandson of Christopher Holt before mentioned, was a justice of the peace in the year 1528. In an old visitation of Lancashire by Thomas Tong, Norroy, 30 Hen. VIII., is this singular entry:—”Robarde Holte of Stubley, hase mar. an ould woman, by whom he hase none issewe, and therefore he wolde not have her name entryed.” Yet it appears he had a daughter, Mary, who married Charles Holt, her cousin, descended from the first Robert. Her grandson was the Robert Holt, father to Dorothy Entwisle before-named, at whose marriage the events took place which, if the following tradition is to be credited, were the forerunners of a more strange and unexpected development.

In the year 1640, nine years before the date of our story, Robert Holt abandoned Stubley for the warmer and more fertile situation of Castleton, about a mile south from Rochdale. It was so named from the *castellum de Recedham*, wherein dwelt Gamel, the Saxon Thane; which place and personage are described in our first series of *Traditions*. Castleton was principally abbey-land belonging to the house of Stanlaw. Part of this township, the hamlet of Marland or Mereland, was, at the dissolution of monasteries, granted to the Radcliffs of Langley, and sold by Henry Radcliff to Charles Holt, who married his cousin, Mary Holt of Stubley, and was grandfather to Robert, who left Stubley for this place, which we have noticed above.

Stubley, with its neighbourhood, was always noted for good ale. From its situation, exposed to all the rigours of that hilly region, the climate was reckoned so cold as to require that their

daily beverage should be of sufficient strength to counteract its effects. That habits of intemperance would be contracted from the constant use of such stimuli may easily be inferred. The following letter from Nicholas Stratford, Bishop of Chester, to James Holt of Castleton, son of Robert Holt before-named, is but too melancholy a confirmation of this inference.

The original is in the possession of the Rev. J. Clowes of Broughton Hall:—

Sir,—Your request in behalf of Mr Halliwell was easily granted; for I am myself inclined to give the best encouragement I can to the poor curates, as long as they continue diligent in the discharge of their duty. But I have now, Sir, a request to make to you, which I heartily pray you may as readily grant me; and that is, that you will for the future abandon and abhor the sottish vice of drunkenness, which (if common fame be not a great liar) you are much addicted to. I beseech you, Sir, frequently and seriously to consider the many dismal fruits and consequences of this sin, even in this world—how destructive it is to all your most valuable concerns and interests; how it blasts your reputation, destroys your health, and will (if continued) bring you to a speedy and untimely death: and, which is infinitely more dreadful, will exclude you from the kingdom of heaven, and expose you to that everlasting fire where you will not be able to obtain so much as one drop of water to cool your tongue. I have not leisure to proceed in this argum^t, nor is it needful that I should, because you yourself can enlarge upon it without my ... I assure you, S^r, this advice now given you proceeds from sincere love and my earnest desire to promote your happiness both in this world and the next; and I hope you will be pleased so to accept from,

“S^r,

“Your affectionate friend

“and humble servant,

“Chester, *Nov.* 1699.”N. Cestriens.

Clegg Hall, after many changes of occupants, is now in part used as a country alehouse; other portions are inhabited by the labouring classes who find employment in that populous and manufacturing district. It is the property of Joseph Fenton, Esq., of Bamford Hall, by purchase from John Entwisle, Esq., the present possessor of Foxholes, in that neighbourhood.

To Clegg Hall, or rather what was once the site of that ancient house, tradition points through the dim vista of past ages as the scene of an unnatural and cruel tragedy. Not that this picturesque and stately pile, with its gable and zigzag terminations, the subject of our present engraving, was the very place where the murder was perpetrated; but a low, dark, and wooden-walled tenement, such as our forefathers were wont to construct in times anterior to the Tudor ages. The present building, with its little porch, quaint and grotesque, its balustrade and balcony above, and the points and pediments on the four sides, are evidently the coinage of some more modern brain—peradventure in King James’s days. Not unlike the character of that learned monarch and of his times, half-classical, half-barbarous, it combines the puerilities of each, without the power and grandeur of the one, or the rich and chivalric magnificence of the other; and might remind the beholder of some gaunt warrior of the Middle Ages, with lance, and armour, and “ladye-love,” stalking forth, clad in the Roman toga or the stately garb of the senator. The building, the subject of our tale, has neither the gorgeous extravagance of the Gothic nor the severe and stern utility of the Roman architecture. Little bits of columns, dwarf-like, and frittered down into mere extremities, give the porch very much the appearance of a child’s plaything, or a Dutch toy stuck to its side.

It has the very air and attitude—the pedantic formalities—of the time when it was built. Not so the house on whose ruins it was erected; the square, low, dark mansion, constructed of

wood, heavy and gigantic, shaped like the hull of some great ship, the ribs and timbers being first fixed, and the interstices afterwards filled with a compost of clay and chopped straw, to keep out the weather. Of such rude and primitive architecture were the dwellings of the English gentry in former ages: such was the house built by Bernulf and Quenilda Clegg, in the reign of Stephen, the supposed scene of that horrible deed which gave rise to the stories yet extant relating to "Clegg-Hall Boggart." Popular story is not precise, generally, as to facts and dates. The exact time when this occurrence took place we know not; but it is more than probable that some dark transaction of this nature was here perpetrated. The prevailing tradition warrants our belief. However fanciful and extravagant the filling up of the picture, common rumour still preserves untouched the general outline. It is said that, sometime about the thirteenth or fourteenth century, a wicked uncle destroyed the lawful heirs of this goodly possession—two orphan children that were left to his care—by throwing them over a balcony into the moat, that he might seize on the inheritance. Such is the story which, to this day, retains its hold on the popular mind; and ever after, it is said, the house was the reputed haunt of a troubled and angry spirit, until means were taken for its removal, or rather its expulsion. But upon the inhuman deed itself we shall not dilate, inasmuch as the period is too remote, and the events are too vague, for our purpose.

The house built by Bernulf Clegg had passed, with many alterations and renewals, into the possession of the Ashtons of Little Clegg. About the year 1620 the present edifice was built by Theophilus Ashton; and thirty years had scarcely elapsed from its erection to the date of our story. Though the original dwelling had, with one or two exceptions, been pulled down, yet symptoms of "the boggart" were still manifest in the occasional visitations and annoyances to which the inmates were subject.

The hues of evening were spread out, like a rich tapestry, above and behind the long unpicturesque line of hills, the lower acclivities of Blackstonedged, opposite to the stately mansion of Clegg Hall. The square squat tower of Rochdale Church peered out from the dark trees, high on its dim eyrie, in the distance, towards the south-west, below which a wan hazy smoke indicated the site of that thriving and populous town. To the right, the heavy blue ridge of mountains, bearing the appropriate name of Blackstonedged, had not yet put on its cold, grey, neutral tint; but the mass appeared to rise abruptly from the green enclosures stretching to its base, in strong and beautiful contrast of colour, such as painters love to express on the mimic canvas. It was a lovely evening in October; one of Nature's parting smiles, ere she envelops herself in the horrors and the gloom of winter. So soft and balmy was the season that the wild flowers lingered longer than usual in the woods and copses where they dwelt. In the gardens some of the spring blossoms had already unfolded. The wallflowers and polyanthus had looked out again, unhesitatingly, on the genial sky—deprived, by sophistication and culture, of the instincts necessary to their preservation: the wild untutored denizens of the field and the quiet woods rarely betray such lack of presentiment. But such are everywhere the results of civilisation; which, however beneficial to society in the aggregate, gives its objects altogether an artificial character, and, by depriving them of their natural and proper instincts, renders them helpless when single and unaided; while it makes them more dependent upon each other, and on the factitious wants, the offspring of those very habits and conditions into which they are thrown.

On the hollow trunk of a decrepit ash the ivy was blossoming profusely, gathering its support from the frail prop which it was fated to destroy. The insects were humming and frolicking about on their tiny wings, taking their last enjoyment of their little day, ere they gave place to the ephemera of the next.

“How merry and jocund every life-gifted thing looks forth on this our festival. It might be Nature holding high jubilee in honour of Holt’s daughter on her wedding-night!”

Thus spake Nicholas Haworth to his sister Alice, as they stepped forth from the hall porch, and stayed for a moment by this aged trunk to admire the scene that was fast losing its glory and its brightness. They were bidden to the marriage-supper at Stubbley, where a masqued ball was to be given after the nuptials of Dorothy Holt, the daughter of its possessor, with Entwisle, the heir of Foxholes.⁶⁸

“It may be holiday and gladness too; but I feel it not,” said Alice pensively, as she leaned on her brother’s arm, while they turned into a narrow lane overarched by irregular groups of beech and sycamore trees.

“Heed not such idle fancies,” said her brother. “And so, because, forsooth, an impudent beggar-man predicts some strange event that must shortly befall thee, the apprehension doth cast its shadow ere it come, and thou art ready to conjure up some grim spectre in the gloom it hath created. But, in good sooth, here comes the wizard himself who hath raised these melancholic and evil humours.”

“I never pass him without a shudder,” said she, at the same time cringing closely to her protector.

This awful personage was one of an ancient class, now probably extinct; a sort of privileged order, supplying, or rather usurping, the place of the mendicant friars of former days. Their vocation was not of an unprofitable kind, inasmuch as alms were commonly rendered, though more from fear than favour. Woe betide the unlucky housewife who withheld her dole, her modicum of meal or money to these sturdy applicants! Mischief from some invisible hand was sure to follow, and the cause was laid to her lack of charity.

The being, the subject of these remarks, had been for many months a periodical visitor at the Hall, where he went by the name of “Noman.” It is not a little remarkable that tradition should here point out an adventure something analogous to that of Ulysses with the Cyclop as once happening to this obscure individual, and that his escape was owing to the same absurd equivocal by which the Grecian chief escaped from his tormentor. Our tale, however, hath reference to weightier matters, and the brief space we possess permits no further digression. This aged but hale and sturdy beggar wore a grey frieze coat or cloak loosely about his person. Long blue stocking gaiters, well patched and darned, came over his knee, while his doublet and hosen, or body-gear, were fastened together by the primitive attachment of wooden skewers—a contrivance now obsolete, being superseded by others more elegant and seemly. A woollen cap or bonnet, of unparalleled form and dimensions, was disposed upon his head, hiding the upper part of his face, and almost covering a pair of bushy grey eyebrows, that, in their turn, crouched over a quick and vagrant eye, little the worse for the wear of probably some sixty years. A grizzled reddish beard hung upon his breast; and his aspect altogether was forbidding, almost ferocious. A well-plenished satchel was on his shoulder; and he walked slowly and erect, as though little disposed to make way for his betters in the narrow path, where they must inevitably meet. When they came nearer he stood still in the middle of the road, as though inclined to dispute their passage. His tall and well-proportioned figure, apparent even beneath these grotesque habiliments, stood out before them in bold relief against the red and burning sky, where an opening in the lane admitted all the glow and fervour of the western sunset. His strange, wayward, and even mysterious character was no bar to his admittance into the mansions of the gentry through a wide circuit

⁶⁸ Her marriage-gift was £500, nineteen cows, and a bull,—a magnificent portion in those days.

of country, where his familiarities were tolerated, or perhaps connived at, even by many whose gifts he received more as a right than as an obligation.

He looked steadfastly on them as they approached, but without the slightest show either of respect or good-will.

“Prithee, stand a little on one side, that we may pass by without fear of offence,” said Nicholas Haworth, good-humouredly.

“And whither away, young master and my dainty miss?” was the reply, in his usual easy and familiar address, such as might have suited one of rank and condition.

Haworth, little disturbed thereat, said with a careless smile,—”Troth, thou hast not been so long away but thou mightest have heard of the wedding-feast to-night, and, peradventure, been foremost for the crumbs of the banquet.”

“I know well there’s mumming and foolery a-going on yonder; and I suppose ye join the merry-making, as they call it?”

“Ay, that do we; and so, prithee, begone.”

“And your masks will ne’er be the wiser for’t, I trow,” said the beggar, looking curiously upon them from beneath his penthouse lids.

“But that I could laugh at his impertinence, Alice, I would even now chide him soundly, and send his pitiful carcase to the stocks for this presumption. Hark thee, I do offer good counsel when I warn thee to shift thyself, and that speedily, ere I use the readiest means for thy removal.”

“Gramercy, brave ruffler; but I must e’en gi’e ye the path; an’ so pass on to the masking, my Lord Essex and his maiden queen.”

He said this with a cunning look and a chuckle of self-gratulation at the knowledge he had somehow or other acquired of the parts they were intended to enact.

“Foul fa’ thy busy tongue, where foundest thou this news? I’ve a month’s mind to change my part, Alice, but that there’s neither leisure nor opportunity, and they lack our presence at the nuptials.”

“How came he by this knowledge, and the fashion of our masks?” inquired Alice from her brother. “Truly, I could join belief with those who say that he obtained it not through the ordinary channels open to our frail and fallible intellects.”

Mistress Alice, “the gentle Alice,” was reckoned fair and well-favoured. Strongly tintured with romance, her superstition was continually fed by the stories then current in relation to her own dwelling, and by the generally-received opinions about witches and other supernatural things which yet lingered, loth to depart from these remote limits of civilisation.

“Clegg-Hall Boggart” was the type of a notion too general to be disbelieved; yet were the inmates, in all probability, less intimately acquainted with the freaks and disturbances attendant thereon than every gossip in the neighbourhood; for, as it frequently happens, tales and marvels, for the most part originating through roguery, and the pranks of servants and retainers, were less likely to come to the ears of the master and his family than those of persons less interested, but more likely to assist in their propagation. The vagrant and erratic movements of “Noman” were, somehow or another, connected with the marvellous adventures and appearances in the “boggart chamber.” At the Hall, this discarded room, being part of the old house yet remaining, was the one which he was permitted to occupy during his stay; and his appearance was generally the signal of a visit from their supernatural guest. To

be sure, the strange sights he beheld rested on his testimony alone; but his word was never questioned, and his coming was of equal potency with the magician's wand in raising the ghost.

"We shall have some news from our troublesome guest, I suppose, in the morning," said Alice to her brother, as they went slowly on: "I know not the cause; but yonder vagrant seems to waken our ancient companion from his slumbers, either by sympathy or antipathy, I trow."

"For the most part they be idle tales," said he; "though I doubt not, in former days, the place was infested by some unquiet spirit. But this good house of ours hath modern stuff too strong upon it. The smell of antiquity alone hath a savour delicate enough for your musty ghost."

Alice pressed his arm slightly as an admonition, at the same time gently chiding his unbelief. Thus beguiling the way with pleasant discourse, they drew nigh to the old house at Stubley, little more than a mile distant from their own dwelling.

Though now resident in his more modern, sheltered, and convenient mansion of Castleton, Holt determined that his daughter's wedding should be solemnised in the ancient halls, where Robert Bath, vicar of Rochdale, who was presented to the living on his marriage with a niece of Archbishop Laud, was invited to perform the ceremony;—"A man," says Dr Whitaker, "of very different principles from his patron; for he complied with all changes but the last, and retained his benefice till August 24, 1662, when he went out on the Bartholomew Act, and retired to a small house at Deepleach Hill, near Rochdale, where he frequently preached to a crowded auditory."⁶⁹

As they came nigh, lights were already glancing between the mullions of the great hall window, then richly ornamented with painted glass. The guests were loitering about the walks and terraces in the little garden-plots, which in that bleak and chilly region were scantily furnished. In the hall, fitted up with flowers and green holly-wreaths for the occasion, the father of the bride and his intended son-in-law were pacing to and fro in loving discourse; the latter pranked out in a costly pair of "petticoat breeches," pink and white, of the newest fashion, reaching only to the knee. These were ornamented with ribands and laces at the two extremities, below which silk stockings, glistening like silver, and immense pink

⁶⁹ We are sorry that this remark should come from the historian of Whalley; but our respect for the author even will not suffer us to let it pass unnoticed. The passage, indeed, refutes itself, and we need refer to none other than the very terms of the accusation. The circumstance of Bath "going out under the Bartholomew Act," that master-movement of spiritual tyranny, issued by an ill-advised and sensual monarch, when two thousand and upwards of conscientious clergymen were driven from their flocks and deprived of their benefices in one day, is a sufficient denial of what the learned doctor has insinuated, as it respects complying "with all changes" from mere self-interest and worldly lucre. For what could have hindered this conscientious and self-denying minister from conforming to the terms of the act, and securing his goodly benefice thereby, if it were not a zealous and honest regard to the vows he had taken, and the future welfare of his flock; which the very fact of his subsequent preaching to crowded auditories at his own house sufficiently corroborates. We know the persecutions, the malice, and the poverty, which would assail this unlicensed administration of ordinances; and nothing but a reverential awe for the sacred and responsible functions he had undertaken could have stimulated him to "endure the cross and despise the shame," when a very different line of conduct would have left him in the undisturbed possession of both wealth and patronage. But, we are afraid, the unpardonable offence of preaching in the church under the authority and protection of the Commonwealth, and his leaving her pale and preaching to "crowded auditories," when the wicked decree of St Bartholomew went forth, is ungrateful to the spirit of many, who ought not to stigmatise as sectaries and malignants all who have dared to think for themselves, and at anytime to oppose "spiritual wickedness" in "high places." The very principles which made Bath an outcast for conscience' sake are those which originated and led on the work of our Protestant Reformation, and placed the historian of Whalley where his sacred functions should have led him to respect the rights and consciences even of those from whom he might differ, and not hold them up to unmerited obloquy and reprehension.

shoe-roses, completed his nether costume. A silken doublet and waistcoat of rich embroidery, over which was a turned-down shirt-collar of point-lace, surmounted the whole.

His friends and officials were busily employed in arranging matters for the occasion, distributing the wedding-favours, and preparing for the entertainments and festivities that were to follow.

Holt and his son-in-law were exempt from duty, save that of welcoming those that were bidden, upon their arrival.

Before an oaken screen, beautifully carved with arabesque ornaments and armorial bearings,⁷⁰ there was a narrow table, covered with a white cloth, and on it the prayer-book, open at the marriage formulary. Four stools were placed for those more immediately interested in the ceremony. Rosemary and bay-leaves, gilt and dipped in scented water, were scattered about the marriage-altar in love-knots and many fanciful and ingenious devices. A bride-cup rested upon it, in which lay a sprig of gilded rosemary—a relic or semblance of the ancient hymeneal torch. Huge tables, groaning with garniture for the approaching feast, were laid round the apartment—room being left in the central floor for all who chose to mingle in the games and dances that were expected after supper.

The company were now assembled, and the ceremony about to commence. The bride, clothed in white, with a veil of costly workmanship thrown over her, was led in by her maidens and a train of friends. The bridegroom taking her hand, they stood before the altar, and the brief but indissoluble knot was tied. The kiss being given, the happy husband led away his partner into the parlour or guest chamber, followed by many of those who had witnessed the ceremony. Alice and her brother were amongst them; and the bride, perceiving their entrance, drew the hand of the maiden within hers, and retained her for a short season by her side.

The feast was begun; those who were for the mask took but a hasty refreshment, being anxious to proceed into the ‘tiring rooms, there to array for the more interesting part of the night’s revel. In due time issued forth from their crowded bowers lords and ladies gay, buffoons, morris-dancers, and the like; gypsies, fortune-tellers, and a medley of giddy mummers, into the hall, where the more sedate or more sensual were still carousing after the feast.

“Room for the masks!” was the general cry; and the musicians, each after his kind, did pierce and vex the air with such a medley of disquieting sounds that the talkers were fain to cease, and the dancers to fall to in good earnest. Alice and her brother were disguised as the cunning beggar had predicted—to wit, as the virgin queen and her unfortunate lover. Masks were often dropping in, so that the hall and adjoining chambers were fully occupied, resounding in wild echoes with noise and revelry.

Loud and long was the merriment, increasing even until the roofs rung with the din, and the revellers themselves grew weary of the tumult.

Alice was standing by the oaken screen during a temporary cessation on her part from the labours incident to royalty, when there came from behind it a tawny Moor, wearing a rich shawl turban, with a beard of comely aspect. His arms were bare and hung with massive bracelets, and he wore a tight jacket of crimson and gold. His figure was tall and

⁷⁰ This interesting and curious relic is now in the possession of the Rev. J. Clowes of Broughton, whose ancestor, Samuel Clowes, Esq., about the year 1690, married Mary Cheetham, a descendant of Humphrey Cheetham, founder of the Manchester Blue Coat School. In 1713, after the death of James Holt, whose faithful rebuke from the Bishop of Chester we have noticed in the introduction, Castleton came into possession of the Cheethams until the death of Edward Cheetham, in 1769.

commanding; but his face was concealed by a visor of black crape, which hindered not his speech from being clearly apprehended, though the sound came forth in a muffled tone, as if feigned for the occasion. Immediately there followed an Arabic or Turkish doctor, clad in a long dark robe, and his head surmounted by a four-cornered fur cap. In one hand he held a glass phial, and a box under his left arm. Of an erect and majestic stature, he stood for a moment apparently surveying the scene ere he mingled in the busy crowd. His face also was covered with black crape, and through the “eyelet-holes” a bright and burning glance shot forth, hardly repressed by the shadow from his disguise. Alice, being unattended, shunned these unknown intruders, and mingled again with a merry group who were pelting one another with comfits and candied almonds. The stately Elizabeth beckoned to her maidens; but they merely curtsied to their royal mistress, without discontinuing their boisterous hilarity. Indeed, the mumming hitherto had been more in dress than manners, so little restraint had their outward disguise occasioned, or their behaviour been altered thereby. The two late comers, however, produced a change. It appeared that their business was to enact a play or cunning device for the amusement of the company who, regarding them with a curious eye, one by one left off their several sports to gaze upon the strangers.

The rest were generally known to each other; but whispers and inquiries now went round, from which it appeared that the new visitants were strictly concealed, and their presence unexpected.

“Now, o’ my faith,” said Harry Cheetham, whose skill in dancing and drollery had been conspicuous throughout the evening, “yon barbarians be come from the Grand Turk, with his kerchief, recruiting for the seraglio.”

“Out upon thee!” said a jingling Morisco, enacted by young Hellawell of Pike House; “the Grand Signior loveth not maidens such as ours for his pavilion. They be too frosty to melt, even in Afric’s sunny clime.” This was said with a malicious glance at Alice, whose queen-like dignity and haughty bearing had kept many an ardent admirer at bay through the evening.

“Sure the master of the feast hath withheld this precious delectation until now,” said Essex; “for they, doubtless, be of his providing.”

“And give promise of more novel but less savoury entertainment,” said Hamer of Hamer. But Holt either knew them not, or his look of surprise, not unmixed with curiosity and expectation, showed that he was playing the masker too, without other disguise than his own proper features—the kind hospitable face of an honest north-country squire, ruddy with health and conviviality.

At the farther end of the hall the bride and her bride-maidens were standing, with the bridegroom at her side, whispering soft gallantries in her ear. The strangers, on their entrance, rendered neither token nor obeisance, as courtesy required, to the bride and her train, but followed Alice, who had joined her brother in the merry crowd, now watching the motions of these unexpected visitants. They approached with stately and solemn steps; and, without once deigning to notice the rest of the company, the gaudy Moor bowed himself in a most dignified *salaam* before the queen. Alice, apparently with some trepidation at being thus singled out from the rest, clung to her brother, she hardly knew why.

“My sublime master, emperor of the world, lord of the sun, and ruler of the seven celestial configurations, sendeth his slave unto the most high and mighty Queen—whose beauty, as a girdle, doth encompass the whole earth—with greeting.”

“And who is he?” said Alice, timidly enough.

“The Sultan Ibrahim, lord of the seven golden towers, the emerald islands, and ruler over an hundred nations. He bade his slave kiss the hem of his mistress’s garment, and beseech her to put her foot on the neck of his bondsman, her slave’s slave, and accept his gift.”

“And who is this thy companion?” said Alice, growing bolder, while the company were gradually gathering round them.

“This, whom your unworthy slave hath brought, most gracious Queen, is the renowned Doctor Aboulfahrez, high conjuror to the Khan of Tartary, and physician to the Great Mogul. He doth drive hence all pains and diseases whatsoever, and will cure your great majesty of any disorder of the spirit, by reason of charms or love-philtres heretofore administered.”

With a slight bend of his illustrious person, as though the high conjuror to the Khan of Tartary, and physician to the Great Mogul, thought himself too nearly on an equality with her “high mightinesse” the Queen, the learned doctor for the first time broke silence—

“Will it please the Queen’s grace to command an ensample of mine art?”

“We must first be assured unto what purpose. Hast thou not heard,” said Alice, with increasing confidence, “that it is treason to put forth strange or unlawful devices before the Queen?”

The stranger bowed. “But your grace hath traitors in those fair eyes which do prompt treason if they practise none.”

This gallant speech was much applauded by the company, and relieved Alice from the necessity of a speedy and suitable answer; for she began to be somewhat perplexed by the address of these bold admirers.

“Look at this precious phial, the incomparable elixir, the pabulum of life, the grand arcanum, the supernaculum, the mother and regenerator of nature, the source and the womb of all existence, past, present, and to come!” The learned doctor paused, more from want of breath than from scarcity of epithets wherewith to blazon forth the great virtues of his discovery. Soon, however, he breathed again through the mouth-slit in his mask, and blew on the phial, when lo! a vapour issued from within, curling in long-drawn wreaths down the side, in a manner most wonderful to behold.

This trick roused the admiration of his audience, but he made a sign that they should be still, as their breath and acclamations might disturb the process. He now thrust one finger into the vapour, when it appeared to wind round his hand; then, letting the bottle drop, it fell, suspended from the finger by this novel and extraordinary chain—the vapour seeming to be the link by which it hung. This unexpected feat repressed the noisy burst of applause which might have been the result of a less wonderful device. Every one looked anxiously and uneasily at his neighbour, and at the renowned Doctor Aboulfahrez, not feeling comfortable, perhaps, or even safe, in the presence of so exalted a personage. But new wonders were at hand. The mysterious visitor uttered some cabalistic words, and lo! flames burst forth from the magic phial, to the additional wonder and dismay of the beholders.

“When the Queen’s grace doth will it, this box shall be opened; but it will behove her to be discreet in what may follow, lest the charm be evaded.”

The Moorish slave was silent during this procedure, standing with arms folded, as though he had been one of the mutes of his master’s harem, rather than ambassador to his “ladye love.” With the assent of Alice, the Doctor took in one hand the casket, which he cautiously unlocked. The lid flew open by a secret spring, and a peacock of surprising beauty and glittering plumage rose out of the box, imitating the motions of the real bird to admiration.

The mimic thing, being placed on the floor, flapped its wings, and unfolded its tail with all the pride and precision of the original.

“Beshrew me!” said Holt, approaching nearer to the performer, “but thou hast been bred to the black art, I think. Some o’ ye have catered excellently for our pastime.” But who it was none could ascertain, each giving his neighbour credit secretly for the construction of these dainty devices. Yet new wonders were about to follow, when the bride and bridegroom, though wedded to each other’s company, came forward to see the spectacle. Not a guest was missing. Even those most pleasantly occupied at the tables left their sack and canary, their spices and confections. The musicians, too, and the menials, seemed to have forgotten their several duties, and stood gaping and marvelling at the show. Suddenly there flew open a little door in the breast of the automaton bird, and out jumped a fair white pigeon, which, after having performed many surprising feats, in its turn became the parent of another progeny—to wit, a beautiful singing bird, or nightingale, which warbled so sweetly, fluttering its wings with all the ecstasy of that divine creature, that the listeners were nearly beside themselves with ravishment and admiration. The nightingale now opened, and a little humming-bird of most surprising brilliancy hopped forth, and jumping up to the Queen, held out its beak, having a label therein, apparently beseeching her to accept the offering. She stooped down to receive the billet, which she hastily unfolded. What effect was visible on her countenance we cannot pretend to say, inasmuch as the mask precluded observation; but there was an evident tremor in her frame. She seemed to be overpowered with surprise, and held out the note as though for the moment incapable of deciding whether to accept it or no. Then with a sudden effort she crumpled it together, and thrust it behind her stomacher. Wonder sat silent and watchful on the face of every beholder. The actors in this strange drama had replaced the automata in the box again, closing its lid. The Moor had made his *salaam*, the Doctor his obeisance, disappearing behind the screen from which they had so mysteriously come forth. But at their departure a train of fire followed upon their track, and a lambent flame played curiously upon the wooden crockets for a few seconds, and then disappeared.

Now was there a Babel of tongues unloosed, at first by sudden impulses and whispers, then breaking forth by degrees into a loud and continuous din of voices, all at once seeking to satisfy their inquiries touching this strange and unexpected visit. Their host was mightily pestered and besieged with questions and congratulations on the subject, which he has promptly and peremptorily disclaimed, attempting to fix the hatching of the plot upon the astonished bridegroom. But even he would not father the conceit; and, in the end, it began to be surmised that these were indeed what their appearance betokened, or something worse, which cast a sudden gloom on the whole assembly. Some sallied out of the door to watch, and others blamed the master for not seizing and detaining these emissaries of Satan. Alice was closely questioned as to the communication she had received; but she replied, evasively perhaps, that it was only one of the usual stale conceits appropriate to the masque.

Nothing more was heard or seen of them; and it was now high time they should accompany the bridegroom to his own dwelling at Foxholes—a goodly house situate on a pretty knoll near the town of Rochdale, and about two miles distant from Stubley.

Now was there mustering and hurrying to depart. An unwieldy coach was drawn up, into which the bride and her female attendants were forthwith introduced, the bridegroom and his company going on foot. On arriving at Foxholes, the needful ceremonies were performed. Throwing the stocking, a custom then universally practised, was not omitted; which agreeable ceremony was performed as follows:—

The female friends and relations conducted the bride to her chamber, and the men the bridegroom. The latter then took the bride’s stockings, and the females those of the

bridegroom. Sitting at the bottom of the bed, the stockings were thrown over their heads. When one of the “hurlers” hit the owner, it was deemed an omen that the party would shortly be married. Meanwhile the posset was got ready, and given to the newly-married couple.⁷¹

It was past midnight, yet Alice sat, solitary and watchful, at her little casement. One fair white arm supported her cheek, and she was gazing listlessly on the silver clouds as they floated in liquid brightness across the full round disc of the moon, then high in the meridian. Her thoughts were not on the scene she beheld. The mellow sound of the waterfalls, the murmur from the river, came on with the breeze, rising and falling like the deep pathos of some wild and mysterious music. Memory, that busy enchanter, was at work; and the scenes she had lately witnessed, so full of disquietude and mystery, mingled with the returning tide of past and almost forgotten emotions. We have said that the prevailing bent or bias of her disposition was that of romance; and this idol of the imagination, this love of strange and enervating excitement, had not been repressed by the occurrences of the last few hours; on the contrary, she felt as though some wondrous event was impending—some adventure which she alone should achieve—some power that her own arm should contend with and subdue.

She took the billet from her bosom; the moonlight alone fell upon it; but the words were so indelibly fixed upon her imagination that she fancied she could trace every word on that mystic tablet.

“To-morrow, at midnight, in the haunted chamber! If thou hast courage, tarry there a while. Its occupant will protect thee.”—[‘Wherefore am I so bent on this adventure? To visit the beggar in his lair!’ thought she; and again she threw her eyes on the billet.] “Peril threatens thine house, which thy coming can alone prevent. Shouldest thou reveal but one word of this warning, thy life, and those dear to thee, will be the forfeit. From thine unknown monitor, “These.”

The guest in the boggart-chamber was Noman, to whom it had been allotted, and though he told of terrible sights and harrowing disclosures, he seemed to brave them all with unflinching hardihood, and even exulted in their repetition. To remain an hour or two with such a companion was in itself a sufficiently novel adventure; but that harm could come from such a source scarcely entered her imagination. A feeling of irrepressible curiosity stimulated her, and prevailed over every other consideration. It was not like spending the time alone; this certainly would have been a formidable condition to have annexed. Besides, would it not be a wicked and a wanton thing to shrink from difficulty or danger when the welfare and even life of one so dear as her brother, peradventure, depended on her compliance. Another feeling, too, more complicated, and a little more selfish it might be, was the hidden cause to which her inclinations might be traced.

“Mine unknown monitor!” she repeated the words, and a thousand strange and wayward fancies rose to her recollection. Often had she seen, when least expecting it, a stranger, who, in whatsoever place they met, preserved a silence respectful but mysterious. She had seen him in the places of public resort, in the solitary woods, and in the highways; but his reserve and secrecy were unbroken. When she inquired, not an individual knew him; and though his form and features were indelibly traced on her memory, she could never recall them without an effort, which, whether it was attended with more of pain than of pleasure, we will not venture to declare. Once or twice she had fancied, when awaking in the dead stillness of the night, that an invisible something was near and gazing upon her; but this feeling was soon forgotten, though often revived whenever she was more than usually sensitive or excited. The

⁷¹ Brand’s *Popular Antiquities*, ii. 86-96.

figure of the Moor was wonderfully similar to the form of the mysterious unknown. But the secret was now, at any rate, to be divulged; and a few hours would put her into possession of the key to unlock this curious cabinet. So thought Alice, and her own secret chambers of imagery were strangely distempered thereby. Was she beloved by one of a higher order of beings, a denizen of the invisible world, who tracked her every footstep, and hovered about her unseen? She had heard that such things were, and that they held intercourse with some favoured mortals—unlimited duration, and a nature more exalted, subject to no change, being vouchsafed to the chosen ones. The exploits at Stubbley seemed to favour this hypothesis, and Alice fell into a delicious reverie, as we have seen, well prepared for the belief and reception of any stray marvels that might fall out by the way.

Looking upon the moat which lay stagnant and unruffled beneath the quiet gaze of the moon, she thought that a living form emerged from the bushes on the opposite bank;—she could not be mistaken, it was her unknown lover. Breathless she awaited the result; but the shadows again closed around him, and she saw him not again. Bewildered, agitated, and alarmed, the day was springing faintly in the dim east when her eyelids lay heavy in the dew of their repose.

Morning was high and far risen in the clear blue atmosphere, but its first and balmy freshness was passed when Alice left her chamber. She looked paler and more languid than she was wont, and her brother rallied her playfully on the consequences of last night's dissipation; but her thoughts were otherwise engrossed, and she replied carelessly and with an air of abstraction far different from her usual playful and unrestrained spirit. The mind was absorbed, restricted to one sole avenue of thought: all other impressions ceased to communicate their impulse. Her brother departed soon afterwards to his morning avocations; but Alice sat in the porch. She looked out on the hills with a vacant, but not unwistful eye. Their slopes were dotted with many a fair white dwelling, but the rigour of cultivation had not extended so far up their barren heathery sides as now; yet many a bright paddock, green amid the dark waste, and the little homestead, the nucleus of some subsequent and valuable inheritance, proclaimed the unceasing toil, the primeval curse, and the sweat of the brow, that was here also.

To enjoy the warmth and freshness of the morning, Alice had removed her spinning-wheel into the porch. Here she was engaged in the primitive and good old fashion of preparing yarn for the wants of the household—an occupation not then perfected into the system to which it is now degraded. The wives and daughters of the wealthiest would not then disdain to fabricate material for the household linen, carrying us far back into simpler, if not happier times, when Homer sung, and kings' daughters found a similar employment.

Alice was humming in unison with her wheel, her thoughts more free from the very circumstance that her body was the subject of this mechanical exercise.

"Good morrow, Mistress Alice!" said a sonorous voice at the entrance. Turning suddenly, she espied the athletic beggar standing erect, with his staff and satchel, on one side of the porch.

"Ha' ye an awmous to-day, lady?" He doffed his cap and held it forth, more with the air of one bestowing a favour than soliciting one.

"Thou hast been i' the kitchen, I warrant," said Alice, "by the breadth of thy satchel."

"An' what the worse are ye for that?" replied the saucy mendicant; "your hounds and puppies would lick up the leavings, if I did not."

"Go to," said Alice, impatiently; "thou dost presume too far to escape correction. Begone!"

"This air, I reckon—ay, this blessed air—is as free unto my use as thine," said Noman, sullenly, and without showing any symptoms of obedience.

"My brother shall know of thine insolence, and the menials shall drive thee forth."

"Thy brother!—tell him, pretty maiden, that though he is a lawyer, and his uncle, he who built this house to boot, he hath little left in this misgoverned realm but to deal out injustice. Other folks' money sticks i' their skirts that have precious little o' their own, I wis."

"I know not the nature of thine allusions, nor care I to bandy weapons with such an adversary."

"Hark ye, lady! it was to solder down as pretty a piece of roguery as one would wish to leave to one's heirs that Theophilus Ashton, thine uncle, thy mother's brother, now deceased, went to London when he had builded this house."

"Roguery!—mine uncle Ashton! Darest thou?"——

"Ay, the same. The spoils of my patrimony built this goodly dwelling, and the battle of Marston Moor gave thy brother wherewith to buy the remainder of the inheritance. I was made a beggar by my loyalty, he a rich man by his treason."

"What means this foul charge?" said Alice, astounded by the audacity of this accusation.

"But fear not. Had it not been for thee and another—whose well-being is bound up in thine own—long ago would this goodly heritage have been spoiled; for—revenge is sweeter even than possession; so good-morrow, Mistress Alice."

"What, then, is thy business with me?"

"Wentest thou not from the masque with thy pretty love-billet behind thy stomacher?"

"Insolent vagrant, this folly shall not go unpunished!"

"Hold, wench! provoke not an"—he paused for one second, but in that brief space there came a change over his spirit, which in a moment was subdued as though by some over-mastering effort—"an impotent old man." His voice softened, and there was a touch even of pathos in the expression. "To-night—fail not—I, ay even *I*, will protect thee. Fear not; thy welfare hangs on that issue!"

Saying this, with an air of dignity far superior to his usual bluntness and even rudeness of address, he slowly departed. Thoughts crowded, like a honey swarm, to this hive of mystery, nor could she throw off the impression which clung to her. She had been warned against revealing this communication, but at one time she felt resolved to make her brother acquainted with the whole, and to claim his protection; but then came the warning, or rather threat, of some hidden mischief that must inevitably follow the disclosure. "Surely, in her own home, she might venture to walk unattended. The beggar she had known for some time in his periodical visits; and though she felt an unaccountable timidity in his presence, yet she certainly was minded to make an experiment of the adventure; but"——And in this happy state of doubt and fluctuation she remained until eventide, when a calm bright moon, as it again rose over the hill, saw Alice at the casement of her own chamber, looking thoughtfully, anxiously, down where the dark surface of the stagnant moat wore a bright star on its bosom. The scene, the soft and tender influence which it possessed—the hour, soothing and elevating the mind, freed from the harassing and petty cares of existence—to a romantic and imaginative disposition these were all favourable to its effects—the development of that ethereal spirit of our nature, that enchanter whose wand conjures up the busy world within, creating all things according to his own pleasure, and investing them with every attribute at

his will. She felt her fears give way, and her resolution was taken: the die was cast, and she committed herself to the result. What share the handsome, dark, and melancholy-looking stranger had in this decision she did not pause to inquire, nor indeed could she have much if any suspicion of the secret influence he excited. There was danger, and this danger could only be averted by her interference: what might be curiosity was at any rate her duty; and she, feeling mightily like some devoted heroine, would not shrink from the trial. When once brought to a decision she felt a load taken from her breast; she breathed more freely, and her tread was more vigorous and elastic. She left her chamber with a lofty mien, and the gentle Alice felt more like the proud mistress of an empire than the inhabitant of a little country dwelling when she re-entered the parlour: yet there was a restless glance from her eye which ever and anon would start aside from visible objects and wander about, apparently without aim or discrimination. Her brother was busied, happily, with domestic duties, too much engaged to notice any unusual disturbance in her demeanour, and Alice employed her time to little profit until she heard the appointed signal for rest. As they bade the usual “good-night,” her heart smote her: she looked on the unconscious, unsuspecting aspect of her brother, and the whole secret of her heart was on her tongue: it did not escape her lips; but the tear stood in her eye; and as she closed the door it sounded like the signal of some long separation—as though the portal had for ever closed upon her.

Wrapped in a dark mantle, with cap and hood, the maiden stepped forth from her little closet about midnight. She bore a silver lamp that waved softly in the night-wind as she went with a noiseless, timid step through the passages to the haunted chamber. The room wherein the beggar slept was somewhat detached from the rest of the dormitories. A low gallery led by a narrow corridor to a flight of some two or three steps into this room, now used for the stowage of lumber. It was said to have been one of the apartments in the old house, forming a sort of peduncle to the new, not then removed, like a remnant of the shell sticking to the skirts of the new-fledged bird. This adjunct, the beggar’s dwelling, is now gone. An ancient doorcase with a grotesque carving disclosed the entrance. She paused before it, not without a secret apprehension of what might be going on within. For the first time she felt the novelty, not to say imprudence, of her situation, and the unfeminine nature of her exploit. She was just hesitating whether or not to return when she heard the door slowly open; a tall, gaunt, figure looked out, which she immediately recognised to be that of the mendicant. Somewhat reassured, and her courage strengthened by his appearance, she did not attempt to retreat, but stood silent for a space, and seemingly not a little abashed; yet the purity of her motives, as far as known to herself, soon recurred to her aid, and her proud and somewhat haughty spirit immediately roused its energies when she had to cope with difficulty and danger.

“I come to thy den, old man, that I may unriddle thy dark sayings.”

“Or rather,” replied he, slowly and emphatically, “that thou mayest unriddle that pretty love-billet thou hast read.”

“I am here in my brother’s house, and surely I have both the right and the power to walk forth unquestioned or unsuspected of an intrigue or assignation,” replied she, quick and tender on the point whereon her own suspicions were disagreeably awakened.

“Come in, lady,” said he, “and thou shall be safe from any suspicions but thine own.”

Alice entered, and the door was closed and bolted. Her feelings were those of uneasiness, not unmixed with alarm. Before her stood the athletic form of the mendicant; she was at some distance from the rest of the family—none caring to have their bidding-place in the immediate vicinity of the haunted chamber—in the power, it might be, of this strange and anomalous being. A miserable pallet lay on the floor in one corner, and the room was nearly filled with

useless lumber and the remains of ancient materials from the old apartments. Probably it was from this circumstance that the ghosts had their fancies for this room, haunting the relics of the past, and lingering around their former reminiscences. The light she held gleamed athwart the face of her companion, and his features were strangely significant of some concealed purpose.

“Whom do we meet in this place?” she inquired.

“Prithee, wait; thou wilt see anon. But let me counsel thee to remain silent; what thou seest note, but make no reply. Be not afraid, for no harm shall befall thee. But let me warn thee, maiden, that thou shrink not from the trial.”

He now slowly retired, and she watched his receding figure until it was hidden behind a huge oaken bedstead in the corner. But he returned not, and Alice felt terrified at being so unexpectedly left alone. She called out to him, but there was no answer; she sought for some outlet, but no trace was visible whereby he could have departed from the chamber. As she was stooping down, suddenly the light was blown out, and she felt herself seized by invisible hands.

“Be silent for thy life,” said a strange whisper in her ear. She was hurried on through vaults and passages; the cold damp air struck chilly on her, and she felt as though descending into some unknown depths, beneath the very foundations of her own dwelling. Darkness was still about their steps; but she was borne along, at a swift pace, by persons evidently accustomed to this subterranean line of communication.

“No harm shall happen thee,” said the same whisper in her ear as before. Suddenly a vivid light flashed out from an aperture or window, and she heard a groaning or rumbling and the clank of chains; but this was passed, and a pale dull light showed a low vaulted chamber, into which Alice was conveyed. An iron lamp hung from the ceiling in what seemed to have been one of the cellars of the old house, though she was unaware beforetime of such a dangerous proximity. The door was closed upon her, and again she was left alone. So confused and agitated was she for a while that she felt unable to survey the objects that encompassed her. By degrees, however, she regained sufficient fortitude to make the examination. Her astonishment was extreme when she beheld, ranged round the vault, coffers full of coin—heaps of surprising magnitude exposed, the least of which would have been a king’s ransom; fair and glistening too, apparently fresh from the hands of some cunning artificer. Her curiosity in some measure getting the better of her fears, she ventured to touch one of these tempting heaps—not being sure but that her night visions were answerable for the illusion. She laid her hand on a hoard of bright nobles. Another and another succeeded, yet each coffer held some fresh denomination of coin. There were moneys of various nations, even to the Spanish pistole and Turkish bezant. Such exhaustless wealth it had never yet entered into her imagination to conceive—the very idea was too boundless even for fancy to present.

“Surely,” thought she, “I am in some fairy palace, where the combined wealth of every clime is accumulated; and the king of the genii, or some old and ugly ogre, has certes fallen in love with me, and means to present it for my dowry.” Smiling at this thought, even in the midst of her apprehensions—for the blow which severed her from her friends was too stunning to be felt immediately in all its rigour—she stood as one almost transported with admiration and surprise. Yet her situation was far from being either enviable or pleasant, though in the midst of a treasure-house of wealth that would have made an emperor the richest of his race. No solution that she could invent would at all solve the problem—no key of interpretation would fit these intricate movements. Here she stood, a prisoner perhaps, with the other treasures in the vault; and assuredly the miser, whosoever he might be, had shown great taste and judgment too in the selection. But the crisis was at hand. The door opened, and she heard a

footstep behind her. A form stood before her whom she immediately recognised and perhaps expected. The mysterious stranger was in her presence. With a respectful obeisance he folded his hands on his bosom, but he spoke not.

“What wouldst thou? and why this outrage?” inquired she.

The intruder pointed to the surrounding treasures, then to himself: by which she understood (so quickly interpreted is the mute eloquence of passion) that he was in love with her, and devoted them all exclusively to her service. But what answer she gave, permit me, gentle reader, for a season to detain; for truly it is an event of so marvellous a nature whereon our tradition now disporteth itself, that, like an epicure hindering the final disposal of some delicate mouthful, of which, when gulped, he feeleth no more the savour, so we would, in like manner, courteous reader, do thee this excellent service, in order that the sweetness of expectation may be prolonged thereby; and the solution, like a kernal in the shell, not be crushed by being too suddenly cracked.

Turn we now to the inmates at the hall, where, as may easily be understood, there was a mighty stir and commotion when morning brought the appointed hour, and Mistress Alice came not to the breakfast meal. Her brother was at his wits’ end when the forenoon passed, and still there were no tidings. Messengers were sent far and near, and no place was left untried where it was thought intelligence might be gained. She was not to be found, nor any trace discovered of her departure.

Nicholas was returning from Foxholes, Stubbley, and Pike House. Passing, in a disconsolate mood, through the gate leading from the lane to his own porch, he met Noman, apparently departing. The beggar, seeing his approach, assumed his usual stiff and inflexible attitude, pausing ere he passed. A vague surmise, for which he could not account, prompted the suspicions of Nicholas Haworth towards this unimportant personage.

“What is thy business to-day abroad?” he inquired hastily.

“A word in thine ear, master,” said the beggar.

“Say on, then; and grant that it may have an inkling of my sister!”

“She hath departed.”

“That I know. But whither?”

“Ask the little devilkins I saw yesternight. I have told ye oft o’ the sights and terrible things that have visited me i’ the boggart chamber, and that the ghost begged hard for a victim.”

“What! thou dost not surely suppose he hath borne away my sister?”

“I have said it!” replied the mendicant, with an air of mystery.

“We’ll have the place exorcised, and the spirit laid; and thou”—said Nicholas, pausing—
“have a care that we hale thee not before the justice for practising with forbidden and devilish devices.”

“I cry thee mercy, Master Haworth; but for what good deed am I to suffer? I have brought luck to thine house hitherto, and what mischief yon ghost hath wrought is none o’ my doing. If thou wilt, I can rid thee of his presence, and that speedily, even if ‘twere Beelzebub himself.”

“But will thy conjurations bring back my sister?” said the wondering, yet half-credulous squire.

“That is more than I can tell. But, to prove that I am not in league with thine enemy, I will cast him out.”

“Hath Alice been strangled, or in anywise hurt, by this wicked spirit?”

“Nay,” said the beggar solemnly, “I guess not; but I heard him pass by, and the chains did rattle fearfully through mine ears, until I heard them at her bed-chamber. He may have spirited her away to fairy-land for aught I know; and yet she lives!”

“Save us, merciful Disposer of our lot!” said Nicholas, much moved to sorrow at this strange recital, yet in somewise comforted by the assurance it contained. “We are none of us safe from his visitations, now they are extended hitherto. I dreamt not of danger beforetime, though I have heard sounds, and seen unaccountable things; yet I imagined that in the old chamber only he had power to work mischief; and, even there, I did disbelieve much of thy story, as it respected his freaks and the nature and manner of his visits. The rumblings that I fancied at times in the dead of night were in the end disregarded and almost forgotten.”

“I too have heard the like, but I knew it was the spirit, and”——

“Beware, old man; for I do verily suspect thee as an abettor of these unlawful practices.”

“And so the reward for my testimony is like to end in a lying accusation and a prison!”

“Canst thou win her back by driving from me this evil spirit?”

“I can lay the ghost, I tell thee, if thou wilt; but as for the other, peradventure it lieth not within the compass or power of mortal man to accomplish.”

“What thou canst, let it be done without delay, for I would fain behold a sight so wonderful; yet will I first take precaution to put thee in durance until it be accomplished; perchance it may quicken thee to this good work; and I do bethink me too, thou knowest more than thou wouldst fain acknowledge of this evil dealing toward my sister.”

The beggar sought not to escape; he knew it would be in vain, for the menials had surrounded them; and he was conveyed to the kitchen until he should be ready for the important duties he had to perform. To-morrow was appointed for the trial, but fearful was the night that intervened—rattling of chains, falling of heavy weights, loud rumblings, as though a coach-and-six were driving about the premises; these, intermingled with shrieks and howlings, were not confined to the old room, where the beggar lodged as heretofore, but were heard and felt through the whole house. It seemed as though his presence had hitherto confined them to the locality we have named, and that they had burst their bounds on his departure. Little rest had the household on that fearful night, and the morning was welcome to many who had been terrified so that they scarcely expected to see the light of another sun.

With the earliest dawn Nicholas Haworth hied him to the kitchen, where the beggar, a close prisoner, was comfortably nestled on his couch.

“What ho!” said the squire, “thou canst sleep when others be waking. Thy friends have been seeking thee through the night, mayhap. There have been more shaking limbs than hungry stomachs, I trow.”

“I know of naught that should keep me waking; my conscience made no echo to the knocking without; and so good-morrow, Master Nicholas.”

There came one at this moment running in almost breathless, to say that the cart-horses were all harnessed and yoked ready in the stable by invisible hands, and that no one durst take them from their stalls. On the heels of this messenger came another, who shouted out that the bull, a lusty and well-thriven brute, was quietly perched, in most bull-like gravity, upon the

hay-mow. It being impossible, or contrary to the ordinary law of gravitation, that he could have thus transported himself, what other than demon hands could or durst have lifted so ponderous and obstinate a beast into the place? In short, such were the strange and out-of-the-way frolics that had been committed, that Satan and all his company seemed to have been let loose upon the household on this memorable night.

“Thou shalt rid us of these pests, or by the head of St Nicholas,” said his namesake, “the hangman shall singe thy beard for a fumigation.”

“Let me go, and the spirit shall not trouble thee.”

“Nay, gaffer, thou dost not escape me thus; my sister, we have yet no tidings of her, and, it may be, those followers or familiars of thine can help me to that knowledge.”

“I tell thee I’ll lay the ghost while the holly’s green, or mire in Dearnly Clough, should it so please thee, Master Nicholas; but I must first be locked up for a space in the haunted chamber alone. Keep watch at both door and loophole, if thou see fit; but I gi’e thee my word that I’ll not escape.”

“Agreed,” said Haworth; “but it shall not avail thee, thou crafty fox, for we will watch, and that right diligently; unless the de’il fly away with thee, thou shalt not escape us.”

The bargain was made, and Noman was speedily conducted to the chamber. Sentinels were posted at the door, and round the outside, to prevent either entrance or exit.

A long hour had nigh elapsed, and the watchers were grown weary. Some thought he had gone off in a chariot of smoke through the roof, or in a whirlwind of infernal brimstone; while others, not a few, were out of doors gazing steadfastly up towards the chimneys, expecting to see him perched there, like a daw or starling, ready for flight. But when the hour was fulfilled, the beggar lifted up the latch, and walked forth alone, without let or molestation.

“Whither away, Sir Grey-back?” said Nicholas, “and wherefore in such haste? We have a word or so ere thou depart. Art thou prepared?”

“Ay, if it so please thee.”

“And when dost thou begin thine exorcism?”

“Now, if so be that thou have courage. But I warn thee of danger therefrom. If thou persist, verily in this chamber shall it be done.”

“Then return, we will follow—as many as have courage, that is,” said Nicholas Haworth, looking round and observing that his attendants, with pale faces and mewling stomachs, did manifest a wondrous inquietude, and a sudden eagerness to depart. Yet were there some whose curiosity got the better of their fears, and who followed, or rather hung upon their master’s skirts, into the chamber, which, even in the broad and cheerful daylight, looked a gloomy and comfortless and unhallowed place. Noman commanded that silence should be kept, that not even a whisper should breathe from other lips than his own. He drew a line with his crutch upon the floor, and forbade that any should attempt to pass this imaginary demarcation. The auditors were all agape, and but that the door was fastened, some would doubtless have gone back, repenting of their temerity.

After several unmeaning mummeries and incantations, the chamber appeared to grow darker, and a low rumbling noise was heard, as from some subterranean explosion.

“*Dominus vobiscum*,” said the necromancer; and a train of fire leapt suddenly across the room. A groan of irrepressible terror ran through the company; but the exorcist, with a look

of reprehension for their disobedience, betook himself again to his ejaculations. Retiring backwards a few paces to a corner of the room, he gave three audible knocks upon the floor, which, to the astonishment and dismay of the assembly, were distinctly repeated, apparently from beneath. Thrice was this ceremony gone through, and thrice three times was the same answer returned.

“Restless spirit,” said the conjuror, solemnly, and in a voice and manner little accordant with those of an obscure and unlearned beggar; “why art thou disquieted, and what is the price of thy departure?”

No answer was given, though the question was repeated. The adjurer appeared, for one moment, fairly at a nonplus.

“By thine everlasting doom, I conjure thee, answer me!” Still there was no reply. “Thou shalt not evade me thus,” said he, indignant at the slight which was put upon his spells. He drew a little ebony box from his bosom, and on opening it smoke issued therefrom, like the smell of frankincense. With this fumigation he used many uncouth and horrible words, hard names, and so forth, which probably had no existence save in the teeming issue of his own brain. During this operation groans were heard, at first low and indistinct, then loud and vehement; soon they broke into a yell, so shrill and piercing that several of the hearers absolutely tried, through horror and desperation, to burst the door; but this was secure, and their egress prevented thereby.

“Now answer me what thou wouldst have, and tell me the terms of thy departure hence.”

A low murmur was heard. The beggar listened with great attention.

“This wandering ghost avoucheth,” said he, after all was silent, “that there be two of them, and that they rest not until they have taken possession of this house, and driven the inhabitants therefrom.”

“Hard law this,” said Nicholas Haworth; “but, for all their racket, I shan’t budge.”

“Then must they have a sacrifice for the wrong done when they were i’ the body; being slain, as they say, by their guardian, a wicked uncle, that he might possess the inheritance.”

Again he made question, looking all the while as though talking to something that was present and visible before him.

“What would ye for your sacrifice, evil and hateful things? for I know, in very deed, that ye are not the innocent and heavenly babes whose spirits are now in glory, but devilish creatures who have been permitted to walk here unmolested, for the wickedness that hath been done. Again, I say that your unwillingness sufficeth not, for ye shall be driven hence this blessed day.”

Another shriek announced their apprehension at this threat, and again there was a murmuring as before.

“He sayeth,” cried the exorcist, after listening a while, “they must have a living body sacrificed, and in four quarters it must be laid; then shall these wicked spirits not return hither until what is severed be joined together. With this hard condition we must be content.”

“Then, by ‘r lady’s grace, if none else there be, thou shalt be the holocaust for thy pains,” said Nicholas, “for I think we need not any other. What say ye, shall not this wizard be the sacrifice, and we then rid the world of a batch of evil things at once?” He looked with a cruel eye upon the mendicant; for he judged that his sister had, in some way or another, fallen a victim to his devilish plots; and he would have thought it little harm to have poured out his

blood on the spot. The beggar seemed aware of his danger, but with a loud and peremptory tone he cried—

“There needeth not so costly an oblation. Bring hither the first brute animal ye behold, any one of you, on crossing the threshold of the porch.”

A messenger was accordingly sent, who returned with a barn-door fowl in his hand, a well-fed chanticleer, whose crow that morning had awakened his cackling dames for the last time.

With great solemnity the conjuror went forth from the chamber, and in the courtyard the fowl was named “John;” sponsors standing in due form, as at an ordinary baptism. Then the bird was dismembered, or rather divided into four parts, according to the directions they had received. These were afterwards disposed of as follows:—one was buried at Little Clegg, in a field close by, another under one of the hearth-flags in the hall, another at the Beil Bridge, by the river which runs past Belfield, and the remaining quarter under the barn-floor. Nicholas continued to look on with a curious eye until the ceremony was concluded, when, after a brief pause, he inquired—

“Have there been no tidings yet from Alice? Can thine art not disclose to me whither she be gone?”

“The maiden lives,” said the beggar doggedly.

“Thou knowest of her hiding, then?” said her brother sharply, and with a cunning glance directed towards the speaker.

“The spirit said so,” replied Noman, as though wishful to evade or to shrink from the question.

“And what else?” inquired the other; “for by my halidome thou stirrest not hence until she be forthcoming, alive or dead! I verily suspect—nay, more, I charge thee with forcibly detaining her against her own privy or consent.”

The beggar looked steadily upon him, not a whit either moved or abashed at this bold accusation.

“Peradventure thou speakest without heed and unadvisedly. I tell thee again, thou wouldest have been driven hence ere now had it not been for others whom that spirit must obey.”

“Who art thou?” said the perplexed inquirer; “for thou art either worse or better than thou seemest.”

“Once the rightful heir, now a beggar, in these domains, wrested from me by rapine and the harpy fangs of injustice misnamed law. Theophilus Ashton, from whom ye took your share of the inheritance when death dislodged it from his gripe, won it himself most foully from my ancestors;—and have I not a right to hate thee?”

“And so thy vengeance hath fallen upon a defenceless woman?”

“Nay, I said not so; but if I had so minded I might have been glutted with vengeance, ay, to my heart’s core. Hark thee. Secrets I have learned that will bind the hidden things of darkness, and bow them to my behest. The unseen powers and operations of nature have been open to my gaze. Long ago my converse and companionship were with the learned doctors and sages of the East. In Spain I have walked in the palace of the Moorish kings, the Alhambra at Grenada; and in Arabia I have learned the mystic cabala, and worshipped in the temple of the holy prophet!”

“And yet thou comest a beggar to my door! Truly thy spells have profited thee little.”

The beggar smiled scornfully. "Riches inexhaustible, unlimited are mine; while nature is unveiled at my command."

"Thou speakest riddles, old man; or thou dost hug the very spectres of thy brain, which men call madness."

"I am not mad; save it be madness that I have not hurled thee from this thy misgotten heritage. A power of mighty and all prevading energy hath hindered me, and, it may be, rescued thee from destruction."

"Unto what unknown intercessor do I owe this forbearance?"

"Love!" said the mendicant, with an expression of withering and baneful scorn; "a silly hankering for a puling girl."

"Thee!—in love?"

"And is it so strange, so hard and incapable of belief, that in a frosty but vigorous age, the sap should be fresh though the outward trunk look withered and without verdure?"

Nicholas shuddered. A harrowing suspicion crossed him that his beloved sister had fallen a victim to the lawless passions of this hoary delinquent.

"Thou dost judge wrongfully," said the beggar; "she appertaineth not to me. 'Tis long since I have drunk of that maddening cup, a woman's love. Would that another had not taken its intoxicating draught."

"Thou but triflest with me," said Haworth; "let the maiden go, or beware my vengeance."

"Thy vengeance! Weak, impotent man! what canst thou do? Thy threats I hold lighter than the breath that makes them; thy cajolments I value less than these; and thy rewards—why, the uttermost wealth that thou couldst boast would weigh but as a feather against the riches at my disposal."

"Then give her back at my request."

"I tell thee she is not mine, nor in my charge."

"But thou knowest of her detention, and where she is concealed."

"What if I do? will that help thee to the discovery?"

"Point out the place, or conduct me thither, and"——

The mendicant here burst forth into a laugh so tantalising and malicious that Nicholas, though silent, grew pale with choler.

"Am I a fool?" said the exorcist; "an everyday fool? a simpleton of such a dastardly condition that thou shouldest think to whine me from my purpose? Never."

Scarcely was the word spoken when a loud and awful explosion shook the building to its foundations. Horror and consternation were seen upon the hitherto composed features of the beggar. He grasped his crutch, and with a yell of unutterable anguish he cried, "Ruined—betrayed! May the fiends follow ye for this mischance!"

He threw himself almost headlong down the steps, and ran with rapid strides through the yard, followed by Nicholas, who seemed in a stupor of astonishment at these mysterious events.

Passing round to the other side of the house, he saw a smoke rising in a dense unbroken column from an outbuilding beyond the moat, towards which Noman was speedily

advancing. Suddenly he slackened his pace. He paused, seemingly undecided whither to proceed. He then turned sharply round and made his way into the kitchen, passing up a staircase into the haunted chamber, still followed by Nicholas Haworth, and not a few who were lookers-on, hoping to ascertain the cause of this alarm.

To their great surprise the beggar hastily displaced some lumber, and, raising a trap-door, quickly disappeared down a flight of steps. With little hesitation the master followed, and keeping the footsteps of his leader within hearing, he cautiously went forward, convinced that in some way or another this opportune but inexplicable event would lead to the discovery of his sister.

Suddenly he heard a shriek. He felt certain it was the voice of Alice. He rushed on; but some unseen barrier opposed his progress. He heard noises and hasty footsteps beyond, evidently in hurry and confusion. The door was immediately opened, and he beheld Noman bearing out the half-lifeless form of Alice. Smoke, and even flame, followed hard upon their flight; but she was conveyed upwards to a place of safety.

“There,” said the mendicant, when he had laid down his burden, “at the peril of all I possess, and of life too, I have rescued her. My hopes are gone—my schemes for ever blasted—and I am a ruined, wretched old man, without a home or a morsel of bread.”

He walked out through the porch, Nicholas being too busily engaged in attending to the restoration of Alice to heed his escape. Two other men, strangers, had before emerged from the avenue. In the confusion of the moment their flight was effected, and they were seen no more.

When Alice was sufficiently recovered, Nicholas, to his utter surprise and dismay, learned that she had been doomed to be imprisoned, even in her own house, until she consented to be the wife of one whom, however he might have won upon her regard by fair and honest courtship, she hated and repulsed for this traitorous and forcible detention. Yet they had not dared to let her go, lest the secrets of her prison-house should be told. The false beggar, whose real name was Clegg, having become an adept in the art of coining, acquired during his residence abroad, and likewise having arrived at the knowledge of many chemical secrets long hidden from the vulgar and uninitiated, had leagued himself with one of the like sort, together with his own son, a handsome well-favoured youth (whose mother he had rescued from a Spanish convent), for the purpose of carrying on a most extensive manufacture and issue of counterfeit money of several descriptions. His former knowledge, when young, of his ancestors’ mansion at Clegg Hall suggested the fitness of this spot for their establishment. Its situation was sequestered; and the ancient vaults, though nearly filled with rubbish, might yet be made available for their purpose. The secret entrance, and, above all, the currently-believed story of the ghost, might afford facilities for frightening away those who were disposed to be curious; and any noises unavoidable in the course of their operations might be attributed to this fruitful source of imposture. By a little dexterity, possession of the haunted chamber was obtained, the feigned beggar being a periodical visitant; thence a ready entrance was contrived, and all materials were introduced that were needful for their fraudulent proceedings. Many months their traffic was carried on without discovery; and in the beggar’s wallet counterfeit money to a considerable amount was conveyed, and distributed by other agents into general circulation. Well might he say that boundless wealth was at their command; the means employed in disposing of the proceeds of their ingenuity were well calculated for the purpose. They had proposed, by machinations and alarms, to drive away utterly the present inhabitants and possessors of the Hall. The reign of terror was about to commence, plans being already matured for this purpose, had not the younger Clegg seen Alice Haworth; and love, that mighty controller of human affairs and devices, most

inopportunately frustrated their intentions. The elder Clegg, too, was induced to aid the design, hoping that, should a union take place, the inheritance might revert into the old channel. We have seen the result: the wilfulness and obduracy of Alice, and the infatuation of the lover, who had thought to dazzle her with the riches he purposely spread before her, prevented the success of their schemes. She peremptorily refused and repulsed him, accusing him of a gross and wanton outrage. What might have been the end of this contention we know not, seeing that an unforeseen accident caused the explosion which led to her escape and the flight of her captors.

What remained of the old house was pulled down. The vaults and cellars, which were found to extend for a considerable distance even beyond the moat, were walled up, and every vestige that was left, together with an immense hoard of counterfeit money, was completely destroyed.

XXXI. The Mermaid Of Martin Meer

“Now the dancing sunbeams play
O’er the green and glassy sea:
Come with me, and we will go
Where the rocks of coral grow.”

Little needs to be said by way of introduction or explanation of the following tale. Martin Meer is now in process of cultivation; the plough and the harrow leave more enduring furrows on its bosom. It is a fact, curious enough in connection with our story, that some years ago, in digging and draining, a canoe was found here. How far this may confirm our tradition, we leave the reader to determine. It is scarcely two miles from Southport; and the botanist, as well as the entomologist, would find themselves amply repaid by a visit.

Martin Meer, the scene of the following story, we have described in our first series of *Traditions*, where Sir Tarquin, a carnivorous giant, is slain by Sir Lancelot of the Lake. These circumstances, and more of the like purport on this subject, we therefore omit, as being too trite and familiar to bear repetition. We do not suppose the reader to be quite so familiar with the names and fortunes of Captain Harrington and Sir Ralph Molyneux, though they had the good fortune to be born eleven hundred years later, and to have seen the world, in consequence, eleven hundred years older—we wish we could say wiser and better tempered, less selfish and less disposed to return hard knocks, and to be corrupted with evil communications. But man is the same in all ages. The external habits and usages of society change his mode of action—clothe the person and passions in a different garb; but their form and substance, like the frame they inhabit, are unchanged, and will continue until this great mass of intelligence, this mischievous compound of good and evil, this round rolling earth, shall cease to swing through time and space—a mighty pendulum, whose last stroke shall announce the end of time, the beginning of eternity!

Our story gets on indifferently the while; but a willing steed is none the worse for halting. Harrington and his friend Sir Ralph were spruce and well-caparisoned cavaliers, living often about court towards the latter end of Charles the Second’s reign. What should now require their presence in these extreme regions of the earth, far from society and civilisation, it is not our business to inquire. It sufficeth for our story that they were here, mounted, and proceeding at a shuffling trot along the flat, bare, sandy region we have described.

“How sweetly and silently that round sun sinks into the water!” said Harrington.

“But doubtless,” returned his companion, “if he were fire, as thou sayest, the liquid would not bear his approach so meekly; why, it would boil if he were but chin-deep in yon great seething-pot.”

“Thou art quicker at a jest than a moral, Molyneux,” said the other and graver personage; “thou canst not even let the elements escape thy gibes. I marvel how far we are from our cousin Ireland’s at Lydiate. My fears mislead me, or we have missed our way. This flat bosom of desolation hath no vantage-ground whence we may discern our path; and we have been winding about this interminable lake these two hours.”

“Without so much as a blade of grass or a tree to say ‘Good neighbour’ to,” said Molyneux, interrupting his companion’s audible reverie. “Crows and horses must fare sumptuously in these parts.”

“This lake, I verily think, follows us; or we are stuck to its side like a lady’s bauble.”

“And no living thing to say ‘Good-bye,’ were it fish or woman.”

“Or mermaid, which is both.” Scarcely were the words uttered when Harrington pointed to the water.

“Something dark comes upon that burning track left on the surface by the sun’s chariot wheels.”

“A fishmonger’s skiff belike,” said Sir Ralph.

They plunged through the deep sandy drifts towards the brink, hastening to greet the first appearance of life which they had found in this region of solitude. At a distance they saw a female floating securely, and apparently without effort, upon the rippling current. Her form was raised half-way above the water, and her long hair hung far below her shoulders. This she threw back at times from her forehead, smoothing it down with great dexterity. She seemed to glide on slowly, and without support; yet the distance prevented any very minute observation.

“A bold swimmer, o’ my troth!” said Molyneux; “her body tapers to a fish’s tail, no doubt, or my senses have lost their use.”

Harrington was silent, looking thoughtful and mysterious.

“I’ll speak to yon sea-wench.”

“For mercy’s sake, hold thy tongue. If, as I suspect—and there be such things, ‘tis said, in God’s creation—thou wilt”——

But the tongue of this errant knight would not be stayed; and his loud musical voice swept over the waters, evidently attracting her notice, and for the first time. She drew back her dark hair, gazing on them for a moment, when she suddenly disappeared. Harrington was sure she had sunk; but a jutting peninsula of sand was near enough to have deceived him, especially through the twilight, which now drew on rapidly.

“And thou hast spoken to her!” said he gravely; “then be the answer thine!”

“A woman’s answer were easier parried than a sword-thrust, methinks; and that I have hitherto escaped.”

“Let us be gone speedily. I like not yon angry star spying out our path through these wilds.”

“Thou didst use to laugh at my superstitions; but thine own, I guess, are too chary to be meddled with.”

“Laugh at me an’ thou wilt,” said Harrington: “when Master Lilly cast my horoscope he bade me ever to eschew travel when Mars comes to his southing, conjunct with the Pleiades, at midnight—the hour of my birth. Last night, as I looked out from where I lay at Preston, methought the red warrior shot his spear athwart their soft scintillating light; and as I gazed, his ray seemed to ride half-way across the heavens. Again he is rising yonder.”

“And his meridian will happen at midnight?”

“Even so,” replied Harrington.

“Then gallop on. I’d rather make my supper with the fair dames at Lydiate than in a mermaid’s hall.”

But their progress was a work of no slight difficulty, and even danger. Occasionally plunging to the knees in a deep bog, then wading to the girth in a hillock of sand and prickly bent grass (the *Arundo arenaria*, so plentiful on these coasts), the horses were scarcely able to keep their footing—yet were they still urged on. Every step was expected to bring them within sight of some habitation.

“What is yonder glimmer to the left?” said Molyneux. “If it be that hideous water again, it is verily pursuing us. I think I shall be afraid of water as long as I live.”

“As sure as Mahomet was a liar, and the Pope has excommunicated him from Paradise, ‘tis the same still, torpid, dead-like sea we ought to have long since passed.”

“Then have our demonstrations been in a circle, in place of a right line, and we are fairly on our way back again.”

Sure enough there was the same broad, still surface of the Meer, though on the contrary side, mocking day’s last glimmer in the west. The bewildered travellers came to a full pause. They took counsel together while they rested their beasts and their spur-rowels; but the result was by no means satisfactory. One by one came out the glorious throng above them, until the heavens grew light with living hosts, and the stars seemed to pierce the sight, so vivid was their brightness.

“Yonder is a light, thank Heaven!” cried Harrington.

“And it is approaching, thank your stars!” said his companion. “I durst not stir to meet it, through these perilous paths, if our night’s lodging depended on it.”

The bearer of this welcome discovery was a kind-hearted fisherman, who carried a blazing splinter of antediluvian firewood dug from the neighbouring bog; a useful substitute for more expensive materials.

It appeared they were at a considerable distance from the right path, or indeed from any path that could be travelled with safety, except by daylight. He invited them to a lodging in a lone hut on the borders of the lake, where he and his wife subsisted by eel-catching and other precarious pursuits. The simplicity and openness of his manner disarmed suspicion. The offer was accepted, and the benighted heroes found themselves breathing fish-odours and turf-smoke for the night, under a shed of the humblest construction. His family consisted of a wife and one child only; but the strangers preferred a bed by the turf-embers to the couch that was kindly offered them.

The cabin was built of the most simple and homely materials. The walls were pebble-stones from the sea-beach, cemented with clay. The roof-tree was the wreck of some unfortunate vessel stranded on the coast. The whole was thatched with star-grass or sea-reed, blackened with smoke and moisture.

“You are but scantily peopled hereabouts,” said Harrington, for lack of other converse.

“Why, ay,” returned the peasant; “but it matters nought; our living is mostly on the water.”

“And it might be with more chance of company than on shore; we saw a woman swimming or diving there not long ago.”

“Have ye seen her?” inquired both man and dame with great alacrity.

“Seen whom?” returned the guest.

“The Meer-woman, as we call her.”

“We saw a being, but of what nature we are ignorant, float and disappear as suddenly as though she were an inhabitant of yon world of waters.”

“Thank mercy! Then she will be here anon.”

Curiosity was roused, though it failed in procuring the desired intelligence. She might be half-woman half-fish for aught they knew. She always came from the water, and was very kind to them and the babe. Such was the sum of the information; yet when they spoke of the child there was evidently a sort of mystery and alarm, calculated to awaken suspicion.

Harrington looked on the infant. It was on the woman’s lap asleep, smiling as it lay; and an image of more perfect loveliness and repose he had never beheld. It might be about a twelvemonth old; but its dress did not correspond with the squalid poverty by which it was surrounded.

“Surely this poor innocent has not been stolen,” thought he. The child threw its little hands towards him as it awoke; and he could have wept. Its short feeble wail had smitten him to the heart.

Suddenly they heard a low murmuring noise at the window.

“She is there,” said the woman; “but she likes not the presence of strangers. Get thee out to her, Martin, and persuade her to come in.”

The man was absent for a short time. When he entered, his face displayed as much astonishment as it was possible to cram into a countenance so vacant.

“She says our lives were just now in danger; and that the child’s enemies are again in search; but she has put them on the wrong scent. We must not tarry here any longer; we must remove, and that speedily. But she would fain be told what is your business in these parts, if ye are so disposed.”

“Why truly,” said Harrington, “our names and occupation need little secrecy. We are idlers at present, and having kindred in the neighbourhood, are on our way to the Irelands at Lydiat, as we before told thee. Verily, there is but little of either favour or profit to be had about court now-a-days. Nought better than to loiter in hall and bower, and fling our swords in a lady’s lap. But why does the woman ask? Hath she some warning to us? or is there already a spy upon our track?”

“I know not,” said Martin; “but she seems mightily afeard o’ the child.”

“If she will entrust the babe to our care,” said Harrington, after a long pause, “I will protect it. The shield of the Harringtons shall be its safeguard.”

The fisherman went out with this message; and on his return it was agreed that, as greater safety would be the result, the child should immediately be given to Harrington. A solemn pledge was required by the unseen visitant that the trust should be surrendered whenever, and by whomsoever, demanded; likewise a vow of inviolable secrecy was exacted from the parties that were present. Harrington drew a signet from his finger; whoever returned it was to receive back the child. He saw not the mysterious being to whom it was sent; but the idea of the Meer-woman, the lake, and the untold mysteries beneath its quiet bosom, came vividly and painfully on his recollection.

Long after she had departed, the strange events of the evening kept them awake. Inquiries were now answered without hesitation. Harrington learned that the “Meer-woman’s” first appearance was on a cold wintry day, a few months before. She did not crave protection from the dwellers in the hut, but seemed rather to command it. Leaving the infant with them, and

promising to return shortly, she seemed to vanish upon the lake, or rather, she seemed to glide away on its surface so swiftly that she soon disappeared. Since then she had visited them thrice, supplying them with a little money and other necessities; but they durst not question her, she looked so strange and forbidding.

In the morning they were conducted to Lydiate by the fisherman, who also carried the babe. Here they told a pitiable story of their having found the infant exposed, the evening before, by some unfeeling mother; and, strange to say, the truth was never divulged until the time arrived when Harrington should render up his trust.

Years passed on. Harrington saw the pretty foundling expand through every successive stage from infancy to childhood—lovelier as each year unfolded some hidden grace, and the bloom brightened as it grew. He had married in the interval, but was yet childless. His lady was passionately fond of her charge, and Grace Harrington was the pet and darling of the family. No wonder their love to the little stranger was growing deeper, and was gradually acquiring a stronger hold on their affections. But Harrington remembered his vow: it haunted him like a spectre. It seemed as though written with a sunbeam on his memory; but the finger of death pointed to its accomplishment. It will not be fulfilled without blood, was the foreboding that assailed him. His lady knew not of his grief, ignorant happily of its existence, and of its source.

Their mansion stood on a rising ground but a few miles distant from the lake. He thus seemed to hover instinctively on its precincts; though, in observance of his vow, he refrained from visiting that lonely hut, or inquiring about its inhabitants. Its broad smooth bosom was ever in his sight; and when the sun went down upon its wide brim his emotion was difficult to conceal.

One soft, clear evening, he sat enjoying the calm atmosphere, with his lady and their child. The sun was nigh setting, and the lake glowed like molten fire at his approach.

“‘Tis said a mermaid haunts yon water,” said Mrs Harrington; “I have heard many marvellous tales of her, a few years ago. Strange enough, last night I dreamed she took away our little girl, and plunged with her into the water. But she never returned.”

“How I should like to see a mermaid!” said the playful girl. “Nurse says they are beautiful ladies with long hair and green eyes. But”—and she looked beseechingly towards them—“we are always forbidden to ramble towards the Meer.”

“Harrington, the night wind makes you shiver. You are ill!”

“No, my love. But—this cold air comes wondrous keen across my bosom,” said he, looking wistfully on the child, who, scarcely knowing why, threw her little arms about his neck, and wept.

“My dream, I fear, hath strange omens in it,” said the lady thoughtfully.

The same red star shot fiercely up from the dusky horizon; the same bright beam was on the wave; and the mysterious incidents of the fisherman’s hut came like a track of fire across Harrington’s memory.

“Yonder is that strange woman again that has troubled us about the house these three days,” said Mrs Harrington, looking out from the balcony; “we forbade her yesterday. She comes hither with no good intent.”

Harrington looked over the balustrade. A female stood beside a pillar, gazing intently towards him. Her eye caught his own; it was as if a basilisk had smitten him. Trembling, yet

fascinated, he could not turn away his glance; a smile passed on her dark-red visage—a grin of joy at the discovery.

“Surely,” thought he, “’tis not the being who claims my child!” But the woman drew something from her hand, which, at that distance, Harrington recognised as his pledge. His lady saw not the signal; without speaking, he obeyed. Hastening down-stairs, a private audience confirmed her demand, which the miserable Harrington durst not refuse.

Two days he was mostly in private. Business with the steward was the ostensible motive. He had sent an urgent message to his friend Molyneux, who, on the third day, arrived at H——, where they spent many hours in close consultation. The following morning Grace came running in after breakfast. She flung her arms about his neck.

“Let me not leave you to-day,” she sobbed aloud.

“Why, my love?” said Harrington, strangely disturbed at the request.

“I do not know!” replied the child, pouting.

“To-day I ride out with Sir Ralph to the Meer, and as thou hast often wished—because it was forbidden, I guess—thou shalt ride with us a short distance; I will toss thee on before me, and away we’ll gallop—like the Prince of Trebizond on the fairy horse.”

“And shall we see the mermaid?” said the little maiden quickly, as though her mind had been running on the subject.

“I wish the old nurse would not put such foolery in the girl’s head,” said Mrs Harrington impatiently. “There be no mermaids now, my love.”

“What! not the mermaid of Martin Meer?” inquired the child, seemingly disappointed.

Harrington left the room, promising to return shortly.

The morning was dull, but the afternoon broke out calm and bright. Grace was all impatience for the ride; and Rosalind, the favourite mare, looked more beautiful than ever in her eyes. She bounded down the terrace at the first sound of the horses’ feet, leaving Mrs Harrington to follow.

The cavaliers were already mounted, but the child suddenly drew back.

“Come, my love,” said Harrington, stretching out his hand; “look how your pretty Rosalind bends her neck to receive you.”

Seeing her terror, Mrs Harrington soothed these apprehensions, and fear was soon forgotten amid the pleasures she anticipated.

“You are back by sunset, Harrington?”

“Fear not, *I* shall return,” replied he; and away sprang the pawing beasts down the avenue. The lady lingered until they were out of sight. Some unaccountable oppression weighed down her spirits; she sought her chamber, and a heavy sob threw open the channel which hitherto had restrained her tears.

They took the nearest path towards the Meer, losing sight of it as they advanced into the low flat sands, scarcely above its level. When again it opened into view its wide waveless surface lay before them, reposing in all the sublimity of loneliness and silence. The rapture of the child was excessive. She surveyed with delight its broad unruffled bosom, giving back the brightness and glory of that heaven to which it looked; to her it seemed another sky and another world, pure and spotless as the imagination that created it.

They entered the fisherman's hut; but it was deserted. Years had probably elapsed since the last occupation. Half-burnt turf and bog-wood lay on the hearth; but the walls were crumbling down with damp and decay.

The two friends were evidently disappointed. At times they looked out anxiously, but in vain, as it might seem; for they again sat down, silent and depressed, upon a turf-heap by the window, while the child ran playing and gambolling towards the beach.

Harrington sat with his back to the window, when suddenly the low murmuring noise he had heard on his former visit was repeated. He turned pale.

"Thou art not alone; and where is the child?" or words to this purport were uttered in a whisper. He started aside; the sound, as he thought, was close to his ear. Molyneux heard it too.

"Shall I depart?" said he, cautiously; "I will take care to keep within call."

"Nay," said his friend, whispering in his ear, "thou must ride out of sight and sound too, I am afraid, or we shall not accomplish our plans for the child's safety. Depart with the attendants; I fear not the woman. Say to my lady I will return anon."

With some reluctance Sir Ralph went his way homewards, and Harrington was left to accomplish these designs without assistance.

Immediately he walked out towards the shore; but he saw nothing of the child, and his heart misgave him. He called her; but the sound died with its own echo upon the waters. The timid rabbit fled to its burrow, and the sea-gull rose from her gorge, screaming away heavily to her mate; but the voice of his child returned no more!

Almost driven to frenzy, he ran along the margin of the lake to a considerable distance, returning after a fruitless search to the hut, where he threw himself on the ground. In the agony of his spirit he lay with his face to the earth, as if to hide his anguish as he wept.

How long he remained was a matter of uncertainty. On a sudden, instantaneously with the rush that aroused him, he felt his arms pinioned, and that by no timid or feeble hand. At the same moment a bandage was thrown over his eyes, and he found himself borne away swiftly into a boat. He listened for some time to the rapid stroke of the oars. Not a word was spoken from which he could ascertain the meaning of this outrage. To his questions no reply was vouchsafed, and in the end he forbore inquiry—the mind wearied into apathy by excitement and its consequent exhaustion.

The boat again touched the shore, and he was carried out. The roar of the sea had for some time been rapidly growing louder as they neared the land. He was now borne along over hillocks of loose sand to the sea-beach, when he felt himself fairly launched upon the high seas. He heard the whistling of the cordage, the wide sail flap to the wind, with the groan of the blast as it rushed into the swelling canvas; then he felt the billows prancing under him, and the foam and spray from their huge necks as they swept by. It was not long ere he heard the sails lowered; and presently they were brought up alongside a vessel of no ordinary bulk. Harrington was conducted with little ceremony into the cabin; the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he found himself in the presence of a weather-beaten tar, who was sitting by a table, on which lay a cutlass and a pair of richly-embossed pistols.

"We have had a long tug to bring thee to," said the captain; "but we always grapple with the enemy in the long run. If thou hast aught to say why sentence of death should not pass on thee, ay, and be executed straightway too—say on. What! not a shot in thy locker? Then may all such land-sharks perish, say I, as thus I signify thy doom." He examined his pistols with

great nicety as he spoke. Harrington was dumb with amazement, whilst his enemy surveyed him with a desperate and determined glance. At length he stammered forth—

“I am ignorant of thy meaning; much less can I shape my defence. Who art thou?”

The other replied, in a daring and reckless tone—

“I am the Free Rover, of whom thou hast doubtless heard. My good vessel and her gallant crew ne’er slackened a sky-raker in the chase, nor backed a mainsail astern of the enemy. But pirate as I am—hunted and driven forth like the prowling wolf, without the common rights and usages of my fellow men—I have yet their feelings. I *had* a child! Thy fell, unpitying purpose, remorseless monster, hath made me childless! But thou hast robbed the lioness of her whelp, and thou art in her gripe!”

“As my hope is to escape thy fangs, I am innocent of the crime.”

“Maybe thou knowest not the mischief thou hast inflicted; but thy guilt and my bereavement are not the less. My child was ailing; we were off this coast, when we sent her ashore secretly until our return. A fisherman and his wife, to whom our messenger entrusted the babe, were driven forth by thee one bitter night without a shelter. The child perished; and its mother chides my tardy revenge.”

“‘Tis a falsehood!” cried Harrington, “told to cover some mischievous design. The child, if it be thine, was given to my care—by whom I know not. I have nurtured her kindly; not three hours ago, as I take it, she was in yonder hut; but she has been decoyed from me; and I am here thy prisoner, and without the means of clearing myself from this false and malicious charge.”

The captain smiled incredulously.

“Thou art lord of yonder soil, I own; but thou shouldest have listened to the cry of the helpless. I have here a witness who will prove thy story false—the messenger herself. Call hither Oneida,” said he, speaking to the attendants. But this personage could not be found.

“She has gone ashore in her canoe,” said the pirate; “and the men never question her. She will return ere mid-watch. Prepare: thou showedst no mercy, and I have sworn!”

Harrington was hurried to a little square apartment, which an iron grating sufficiently indicated to be the state prison. The vessel lay at anchor; the intricate soundings on that dangerous coast rendered her perfectly safe from attack, even if she had been discovered. He watched the stars rising out, calm and silently, from the deep: “Ere yon glorious orb is on the zenith,” thought he, “I may be—what?” He shrank from the conclusion. “Surely the wretch will not dare to execute his audacious threat?” He again caught that red and angry star gleaming portentously on him. It seemed to be his evil genius; its malignant eye appeared to follow out his track, to haunt him, and to beset his path continually with suffering and danger. He stood by the narrow grating, feverish and apprehensive; again he heard that low murmuring voice which he too painfully recognised. The mysterious being of the lake stood before him.

“White man”—she spoke in a strange and uncouth accent;—“the tree bows to the wing of the tempest—the roots look upward—the wind sighs past its withered trunk—the song of the warbler is heard no more from its branches, and the place of its habitation is desolate. Thine enemies have prevailed. I did it not to compass thine hurt: I knew not till now thou wert in their power; and I cannot prevent the sacrifice.”

“Restore the child, and I am safe,” said Harrington, trembling in his soul’s agony at every point; “or withdraw thy false, thine accursed accusations.”

“Thou knowest not my wrongs and my revenge! Thou seest the arrow, but not the poison that is upon it. The maiden, whose race numbers a thousand warriors, returns not to her father’s tribe ere she wring out the heart’s life-blood from her destroyer. Death were happiness to the torments I inflict on him and the woman who hath supplanted me. And yet they think Oneida loves them—bends like the bulrush when the wind blows upon her, and rises only when he departs. What! give back the child? She hath but taken my husband and my bed; as soon might ye tear the prey from the starved hunter. This night will I remove their child from them—to depart, when a few moons are gone—it may be to dwell again with my tribe in the wigwam and the forest.”

“But I have not wronged thee!”

“Thou art of their detested race. Yet would I not kill thee.”

“Help me to escape.”

“Escape!” said this untamed savage, with a laugh which went with a shudder to his heart. “As soon might the deer dart from the hunter’s rifle as thou from the cruel pirate who has pronounced thy death! I could tell thee such deeds of him and these bloody men as would freeze thy bosom, though it were wide and deep as the lakes of my country. Yet I loved him once! He came a prisoner to my father’s hut. I have spilled my best blood for his escape. I have borne him where the white man’s feet never trod—through forests, where aught but the Indian or the wild beast would have perished. I left my country and my kin—the graves of my fathers—and how hath he requited me? He gave the ring of peace to the red woman; but when he saw another and a fairer one of thy race, she became his wife; and from that hour Oneida’s love was hate!—and I have waited and not complained, for my revenge was sure! And shall I now bind the healing leaf upon the wound?—draw the arrow from the flesh of mine enemies? Thou must die! for my revenge is sweet.”

“I will denounce thee to him, fiend! I will reveal!”——

“He will not believe thee. His eye and ear are sealed. He would stake his life on my fidelity. He knows not of the change.”

“But he will discover it, monster, when thou art gone. He will track thee to the verge of this green earth and the salt sea, and thou shall not escape.”

With a yell of unutterable scorn she cried——

“He may track the wild bee to its nest, and the eagle to his eyrie, but he discerns not one footprint of Oneida’s path!”

The pangs of death seemed to be upon him. He read his doom in the kindling eye and almost demoniac looks of the being who addressed him. She seemed like some attendant demon waiting to receive his spirit. His brain grew dizzy. Death would have been welcome in comparison with the horrors of its anticipation. He would have caught her; but she glided from his grasp, and he was again left in that den of loneliness and misery. How long he knew not; his first returning recollection was the sound of bolts and the rude voices of his jailers.

In this extremity the remembrance of that Being in whom, and from whom, are all power and mercy, flashed on his brain like a burst of hope—like a sunbeam on the dark ocean of despair.

“God of my fathers, hear!” escaped from his lips in that appalling moment. His soul was calmed by the appeal. Vain was the help of man, but he felt as if supported and surrounded by the arm of Omnipotence, while silently, and with a firm step, he followed his conductors.

One dim light only was burning above. Some half-dozen of the crew stood armed on the quarter-deck behind their chief; their hard, forbidding faces looked without emotion upon this scene of unpitying, deliberate murder.

To some question from the pirate Harrington replied by accusing the Indian woman of treachery.

“As soon yonder star, which at midnight marks our meridian, would prove untrue in its course.”

Harrington shuddered at this ominous reference.

“I cannot prove mine innocence,” said he; “but I take yon orb to witness that I never wronged you or yours. The child is in her keeping.”

“Call her hither, if she be returned,” said the captain, “and see if he dare repeat this in her presence. He thinks to haul in our canvas until the enemy are under weigh, and then, Yoh ho, boys, for the rescue. But we shall be dancing over the bright Solway ere the morning watch, and thy carcase in the de’il’s locker.”

“If not for mine, for your own safety!”

“My safety! and what care I, though ten thousand teeth were grinning at me, through as many port-holes. My will alone bounds my power. Who shall question my sentence, which is death?”

He gnashed his teeth as he went on. “And your halls shall be too hot to hold your well-fed drones. Thy hearth, proud man, shall be desolate. I’ll lay waste thy domain. Thy race, root and branch, will I extinguish; for thou hast made me childless!”

The messenger returned with the intelligence that Oneida was not in the ship.

“On shore again, the ——! If I were to bind her with the main-chains, and an anchor at each leg, she would escape me to go ashore. No heed; we will just settle the affair without her, and he shall drop quietly into a grave ready made, and older than Adam. I would we had some more of his kin; they should swing from the bowsprit, like sharks and porpoises, who devour even when they have had enough, and waste what they can’t devour.”

“Thou wilt not murder me thus, defenceless, and in cold blood.”

“My child was more helpless, and had not injured *thee*! Ye give no quarter to the prowling beast, and yet, like me, he only robs and murders to preserve his life. How far is it from midnight?”

“Five minutes, and yon star comes to his southing,” said the person he addressed.

“Then prepare; that moment marks thy death!”

The men looked significantly towards their rifles.

“Nay,” cried this bloodthirsty freebooter, “my arm alone shall avenge my child.”

He drew a pistol from his belt.

“Yonder is Oneida,” sang out the man at the main-top; “she is within a cable’s length.”

“Heed her not. When the bell strikes, I have sworn thou shalt die!”

A pause ensued—a few brief moments in the lapse of time, but an age in the records of thought. Not a breath relieved the horror and intensity of that silence. The splash of a light oar was heard;—a boat touched the vessel. The bell struck.

“Once!” shouted the fierce mariner, and he raised his pistol with the sharp click of preparation.

“Twice!”

The bell boomed again.

“Thrice!”

“Hold!” cried a female, rushing between the executioner and the condemned: But the warning was too late;—the ball had sped, though not to its mark. Oneida was the victim. She fell, with a faint scream, bleeding on the deck. But Harrington was close locked in the arms of his little Grace. She had flown to him for protection, sobbing with joy.

The pirate seemed horror-struck at the deed. He raised Oneida, unloosing his neckcloth to staunch the wound.

“The Great Spirit calls me:” she spoke with great exertion: “the green woods, the streams, land of my forefathers. Oh! I come!” She raised herself suddenly with great energy, looking towards Harrington, who yet knelt, guarded and pinioned—the child still clinging to him.

“White man, I have wronged thee, and I am the sacrifice. Murderer, behold thy child!” She raised her eyes suddenly towards the pirate, who shook his head, supposing that her senses grew confused.

“It was for thy rescue!” again she addressed Harrington. “The Great Spirit appeared to me: he bade me restore what I had taken away, and I should be with the warriors and the chiefs who have died in battle. They hunt in forests from which the red-deer flies not, and fish in rivers that are never dry. But my bones shall not rest with my fathers!—I come. Lake of the woods, farewell!”

She threw one look of reproach on her destroyer, and the spirit of Oneida had departed.

The pirate stood speechless and bewildered. He looked on the child—a ray of recollection seemed to pass over his visage. Its expression was softened; and this man of outlawry and blood became gentle. The savage grew tame. The common sympathies of his nature, so long dried up, burst forth, and the wide deep flood of feeling and affection rolled on with it like a torrent, gathering strength by its own accumulation.

Years after, in a secluded cottage by the mansion of the Harringtons, dwelt an old man and his daughter. She soothed the declining hours of his sojourn. His errors and his crimes—and they were many and aggravated—were not unrepented of. She watched his last breath; and the richest lady of that land was “The Pirate’s Daughter.”

XXXII. George Fox

“O Thou who every thought pervades,
My darkened soul inform:
With equal hand Thy goodness guides
A planet or a worm.”

On the eastern side of Swart Moor, about a mile from Ulverstone, stands Swartmoor Hall. This bleak elevation took its name from Colonel Martin Swart, or Swartz, an experienced and valiant soldier, of a noble German family, to whom the Duchess of Burgundy, in 1486, entrusted the command of the troops which were sent to support Lambert Simnel in his claim to the English crown. A more detailed account of this transaction will be found in the first volume of our present series, in the tradition relating to “The Pile of Fouldrey.” Suffice it to say that the rebel army was defeated here with great slaughter; and Swartz, along with several of the English nobility, was slain—an event which entailed the name of this chieftain on the place of his overthrow.

The hall, about 180 years ago, was the residence of Thomas Fell, commonly called Judge Fell, vice-chancellor of the Duchy Court at Westminster, and one of the judges that went the Welsh circuit; a man greatly esteemed both in his public and private capacity. His wife was a lady of exemplary piety: she was born at Marsh Grange, in the parish of Dalton, in the year 1614, and was married before she had attained to the age of eighteen. The Judge and his lady being greatly respected, and much hospitality being displayed in their house to ministers and religious people, George Fox, in the year 1652, on his first coming into Furness, called at Swartmoor Hall, and preaching there, and also at Ulverstone, Mrs Fell, her daughters, and many of the family adopted his principles. The Judge was then upon the circuit. On his return he seemed much afflicted and surprised at this revolution in his family; and in consequence of some malicious insinuations from those who met him with the intelligence, he was greatly exasperated against George Fox and his principles. By the prudent intervention of two friends, however, his displeasure was greatly mitigated; and Fox, returning hither in the evening, answered all his objections in so satisfactory a manner, that the Judge “assented to the truth and reasonableness thereof;” the tranquillity of the family was restored; and from that time, notwithstanding numerous attempts to detach him from the cause, he continued a steady friend to the members of the society and its founder on all occasions where he had the power. A weekly meeting was established in his house the following Sunday. But his patronage did not last many years; he departed this life in September 1658, his health having been for some time before considerably on the decline.

Mrs Fell, after his death, suffered much inconvenience and oppression because of the religious principles she had embraced; yet, notwithstanding, the weekly meetings continued to be held at her house until the year 1690, when a new meetinghouse was opened about a quarter of a mile distant.

In 1669, eleven years after the death of Judge Fell, she married George Fox, whom she survived eleven years, dying at Swartmoor Hall in February 1702, nearly eighty-eight years old.⁷²

⁷² Vide West's *Antiquities of Furness*.

The house is still inhabited, though in a very dilapidated condition. The barns and stables by which it is surrounded, and the litter of the farmyard, give it a very mean and undignified appearance.

The tenant is a substantial farmer, who is very assiduous in showing the premises. The hall is spacious, with an oaken wainscoting. The bedrooms, which are large and airy, were formerly ornamented with carved work, now greatly damaged. In one of them is a substantial bedstead, with carved posts, on which it is said this reformer used to repose, and any of his followers have permission to occupy it for one night. This privilege is either not known, or perhaps not very highly appreciated, for the tenant states that not a single "Friend" has availed himself of it during the whole time he has resided there. Here is shown the study of George Fox in all its pristine plainness and simplicity. On one side of the hall is an orchard, looking almost coeval with the building. The house stands high, and the upper windows command an extensive and beautiful prospect. The meetinghouse is a neat plain building, in perfect repair, still used by the Friends at Ulverstone and the neighbourhood for religious worship. Over the door is the following inscription, "*Ex dono G.F. 1688.*" There is a burial-place surrounded with trees attached to the chapel.

George Fox did not reside constantly at Swartmoor after his marriage. The greater part of his time was spent in itinerancy. He travelled nearly over the whole of Great Britain, and several parts of America in the exercise of his ministry. After encountering innumerable sufferings, oppositions, and afflictions, this indefatigable missionary departed this life on the 13th of November 1690, in the 67th year of his age, at a house in White Hart Court, London. He was interred in the "Friends Burying-Ground," near Bunhill Fields.

The author is aware that the following remarkable account of "a special interposition" has been attributed to other names and later dates, and is recorded as having happened to individuals at different places both in England and Ireland. The same fact attaching itself to different localities and persons—probably according to the caprice or partialities of the several narrators—is, as he has found in the course of his researches, no unusual occurrence. He does not attempt to decide in favour of any of the conflicting claims or authorities, but merely to give the tale as it exists, selecting those places and circumstances which are most suitable for his purpose.

The supremacy of a special Providence, guiding and overruling the affairs of men, is a doctrine which few will have the hardihood to withstand and still less to deny. It is interwoven with our very nature, and seems implanted in us for the wisest and most beneficent of purposes. It is a doctrine full of comfort and consolation; our stay and succour in the most appalling extremities. There does seem, at times, vividly bursting through the most important periods of our existence, a ray from the secret place of the Most High. We see an opening, as it were, into the very arrangements and councils of the skies; we catch a glimpse of the machinery by which the universe is governed; the wheels of Providence are for a moment exhibited, palpable and unencumbered by secondary causes, while we, stricken prostrate from the consciousness of our own insignificance, acknowledge with awe and admiration the protecting power of which we are so unworthy.

Of the special interference we have just noticed the following narrative, true as to the more important particulars, is a striking instance; events, apparently happening out of the ordinary way, seem brought about by this direct interposition at a period when the most eminent display of human foresight and sagacity would have been unavailing.

One chill and misty evening in the year 1652, being the early part of a wet and, as it proved, a tardy spring, two strangers were benighted in attempting to cross the wild mountain ridge

called Cartmel Fell. They had proposed taking the most direct route from Kendal to Cartmel; having, however, missed the few points which indicated their track, they had for several hours been beating about in the expectation of finding some clue to extricate themselves, but every attempt seemed only to fix them more inextricably in a state of doubt and bewilderment. A dense fog had been rapidly accumulating, and they began to feel something startled with a vague apprehension of a night-watch amongst the hills, unprovided as they were with the requisite essentials for either food or lodging.

The elder of the two, though not more than midway between thirty and forty years old, was clad in a strange uncouth garb of the coarsest materials, and his lank long hair hung matted and uncombed upon his shoulders from a "brim" of extravagant dimensions. This style of dress was not then recognised as the distinctive badge of a religious sect, as it is now of the people called "Quakers," or, as they are more favourably designated, "Friends." The person of whom we speak was the founder of this society, George Fox, who, only about five years previous to the date of our story, after much contemplation on religious subjects, took upon himself the public ministry. In the year 1650 he was imprisoned at Derby for speaking publicly in the church after divine service; on being brought before a magistrate, he bade the company "*tremble at the word of the Lord*;" the expression was turned into ridicule, and he and his friends received the appellation of "*Quakers*."

His appearance was stout and muscular; and his general demeanour of that still, undisturbed aspect which, if not one of the essentials of his own religion, is at least looked upon as its greatest ornament, betokening the inward grace of a meek and quiet spirit. "He was," says John Gough, the historian of this people, "a man of strong natural parts, firm health, undaunted courage, remarkable disinterestedness, inflexible integrity, and distinguished sincerity. The tenor of his doctrine, when he found himself concerned to instruct others, was to wean men from systems, ceremonies, and the outside of religion in every form, and to lead them to an acquaintance with themselves by a most solicitous attention to what passed in their own minds; to direct them to a principle of their own hearts, which, if duly attended to, would introduce rectitude of mind, simplicity of manners, a life and conversation adorned with every Christian virtue, and peace, the effect of righteousness. Drawing his doctrine from the pure source of religious truth, the New Testament, and the conviction of his own mind, abstracted from the comments of men, he asserted the freedom of man in the liberty of the gospel against the tyranny of custom, and against the combined powers of severe persecution, the greatest contempt, and keenest ridicule. Unshaken and undismayed, he persevered in disseminating principles and practices conducive to the present and everlasting well-being of mankind, with great honesty, simplicity, and success."

The companion of this reformer was arrayed in a more worldly suit; a mulberry-coloured cloak and doublet, with a hat of grey felt, that, for brevity of brim, would almost have vied with that of the brass basin worn by the knight of the rueful countenance, whose history may be consulted at length in the writings of that veracious historian, Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. His movements were of a more irregular and erratic nature than comported with the well-ordered and equable gait of his companion. The rarely-occurring remarks of the latter were anything but explicit as to the state of his feelings in contemplation of an event, the possibility of which increased with every step—a night's lodgings in these inhospitable wilds. The sun was now evidently beneath the horizon; darkness came on with frightful rapidity; and they had, as yet, no reason to divest themselves of so disagreeable an anticipation. To one in the full glare of daylight, or with a sound roof-tree over his head and a warm fire at his elbow, the idea of a night-vigil may not appear either unpleasant or extraordinary; but, wrapped in a sheet of grey mist, the wet heath oozing beneath his feet, with the cold and benumbing air of the hills for his supper, there could be little question that

he would be apt to regard it as a condition not far removed from the extremity of human suffering; especially if at the same time he had just exchanged a snug fireside and an affectionate neighbourhood of friends for these appalling discomforts.

"I know not what we shall do," said the younger traveller. "It never entered into my head beforehand to imagine the possibility of such an event. Surely, surely, we are not to live through a whole night in these horrid wilds. Pray, do speak out, and let me at least have the comfort of a complaint, for we are past consolation."

"I have been ruminating on this very matter," replied the other; "and it does appear that we are as safe in this place verily as though we were encompassed with walls and bulwarks. Methinks, friend, thou speakest unadvisedly; in future, when thee knowest not what to do—wait! The more thee pulls and hauls, and frets and kicks, depend on it thou wilt be the less able to extricate thyself thereby. We are not left quite without comfort in this dreary wilderness; here is a goodly and a well-set stone, I perceive, just convenient. Verily, it is a mercy if we get a little rest for our limbs. Many a meek and holy disciple, of whom the world was not worthy, has ere now been fain of a slice of hard rock for his pillow."

"And, in truth, we are as likely as the holiest of 'em to refresh ourselves all night on a stone bolster," pettishly replied the unthankful youth, as he seated himself beside his friend.

It was not long ere a slight breeze began to roll the mist into irregular masses of cloud. The dense atmosphere appeared to break, and a star twinkled for a moment, but disappeared as suddenly as it came forth. Ralph Seaton, the younger of the pedestrians, pointed out the friendly visitant to his companion. It seemed as though the eye of mercy were beaming visibly upon them.

"I have seen it," said the man of quiet endurance; "and now gird up thy loins to depart. The fog will rapidly disperse; and it may be that some distant light will guide us to rest and shelter."

While he was speaking the mist coiled upwards, driving rapidly across the sky in the shape of a heavy scud. A few stars twinkled here and there through the lucid intervals, "few and far between;" but they were continually changing place, closing and unfolding as the wind mingled or separated their shapeless fragments.

"It is even as I said. Seest thou yonder light?"

"I see not anything," replied Seaton.

"Just beneath that bright star to our left?" again inquired the elder traveller.

"I only see a dark hill rising there abruptly against the lowering swell of the sky."

Our "Friend" was silent for a space, when he replied in a tone of deep solemnity—

"It is the inward light of which I have spoken to thee before; a token of no ordinary import. To-night, or I am deceived, we are called on to pass through no common allotment of toil and tribulation. Oft hath this light been outwardly manifest, and as often has it been the precursor of some sharp and fiery trial! Again! But thou seest it not. Yet mayest thou follow in my steps. Take heed thou turn not either to the right hand or to the left. But"—The speaker's voice here grew fearfully ominous and emphatic.

"Hast thou courage to do as I shall bid thee? I must obey the will of the Spirit; but unless thou hast faith to follow the light that is within me, rather pass the night on that cold unsheltered rock than draw back from His witness. Remember, it is no slight peril that awaits us."

Not without a struggle and certain waverings, which indicated a faith somewhat less implicit than was desirable on such an occasion, did the disciple promise to obey—ay, to the very letter—every command that might be given. Peradventure, a well-founded apprehension of spending the night companionless on the cold and wet dormitory to which his evil stars had conducted him, had some influence in this determination. Suffice it to say, never did disciple resolve more faithfully to obey than did our young adventurer in this perilous extremity.

Their path now appeared to wind precipitately down a steep and narrow defile, through which a rapid torrent was heard foaming and tumbling over its rugged bed. Following the course of the stream to a considerable distance, a rude bridge was discerned, sufficiently indicating a path to some house or village in that direction. The wind was rising in sharp and heavy gusts. The moon, not yet above the hills, was brightening the dark clouds that hung behind them like a huge curtain. The sky was studded, in beauteous intervals, with hosts of stars. This light enabled them to follow a narrow footpath, which, abruptly turning the head of a projecting crag, showed them a distant glimmer as though from some friendly habitation. Seaton bounded past his more recondite companion; and it was not long ere a fierce growl challenged him as he approached nearer to the dwelling. He threw open the door, and discovered what was sufficiently distinguishable as a public-house, a homely interior, dignified by the name of tavern. Two grim-looking men sat before a huge pile of turf, glowing fiercely from the wide expanse appropriated to several uses beside that of fireplace and chimney. Liquor and coarse bread were near them on a low three-legged table; while Seaton, overjoyed at his good fortune and happy escape, thought the rude hut a palace, and the smell of turf and oat-cake a refection fit for the gods.

“Be quiet, Vixen.” The fierce animal, at this rebuke from her mistress, slunk into a dark corner beside the chimney, whence two hideous and glaring eyes were fixed on the strangers for the rest of the evening. Wherever Seaton turned, he still beheld them, intently watching, as though gloating on their prey. The female who had thus spoken did not welcome her guests with that cheerful solicitude which the arrival of profitable customers generally creates. She bustled about unceasingly; but showed neither anxiety nor inclination to offer them any refreshment. Short and firm-set in person, she looked more muscular than was befitting her sex. Her hair was grizzled, and the straggling tresses hung untrammelled about her smoke-dried and hard-lined visage. Her features wore a dubious and unpleasant aspect, calculated to create more distrust than seemed desirable to their owner. Every effort, however, to disguise their expression only rendered them the more forbidding and repulsive.

Near the turf-stack, by the chimney, sat a being to all appearance in a state of mental derangement almost approaching to idiotcy. His eye rested for a moment, with a vacant and undefined stare, upon the strangers; then, with a loud shrill laugh, which made the listeners shudder, he again bent his head, basking moodily before the blaze. The moment Seaton had thrown down a light portmanteau that he carried, the dame, with a low tap, summoned two stout fellows from an inner room, who, with a suspicious and over-acted civility, inquired the destination and wishes of their guests. The elder of the travellers, now coming forward as spokesman, inquired about the possibility of obtaining lodgings for the night, and was informed that a room, detached from the rest, was generally used as a guest-chamber on all extra occasions.

“There’s a bed in ‘t fit to streek down the limbs of a king,” said one of the gruff helpers; “and maybe the gentlemen will sleep as sound here as they could wish. Rabbit thee, Will, but the luggage will break thy back. Have a care, lad. Let me feel: it’s as light as a church poor’s-box. The de’il’s flown awa’ with aw the shiners, I think; for it’s lang sin’ I heard a good ow’d-fashioned jink in a traveller’s pack.”

This was said more by way of comment than conversation, as he handled the stranger's valise.

The features of these men exhibited a strange mixture of ferocity and mirth. Savage, and almost brutal in their expression, still an atmosphere of fun hovered about them—a Will-o'-the-wisp sort of playfulness, unnatural and decoying, like the capricious gambols of that renowned and mischievous sprite.

The Quaker seated himself on a low bench before the fire. He took from his neck a huge handkerchief, spreading it out on his knees. He then drew off a pair of long worsted stocking-boots; leisurely untied his shoes, and extending his ample surface in the most convenient manner to the blaze, appeared, with eyes half-shut, pondering deeply some inward abyss of thought, yet not wholly indifferent to the objects around him. His tall and bony figure looked more like some stiff and imitative piece of mechanism than a living human frame with flexible articulations, so fashioned was every motion of the body to the formal and constrained habits and peculiarities of the mind. Seaton had observed, with no slight uneasiness, the suspicious circumstances in which they were placed; but he was fearful of betraying his mistrust, lest it should accelerate the mischief he anticipated. He looked wistfully at his friend; but there was no outward manifestation that could elucidate the inward bent of his thoughts. The keen expression of his eye was not visible; but his other features wore that imperturbable and stolid aspect which suited the stiff and unyielding substance of his opinions. Seaton was now reminded of his supper by an inquiry from the female as to their intentions on that momentous subject. A "flesh pye," as she termed it, was drawn from its lair—a dark hole used as a cupboard—and set before the guests. The very name sounded suspicious and disgusting. In the present state of his feelings the most trivial circumstance was sufficient to keep alive the apprehensions that haunted him. He endeavoured to rally himself out of his fears, and had in some measure succeeded, thrusting his knife deep into the forbidden envelope. At that moment a slight rustling caused him to look aside. The idiot was gazing on him. He shrank from this unexpected glance; and the knife loosened in his grasp. He thought the creature made a sign with his finger, forbidding him to eat. It might be fancy; but nevertheless he felt determined not to touch the food; and the former, with that natural cunning which, in characters of this description, almost assumes the nature of instinct, again appeared crouching over the blaze, and incapable either of observation or intelligence. This transaction passed unnoticed by the rest of the party; and Seaton, afraid that some horrible and unnatural food had been set before him, secretly motioned to his friend, who, apparently unheeding, helped himself to a portion of the mysterious dish. For a moment it occurred to Seaton that the cunning half-wit, apprehensive lest too great a share of the savoury victuals should fall to their lot, had contrived to forbid this appropriation. After a few mouthfuls, however, he observed that his friend had as little relish for the provision as himself, remarking that a rasher of bacon would be preferred, if the hostess could furnish him with this delicacy. A whisper was the result of this request; but, in the end, a savoury collop was set upon the table. Beer was added, as a matter of course; but neither of them partook of the beverage. Though Seaton, to all appearance, drank a portion, yet his fears got the better of his fatigue; and some apprehension of treachery made him careful to convey away the liquor unobserved. Fox now drew up his gaunt figure in the attitude which indicated a change of position. With great deliberation he rose, and addressed the hostess—

"Canst thee show us to bed?"

Answering in the affirmative, she snatched up a light, and leading the way across a narrow yard, she pointed out a small step-ladder outside the building. Giving the candle into the hands of the grave personage who followed her, she left them after bidding "Good-night!"

They scrambled up the ladder, entering the room appropriated to their use. It was low, and of scanty dimensions. The walls were bare; and the damp oozed through chinks and crevices, where the wind met with slight interruption, though it clamoured unceasingly for admission. The only furniture in the apartment was a low bedstead, on which a straw mattress reposed in all the accumulated filth of past ages. A coverlid of coarse woollen partly concealed a suit of bed-linen that would have stricken terror amongst a tribe of Esquimaux. Neither party appeared wishful to tempt the mysteries that were yet unseen, or to divest himself of clothing. They flung their luggage on the floor, and sat upon it, each awaiting the first word of intercourse from his companion. After a while there was a heavy groan from the Quaker; and Seaton something hastily intimated his suspicions respecting the occupation and pursuits of the party below.

"I am of the like persuasion with thyself," was the reply. "Verily, the warning was not in vain. This night may not pass ere faith shall have its test. I have had a sore struggle. Our safety will be granted; but through inward guidance rather than from our own endeavours. Yet must we use the means."

"I see no way of escape," returned Seaton, "provided they be what we have unhappily too good cause to apprehend. Unarmed, and without the means of defence, how can we cope with men whose object, doubtless, with the robbery, will be the concealment of their crime?"

"Follow my example. It is thine only chance for deliverance. Question me not; but be silent, and obey. I have said it."

While the speaker relapsed into one of his usual reveries, Seaton cast his eyes inquiringly round the room. Their feeble light was ready to expire. The rude gusts rocked the frail tenement "as if't had agues;" and the walls groaned beneath their pressure. There was a small casement, stuffed with paper and a matchless assortment of parti-coloured rags, near the roof, directly over the bed. He ascended softly to examine the nature of this outlet; but, to his further alarm, he found it guarded outside with iron bars. This was a direct confirmation of his surmises. A cold shudder crept over him. He felt almost stiffening with horror as he looked down upon his thoughtful companion, doomed, he doubted not, as well as himself, to fall a prey to the assassin. He gazed wildly round the apartment, as if with some desperate hope of deliverance. His head grew dizzy; objects seemed to flit past him; and more than once he fancied that footsteps were creeping up the ladder. This acute burst of agony subsiding, he listened to the short and rapid whirl of the wind eddying by; and never had the sound fallen upon his ear so fearfully. It seemed like the wail of a departing spirit, or like some funeral dirge, moaning heavily and deep through the sudden pauses of the blast. He threw himself on the bed. Fatigue and long abstinence had enervated his frame. Nature, forced almost beyond the limit of endurance, had become passive, and almost incapable of suffering. A deep slumber stole upon him, yet could he not escape the horrors by which he was surrounded. Daggers reeking in blood—spectres covered with hideous wounds—murderers on the rack—gibbets, and a thousand forms, shapeless and unimaginable, crowded past with inconceivable rapidity. A huge figure approached. In its hand a weapon was uplifted, as if to destroy him. He made a vehement effort to escape; but was holden, without the power of resistance. Just as it was descending he awoke. For a while he was unable to recollect precisely the nature of his situation. The apartment was quite dark. He groped confusedly about him, but to no purpose. At that instant a ray seemed to glide from the casement. It was a moonbeam struggling through that almost impervious inlet. By this light he beheld a figure intently gazing towards the window. At the first glance he did not recognise his companion; but, as he started from the couch, the former approached him, and, laying one hand on his shoulder, whispered that he should be still. He obeyed, and remained

motionless. The reason for this admonition was soon apparent. He heard a slight pattering at intervals on the few brittle fragments which the window yet retained. Seaton at first thought it might be the rain, especially as the wind had considerably abated; but he soon found there must be some other cause, from the rattling of sand and other coarser materials upon the floor and bed. He crept close to the window, looking out below, but was unable to find out the reason of this disturbance. Suddenly a volley of pebbles bounded past his face, and the moon shining forth at the same instant, a figure was distinguished anxiously attempting to arouse and excite their attention. To his great astonishment he recognised the wayward being whose glance had startled him so disagreeably a few hours before. He recollected the idiot's former signal, and felt convinced that this was a more direct and friendly interference. Seaton carefully pulled away a portion of the stuffing, and was thus enabled to bring his head closer to the bars. This movement was observed; and with an admonition to silence, the strange creature pointed to the ground, at the same time he appeared as if urging them to escape. Seaton comprehended his meaning; but the iron fastenings were an apparently insurmountable impediment. He laid hold of one of the bars with considerable force; and to his great joy it yielded to the pressure. Apparently there was no other individual beneath, or this friendly warning would not have been given. It seemed as if the tenants of the hovel were too secure of their prey to set a watch. He descended cautiously to his companion. A few whispers were sufficient to convey the intelligence. Again he mounted to the window; and, on looking down, found that their providential monitor had disappeared. There was no time to be lost. Seaton again tried the bar, and succeeded in removing it. Another was soon wrenched from its hold, and a few minutes more saw him safely through the aperture, from which he let himself down with little difficulty to the ground. His companion immediately followed; and once more outside their lodging, a new difficulty presented itself. Seaton knew of no other path than the one by which they had previously gained the cottage; and this would, in all probability, afford a leading track to their pursuers, who might be expected shortly to be aware of their escape. But he was relieved from this dilemma by his companion making a signal that he should follow. "Remember thy promise," said he. Seaton was prepared to obey, feeling a renewed confidence in the discretion of his guide. Turning into a pathway near the place where they had alighted, their course was towards a river, which they beheld at no great distance twinkling brightly in the moonbeams. They cautiously yet rapidly proceeded down a narrow descent, fear hastening their flight, for they expected every moment to hear the footsteps of their pursuers. In a little while they turned out of the road, and, by a circuitous path, which the guide seemed to tread with unhesitating confidence, they came to the river's brink. By the brawling of its current, and the appearance it presented, the water was evidently shallow, and might be crossed without much difficulty. Seaton was preparing to make the attempt, but was prevented by his comrade.

"I have some inward impression that we may not cross here. We shall be pursued; and our adversaries will imagine that we have passed over what is doubtless the ford of this Jordan. I know not why, but we must follow its banks, and for some distance, ere we pass."

Seaton urged the danger and folly of this proceeding, and proposed crossing immediately, but met with a decided and unflinching refusal from his companion. They now kept along the river's brink, but with much difficulty. The rain having swollen the waters, they were often forced to wade up to the knees through the little creeks and rivulets that intersected their path. They journeyed on for a considerable time in silence, when the elder traveller made a sudden pause.

"It is here," said he. Seaton looked on the river; but the broad and deep wave rolled past with frightful impetuosity. The moonbeams glittered on a wide and rapid flood, whose depths

were unknown, but to which, nevertheless, it seemed that they were on the point of committing themselves.

“The river is both wide and deep!” said the youth.

“Nevertheless, we must cross,” replied his more taciturn companion. Without further parley the latter plunged boldly into the stream. Urged on by his fears, and preferring death in any shape to the death that was pursuing him, Seaton followed his example. For some time they struggled hard with the full sweep of the current; and it seemed little short of a miracle when they arrived, almost breathless and exhausted, on the opposite side.

“Praised be His name who hath given strength! Though deep waters have encompassed us, yet His arm is our deliverance.”

With a holy and ardent outpouring of soul did this good man render thanksgivings unto Him whose hand had been so visibly stretched out for their protection. Just as he had made an end of speaking, a distant but distinct howl was borne down upon the wind. They listened eagerly, as the sound evidently grew nearer. It was like the short but stifled cry of a hound in full chase.

“Peril cometh as a whirlwind,” said George Fox; “but fear not—a way will be left for our escape!”

“It is that malicious hound!” replied Seaton shuddering, as he remembered the beast which had gazed so intently on him, and which was evidently trained for the present purpose.

“We must climb up to those tall bushes with all speed,” said the companion of his flight, at the same time leading the way with considerable haste and agility.

From this height they saw, at some distance up the river, three men on horseback, preceded by a large hound, who, true to the scent, was following steadily on their footsteps. They approached rapidly to the place where the fugitives had gone over, when the dog made a dead halt, and looked wistfully across.

“Loo, loo!” said the foremost rider, “hie on, lass!” But the beast would not move.

“Sure now, Mike,” said he, as the others came up, “if they’ve taken the water at this unlucky hole, they’ll need no drownin’ by this anyhow.”

“It’s the brute, bad luck to her,” replied his comrade. “She’s on the wrong scent. Why they’re over the ford by this, and we shall have the bloody thief-catchers here before we can open the door for ‘em.”

“If the bitch had followed my nose, instead of her own beautiful scent,” said the remaining speaker, “we should ha’ been over the ford too, long ago. They’d as soon think of swimming o’er the bay in a cabbage-leaf as cross at this place. Back, back; and we’ll shoulder ‘em yet, my darlings. Come along, boys—one of you take the ford, an’ watch the road over the hill. Have a care, now, that the rogues be not skulking round the bog. I’ll keep the road hereabout; an’ thou, Mike, lay to with the hound when thou art on the other side. Maybe they’ll not find it just so easy to beat us in the hunting while we’ve a leg to lay on after them.”

The worthy triumvirate here withdrew. The animal was with much difficulty forced from her track; but by the help of a stout cord she was dragged off, yelping and whining, to the great joy of their intended victims. Seaton could not but recognise the very finger of Providence, which had pointed out the means of preservation. No other way was left apparently for their escape. Whatsoever course they had taken, save this, must have inevitably thrown them into

the very toils of their pursuers; and he determined to follow, fearlessly and without question, the future impulses of his companion.

“Shall we attempt to flee, or must we tarry here a space?” he hesitatingly inquired.

“Nay, friend,” said his guide, “I wis not yet what we shall do; but methinks we are to abide here until morning!”

Seaton shivered at this intimation. His clothes were drenched, and his whole frame stiffened and benumbed with cold. His position, too, crouching amongst decayed branches and alder twigs, was none of the most eligible or easy to sustain. He felt fully resolved, however, to follow the leadings of his friend, being convinced that his ultimate safety depended on a strict adherence to this determination.

The country was very thinly inhabited, and their enemies were in possession of the only outlets by which they could escape to the nearest village. Aided, too, by the sagacity of the dog, their track would inevitably be discovered before daylight enabled them to find shelter. These considerations were too important to be overlooked, and Seaton quietly resolved to make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit. He wrung out the wet from his clothes, chafed his limbs, and ere long, to his inexpressible relief, the first symptoms of the dawn were visible in the east. Just as a glowing rim of light was gliding above the horizon, they ventured to peep forth cautiously from their retreat. To their great mortification, they saw, at a considerable distance, a horseman stationed on the brow of a neighbouring hill, evidently for the purpose of a more extended scrutiny. Signals would inevitably betray their route should they emerge from their concealment; and escape now seemed as hopeless as ever.

In this fresh difficulty Seaton again sought counsel from his friend, who replied with great earnestness—

“There is yet another and a more grievous trial;”—he lifted up his eyes, darkening already with the energy of his spirit;—”but I trust our deliverance draweth nigh. We must return!”

“Return?” cried Seaton, his lips quivering with amazement. “Whither? Not to the den we have just left?”

“Even so,” said the other with great composure.

“Then all hope is lost!” mournfully returned the inquirer.

“Nay,” replied his companion, “but let me ask what chance, even according to thine own natural and unaided sense, there is of deliverance in our present condition? Hemmed in on every hand, without a guide, and strangers to the path we should take, if the watchman from the hill miss our track, there is the hound upon our scent!”

There was no gainsaying these suggestions; but still a proposal that they should return to the cabin, whence they had with such pains and difficulty made their escape, in itself was so absurd and inexplicable a piece of manoeuvring, that common sense and common prudence alike forbade the attempt. Yet, on the other hand, common sense and common prudence appeared to be equally unavailing as to any mode of escape from the toils in which they were entangled.

Again he determined to follow his friend’s guidance: who, addressing himself immediately to the task, made the best of his way to the ford which he had refused to cross the preceding night. They now took the direct road to the house. The morning was sharp and clear. Seaton felt the cold and raw atmosphere cling to his frame, already chilled to an alarming degree; but the excitement he had undergone prevented further mischief than the

temporary inconvenience he then suffered. As they came nearer the hut his very faculties seemed to escape from his control. A sense of danger, imminent and almost insupportable, came upon him. Bewildered, and actuated with that unaccountable but instinctive desperation which urges on to some inevitable doom, he rushed wildly into the dwelling. It was not as they had left it. Several horses were quietly standing by the door; and a party, who had merely called for the purpose of half-an-hour's rest and refreshment, were then making preparations to depart. Seaton took one of them aside, and disclosed the terrible circumstances we have related. By a judicious but prompt application of their forces they prevented any one from leaving the house, and were prepared to seize all who should return thither. A close search soon betrayed the quality and calling of its inmates. A vast hoard of plunder was discovered, and proofs too abundant were found that deeds had been there perpetrated of which we forbear the recital. The old woman was seized; and her capture was followed by the apprehension of the whole gang, who shortly after met with the retribution merited by their crimes.

The maniac proved to be a son of the old beldame. At times, the cloud unhappily clearing from his mental vision had left him for a short space fearfully cognisant of the transactions he was then doomed to witness. On that night to which our history refers a sudden providential gleam of intelligence flashed upon him, and an unknown impulse prompted his interference in behalf of the unfortunate, and, as he thought, unsuspecting victims. Ere leaving the country they saw him comfortably provided for; and, as far as the nature of his malady would permit, his mind was soothed, and his darkest moments partly relieved from the horrors which humanity alone could mitigate, but not prevent.

XXXIII. The Demon Of The Well

“Avaunt, thou senseless thing!
Can graven image mimic life, and glare
Its stony eye-balls; grin, make mouths at me?
Go to, it is possessed;—some demon lurks
Within its substance.”

Peggy’s well, the subject of our engraving, is near the brink of the Ribble, in a field below Waddow Hall; Brunckerley Stepping-stones not being far distant, where several lives have been lost in attempting to cross, at times when the river was swollen by a rapid rise, which even a day’s rain will produce. These calamities, along with any other fatal accidents which happened in the neighbourhood, are usually attributed to the malevolence of Peggy. The stepping-stones are alluded to in our first volume as the place where King Henry VI was taken, after escaping from Waddington Hall.

Some stones are still visible at low water; but whether these are the original “Hippins,” or the foundations of a wooden bridge which succeeded them, and was borne down by the ice at the breaking up of the frost in the year 1814, is not known.

The stone image by the well, depicted in our engraving, has been the subject of many strange tales and apprehensions, being placed there when turned out of the house at Waddow, to allay the terrors of the domestics, who durst not continue under the same roof with this misshapen figure. It was then broken, either from accident or design, and the head, some time ago, we have understood, was in one of the attic chambers at Waddow Hall.

One loud, roaring, and tempestuous night—the last relics of the year 1660—some half-dozen boon companions were comforting themselves beside a blazing fire, and a wassail-cup, at the ingle of a well-ordered and well-accustomed tavern within the good borough of Clitheroe, bearing on its gable front, over a grim and narrow porch, a marvellous portraiture apparently of some four-footed animal, by common usage and consent denominated “The Bull.” What recked they of the turmoil that was abroad, while good liquor lasted, and the troll and merry tale went round? The yule-log was blazing on the hearth, and their cups were bright and plenished.

““Ods bodikins, Nic—and that’s a parson’s oath,” said a small waspish figure from the farther chimney-corner, in a sort of husky wheezing voice, “I’ll lay thee a thimblefull of pins thou dar’na do it.”

“And I’ll lay thee a grey lapstone, an’ a tachin-end to boot, that I run ower t’ hippin-stones to-night, and never a wet sole; but a buss and a wet lip I’ll bring fro’ the bonniest maiden at Waddow!”

“Like enough, like enough, though thou hast to brag for’t,” said the first speaker tauntingly—an old customer of the house, and a compiler of leathern extremities for the good burghers and their wives.

“Give o’er your gostering,” said another; “*Non omnes qui citharam tenent, sunt citharædi*. Many talk of Robin Hood who never shot from his bow. Know ye not ‘tis Peggy’s year, and her oblation hath not been rendered? Eschew therefore the rather your bravery until this night be overpast.”

This learned harangue betrayed the schoolmaster, who was prone to make Gaffer Wiswall's chimney-side a temporary refuge from the broils and disturbances of his own, where his spouse, by way of enticing him to remain, generally contrived either to rate him soundly or to sulk during their brief communion.

"Who cares for Peg?" said the hero who had boasted of his blandishments with the maids. "She may go drown herself i' the Red Sea for aught I care!"

This heretical, unbelieving, and impious scorner was a man of shreds and patches, a pot-valiant tailor, whose ungartered hosen, loose knee-strings, and thin shambling legs, sufficiently betokened the sedentary nature of his avocations. "I wonder the parson hasn't gi'en her a lift wi' Pharaoh and his host ere this," continued he.

"Or the schoolmaster," said that provoking little personage, the first speaker, whose sole aim was to throw the apple of discord amongst his fellows.

"And pray who may this lady be whom ye so ungallantly devote to perdition?" inquired a stranger from behind, who had hitherto been silent, apparently not wishful to join the hilarity of those he addressed. The party quesited was in the midst of a puff of exhalation more than usually prolonged when the question was put, so that ere he could frame his organs to the requisite reply the pragmatical tailor, whose glibness of tongue was equalled only by his assurance, gave the following by way of parenthesis:—

"Plague on't, where's t'ou bin a' thy life, 'at doesn't know Peg O'Nelly, man?"

"Deuce tak' thee for a saucy lout," said the sutor; "I'll brak' thy spindle-shanks wi' my pipe-stump. Be civil if thou can, Nicky, to thy betters. Sir, if it please ye to listen, we'll have ye well instructed in the matter by the schoolmaster here." He cast a roguish look at the pedagogue as he spoke. But I pray you draw in with us, an' make one wi' the rest."

The scholar adjusted himself, passed one hand thoughtfully upon his brow, and with a gentle inclination commenced with a loud hem, or clearance of aught that might obstruct the free communication of his thoughts.

"Peg, or Peggy, as some do more euphoniously denominate her, was maid, woman, or servant—*ancilla*, *famula*, *ministra*, not *pedissequa*, or one who attends her mistress abroad, but rather a servant of all work, in the house yonder at Waddow, many years past. Indeed, my grandmother did use to speak of it as *ex vetere famâ*—traditionary, or appertaining unto the like."

"I tell thee what, gossip, if thee doesn't get on faster wi' thy tale, Peggy's ghost will have a chronicle of another make. I can see Nic's tongue is yammering to take up a stitch i' thy narrative," interrupted the leathern artificer.

"And I'd bring it up in another guess way," said Nicholas, tartly, "than wi' scraps and scrapings fro' gallipots, and remnants o' mass books."

"Pray ye, friends, be at peace a while, or I may be dealt with never a word to my question," said the stranger beseechingly.

"Go on," rejoined the peremptory occupant of the chimney-corner; "but let thy discourse be more akin to thy text."

The schoolmaster, thus admonished, again set forward.

"As I was a-saying precedent or prior to this unseasonable interruption—*medium sermonem*—I crave your mercy, but I was born, as I may say, with the Latin, or the *lingua latialis* in my mouth, rather than my mother-tongue; so, as I was a-saying, this same

Peggy, *filia* or daughter to Ellen, if I mistake not, seeing that Peg O'Neill doth betoken, after the manner and use of these rude provincials, that the genitrix or *mater* is the genitive or generator, being"——

"Now a murrain light on all fools, coxcombs, and"——

"Tailors' shins—hang thee, for thou hast verily split mine wi' thy gilly-pegs. They're as sharp as a pair of hatchets," said an unfortunate neighbour who had the ill-luck to encounter the gyrations of these offensive and weapon-like appendages to the trunk of Nicholas Slater, who, in his great ardour and distress at the floundering and abortive attempts of the scholar, threw them about in all directions, to the constant jeopardy and annoyance of those more immediately within their sphere of operation.

"Keep 'em out o't gait then," said the testy aggressor, angry at the interruption, being fearful of losing so lucky an opportunity.

"Peg O'Nelly, sir, was a maid-servant once at Waddow, killed first, and then drowned i' the well by one o' the men for concubinage, as the parson says; and so for the wrong done, her ghost ne'er having been laid, you see she claims every seventh year an offering which must be summat wick—and"——While he hesitated another took up the thread of his narrative.

"This is the last night o' the year, you see," said the other in continuation; "and we be just thinking to bid good-bye to th' old chap, and greet th' new one with a wag of his paw, and a drink to his weel-doing. But the first cause o' this disturbance was by reason of its being Peggy's year, and as she hasn't had her sop yet, we thought as how it would be no bad job to get rid o' this drunken tailor here, and he might save some better man; so we have been daring him to cross t' hippin-stones to-night; for there is but an hour or two to spare before her time's up."

"It is not too late," said the stranger, with great solemnity. Every eye was bent upon him. He still sat in the broad shadow projected by one huge chimney-corner, his face overhung by a broad felt hat, girt with a band and buckle; a drooping dragged feather fell over its crown. His whole person was so curiously enveloped in a loose travelling cloak that nothing but a dark unshapely mass, having some resemblance to the human form, could be distinguished. Concealment was evidently the object. Every one was awed down into silence. The few words he had spoken seemed to have dried up, or rather frozen at its surface, the babbling current of their opinions, that ran, whilom, with unceasing folly and rapidity.

"Silence!" cried the sutor from the opposite ingleside.

This command operated like a charm. The ice was broken, and the current became free. Without more ado, as if in opposition to the self-constituted authority from the high-backed chair, the guests, with one exception only, commenced with a vigorous discharge of "airy missiles," which by degrees subsided into a sort of desultory sharp-shooting; but their words were neither few nor well applied. It was evident that a gloom and disquietude was upon the assembly. There was a distinct impression of fear, though a vague notion as to its cause—a sort of extempore superstition—a power which hath most hold on the mind in proportion as its limits and operations are least known or understood. The bugbear owing its magnitude and importance to obscurity and misapprehension, becomes divested of its terrors when it can be surveyed and appreciated.

"*Te misereat, miserescat, vel commiserescat mei,*"

quoted the schoolmaster, who, before he could find an equivalent in his mother-tongue, was tripped up by the nimble constructor of raiment.

“The dule and his dam are verily let loose on us,” said he.

“Our Lady and her grace forefend!” cried he of the awl and lapstone, whose pipe having unaccountably been extinguished, was just in the act of being thrust down into the red and roaring billets when he beheld a blue flame hovering on them; a spiral wreath of light shot upwards, and the log was reduced to a mass of glowing ashes and half-burnt embers. At this critical moment the stranger deliberately approached the hearth. He threw a whole flagon of liquor wilfully upon the waning faggots, and in a moment fiz, splutter, and smoke proclaimed that the warfare of the elements, like many others, had ended in the destruction of both the contending belligerents. The yule-log was extinguished. There was a general rush, and a consternation of so unequivocal a nature, that tables, benches, platters, and drinking utensils were included in one vast overthrow. Some thought they saw the glowing emblem of Yule transferred to the stranger’s eyes, which twinkled like twin loopholes to the furnace within.

“I have thee now!” said he; but who this unfortunate might be whom they had so left, even in the very claws of the Evil One, they knew not, nor did they care to inquire. Each, too happy to escape, rushed forth hatless and sore dismayed into the street, with all the horrors of a pelting and pitiless night upon his head, and thought himself well off by the exchange, and too much overjoyed that his own person was not the victim in the catastrophe.

In the morning Isabel, the landlord’s ward, and his coal-black steed were amissing!

Now, it was but a mile or so from this ancient borough to Brunckerley, or Bromiley hippin (stepping) stones, across the Ribble, where, upon this insecure but long-used mode of transit, the steps of our forefathers were guided over the ford. These same stepping-stones were quite as often the instruments or executioners of Peggy’s vengeance as the well itself dignified by her name. It need not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that when the appalling and fearful events of the preceding night were bruited forth in the public thoroughfares upon New-Year’s morning—a season when news-carriers and gossips, old and young, are more particularly prone to a vigilant exercise of their talents and avocations—we say it need not be a source of either suspicion or surprise that many of these conduit-pipes of intelligence, even before the day was broad awake, did pour forth an overwhelming flood of alarm and exaggeration. According to these veracious lovers of the marvellous, shrieks were heard about the requisite time, and in the precise direction where it must needs follow that Isabel was just in the act of being whisked off by one of Pegg’s emissaries, and that ere now she was doubtless offered as one of the septennial sacrifices to her revenge.

It was a brave and comely morning, and a brave sight it was to see old and young go forth to the river on that blessed day. The crisp and icy brink of the brawling Ribble was beset by groups of idle folk, some anxiously looking out for symptoms or traces of the body, others occupied with rakes and various implements for searching the unknown regions beneath the turbid and angry waters. Beyond were the antlered and hoary woods of Waddow, every bow laden with the snows of yestereven, sparkling silently in the broad and level sweep of light, pouring in one uninterrupted flood over the wide and chilly waste—a wilderness of snow, a gay and gorgeous mantle glittering on the bosom of death and desolation.

Gaffer Wiswall was there. The old man almost beside himself with grief, heart-stricken with the blow, felt alone, a scathed trunk, doomed to survive when the green verdure of his existence had departed.

Wet and weary were the searchers, and their toil unremitting, but the body was not found. The “Well,” Peg O’Nelly’s Well, was tried, with the like result. Surely this was a visitation of more than ordinary spite and malignity. Hitherto the bodies of the victims, with but few exceptions, had been rendered back to their disconsolate survivors, the revengeful ghost

apparently satisfied with their extinction; but it is now high time to make the attempt, if possible, to rid themselves of her persecutions.

“Look here!” said one of the bystanders, pointing to the river’s margin; “there hath gone a horse, or it may be two, along these slippery banks, but a few hours ago, and the track seems to come from the river.”

“Let us see to the other side,” said another, “if there be a fellow to it.” And, sure enough, on the opposite bank, there were footmarks corresponding thereto, as though one or more adventurous horsemen had swam the swollen waters recently, a little higher up than the ford, pursuing their slippery way by the very margin, along the woods, for some distance, when their track was lost amid these deep and almost pathless recesses.

“Mercy o’ me,” said one, “it is deep enough thereabouts to drown the castle and hill to boot. Neither horse nor man could wade that hurly-burly there last night, for the waters were out, and the footboy from Waddow told me that nobody could even cross the hippin-stones at eight o’clock. He came round by the bridge.”

“But if the beasts could swim?” said another, of more knowledge and shrewdness than the rest.

“Swim!—Go to!” said the small leathern-aproned personage whose functions we have before adverted to at the bright and merry ingle of old Wiswall; “neither man nor beast could have held breast against the torrent.”

This was a complete negation to the whole. Nevertheless something had crossed, whether cloven-footed or not they were unable to distinguish, inasmuch as the demon, or whatsoever it might be, had taken the precaution to make its passage in a pair of horse-shoes. The probability was, that Peggy had varied the usual mode of her proceedings, and sent a messenger with a strong arm and a fiery steed to seize her victim.

“We’re none on us safe,” cried one, “fro’ this she div—div—Save us! I’d like to ha’ made a bad job on’t.”

“The bloody vixen is ne’er satisfied,” said an old gossip, whose nose and chin had been gradually getting into closer fellowship for at least a long score of winters. “I’ll hie me to Bet at the Alleys for a charm that’ll drive aw t’ hobgoblins to the de’il again. When I waur a wee lassie, the scummerin’ dixies didn’t use to go rampaging about this gate. There was nowt to do, but off to t’ priest, an’ th’ job waur done. Now-a-days, what wi’ new lights, doctrines, an’ lollypops, Anabaptists an’ Presbyterians, they’re too throng wranglin’ wi’ one another to tak’ care o’ the poor sheep, which Satan is worrying and hurrying like hey go mad, and not a soul to set the dog at him, nor a callant to tak’ him by t’ horns, an’ say ‘Boh!’”

It seems “the good old times,” even in those days, were objects of regret, still clung to with fondness and delight—reversing the distich; for—

“Man never is, but always *has been*, blest!”

It is a principle in our very nature that we should look back with yearnings to our youthful years, when all was fresh and joyous; when our thoughts were in all the prime, the spring-tide of their existence, and our emotions, young and jocund as ourselves, bubbled forth fresh and clear as the mountain-spring from its source. The change is not in the objects around us; it is in ourselves. Looking through the medium of our own jaded and enervated feelings, we fancy all things have the same worn-out aspect, and contrast the present with the freshness and vigour of our former existence.

Turn we now to the former inmates at Waddow, an old-fashioned building in that old-fashioned age, now re-edified and re-built. It is beautifully situated on a slope on the Yorkshire side of the Ribble, beyond the “hippin-stones” we have named.

In a low, dark chamber, panelled with dingy oak, into which the morning sun burst joyously, its garish brightness ill assorting with the solemnity and even sadness of the scene, there sat an elderly matron, owner and occupier of the place. The casements were so beset with untrimmed branches and decayed tendrils that her form looked dim and almost impalpable, seen through the mist, the vagrant motes revelling in the sunbeams. It seemed some ghostly, some attenuated shape, that sat, still and stately, in that gloomy chamber. Before her stood a female domestic, antique and venerable as herself, and the conversation was carried on scarcely above a whisper, as though silence brooded over that mansion, rarely disturbed by voice or footstep.

“I heed not these idle tales. A hammer and a willing hand will pound yon bugbear into dirt,” said the dame. “If there be none else, I’ll try what the hand of a feeble but resolute woman can do. Yon Dagon—yon graven image of papistrie, which scares ye so, shall be broken for the very beasts to trample on.”

“But the dins last night were”——

“Tell me not of such folly. When yonder senseless thing is gone, you shall be quiet, maybe, if the rats will let ye. Send Jock hither, and let Jim the mason be sent for, and the great iron mallet. Quick, Mause, at my bidding. We shall see whether or not yonder grim idol will dare to stir after it is cast down.”

With a look of surprise, and even horror, at this impious intent, did the ancient housekeeper move slowly forth to execute her commands.

The innocent cause of all this broil was a certain stone figure, rudely sculptured, which, time out of mind, had been the disturbing but undisturbed inmate of an obscure corner in the cellar beneath an uninhabited wing of the mansion at Waddow. Superstition had invested this rude misshapen relic with peculiar terrors; and the generation having passed to whom its origin was known, from some cause or another it became associated with Peggy’s disaster, who, as it was currently believed, either took possession of this ugly image, or else employed it as a kind of spy or bugbear to annoy the inhabitants of the house where she had been so cruelly treated. There did certainly appear some connection between Peggy’s freaks and this uncouth specimen of primitive workmanship. Though bearing evident marks of some rude effigy, the spoliation of a religious house at some reforming, or, in other words, plundering, era—the ideal similitude probably of a Romish saint—yet, whenever Peggy’s emissaries were abroad and a victim was to be immolated, this disorderly cast-out from the calendar was particularly restless; not that any really authenticate, visible cases were extant of these unidol-like propensities to locomotion, but noises and disturbances were heard for all the world like the uncouth and awkward gambols of such an ugly thing; at least, those who were wiser than their neighbours, and well skilled in iconoclastics, did stoutly aver that they had heard it “clump, clump, clump,” precisely like the jumping and capering of such a misshapen, ill-conditioned effigy, when inclined to be particularly merry and jocose. Now this could not be gainsaid, and consequently the innocent and mutilated relic, once looked upon as the genius or tutelary guardian of the house, was unhesitatingly assigned to the evil domination of Peggy. It might be that the rancour she displayed was partly in consequence of an adequate retribution having failed to overtake her betrayer, and the family, then resident at Waddow, not having dealt out to him the just punishment of his deserts. Thus had she been permitted to pervert the proper influences and benevolent operations of this mystic disturber to her own

mischievous propensities; and thenceforth a malignant spirit troubled the house, heretofore guarded by a saint of true Catholic dignity and stolidity.

But it seemed the time was now come when these unholy doings were to be put an end to. The present owner of Waddow, tired, as we have seen, of such ridiculous alarms, and the terrors of her domestics, and wishful to do away with the evil report and scandal sustained thereby, was now resolved to dissipate these idle fears, to show at once their folly and futility.

“Well, Mause, the old lady will have her way, I know; but if she doesn’t rue her cantrips, my name’s not Jock; that’s all.” And here the speaker stamped with a heavy clouted foot upon the kitchen-hearth, whither the lady’s message had been conveyed.

“Thou maun get thy hammer and pick, lad, and soon, too, I tell thee,” said Mause.

“I’ll do aught ‘at she asks me; but—but—to run like some goupin’ warlock to the whame o’ destruction, wi’ one’s een open, it’s what no Christian will do that hasn’ forsworn his baptism.”

“Maun I tell her so?” inquired Mause, with a significant emphasis.

“Naw, naw; no’ just soa; but thee maun—wait a bit; let’s see.” Here he began to beat about anxiously for an excuse, which did not present itself with the same facility as the expression of his unwillingness to undertake the job. “Eh me!—Jock Tattersall—herd and bailiff now these twenty years—that I should be brought to sich a pass; an’ aw’ through these plaguy women. Well, well; but if a good stiff lie, Mause, would sarve my turn, I wouldna’ care so mich. Hears to me, owd wench; tell mistress I’m gone wi’ t’ kye to water, Peg’s Well being frozen up.”

“Tell her thysel’,” said the indignant Mause; “an’ then one lie may sarve. I’ll no go to the dule upo’ thy shouthers!”

“There’s Bob i’ the yard yon; winnat he do for her instead?”

“I tell thee what, Jock,” said Mause, “mistress’ll ha’t done in her own way; so we may as weel budge sooner as later. But let’s a’ go together, an’ I warrant our dame will be the first, an’ she’ll stand i’ th’ gap if aught should happen. Besides, courage comes wi’ company, thee knows, an’ there’s a round dozen of us.”

This proposal, in the present exigency, seemed the best that could be adopted. The whole household were full of misgivings about the result; yet, sheltered under the authority of their mistress, and themselves not consenting to the deed, they trusted Peggy would consider it in the same light, and if she should break forth upon them, doubtless she would possess sufficient discrimination to know the real aggressor, and wreak her vengeance where it was due.

Mause was despatched to their mistress, who, after a short period, starched and pinned, her aspect as stiff and unyielding as her disposition, consented to take the lead, and shame the unwillingness and cowardice of her domestics. Immediately behind walked, or rather lagged, the executioner with his weapons, looking more like unto one that was going to execution. Mause came next, then the remainder of the household, not one of them disposed to quarrel about precedence. The room to which they were tending was low, dark, and unfurnished, save with the *exuviae* of other parts of the premises. Rats and lumber were its chief occupants. A few steps accomplished the descent, the chamber having less of the nature of cellarage than that of a dairy, which, in former times, and until a more eligible situation had been found, was the general use and appropriation to which it was allotted. Seldom visited, Peggy, or rather her mysterious representative, reigned here without molestation or control. At times, as

we have before seen, the image, awaking from its stony slumber, played the very shame amongst the chattels in the lumber-room.

Its activity and exertions against "social order" were now destined to be forever ended. Irrevocable was the doom, and the lowering aspect of the proud dame of Waddow, as the door unclosed, and a faint light from the loophole opposite revealed her enemy in all the mockery of repose—grim, erect, and undisturbed—showed the inflexibility of her purpose.

"Now to work," said she; "come hither with thy torch, Hal; why dost loiter so? and where's Jock and the mason with the tools?" But Jock and his compeer were loth to come, and the lady's voice grew louder and more peremptory. "Shame on ye, to be cow'd thus by a graven image—a popish idol—a bit of chiselled stone. Out upon it, that nature should have put women's hearts into men's bosoms. Nay, 'tis worse than womanhood, for they have the stouter stomach for the enterprise, I trow. Bring hither the hammer, I say. Doth the foul apprehension of a trumpet terrify you that has been dead and rotten these hundred years?"

Thus did the sturdy dame strive to quell their fears and stimulate them to the attack. Yet they lingered, and were loth to begin. Nay, one whispered to his fellow that the image grinned and frowned horribly during this harangue, and made mouths at the trenchant dame.

"It's no use," said Jock; "I darena strike!"

"Thou craven kestril!" said she, angrily; "and what should ail thee to shy at the quarry? Give me the weapon." And with that she seized the hammer as though rendered furious by the pusillanimity of her attendants. The whole group were paralysed with terror. Not a word was spoken; scarcely a breath was drawn; every eye was riveted upon her, without the power of withdrawal. They saw her approach, as though endowed with tenfold strength, and lending the whole weight of her long, thin arm to the blow, with a right good will added thereto, she dealt a powerful stroke at the head of this dumb idol. A headless trunk tumbled on the floor; but with that there came a shriek, so wild, woeful, and appalling, that the cowardly attendants fled. The torch-bearer threw down the light, and the whole of the domestics, with dismal outcries, rushed pell-mell through the narrow passage; fearful, inconceivable horror urging their flight. The dame was left alone, but what she saw or heard was never divulged; an altered woman she looked when she came forth, like one of the old still portraits that had slipped down from its frame in the gloomy oaken chamber. She spoke not again even to Mause that day, but seemed as if bent on some deep and solemn exercise. Abstracted from every outward impression, she sat, the image of some ancient sibyl communing with the inward, unseen pageantries of thought—the hidden workings of a power she could not control. Towards night she seemed more accessible. Naturally austere and taciturn, she rarely spoke but when it was absolutely necessary; yet now there was a softened, a subdued tone of feeling, and even a bland expression in her address, which for years had not been felt. Some bitter, some heart-searing disappointment, had dried up the sources of feeling, and left her spirit withered, without nurture, and without verdure, without so much as a green spot in the untrodden wilderness of her existence.

"I've seen him, Mause," said she, as though half in earnest, half-musing, when the faithful domestic came to warn her mistress that the time of rest was at hand.

"Seen who, my lady?"

"Bless thee, silly wench, I've seen William. Nay, nurse, it was thy boy, as thou didst use to call him; and as sure as these aged eyes have wept themselves dry at his departure and decease, I saw his vision this morning i' the image-chamber."

“Eh! the good saints guide and preserve us,” said the aged menial, crossing herself very devoutly, more by way of conjuration or counter-charm, than from any proper feeling of reverence or faith in the mystic symbol of our redemption. “There’s death at the door, then, sure enough,” she continued; “aw this gramarye and foretokening isn’t for nought; so who’s to pay for it?”

“When the light was gone,” said the dame, as though scarcely heeding the interpolation of her domestic, “I stayed a brief space; but what passed”——Here she raised her dim and hollow eyes for a moment; “no matter now, Mause; suffice it that my nephew, who was drown’d seven long years ago, stood before me!”

“But young master, Heaven rest his soul, what can he want from yonder bright mansion of glory, where you always said he was gone,” replied Mause, “that he should come again to this pitiful world? Eh me! that Peggy should ha’ claw’d so fair a victim.”

“Peace, Mause; never would I believe it. Nor even now will I, for one moment, apprehend that Heaven would put any of its creatures, for whom its care is continually going forth, into the power of a base and vindictive harlot—that the All-merciful and All-good would render up an innocent victim to her malice. Better worship Moloch and the devils, unto whom our forefathers did offer a vain and cruel sacrifice. No, Mause! believe me, our faith forbids. The light of revealed truth shows no such misrule in the government of the Deity. The powers of evil are as much the instruments of good in His hand as the very attributes of His own perfections. And yet, strange enough that my devoted William should appear at the very time, and in the very place, when the destruction of the ugly image was accomplished, as though the charm were then broken, and he were set free! I am distressed, bewildered, Mause; the links are too strong to be undone by my feeble and unassisted reason. That he was reckoned by common report as a doomed one to that vindictive ghost, I know; and that the mutilation of yonder image should apparently have called forth his very substance from the dark womb where he had lain, transcends my imperfect knowledge. Beshrew me, but I could readily become tinctured with the prevailing belief, did not my firm hold on the goodness and the omnipotence of the great Ruler of all sustain my faith and forbid my distrust.”

“I know not what wiser heads may think; but if I’d seen his wraith rising fro’ the image, I should ha’ thought—what I do yet—and so”——

“Tarry with me through the night, Mause. This vision haunts me strangely, and I do feel more heavy and debilitate than I have been wont.”

Whether the shock was too great or too sudden for a frame so stubborn and unyielding, we know not; but that the firmest often feel more intensely the blows and disasters which others, by yielding to them, do evade, needeth not that we set forth, inasmuch as it is too plain and demonstrative to require illustration. On that same night, Mause, awakening from a short and broken slumber, looked on her mistress, and lo, she was a corpse!

This event, according to the popular belief, would doubtless add another to the list of Peggy’s victims, and was looked upon as a terrible token from the demon against all who should hereafter have the temerity or presumption to interfere with her proceedings.

The following day it was noised abroad, and the survivors were mindful to have the entrance to this fearful chamber walled up, and thus prevent any further mischief or interference.

Towards eventide, or ere the lights were renewed in the death-chamber, there came a gentle knock at the hall-door. An aged domestic answered the summons; but with a scream, she fled as from the face of an enemy. A footstep was heard in the hall. Slowly it ascended the stairs. They creaked and groaned, every step seeming to strike with a cold shudder to the heart.

They verily thought that the house was beset by a whole squadron of infernals, who had sent a messenger for the body of their mistress. The tramp of the mysterious visitor was heard in the death-chamber. Moans and bewailings were distinctly audible; and Mause, who was in the room, came down with a face colourless and wan, as though she had seen a ghost. She could not articulate, save one harrowing word—

“William!” she cried, and pointed upwards. Seven years ago had he been drowned, according to general belief, one fearful night, in crossing the river by Bromiley or Brunckerley hippinstones. Nephew and heir-presumptive to the lady of Waddow, he had left his home that evening writhing under her malediction; for he had in an evil hour, as she thought, formed a base-born attachment to an orphan living with Gaffer Wiswall, and generally looked upon as his daughter. It was this curse which clave like a band of iron about the breast of the proud dame of Waddow; for, in the morning light, when there came news to the hall that he had been seen swept down by the ravening flood—perishing without hope of succour—she sat as though stupefied, without a murmur or a tear, and her stricken heart knew not this world’s gladness again. Solitary and friendless, this fair creation seemed blotted out, and she became fretful and morose. All her earthly hopes were centred in this boy, the offspring of a sister, and they were for ever gone! Mause only had the privilege of addressing her without a special interrogation. The appearance, or it might be, the apparition of her beloved nephew, seemed again to open the sluices of feeling and affection; to soften and subdue the harshness that encrusted her disposition; but it was only the forerunner of an eternal change—the herald of that inexorable tyrant, Death!

Darkness was fast gathering about them; but the whole household were huddled together in the kitchen, none daring to venture forth to their occupations. A long hour it seemed, while every moment they were expecting some further visitation. The fire was nigh extinguished, for who durst fetch the billet from the stack? The conversation, if such might be called the brief and scanty form of their communications, was kept up in a sort of tremulous whisper, every one being frightened at the sound of his own voice. How long this state of things might have lasted we know not, inasmuch as the terrible footsteps were again heard upon the stairs—the same slow and solemn tread. They heard its descent into the hall. It became louder, and the fearful vision was evidently approaching. The sound was now in the narrow passage close to them. The next moment a form was presented to their view, carrying a taper, and recognised by the major part of the group; it being the very semblance of their deceased “young master,” as he was generally called, changed, it was true, but still sufficiently like him, when living, to be distinguished from any other. One loud cry announced their discovery of the phantom.

“Why tarry here?” said the intruder. “Yonder corpse hath need of the death lights;” and with that he disappeared. Yet, however needful it was that the usual offices should be rendered to the departed, there was no one bold enough to perform the duty. Nevertheless the lights were kindled by some invisible hand in the lady’s chamber that night; and, by whomsoever the office was fulfilled, the corpse was not without a watcher, and a faithful one, till daylight came softly on the couch, driving away the darkness and the apprehensions it excited.

It was past midnight ere the domestics retired to rest, or rather to their chambers; so fearful were they of another visit that, by a little care and management, they contrived so that none should be left alone till morning arose before them, bright and cheerful, dissipating, in some measure, their former terrors.

Softly and cheerily broke that morning sun upon the frosty and embossed panes of Gaffer Wiswall’s dwelling; but the light brought no cheer, no solace unto him. The old man was now a withered, a sapless trunk, stripped of the green verdure which had lately bloomed on its

hoary summit. His daughter, as he loved to call her—and he had almost cheated himself into the belief—was ravished from him, and the staff of his declining years had perished.

He was sitting moody and disconsolate, and, like the bereaved mother in Israel, “refusing to be comforted,” when a stranger entered, and, without speaking, seated himself by the broad ingle, opposite the goodman, who was looking listlessly forth into the blazing faggots, but without either aim or discernment. The intruder was wrapped in a dark military cloak; his hat drawn warily over his forehead, concealing his features beneath the broad and almost impervious shadow.

Wiswall awoke from his study, and with a curious eye, seemed silently to ask the will and business of the stranger; but he spoke not. The old man, surveying his guest more minutely, inquired—

“Be ye far ridden this morning, Sir Cavalier?”

“Not farther than one might stride ere breakfast,” was the reply, but in a low, and, it seemed, a hasty tone, as though impatient of being questioned, and preferring to remain unnoticed.

The tapster’s instincts were still in operation. With the true spirit of his calling, he inquired—

“From the army, sir?”

“Ay, from the Grand Turk, an’ thou wilt.”

“The king, they say, hath a fairer word for the dames than for those stout hearts who won him his crown,” said the victualler, seemingly conversant in the common rumours that were abroad. “The sparks about court,” continued he, “do ruffle it bravely among the buxom dames and their beauteous”——Here his daughter’s bright image came suddenly upon his recollection, and the old man wept.

“Why dost weep, old man?” inquired his guest.

“Alas! I had a daughter once, a match fit for the bravest galliard that sun e’er shown upon. She was the wonder and dismay of all that looked on her. She loved a soldier dearly, and her mouth would purse and play, and her eye would glisten at a cap and plume; and yet the veriest prude in all Christendom was not more discreet.”

“Mayhap her sweetheart was a soldier, and abroad at the wars; so that these were but the outgoings of hope and expectation for his return.”

“Her sweetheart, marry! she had once—but—he was ta’en from us. The young heir of Waddow, as we always called him, at the hall yonder, was her true love; but one night, seven long bitter years back, the flood swept him away: we never saw him again, but Isabel’s hope was for ever blighted!”

“And the body—was it not found?”

“Nay, for the current was swift, and bore him hence. The demon—she hath ta’en mine, as the next dainty morsel for her ravening appetite.”

“‘Tis seven years since I first sought my fortune as a soldier. I served my king faithfully. With him I went into exile. He hath returned, and here I come to redeem my pledge.”

The stranger threw off his cloak, and the astonished and almost incredulous tapster beheld the nephew of the dame now heir to the inheritance of Waddow.

“Though swept rapidly down the stream on that dreadful night when I fled, heedlessly fled, from the denunciations of her who had supplied a parent’s place from my infancy, I escaped, almost by a miracle, at a considerable distance below the ford, where I attempted to cross;

yet, knowing her inflexible disposition—for she had threatened to leave me penniless—I resolved to seek my fortune as a soldier until I should be enabled to wed with better prospects for the future. I contrived to assure Isabel of my safety, but I strictly enjoined secrecy. I was not without hope that one day or another, appearing as though I had risen from the dead, I should win a reluctant consent, it might be, to our union. A long exile was the only recompense for my loyalty. The restoration hath rendered me back, and I have redeemed my pledge. At my urgent entreaty the other night, the first of my return, she accompanied me, and we have plighted our vows at the same altar. I took her privily to my former home. Knowing a secret entrance to the chamber where the image is deposited, I concealed her there, safe, as I thought, from molestation, until I had won the consent of her who was my only friend. To my horror and surprise she discovered me there, and the screams of Isabel had nigh betrayed her presence; but it was evident she thought the grave had given back its dead. I could not then undeceive her, and when I returned she was a corpse! Dying without will, I am now the lawful heir to yon good inheritance, and Isabel is the proud mistress of Waddow!”

This unlooked-for intelligence was almost overwhelming; the old man’s frame seemed hardly able to bear the disclosure. He wept like a child; but the overflow of his joy relieved the oppressed heart, full even to bursting.

Yet Peggy was not without a sacrifice, according to popular belief, which sacrifice was offered in the person of the late defunct at Waddow. Indeed, according to some, it were an act of unbelief and impiety to suppose any other, and only to be equalled by that of the attack made by this resolute dame upon Peggy’s representative—an outrage she so dearly atoned for by her own death.

The headless trunk was, however, removed some years afterwards to its present site by the brink of “the Well,” where, having fallen upon evil and unbelieving times, it is desecrated to the profane uses of a resting-place for cans unto the merry maidens who come thither at morning and eventide to draw water.

Many are the victims now recorded to the capricious malevolence of Peggy; and though deprived of her domicile at Waddow, still her visitations are not the less frequent; and whether a stray kitten or an unfortunate chick be the sufferer, the same is deemed a victim and a sacrifice to the wrath of Peggy’s *manes*.

XXXIV. The Sands

“It is the shout of the coming foe,
Ride, ride for thy life, Sir John;
But still the waters deeper grew,
The wild sea-foam rushed on.”

—*Old Ballad.*

The following account of an excursion over the sands, from Mr Baines’s *Companion to the Lakes*, will give a very accurate idea of the mode in which travellers accomplish this interesting, though sometimes perilous journey, over the bare sands of the Bay of Morecambe. Taking a horse at Lancaster, and setting out at the same time with the “Over-sands” coach, he says—

“We arrived at Hest Bank, on the shores of Morecambe Bay, three miles and a half from Lancaster, about five in the afternoon. Here a little caravan was collected, waiting the proper time to cross the trackless sands left bare by the receding tide. I soon saw two persons set out in a gig, and, following them, I found that one of them was the guide appointed to conduct travellers, and the other a servant who was driving his master’s gig to the Cartmel shore, and was to return with the horse the same evening. He had of course no time to lose, and had begun his journey at the earliest possible hour. We found the sands firm and level, except the slight wrinkles produced by the ripple of the waves; but they were still wet, having only just been left by the sea. The guide appeared to drive with caution, and in no place went farther than a mile from land. We had a good deal of conversation, and I found him intelligent and communicative. His name is Thomas Wilkinson. He is a tall, athletic man, past the middle age, and bears marks of the rough weather he has been exposed to in discharging the duties of his post during the winter months. In stormy, and more especially in foggy weather, those duties must be arduous and anxious. It is his business to station himself at the place where the river Keer runs over the sands to the sea, which is about three miles from Hest Bank, and to show travellers where they may pass with safety. The bed of the river is liable to frequent changes, and a fresh of water after rain may, in a very short time, convert a fordable place into a quicksand. When we came to the river, he got out of the gig, and waded over to ascertain the firmness of the bottom, the water being about knee-deep. Having escorted us a little farther, till we saw the guide for the Kent at a distance, and having pointed out the line we should keep, he left us to return to his proper post. We gave him, as is usual, a few pence; for though he is appointed by government, his salary is only £10 a-year, and he is, of course, chiefly dependent on what he receives from travellers.

“These sands are called the Lancaster Sands, and the guide said that they were at present eleven miles over, from Hest Bank to Kent’s Bank, but that he had known them when he could pass directly over in not more than seven miles. The tide forms a channel in the sand, which has been gradually coming nearer the shore for some years past, and has obliged persons crossing to take a longer circuit. It was now the spring-tide, and the sands we were travelling upon would, at high-water, be seventeen feet below the surface of the sea.

“The day was exceedingly fine, and the prospects, in crossing over the sands, were splendid. The whole coast of the bay, from Peel Castle round to the shore beyond Lancaster; the stern crags of Warton and Arncliffe Fells, on the right; farther eastward, the well-known form of Ingleborough, whose broad head, not apparently of very great elevation, is still visible from every considerable hill in Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, and seems to lift itself

in serene and unchanging majesty over the neighbouring hills; the broken and picturesque shores of the Kent, beautifully wooded, and forming a vista to the eye;—the fells of Cartmel, rising in the mid-distance, their sides hung with forests, and several ornamental parks lying round their base; and above, and far beyond them, the noble chain of the Westmoreland and Cumberland mountains, whose lofty summits, clothed with light, formed a sublime barrier stretching along the northern horizon. Such are the principal features of a prospect which is not the less beautiful because it rises from the level expanse of the sands, and which was to me the more interesting from the novelty of my own situation.

“The Ulverstone coach, several gigs, and some persons on horseback, had followed us at a little distance, keeping the track left by the wheels of the vehicle which conveyed the guide. When Wilkinson left us, we rode on two or three miles before we came to the channel of the Kent, and there we found a guide on horseback, who had just forded the river from the opposite side. The guide stationed here has long gone by the name of the Carter, and it is difficult to say whether the office has been so called from the family in which it has been vested, or the family have assumed their official title as a cognomen; but it is certain that for many ages the duties of guide over the Lancaster Sands have been performed by a family named Carter, and have descended from father to son. The present possessor of the office is named James Carter, and has lately succeeded his father. He told me that some persons said the office of guide had been in his family five hundred years, but he did not know how anybody could tell that; and all he could say was, that they had held it ‘for many grandfathers back, longer than anyone knew.’ The salary was only £10 a-year till his father’s time, when it was raised to £20; yet I should suppose that the office is a rather productive one, as the family have accumulated some property.

“The Carter seems a cheerful and pleasant fellow. He wore a rough greatcoat and a pair of jack-boots, and was mounted on a good horse, which appeared to have been up to the ribs in the water. When we came to him, he recommended us to wait till the arrival of the coach, which was nearly a mile distant, as the tide would then be gone farther out. I asked if there had been any accidents in this place lately; to which he replied, that some boys were drowned two years ago, having attempted to pass when the tide was up, in defiance of warnings; but that, with that exception, there had not been any accidents for a considerable time. When the coach came up we took the water in procession, and crossed two channels, in one of which the water was up to the horses’ bellies. The coach passed over without the least difficulty, being drawn by fine tall horses. Arrived at the other side, the man of high genealogy received our gratuities, and we rode on, keeping close to a line of rods which have been planted in the sand to indicate the track, and which have remained there for many months. We shortly met the coach from Ulverstone, and several other vehicles, and as we proceeded the views of the estuary and the distant mountains became still more beautiful and interesting. Three or four miles brought us to Kent’s Bank, on the Cartmel shore. I infer that the river is not fordable for any long period, as the guide told the servant whom I have mentioned that he must return in an hour if he wished to pass over again that evening.

“The peninsula formed by the Kent and the Leven is three miles over; and, after passing it, I came to the latter river, the sands of which are of the same breadth, and must be crossed to reach Ulverstone.”

These sands are reckoned more dangerous than the former, as the channel of the river is frequently shifted.

It is safest to cross at spring-tides; the water then is more completely drained out, and the force of the tide sweeps the bottom clean from mud and sediment.

Here another guide on horseback escorts travellers over.

The views up the Leven are fully as picturesque, though not quite so extensive, as those at the mouth of the Kent. A bold, woody promontory, seen in our engraving, projects into the river at the mouth of the ford, narrowing it to less than half the breadth. The two ridges of the Cartmel and Ulverstone Fells, the former clothed with wood and the latter with verdure, run up inland, and carry the eye back to the mountains, round the head of Coniston Water and Windermere. On the Ulverstone shore, to the left of the town, are the grounds of Conishead Priory, which adorn with their rich woods and lawns the gently-waving side of the hill; and the mouth of the Leven opens out to the Bay of Morecambe, the shores of which are visible to a great extent.

The sands forming the Bay of Morecambe, covered by the sea at high water, are crossed every day by travellers whose time or inclination leads them to choose this route rather than one more circuitous, and nearly thrice the distance, inland. Yet the sands are by no means without danger, especially to the uncautious or unwary. Scarcely a year passes without some loss of lives, generally owing to the obstinacy or foolhardiness of the victims. Guides are appointed to conduct strangers across this trackless waste, whose duty it is to examine daily, on the receding of the tide, the several routes by which passengers may accomplish their journey. The places where danger is to be apprehended are the fordings of the several rivers or watercourses, which, even when the sands are bare, still pour forth a considerable stream to the ocean. These fords are continually changing by reason of the shifting of the sands, so that one day's path may on the morrow prove a dangerous and impassable quicksand.

The principal guide has a small annuity from government, and is obliged, in all weathers, to perform this disagreeable but highly-important duty. The priory of Conishead was charged with this office over the Leven or Ulverstone sands, and the guide whom they appointed, besides perquisites, had an allotment of three acres of land, with fifteen marks per annum. Henry the Eighth, on the dissolution of the monasteries, charged himself and his successors with the payment of a certain sum to the person that should be guide for the time being, by patent under the seal of the duchy of Lancaster. Such was the importance and the idea of danger attached to this journey, that on a little rocky island midway between the shores of Cartmel and Furness, there stood a small chapel or oratory built by the monks of Furness, where prayers were daily offered for the safety of travellers then occupied in this perilous attempt. Yet these, called the Ulverstone sands, are scarcely more than three miles across, whilst the well-known Lancaster sands are nine miles, from the circuitous line of the track, though it is said that the shorter passage is the more dangerous. That the longer journey is not unattended with risk may be inferred from the accidents which have occurred, as well as from the fact, that carriages are sometimes left to the mercy of the coming tide, the passengers making their escape in the best manner they are able.

Our tale hath reference to one of these perilous adventures, long years ago; and as neither plot nor story is evolved, the reader is warned, if he so please, that he leave the few following pages unread, unless he be of a temper not liable to suffer disappointment thereby.

The night was beautifully calm: the moon just sinking upon the verge of the distant waters, where the Bay of Morecambe, the great estuary so called, according to some authorities, by Ptolemy, opens out into the broad channel of the Irish Sea.

The stars shone down, keen, bright, and piercing,—“fixed in their everlasting seat,”—ever presenting the same aspect, the same order and disposition, through all the changes of this changing and mutable world. The scene was peculiarly inviting—so calm, so placid, the whole wide and visible hemisphere was without a blot. Nature, like a deceitful mistress,

looked so hypocritically serene, that her face might never have been darkened with a cloud or furrowed by a frown. So winning was she withal, that, though the veriest shrew, and all untamed and ungovernable in her habits and conditions, this night she became hushed and gentle as the soothed infant in its repose.

The same night came down to the Kent side, intending to set out on their perilous march over the sands of the bay, divers travellers, well mounted for the occasion. Yet were their steeds much harassed, weltering in mud and foam, by reason that their journey had been both long and hasty, and their business urgent, nor were they yet without apprehension of pursuit. They looked wistfully down towards the west, where the moon hung over the ocean's brim, a red ensanguined crescent, as if about to dip her golden bowl into the raging deep, or mayhap to launch her glittering bark on that perilous tide. For, in good sooth, the travellers on that same day, having forded the estuaries of the Duddon and the Leven, were barely in time for their passage across the sands of the Kent, their destination being the tower of Arnside, standing on a round rocky peninsula, little more than two miles from their present station. Yet was the way perilous, though they had time sufficient for their purpose. The river Kent, or Ken, which, when the tide hath receded from the bay, followeth often at a considerable depth and speed, was at this period much swollen by reason of the late swells and freshes from the hills. Moreover, the tide would ere long press back the waters towards their source, and but few hours should elapse ere the ocean itself would roll over and obliterate every trace of their intended path. Yet though sure and undeviating was the peril before them, another more imminent and perchance not less remote, awaited them from behind. They were pursued. Hot and hasty was the chase, and their blood alone would slake the vengeance of their adversaries.

Pausing ere the first splash was heard in the heavy sands beneath the shore, the foremost horseman of the party thus held discourse. Those that followed were likewise armed, and to all appearance were followers or retainers of the chief, who had been with them upon some foray or predatory excursion.

"We are between fire and water, I trow; but what of that? We must e'en cross."

"And how if the fog of yesternight should come again, or we should miss our track?"

"Tush, Harry, with thine evil croak. There will be time enough to discourse with danger when it comes. Besides, I would know it blindfold, and the night doth bear no token of either distemper or disquiet."

"Thou art passing careless of our jeopardy. It were better, even now, that we follow the track by the coast. My counsel was set at naught, or we had gone forward by Cartmel, and missed this perilous pathway of the sea."

"And with it met the enemy at my gate; or, peradventure, having passed on thither before us, we should have found them in quiet possession of our good fortalice yonder. Truly it were a precious entertainment! We should have Lenten fare, I trow, where they be lords o' the feast."

"Our steeds, I think, would have outstripped them, even by way of the forest and the bridges, but"——

"Thou reckonest not for delay by the hill-paths and the morass, let alone the weary miles that we should have to ride. Tut, man, they fancy not of our crossing this little brooklet here, because I misled them ere we departed; and they are now mightily sure of cutting off our retreat, and getting at the tower before us. How the knaves will slink back when they find the

gate barred in their teeth. Forward, Sir Harry, and let the Cumberland wolves take the hindmost!”

They dashed down the slope into the heavy mud by the beach, and soon the little band might have been seen moving like dark specks on the sandy waste, even though night had come on, so clear and unsullied was the atmosphere.

The wind, which through the day had blown light, but piercing, from the north, seemed all at once to become more bland and genial. A pause was felt; then a veering to and fro, like the flapping sail, ere the big canvas comes bellying before the wind; a pause, created by one of those occult and uncomprehended operations of nature, to be understood only in the secret recesses of her power, where all the germs of being are elaborated, but whither the most daring and exalted of human capacities never penetrated.

It was near the turn of the tide, and the wind, obeying her spell, as though at the call of that mighty wizard, was gradually veering towards the sea, and shortly would ride on with the rolling billows, driving forward, like some proud charioteer, the dark waters of the Atlantic in its progress.

The travellers were pricking on their way discreetly, the channel of the river just before them, rippling pleasantly over some quiet star, that seemed to sink deep within its bosom.

To their right was the voice of the restless and mystic ocean, obeying the fiat of Him who hath fixed its bounds—at too great a distance now to excite other feelings than those of their own impotence, and the immensity by which they were surrounded. I know of no sound to be compared to it. There is nought in the wide range of our intelligence that can produce the dread, the almost terrific expansion which it seems to create in the mind, save it be the dizzy view over some dark and unfathomable abyss—an impression that comes over us like the dread unutterable anticipations of eternity!

Suddenly a thin white vapour was seen obscuring the brightness in the west. Then came a cloud-like haze, scudding on the very surface of the stream, wherein the splash of horses' feet announced their entrance. They rode slowly on, but the channel was deep, and it seemed as though some sleight and witchery was about them, for the mist became so dense that the clouds seemed to have dropped down to encompass and enfold them. The stream gradually became deeper, until the foremost horse was wading to the belly, labouring and snorting from the chillness and oppression upon his chest.

“‘Tis an unlucky and an embarrassing escort that we are favoured with,” said the rider. “The wind, too, whiffles about strangely. ‘Tis on my face, now, and verily I think the stream will ne’er be crossed. I trust we are not wading it down towards the sea.”

“Troth but we be, though,” hastily replied his friend, after looking down, bending as low as possible to observe his horse's feet, where he could just discern the gouts of foam as they ran right before, instead of passing them from left to right.

“Put back—put back, and soon!” he cried, in great alarm; for the mist bewildered them strangely. They did put back, but instead of all obeying the same impulse, some of the party, finding themselves on opposite sides of the stream, were plunging and replunging into it, to rejoin their comrades, every one calling out for his neighbour to follow; so that, in the end, the whole party were so confused that, on being gathered together once more on the sand, they really knew not on which side of the stream they stood, nor which way to move. They seemed like persons discoursing in a dream, and the mist hung about them so closely that they could not, even by dismounting, see the marks of their own footsteps. They felt that they were standing on a bank of sand, which they knew must inevitably, and ere long, be covered

by the raging tide, even then, perhaps, on its way to overwhelm and devour them. But this was the utmost of their knowledge, for the direction in which to proceed, or the bearing of either shore, was beyond their knowledge or apprehension. They would now have been glad to retrace their steps, but this, alas! they knew not how to accomplish. To remain would be certain destruction; to go on, might only be hastening to meet it. But move they must, as the only chance of escape; yet opinions were as various as the points of the compass. One was for going to the right, another to the left, another straight forward; so that, what with arguing and wrangling, they became more bewildered and uncertain than ever.

“I do verily believe we have not yet crossed the river,” said one.

“Not come across!” replied another; “why we’ve been through and through, to my own certainty, at least thrice.”

“Thrice in thy teeth!” said his angry opponent; “and so I’ll go forward.”

“And I’ll go back,” was the reply. But the precise idea they had formed of these opposite and important determinations was more than either of them could explain; even though they had been ever so certain upon these points, to proceed in a straight line in any direction was impossible, without some object by which to direct their course. Ever and anon was heard a heavy plunge into the stream, but even this token had ceased to avail them, for its course could not be ascertained. The tide was now arresting its progress, and the water moved to and fro in every direction, according to the various impulses it received. The wind, too, was light and treacherous; its breath seemed to come and go, without any fixed point by which they could feel either its arrival or departure. In this dilemma, and without any clue to their extrication, harassed and confounded, they were like men bereft of their senses, and almost at their wits’ end. Still they clung instinctively about each other, but their conduct had now taken the opposite extreme. Before, all was bustle and activity, everybody giving directions, hallooing, shouting, and so forth. Now, they were silent, and almost stationary, stupefied, distracted. There is a fascination in danger. I have known those who never could look down a precipice without a horrible impulse to leap over the brink. Like the scared bird, almost within the gripe of its destroyer, yet unable to flee, so had they lost, apparently, all power of escape. It was a silence more awful even than the yellings of despair. Its horrid gripe was on every heart; every bosom withered beneath its touch. The nature of the most courageous appeared to change; trembling and perplexity shook the stoutest frame; yet suddenly and unexpectedly was the silence broken, and the spell that bound them dissolved.

“Hark!” said every voice together; “a bell, by the blessed Virgin!” The sound roused them from their stupor. Hope again visited the prison-house of the spirit.

“On, on!” said their leader.

“On, on!” was re-echoed on every side; but they were still attempting to escape in different directions. Scarcely two of them were agreed as to the place whence the sound proceeded. Yet it came on, at stated intervals, a long, deep, melancholy knell, almost terrific in their present condition. Another council was attended with the same results—opinions being as varied as ever. Still that warning toll had some connection with their fellow-men, some link, which, however remote, united them to those who were now slumbering in happiness and security. Yet of their true course and bearing they were as ignorant as ever.

“Now, by’r lady,” said one, “there’s either witch or wizard at the tail o’ this. Haven’t I passed this very place to and fro, man and boy, these twenty years, and never went away by a yard’s space, right or left. Now”——

“Right well, Humphry Braithwaite, should I know it too, and yet we might be in a wilderness for aught I can distinguish, either land-mark or sea-mark. Hush, I’m sure that bell is from the right.”

“Nay, I hear it yonder, to the left, if I’m not witched.”

“Thee’rt gone daft, man, ‘tis —— Well, if the sound binna from both sides, right and left! I hear it behind me now.”

“We must be moving,” said the leader. There’s no chance for us here. We can but meet the enemy at the worst, and there are three chances of escaping for one of drowning, which way soever we take, at a blind venture. Then let us away together; and may the Virgin and St Bees be our helper!”

But there were some who would rather trust to their own guidance; and what with the indecision of one, the obstinacy of another, and the timidity of a third, he soon found himself with only one companion, besides his good grey steed, when he flung the reins to his control, and spurred forward.

Reckless, almost driven to desperation, he committed his way to the beast’s better discretion, as he thought, goading on the jaded animal incessantly, his fellow-traveller still keeping behind, but at no great distance. They halted after a space; but how long it is impossible to say. Hours and minutes, in seasons of pain or excitement, are, in the mind’s duration, arbitrary and conventional. To measure time by the state of our feelings would be as futile as an attempt to measure space by the slowness or impetuosity of our movements. Hours dwindle into minutes, and minutes are exaggerated into hours, according to the circumstances under which the mind moves on. We are conscious of existence only by the succession of our feelings. We are conscious of time only by its lapse. Hence we are apt to make the same measure serve for both; and, as our own dispositions predicate, so doth time run fast or slow. True it is that time cannot measure thought. The mind notes but the current and passage of its own feelings; they only are the measure of existence and the medium of identity.

“Halt, Lord Monteagle!” cried his companion from behind; “I hear the sea before us. Hush, and use thine own senses, if they be worth the trial.”

The other listened, but it was only for one moment; the next saw him wheel round, urging on his flight in the opposite direction, for he knew, or his senses were rendered deceptive through terror, the sound of the coming tide.

“Halt, Lord Monteagle!” again cried the horseman from behind; “for the water is deeper at every plunge. Halt, I say, for the love of”—— The sound died on the speaker’s lip, for he was overwhelmed and sickening with the dread anticipation of death.

“On one side or the other, then, I care not which,” cried the foremost rider.

“To the right, and Heaven grant us a safe deliverance!”

Away went the panting steeds; but the waters increased; yet were they powerful animals, and they swam boldly on amid the roar and dash of the rising waves. Still it was with difficulty they could breast the torrent. The courageous beasts braced every sinew to the work—— instinctively grappling with danger——every effort was directed to their escape. Suddenly a loud shout was heard, and something dark rose up before them. It might be the hull of some vessel, that was approaching an ark of safety. This thought was the first that crossed them. But they felt a sudden shock and a vibration, as though their steeds had struck the land.

They saw, or it was a deception produced by agitation or excitement, the dark outline of the beach, and men hurrying to and fro with lighted torches. They galloped on through the waves, and a few moments brought them safely upon the hard, loose pebbles of the shore.

Joyful was the recognition; for those who had come to their succour were the party from whom they had separated, who had luckily gained the shore before them. But what was their surprise when they found they had been galloping to and fro almost within a stone's throw of the beach opposite the place of their destination! Yet such was their state of bewilderment that it was an even hand but they had put about on the other side, and attempted to return across the channel. In that case no human help could have rescued them from destruction, for the tide already had overtaken them, and it was only their close proximity unto the shore which enabled the horses to regain their footing, and bear them safely to land.

It seems that their pursuers were still outdone, for their stronghold was open to receive them; and the enemy, foiled in their expectations, returned with all speed into Cumberland, lest during their absence some more dangerous foe from the Borders should lay waste their possessions.

XXXV. The Ring And The Cliff

“And still I tried each fickle art,
 Importunate and vain;
 And while his passion touched my heart,
 I triumphed in his pain.”

—Goldsmith.

Having in vain attempted to ascertain the locality of the following tradition, we suspect that it may have strayed originally from another county, though it has taken root in our own.

The only place that could by any possibility answer the description which marks the catastrophe is the high ridge above Broughton, in Furness; and even here it would be difficult to point out any single spot which would exactly correspond in every particular.

The Lancashire coast, with here and there an exception, is one low bank or ridge of sand, loosely drifted into hillocks of but mean height and appearance; only preserving their consistency by reason of the creeping roots of the bent or sea-mat weed (*Arundo arenaria*)⁷³ which bind the loose sands together, and prevent them from being dispersed over the adjoining grounds. On the opposite coast fancy might often recognise those very cliffs to which our story alludes; perpendicular, bare, and almost inaccessible, with rents and chasms, where little difficulty would be found in pointing out the exact features represented in this tradition.

On the sea-coast, where a wild bare promontory stretches out amidst the waves of the Irish Channel, is a small hamlet or fishing station. Its site is in the cleft of a deep ravine, through which a small stream lazily trickles amid sand and sea-slime to the little estuary formed by the sea at its mouth. Between almost perpendicular cliffs the village lies like a solitary enclosure, where the inhabitants are separate and alone—aloof from the busy world—their horizon confined to a mere segment of vision. The same ever-rolling sea hath swung to and fro for ages in the same narrow creek, at the sides of which rise a cluster of huts, dignified with the appellation of village—some of these ornamented about and upon the roofs with round patches of the yellow stone-crop and house-leek, that never-failing protection against lightning and tempest, according to indubitable testimony set forth by Master Nicholas Culpepper in his *Herbal*.

The strong marine odour, so well known to all lovers of sea-side enjoyments, may here be sensibly appreciated; for the pent-up effluvia from the curing of fish, marine algæ, and other products of the coast, abundantly strengthen the reminiscences connected with this solitary and secluded spot.

It was on a cold, grey morning in October that two individuals were loitering up a narrow path from the hamlet which led to the high main road, passing from village to village along the coast; branches from which, at irregular intervals, penetrated the cliffs to the different fishing stations along the beach. The road, on rising from the village, runs along the summit,

⁷³ Many a fertile acre has been covered with sand and rendered useless which might have been preserved by sowing on its confines the seeds of this plant. The Dutch have profited by a knowledge of its efficacy; Queen Elizabeth prohibited the extirpation of it. As soon as it takes root a sandhill gathers round it; so that wherever it is planted it gives a peculiar character to the coast. This grass or reed is manufactured into mats, baskets, &c. A legislative enactment, however, in 1742, was issued for its preservation. The Scottish Parliament likewise protected it, together with *Elymus arenarius*, or upright sea-lyme grass.

a considerable height above the sea; terrific bursts through some rocky cleft reveal the wide ocean rolling on from the dim horizon to the shore. Here and there may be seen the white sail, or the hull of some distant bark, gliding on so smooth and silently as to suggest the idea of volition obeyed without any visible effort. Rising from the ravine, the road passes diagonally up the steep. At the period of which we speak, ere it reached the main line of communication through the country, a reft or chasm in the steep wall towards the sea—a nearly perpendicular rent—left the mountain path without protection, save by a slender paling for the space of a few yards only. Nothing could be more dreary and terrific. Through this dizzy cleft—the sides bare and abrupt, without ledge or projection—the walls, like gigantic buttresses, presenting their inaccessible barriers to the deep—the distant horizon, raised to an unusual height by the point of sight and position of the spectator, seemed to mingle so softly and imperceptibly with the sky that it appeared one wide sea of cloud stretching to the foot of the cliff. From that fearful summit the billows were but as the waving of a summer cloud, undulating on the quiet atmosphere. The fishing bark, with its dun, squat, picturesque sail, looked as though floating in the sky—a fairy boat poised on the calm ether.

As we before noticed, two persons were loitering up this path. They paused at the brink of the chasm. It might be for the purpose of gazing on the scene we have just described; but the lover's gaze was on his mistress, and the maiden's eye was bent on the ground.

“‘Tis even so, Adeline. We must part. And yet the time may come, when——But thou art chill, Adeline. The words freeze ere they pass my lips, even as thine own; for I never yet could melt the frost-work from thy soul. Still silent? Well. I know thy heart is not another's; and yet thou dost hesitate, and linger, and turn away thy cold grey eyes when I would fain kindle them from mine. Nay, Adeline; I know thou lovest me. Ay! draw back so proudly, and offer up thine and thy true lover's happiness for ever on the altar of thy pride.”

“Since thou knowest this heart so well,” retorted the haughty maiden, “methinks it were a bootless wish to wear it on thy sleeve, save for the purpose of admiring thine own skill and bravery in the achievement.”

“Thou wrongest me, Adeline; ‘tis not my wish. Say thou art mine; we are then safe. No earthly power shall part us. But I warn thee, maiden, that long years of misery and anguish will be our portion should we separate while our troth is yet unplighted. This ring,” said he, drawing off his glove, “is indifferently well set. The bauble was made by a skilful and cunning workman. The pearls have the true orient tinge, and this opal hath an eye like the hue of the morning, changeable as—woman's favour. How bright at times!—warm and radiant with gladness, now dull, cold, hazy, and”——unfeeling, he would have said, but he leaned on the slender barrier as he spoke, and his eye wandered away over the dim and distant wave, across which he was about to depart. Whether he saw it, or his eye was too intently fixed on the dark and appalling future, we presume not to determine.

“A woman's favour, like thy similes, Mortimer, hath its colour by reflection. Thou seest but thine own beam in't; the hue and temper of thy spirit. We have no form nor feeling of our own, forsooth; we but give back the irradiation we receive.”

“Thou canst jest, Adeline. Thy chillness comes upon my spirit like the keen ice-wind; it freezes while it withers.”

The maiden turned aside her head, perhaps to hide a gleam of tenderness that belied her speech.

“Adeline, dark hours of sorrow are before thee! Think not to escape.”

He seized her hand.

“Shouldst thou wed another, a doom is thine—a doom from which even thought recoils.”

He looked steadfastly upon her, but the maiden spoke not; a tear quivered through her drooping eyelashes, and her lip grew pale.

“But I must away,” continued Mortimer. “Yonder bark awaits me,” and he drew her gently towards the brink. “It will part us, perhaps for ever! No, no, not for ever. Thou wilt wed—it may be—and when I return—Horror!”

He started back, as from a spectre which his imagination had created.

“That ring—take it. Let it be thy monitor; and should another seek thy love, look on it; for it shall warn thee. It shall be a silent witness of thy thoughts—one that will watch over thee in my stead; for the genii of that ring,” said he, playfully, “are my slaves.”

But she returned the pledge.

“I cannot. Do not wind the links around me thus, lest they gall my spirit; lest I feel the fetters, and wish them broken!”

“Then I swear,” said Mortimer, vehemently, “no hand but thine shall wear it!”

He raised his arm, and the next moment the ring would have been hurled into the gulf, but ere it fell he cast another glance at his mistress. Her heart was full. The emotion she sought to quell quivered convulsively on her lip. He seized her hand; but when he looked again upon the ring it was broken!

By what a strange and mysterious link are the finest and most subtle feelings connected with external forms and appearances! By what unseen process are they wrought out and developed; their hidden sources, the secret avenues of thought and emotion, discovered—called forth by circumstances the most trivial and unimportant! Adeline turned pale; and Mortimer himself shuddered as he beheld the omen. But another train of feelings had taken possession of her bosom; or rather her thoughts had acquired a new tendency by this apparently casual circumstance; and true to the bent and disposition of our nature, now that the slighted good was in danger of being withdrawn, she became anxious for its possession. She received the token. A slight crack upon its rim was visible, but this fracture did not prevent its being retained on the hand.

After this brief development their walk was concluded. They breathed no vows. Mortimer would not again urge her. A lock of hair only was exchanged; and shortly the last adieu was on their lips, and the broad deck of the vessel beneath his feet, whence he saw the tall cliff sink down into the ocean, and with it his hopes, that seemed to sink for ever into the same gulf!

Some few years afterwards, on a still evening, about the same time of the year, a boat was lowered from a distant vessel in the offing. Three men pulled ashore as the broad full moon rose up, red and dim, from the mist that hung upon the sea. The roll of the ocean alone betokened its approach. Its melancholy murmur alone broke the universal stillness. The lights came out one by one from the village casements. The cattle were housed, and the curs had crept to the hearth, save some of the younger sort, who at intervals worried themselves, fidgeting about, and making a mighty show of activity and watchfulness.

One of the passengers stepped hastily on shore. He spoke a few words to the rowers, who threw their oars into the boat, fastening her to the rocks. Afterwards they betook themselves to a tavern newly trimmed, where, swinging from a rude pole, hung the “*sign*” of a ship—for *sign* it could only be called—painted long ago by some self-initiated and village-

immortalised artist, whose production had once been the wonder of the whole neighbourhood.

A roaring blaze revealed the whole interior, where pewter cups and well-scoured trenchers threw their bright glances upon all who wooed these dangerous allurements at "The Ship."

But the individual whom the rowers had put ashore withstood these tempting devices. He strode rapidly up the path, and paused not until he approached the cliff where the agony of one short hour had left its deep furrows for ever on his memory.

The incidents of that memorable day were then renewed with such vividness that, on a sudden, writhing and dismayed, he hurried forward in the vain hope, it might seem, of flying from the anguish he could not control.

A dark plain stone house stood at no great distance, and hither his footsteps were now directed. A little gate opened into a gravel walk sweeping round an oval grass plat before the door. He leaned upon the wicket, as though hesitating to enter. By this time the moon rode high and clear above the mist which was yet slumbering on the ocean. She came forth gloriously, without a shadow or a cloud. The wide hemisphere was unveiled, but its bright orbs were softened by her gaze. The shadows, broad and distinct, lay projected on a slight hoar-frost, where a thousand splendours and a thousand crystals hung in the cold and dewy beam. Bright, tranquil, and unruffled was the world around him—but the world within was dark and turbulent—tossed, agitated, and overwhelmed by the deep untold anguish of the spirit.

The tyrant sway of the passions, like some desolating invader, can make a paradise into a desert, and the fruitful places into a wilderness. How different to Mortimer would have been the scene viewed through another medium! His soul was ardent, devoted, full of high and glorious imaginings; but a blight was on them all, and they became chill and decayed—an uninformed mass, without aim or vitality.

He was afraid to proceed, lest his worst suspicions might be confirmed. He had heard——But we will not anticipate the sequel.

A loud barking announced the presence of an intruder, but the sagacious animal, when he had carefully snuffed out a recognition, fawned and whined upon him, running round and round towards the house, with gambols frolicsome and extravagant enough to have excited the smiles of any human being but Mortimer.

As he approached he heard a soft, faint melody from within. It was her voice;—he could not be mistaken, though years had passed by;—though the dull tide of oblivion had effaced many an intervening record from the tablet of his memory, those tones yet vibrated to his soul. His heart thrilled to their impression like two finely-modulated strings, which produce a corresponding sympathy upon each other. He listened, almost breathless. The recollection came like a track of fire across his brain. Memory! how glorious, how terrible art thou! With the wand of the enchanter thou canst change every current of feeling into joy or woe. The same agency—nay, the same object—shall awaken the most opposite emotions. The simplest forms and the subtlest agents are alike to thee. Nature seems fashioned at thy will, and her attributes are but the instruments of thy power.

The melody that he heard was a wild and mournful ballad which he had once given to Adeline, when the hours flew on, sparkling with delight, and—she had not forgotten him!

The thought was too thrilling to endure. His brain throbbed with ecstasy. Unable to restrain his impatience, he applied hastily to the door. Such was the excitement under which he laboured that the very sound made him start back: it struck so chilly on his heart. Then came

an interval of harrowing suspense. He shuddered when he heard the approaching footsteps, and could with difficulty address the servant who stood inquiring his errand.

“Is—is Adeline within?”

The menial silently surveyed the inquirer, as though doubtful in what manner to reply, ere he answered—

“My mistress is at home, sir.”

Mortimer stepped into the hall. The servant threw open the door announcing his name, and Mortimer was in the presence of Adeline.

The meeting was too sudden for preliminary forms and courtesies. There was no time for preparation. The blow was struck, and a thousand idle inquiries were perhaps saved; but Adeline, after one short gaze of astonishment and dismay, covered her face; a low groan escaped her, and she threw herself convulsively on the chair.

Mortimer hastened to her relief, but she shrank from his touch. She spoke not; her anguish was beyond utterance.

“Adeline!”

She shuddered as though the sound once more awakened the slumbering echoes of memory.

“Leave me, Mortimer,” she cried. “I must not”——

“Leave thee!” it was repeated in a tone that no words can describe. Inquiry, apprehension, were depicted in his look as if existence hung on a word; while a pause followed, compared with which the rack were a bed of roses. The silence was too harrowing to sustain.

“And why? I know it all now,” cried the unhappy Mortimer; and the broad impress of despair was upon his brow, legibly, indelibly written.

“I am here to redeem my pledge; and thou! O Adeline! Why—why? Say how is my trust requited? Were long years too, too long, to await my return? I have not had a thought thou hast not shared. And yet thou dost withhold thy troth!”

“It is plighted!”

“To whom?”

“To my husband?”

Though anticipating the reply, the words went like an arrow to his heart. We will not describe the separation. With unusual speed he descended the path towards the village. He rushed past the cleft with averted looks, fearful that he might be tempted to leap the gulf. He entered the tavern; but so changed in manner and appearance that his companions, fearful that his senses were disordered, earnestly besought him to take some rest and refreshment.

In the end he was persuaded to retire to bed. But ere long fever and delirium had seized him; and in the morning he was pronounced by a medical attendant to be in extreme danger, requiring the interposition of rest and skill to effect his cure.

It was in the cold and heavy mist of a December evening that a female was seated upon the tall cliff above the chasm we have described. As the solitary gull came wheeling around her, she spoke to it with great eagerness and gesticulation.

“Leave me—leave me!” she cried. “I must not now. Poor wanderer! art thou gone?” With an expression of the deepest bitterness and disappointment, she continued, “Why, oh, why didst thou take back thy pledge? Nay, it is here still; but—alas! ‘tis broken. Broken!” and a scream so wild and pitiful escaped her, it was like the last agony of the spirit when riven from its shrine. Her hair wet with the drizzly atmosphere hung about her face. She suddenly threw it aside, as if listening.

“‘Tis he! Again he comes. My—no, no; he *was* my lover! I have none now. I have a husband; but—he is unkind. Alas! why am I thus? I feel it! O merciful Heaven! my brain leaps; but I am not—indeed I am not mad!”

Saying this, she bounded down the cliff into the path she had left, with surprising swiftness. Returning, she was met by her husband, with two servants, who were in search. He chid her harshly—brutally. He threatened—ay, he threatened restraint. She heard this; but he saw not the deep and inflexible purpose she had formed. Horror at the apprehension of confinement, which, in calmer intervals, she dreaded worse than death, prompted her to use every artifice to aid her escape. She was now calm and obedient, murmuring not at the temporary attendance to which she was subjected. She sought not the cliff and the deep chasm; but would sit for hours upon the shore, looking over the calm sea, with a look as calm and as deceitful.

Vigilance became relaxed; apprehension was lulled; she was again left to herself, and again she stole towards the cliff. Like to some guilty thing, she crept onward, often looking back lest she should be observed. Having attired herself with more than ordinary care, before leaving her chamber she unlocked an ivory casket with great caution, taking thence a ring, which she carefully disposed on her forefinger. She looked with so intense a gaze upon this pledge—for it was the pledge of Mortimer—that she seemed to be watching its capricious glance, like the eye of destiny, as if her fate were revealed in its beautiful and mystic light.

Sunset was near as she approached the cliff. She paused where the chasm opened out its deep vista upon the waters. They were now sparkling in the crimson flush from a sky more than usually brilliant. Both sky and ocean were blent in one; the purple beam ran out so pure along the waves, that every billow might now be seen, every path and furrow of the deep.

Adeline climbed over the rail. She stood on that extreme verge, so fearful and abrupt that it might have rendered dizzy a stouter head than her own.

“This night are we married, Mortimer. The *ring* and the *cliff*!”

The ring at this moment shot forth a tremulous brightness; probably from participation with the glowing hues by which it was surrounded.

“The genii of that ring—said he not so?—they will bear me to him. Our couch is decked, and the bridal hymn—Hark!”

It was only the sound from some passing skiff that crept along the waters, but Adeline thought she heard the voice of her lover.

“He calls me; when will he return?”

She looked anxiously on the ring, as though expecting a reply; but she saw its bright hues diminish, and gradually grow dim in the dull grey light which displaced the gaudy sunset.

“Oh, why art thou gone so soon?” Her heart seemed full, as though in the very agony of separation.

“I must away. His bark is on the deep; and he will not return.”

She buried her head in her lap, and wept. But suddenly she started up; she looked on the distant wave as though she beheld some object approaching. She again climbed upon the rail, and gazed eagerly through the twilight on the billows, now foaming back in triumph with the returning tide. Her features were yet beautiful, though wasted by disease; and as she gazed, a smile, rapturous and bright, passed over, like a sunbeam on the dark billows. She waved her hand.

“I have waited for thee. Bear me hence. Haste! Oh, haste! They are here.”

She listened. Her countenance grew more pale and agitated. Voices were heard, and footsteps evidently approaching. She recognised the hated sound of her pursuers. Agony and despair were thy last ministers, unhappy victim! She wrapped her cloak closer to her form, and, with one wild and appalling shriek, leaped that dizzy height, by the foot of which her mangled remains were shortly discovered.

In the family of —— is a ring, taken from the finger of a female ancestor of the house who leaped from “*The Lady’s Cliff*,”—for such it continues to be called; and it is still said to be haunted by her spirit. The ring was found uninjured, save by a crack through the rim, where it seems bent by a sudden stroke. Superstition attaches strange stories to this relic. True enough, at times it appears almost gifted with intelligence; though perhaps the answer, intimated by the brilliancy or dimness of the stone, may often be construed according to the thoughts or wishes of the inquirer. It is kept in a little ivory box, and preserved with great care. It is said there never was a question propounded to this oracle—if done with a proper spirit, with a due and devout reverence, and a reliance on its wondrous efficacy—but the ring, by its brightness or its gloom, shadowed forth the good or evil destiny of the querent.

Mortimer recovered. In this village, many years afterwards, lived an old man, whose daily walk was to the cliff. From that height he would gaze until the last hue of evening died upon the waves. He then returned, with a vacant and down-cast look, sad and solitary, to his dwelling. He was buried there in the churchyard; and a plain-looking stone, with the initials C. M., still marks the spot called The Stranger’s Grave.

XXXVI. The Dead Man's Hand

“Yet stay, fair lady, turn again,
And dry those pearly tears;
For see, beneath this gown of grey,
Thy own true love appears.”

—Percy's *Reliques*.

Bryn Hall, the scene or rather the solution, of the following tradition, is now demolished. It was the ancient seat of the Gerards, by virtue of marriage between William Gerard, about the year 1280, with the daughter and sole heir of Peter de Bryn. It was built in a quadrangular form with a spacious courtyard, to which admittance was gained by a narrow bridge over the moat surrounding the whole fabric. The gatehouse was secured by massy doors well studded with iron; a curiously-carved porch led to the great hall, where, on the chimney-piece, were displayed the arms of England, not older than the reign of James I. A railed gallery ran along one side, on which persons might stand to observe the entertainments below without mingling in them. It was supported by double pillars in front of pilasters, forming arches between, profusely ornamented by rich carved work. Most of these decorations, together with the carved wainscots, were taken to embellish Garswood Hall, near Ashton, a few miles distant, where the family resided after their removal.

In the windows were some armorial bearings of painted glass, the first quarterings beginning with the Leighs of Lyme, instead of Gerard or Bryn, as might have been expected. Here was a Roman Catholic chapel, and a priest who continued long after the family had departed, having in his custody the hand mentioned in the following pages. It is still kept by them, or rather by the priest, who now resides at Garswood. Preserved with great care in a white silk bag, it is still resorted to by many diseased persons, and wonderful cures are said to have been wrought by this saintly relic. It is called the Hand of Father Arrowsmith—a priest who is said to have been put to death at Lancaster for his religion in the time of William III. When about to suffer, he desired his spiritual attendant to cut off his right hand, which should then have the power to work miraculous cures on those who had faith to believe in its efficacy. Not many years ago, a female, sick of the smallpox, had it lying in bed with her every night for six weeks, in order to effect her recovery, which took place. A poor lad, living in Withy Grove, Manchester, afflicted with scrofulous sores, was rubbed with it; and though it has been said he was miraculously restored, yet, upon inquiry, the assertion was found incorrect, inasmuch as he died in about a fortnight after the operation.

Not less devoid of truth is the tradition that Arrowsmith was hanged for witnessing a good confession. Having been found guilty of a misdemeanour, in all probability this story of his martyrdom and miraculous attestation to the truth of the cause for which he suffered was contrived for the purpose of preventing the scandal that might have come upon the Church through the delinquency of an unworthy member.

One of the family of the Kenyons attended as under-sheriff at the execution; and it is said that he refused the culprit some trifling favour at the gallows, whereupon Arrowsmith denounced a curse upon him—to wit, that whilst the family could boast of an heir, so long they should never want a cripple: which prediction was supposed by the credulous to have been literally fulfilled.

What a strange and appalling history would be that of superstition! how humiliating, how degrading to the boasted dignity of our nature! In all ages this teeming source of error has yielded abundantly all varieties of phantasms—the sublime, the solemn, the horrible, and the ridiculous—a mildew, a blight, on the fairest blossoms of truth; an excrescence; a coat of rust, which eateth as a canker, and makes religion, which was given as a blessing and a boon to our perishing race, a burden and a curse. And yet neither good nor evil is unmixed. Such is the nature even of our most baneful impressions that instances do arise where good may come from so corrupt a source. The connection between material and immaterial, between mind and matter, so operates, that sometimes, and in proportion to the strength of the impression, a change is wrought by the mere control of the mind over the bodily functions.

To this operation may be ascribed the wonder-workings of these latter days. We do not question the effects thereby produced; but totally, unhesitatingly, deny the cause. Imagination at times doth so usurp the mastery over the animal and bodily faculties, that she has been known to suspend their ordinary processes, and to render the frame insensible even to the attacks of pain itself.

In one of the northern divisions of the county—we know not the precise situation, nor is it needful to our purpose that we inquire—there dwelt a comely maiden, who, at a period of little more than twenty summers from her birth, found herself in the undisturbed possession, if not enjoyment, of an abundant income, with a domain of more than ordinary fertility and extent. Her parents dying during the period of her youth, she, as the only offshoot of the family, held her dominion uncontrolled. That the possessor of such an abundant stock of liberty should wish to wear a chain is verily a marvel not easily resolved. But so it was; and she seemed never so well pleased as when the links were firmly riveted. The forging of this invisible chain was a work performed in secret. She felt her thrall, but she sighed not to be free! For, alas! a grievous malady had seized her. The light of her eyes—a brisk and winning gallant, in the shape of a male cousin—had departed. He went out to the wars, as was reported, and Ellen refused to be comforted. He knew not, peradventure, of her liking towards him. He was of a different creed, moreover—a Catholic—and she had, in the sovereignty of her caprice, treated him with something of petulance—he thought scorn. What a misfortune, that two fond hearts should have wanted an interpreter!

She sat one evening in her bed-chamber, and Bridget her maid, a little Roman Catholic orphan, who had served her from a child, was busily engaged in preparing her mistress for the night's repose. Now Bridget was a zealous believer in saints, miracles, and the like; and Ellen would often disport herself gently on the subject.

“I wish I could believe in thy legends and thy saints’ gear; it would verily be a comfortable disposition of my thoughts in all extremity to have a hope of a special interference.”

“And why not?” said Bridget, who confessed thrice a-year, and knew the marvellous histories of a dozen saints by rote.

“Because,” said her mistress, “I did not imbibe thy faith with my mother’s milk as thou hast done. ‘Tis part of thy very nature, wench; and thou couldst not but act in conformity thereto.”

“There have we the better of our birthright. But, nevertheless, those who repent and turn to the true faith have the same privileges; yet it is hard, as well it may be, to bend their stubborn nature to this belief. How comfortable to have one’s sins struck from the calendar, and to know that we are holy again as a little child, besides ailments of the body innumerable that are cured whenever we can bring our faith to its full exercise!”

“Well, Bridget, if I were a good Catholic as now I am an unbeliever and heretic, dost think that St Somebody, or whoever I might take a fancy to for the purpose, would be propitiated by a few prayers and genuflexions, and restore me to health and—and”——

She faltered in her speech; the banter died away on her lips; memory gave a sudden twinge, and her heart grew dark under the dim cloud that was passing over.

“I’d answer for it, if you were a good Catholic, that Father O’Leary would cure you as readily as he did Davy Dean’s sow, that went mad, and bit her master.”

“But seeing that I am neither a good Catholic nor even Davy Dean’s sow, is there a saint in the whole calendar would think it worth while to work a miracle on such a wicked unbeliever as I am?”

“There’s one way, as I’ve heard tell; that if ye take a sprig of St John’s wort, and say three *credos* over it and a *paternoster*, and lay it under your pillow, you shall dream of the remedy by which a cure may be wrought.”

Ellen did not immediately reply to this suggestion, for she thought that no special revelation was needed to point out a remedy.

“I would give the world if I had it to know what my cousin William is doing,” said she in a musing fit, as though some sudden fancy had crossed her.

“And why may you not?” said the ready-witted maid; “yea, as sure as St Peter’s at Rome, and that’s not to be gainsaid either by Turk or infidel.”

“What, dost thou learn these crotchets in thy creed?” said Ellen.

“Nay,” replied the other, “it is a bit of conjuration not enjoined by the Church; a kind of left-handed intercourse which we get by stealth from other guess-folk, I reckon, than the holy saints.”

“Am I to dream of this too?”

“Why, nay; you may be wide awake for that matter; but you must just take a phoenix feather in one hand, a cockatrice tooth in your mouth, and breathe on the glass, when, as the breath departs, they say your true love will appear therein.”

“But he is not my true love, wench; and so I may not bind him with such spell, mayhap.”

“How know ye that, fair mistress?”

“Go to; thou dost wound and vex me with thy questions. Hath he not been gone these five months, and never a word, good or bad, hath been rendered to me? Nay, did he not, ere he went, so deport himself with most cold and supercilious arrogance, and even with neglect and disdain?”

“Because in your own bright self, lady, he had the first example; for of all the gay sparks that fluttered about you there was never a one o’ them that had to endure such chilling looks and so haughty a bearing as were usually reserved for him.”

“Hold thy tongue; thou dost presume too much, methinks, upon thy former freedoms, wench. I like not such unguarded speech.”

Bridget was silent at this rebuke; and, whatever was uppermost in her thoughts, no more was said that night.

The following days Ellen was much worse. The disease appeared to be rapidly gaining strength, and the maiden seemed doomed to an early grave.

“And isn’t it a silly thing for one like you to die so soon?” said Bridget; “I can ask for you, what I would not have the face to ask for myself.”

Ellen smiled. The hectic flush was apparently on her cheek; and the fever that fed it was on her vitals; at least, so said the village chroniclers by whom it was told.

What was the precise nature of the request that Bridget made the next Sunday from her patron saint, we know not; but she seemed mightily occupied therewith; and if ever there was faith in such an intercessor, Bridget felt assured that her patron would intercede on behalf of her mistress, though a heretic and unbeliever. But St Bridget was told, in all likelihood, that Ellen must necessarily be a convert to the true faith should a miracle be wrought in her favour.

The following morning Bridget was early at the bedside of her mistress, with a countenance more than usually indicative of some important communication. But Ellen was the first to break silence.

“I have had a strange dream last night.”

“So I guessed,” said Bridget, with a face of great importance; “and what said the holy saint, my good kind patron?”

“Bless thy silly face, it was no woman saint that I saw.”

Bridget looked sad and chop-fallen at this intimation; she was fearful that her prayers were unheeded.

“There came, as I thought in my dream,” said Ellen, “a long-robed priest to my bedside.”

“Sure enough, then, St Bridget—blessings on her wherever she be!—sent him.”

“Prithee, be quiet, and listen. He stood there, methought, and when I asked him of his errand, he raised his right arm, and I saw that the hand was wanting, being taken off at the wrist. I marvelled exceedingly at this strange apparition; but as I was a-going to question him thereon I awoke. I know not why, but the vision sorely troubled me, especially when again going to sleep, for it was repeated thrice.”

“It’s a riddle,” said Bridget, “and one with a heavy meaning in it, too, if we could find it out.”

“Verily, I think so,” said Ellen; “for the impress doth not pass away like that from ordinary dreams; but rests with a deep and solemn power upon my spirit, such as I can neither throw off nor patiently endure.”

“I’ll unriddle it for you, or go a pilgrimage to our Lady at Loretto,” said Bridget, determined not to be behindhand in her curiosity. So she set her woman’s wits immediately to work; yet she saw her mistress daily losing strength, and no clue was obtained by which to know the interpretation of the vision. She consulted her confessor; but he was equally at a loss with herself, and knew not the nature of the dream, nor its meaning.

One day Mistress Bridget brought in a tall beggar woman, dumb, or pretendedly so, and apparently deaf. She made many signs that the gift of foreknowledge was in her possession, though she seemed herself to have profited little by so dangerous an endowment. Ellen, being persuaded by her maid, craved a specimen of this wonderful art. The hag, a smoke-dried, dirty-looking beldame, with a patch over one eye, and an idiotic expression of face, began to mutter and make an odd noise at the sight of the sick lady. She took a piece of chalk from her handkerchief, and began her work of divination. First she drew a circle on the floor, as a boundary or frame, and within it she put many uncouth and crabbed signs; but their meaning was perfectly unintelligible. Under this she sketched something like unto a sword, then a hideous figure was attached to it, with a soldier’s cap on his head. Before him was a heart,

that seemed to hang, as it were, on the point of this long sword; which when Ellen saw she changed colour, but attempted to smile; yet she only betrayed her agitation. The dumb operator drew one hand across her own breast, and with the other pointed to the lady; which appeared to Ellen as though intimating that a soldier had won her heart, and that this was the true cause of her illness. Such an interpretation, perchance, was but the conscious monitor speaking from within, as it invested this unmeaning hieroglyphic with the hue and likeness of its own fancies. But more marvellous still was the subsequent proceeding. Having revealed the cause, it seemed as though she were about to point out, obscurely as before, the method and means of cure. When she had drawn the long unshapely representation of a cloak, above it was placed something like unto a human head, without helm or other covering; and to this figure two arms were added; one having a huge hand, displayed proper, as the heralds say, the other arm entirely destitute of this useful appendage. Ellen at once remembered her dream, and watched the process even with more interest than before.

The hand which should have been attached to the wrist was now drawn distinct from the rest, as though grasping a heart wounded by the sword; and doubtless the interpretation, according to Bridget's opinion, was, that the application of a hand, which had been severed from the body, would alone cure the disease under which she pined. The dumb prophetess did not communicate further on the subject; and after having received her bounty, she departed.

"How very strange!" said Ellen.

"Marvellous enough," said the maid; "but St Bridget hath doubtless sent her to your help. Nay, peradventure, it was St Bridget herself! Save us, what a kind, good creature she must be!"

Here she crossed herself with great fervour, forgetting that even a saint among womankind would hardly feign herself dumb.

"There is some mystery about this hand," thought Ellen; but where to seek for a solution was a mystery of equal magnitude with the rest. Bridget was sure, from the disclosures already vouchsafed, that the needful directions would not be withheld.

Ellen felt restless and disturbed for a while after this event; but her sensations were again reverting to their ordinary channel when one morning she awoke in a fearful trepidation. She said that the figure of a human hand was visible, in her slumbers; that it led the way, pointing to an old house like a fortified mansion, with a moat and gatehouse before the main entrance. As she followed, the hand seemed to twine its fingers about her heart, and for that time she felt relieved of her pain. So vividly was the scene impressed upon her imagination that she felt assured she should recognise the building again, and especially the interior, where, in a stately chamber, the miraculous cure was performed. Bridget rubbed her hands, and capered about for joy.

"The name of St Bridget be praised!" said she, and vowed twenty things in a breath; but the principal of these was an embroidered petticoat, which vow she expected her mistress would enable her to fulfil. Indeed, she had long set her mind upon this lustrous piece of attire, and was waiting, somewhat impatiently, the time when it should be allotted to her. So audibly had she made her vow that Ellen was reminded of her pertinacity in still hoarding this precious and coveted piece of finery, which Bridget looked upon as an unwarrantable detention of her perquisites.

The cunning maid having obtained the garment for her patron saint, what harm was there in wearing it, a while at least, for her sake?

Affairs went on for a little time in this dubious state; but the continued and increasing illness of Ellen made it expedient that a change of air should be attempted, and the journey accomplished by short and easy travel. The family coach was brought out, and Mistress Bridget, invested with the dignities of her office, went forth as attendant of the body, and principal conductor of stores and packages.

Journeying southwards at a slow pace, pausing to take a look where there was any object worth the attention, they came one afternoon, about the fourth day from their departure, to Wigan. When they had journeyed thence a mile or so, as they were passing down a jolting road, Bridget, whose curious eye was ever on the look-out, suddenly exclaimed, at the same time pointing through the window—

“I declare if there is not the dummy again yonder!”

Ellen beheld the dumb sibyl, whose predictions were not forgotten. Bridget, by her looks, seemed to ask leave to stop the carriage and hold another conference with the woman; and Ellen, whom illness had rendered somewhat passive in such matters, did not make any opposition. Having accosted this walking oracle, Bridget curtsied with great reverence, peradventure fancying that St Bridget herself might be again embodied before her; but the beldame went straight to the carriage, addressing herself to the invalid within by pointing to her breast, and making divers motions of the like signification, which were not easy to be understood, even by the party for whom they were intended. The prophetess seemed fully to comprehend that her symbolic representations were unintelligible, and no fitting place being at hand whereon they could be readily portrayed, she strove with the greater vehemence to explain her meaning. There appeared a more than ordinary anxiety on her part to communicate something of importance; and the travellers looked as though fully aware of it. Her most unequivocal signs, however, were to this purport—that they should not proceed farther. Ellen, impelled by fear and curiosity, spoke aloud—

“Surely we are not to remain here at the beck of this woman!”

The one-eyed sibyl nodded an affirmative. This, at any rate, helped them to an easier mode of communication, finding that she was not deaf, as they had hitherto supposed.

“And whither shall we proceed?”

The woman here pointed to a narrow lane on the right of the main road they were pursuing.

“Truly that seems but an indifferent path. Wherefore should we turn in thither?” inquired Ellen.

Again the prophetess pointed to her own breast, and then at the bosom of the invalid.

“By this token I understand that in so doing I am to expect some relief.”

Again nodded the officious intruder.

“But how shall that relief be obtained?”

The woman here lifted up her hand, again pointing towards the path by which they should proceed.

“Go and see, I suppose thou wouldst say,” said Ellen.

Another affirmatory nod was the answer.

“Wilt thou be our guide?”

The person addressed here darted a look at Ellen which seemed to express pleasure at the request, if pleasure it might be called that could irradiate such an aspect. She put out her hand

for the customary largess ere setting forward as their guide on the expedition. Some difficulty now arose by reason of the straitness of the path; but their dumb leader hastened up the lane with unusual speed, beckoning that they should follow. From this signal it appeared that there was sufficient room, and the postilion addressed himself to proceed by so unusual a route.

They went forward for about a mile with little difficulty; but a sudden turn, almost at right angles with their course, presented an obstacle which the driver hesitated whether or not to encounter; but it was impossible to return, though they were not without serious fears that the weird woman might lead them on to a situation from which they could not extricate themselves. Still she beckoned them forward, until they emerged into another and a wider road, on which they travelled without further impediment.

Ellen, whose eyes were abundantly occupied, suddenly assumed a look of greater fixedness and intensity. For a while she seemed nearly speechless with amazement. At length she cried—

“‘Tis there!—There!”

Bridget looked forth, but saw nothing worthy of remark save an old gatehouse over a dark lazy moat, secured by heavy wooden doors.

This gatehouse was apparently the entrance to a court or quadrangle, enclosed by buildings of wood and plaster of the like antiquity. Their guide stood on the bridge, as though to intimate that their wanderings would here terminate.

“I have seen it before,” said Ellen, with great solemnity and emotion. Bridget perhaps fancied her mistress’s thoughts were wandering strangely, and was just going to recommend rest and a little of the medicine she carried, when Ellen again spoke, as though sensible of some incoherency in her remark:—”In my dreams, Bridget.”

“St Bridget and the Virgin be praised! Is this the house you saw when”——

“The very same. I should know it again; nor should I forget it if I were to live to the age of the patriarchs.”

“It’s an evident answer to my prayers,” said Bridget; and here the devout enthusiast began to recite internally some holy ejaculations, which, if they did not possess any positive efficacy, were at least serviceable in allaying the excitement under which she laboured.

Ellen determined to alight and witness the issue of the adventure; so in due time these forlorn damsels were seen advancing over the bridge unto this enchanted castle.

The beldame knocked loudly at the gate, and immediately she sprang back; but when the travellers again looked round she was gone!

Now were they in a precious dilemma. Two females before a stranger’s gate; the warder a-coming, when their business would of necessity be demanded. A tread, every footstep of which might have been passing over them, was close at hand. The bolts shrieked; the gate shook, and a curious face peeped forth to inquire their errand. Bridget, whose ready tongue rarely refused its office, replied—

“Is there a Catholic priest hereabout? for we would fain have a word with one of that persuasion.”

The grim warder smiled.

“Ye have not far to go for such an one,” said he; “but ye be far-off comers, I reckon, or ye would have known Bryn Hall belike, the dwelling-place of the noble house of Gerard, that hath never been without a priest and an altar therein.”

He threw the gate wide open, and invited them to follow; after which he led them through a clumsily-ornamented porch into the great hall, at the end of which was a low gallery, supported by pillars and pilasters richly and profusely carved. From these arches were sprung, and a flight of stairs at one end led to the upper chambers.

Their guide preceded them into a small wainscoted room, fitted up as a study, or perhaps an oratory in those days. A wooden crucifix, with a representation of the Saviour carved in ivory, was placed in a recess, occasionally covered by a green curtain. Shelves laden with books occupied the farther end of the room, and writing materials were laid upon an oak trestle or table, before which sat a tall white-haired personage in a suit of sables, to whose further protection the porter left his charge.

Ellen had suffered herself to be led passive hitherto by her maid; but when she saw that they were now fairly committed to the disposal of the priest, for so he appeared, she felt uneasy and anxious to depart. The room and the whole scene were vividly brought to her recollection; for she fancied that, at one time or another, she had been present in a similar place.

Bridget curtsied to the holy father, who, doubting not that either a case of conscience or a need-be for confession brought these strangers to his presence, began the usual interrogatories.

“Here is a sick person, most reverent sir, who would have the benefit of your prayers,” said Bridget. The pale and wasting form that was by her side sufficiently corroborated this reply.

“Daughter, the prayers of the church are for the penitent and believing; hast thou made shrift and a clear confession?”

Bridget was prepared for this question.

“She is not of the faith; but, peradventure, if aid be vouchsafed, she shall be reclaimed.”

“If she have faith, I will cure her malady. What sayest thou?” He fixed his clear grey eye upon her, and Ellen felt as though some charm were already at work, and a strange tingling went through her frame. She stammered out something like an assent, when the priest carefully proceeded to unlock a little cabinet, inlaid with ivory and gold, from which he took out a white silk bag that diffused a grateful perfume through the chamber. He offered up a prayer before he unloosed the strings; after which, with great formality and reverence, he drew forth a human hand, dried and preserved, apparently by some mysterious process, in all its substance and proportions. Ellen was dumb with astonishment. Bridget could with difficulty refrain from falling on her knees before this holy relic; and her delight would easily have run over in some form of religious extravagance had it been suffered to have free vent. To this relic, doubtless, had the predictions referred: and she doubted not its power and efficacy.

“This rare and priceless thing,” said the priest, “was once the right hand of an English Martyr, Father Arrowsmith by name, put to death for his holy profession. In consideration whereof, it is permitted, by the will of the Supreme, that an honourable testimony be rendered to his fidelity by the miracles that it doth and shall work to the end of time. Rub it thrice on the part affected, and mark the result. If thou receive it with humility and faith, trusting in Heaven, from whence alone the healing virtue doth flow—these holy relics being, as it were, but the appointed channels and conduits of His mercy—thou shall assuredly be healed.”

But Ellen was at some loss to know the precise situation of her complaint, until she recollected the picture drawn by the dumb fortune-teller, who described the heart alone as

touched by this miraculous hand. Yet, in what manner to make the application was a matter of some difficulty.

Bridget again relieved her from the dilemma.

“If it so please your reverence, the seat of the complaint is not visible. Suffer us to use it privately. We will not carry forth nor misuse this precious keepsake; for I have been brought up in the nurture of the Holy Church, and am well instructed in her ceremonies.”

“I fear not for the harm that can happen to it, by reason of ungodly or mischievous devices. If taken away, it would assuredly return hither. Should the lady have some inward ailment, let her lay it as near as may be to the part where she feels afflicted, and keep it there for a space, until she findeth help.”

The two visitors were then shown into another chamber; and here Bridget, with great devoutness, and a firm faith in its efficiency, placed the dead cold hand upon her mistress’s heart. Ellen shuddered when she felt its death-like touch. It was either fancy, or something more, but she really felt as though a load were suddenly taken away—an oppression, an incubus, that had continually brooded over her, was gone. Surprised, and lightened of her burden, she returned into the oratory, and gave back the relic, along with a liberal offering into the hands of the priest. He said there would scarcely be occasion for a repetition of the act, as it was evident the faith of the recipient had wrought its proper work.

The day by this time being far spent, the priest begged permission to introduce Ellen to Lady Gerard, who, he said, would be much gratified to afford them entertainment, and, if need were, shelter for the night. On hearing the name of her visitor, this kind lady would take no denial, but expressed herself warmly on the folly and imprudence of an invalid being exposed to the night air; and Ellen, delighted with the change she felt, was all compliance and good-nature. After a little hesitation, she suffered her first refusals to be overcome, and the night wore on with pleasant converse. By little and little Lady Gerard gained the confidence of Ellen, who seemed glad that she could now speak freely on the subject nearest to her heart.

“It is marvellous enough,” continued Lady Gerard, “that you should have been conducted hither; for in this house there is a magic mirror, which may, peradventure, disclose what shall relieve your anxiety. On being looked into, after suitable preparations, it is said—for I never tried the experiment—to show wondrous images within its charmed surface; and like the glass of Cornelius Agrippa, of which we have a tractate in the library chamber, will show what an absent person is doing, if the party questioning be sincere, and anxious for his welfare.”

“I have long wished,” said the blushing Ellen, “that I might see him of whom our evening’s discourse hath, perchance, been too much conversant. I would not for worlds that he knew of my wish; but if I could see him once more, and know the bearing of his thoughts toward me, I could now, methinks, die content.”

“This very night, then, let us consult the oracle,” said Lady Gerard; “but there must not be any witness to our exploit; so while away your impatience as best you may until I have made the needful preparations for our adventure.”

Ellen could not repress her agitation when, after waiting alone for a little time, her kind hostess came to summon her to the trial. She was conducted up the staircase before mentioned, and through a corridor of some length. The lamp grew pale and sickly in the cold wind of the galleries they trod. Soon, however, they paused before a low door. Lady Gerard pressed her finger on her lip, in token of silence. She then blew out the light, and they were involved in total darkness. Taking hold of Ellen’s arm, which trembled excessively within her

own, she opened the door, but not a ray was yet visible. She was conducted to a seat, and Lady Gerard whispered that she should be still. Suddenly a light flashed forth on the opposite side, and Ellen saw that it came from a huge antique mirror. A form, in male attire, was there discernible. With a slow and melancholy pace he came forward, and his lips seemed to move. It was—she could not be mistaken—it was her cousin William! She thought he looked pale and agitated. He carried a light which, as it glimmered on his features, showed that they were the index of some internal and conflicting emotion. He sat down. He passed one hand over his brow, and she thought that a sigh laboured from his lips; but as she gazed the light grew dim, and ere long the mirror, ceasing to be illuminated, again left them in total darkness. A few minutes elapsed, which were swollen to long hours in the estimation of the anxious and wondering inquirer. Her companion again whispered that she should await the result in silence. Suddenly the light flashed out as before, and she saw the dumb fortune teller instead of the individual she expected. Her features were more writhen and distorted than ever; and she seemed to mutter, it might be, some malignant spell, some charm, the operation of which was for some unknown and diabolical intent. Ellen shuddered as the weird woman took a paper-roll from her bosom. Unfolding it, there was displayed the figure of her lover, as she supposed, kneeling, while he held out his hands toward the obdurate heart which he in vain attempted to grasp.

“I have wronged him,” said Ellen, in a whisper to her companion; “if I interpret these images aright, he now sighs for my favour; and—would that we had known each other ere it was too late!”

“He knows now,” said Lady Gerard; and immediately the dumb prophetess was at her side. She threw off a disguise, ingeniously contrived, and Ellen beheld her cousin William! The magic mirror was but an aperture through the wainscot into another apartment, and the plot had been arranged in the first place by Mrs Bridget, who had been confederate with the handsome but somewhat haughty wooer, having for his torment a maiden as haughty and intractable as himself. Thus two loving hearts had nigh been broken for lack of an interpreter. William’s absence had taken deeper hold on Ellen’s finely-tempered frame than was expected; and it was with sorrow and alarm that he heard of her illness. His distant relative, Lady Gerard, to whom he had retired for a season, spake of the marvellous hand, which, he was sure, being a devout and pious Catholic, would cure any disease incident to the human frame. It was absolutely needful that a cure should be attempted, along with some stratagem, to conquer the yet unbroken obstinacy in which, as with a double panoply, Ellen had arrayed herself. The result of the experiment has been shown. She was united to her cousin ere a few months were old, and the “merrie spring” had melted in the warm lap of summer.

XXXVII. The Lost Farm; Or, The Haunted Casket

“And when of me his leave he tuik,
The tears they wat mine ee,
I gave tull him a parting luik,
‘My benison gang wi’ thee;
God speed thee weil, mine ain dear heart,
For gane is all my joy;
My heart is rent, sith we maun part,
My handsome Gilderoy.’

“Of Gilderoy sae ‘fraid they were,
They bound him mickle strong,
Tull Edenburrow they led him thair,
And on a gallows hung.
They hung him high aboon the rest,
He was sae trim a boy;
Thair dyed the youth whom I lued best,
My handsome Gilderoy.”

On the flat, bare, sandy coast, near to Southport, now a modern bathing-place of great resort, described in the first series of this work, might be seen, some few years ago, a ruined barn, cottage, and other farmyard appurtenances, around which the loose and drifting sand was accumulated, covering, at the same time, some acres of scanty pasture, once held under lease and occupation by an honest fisherman, who earned a comfortable, if not an easy subsistence, from his amphibious pursuits. The thatched roofs were broken through—the walls rent and disfigured—all wore the aspect of desolation and decay. Long grass had taken root, flourishing luxuriantly on the summit, though surrounded by a barren wilderness, a wide and almost boundless ocean of sand. The ruin was the only fertile spot in this dreary waste. Though painful and melancholy the aspect, still, as the sea-breeze came softly over, sighing gently on its time-worn furrows, and on the nodding plumes that decorated the crest of this aged and hoary relic of the past, the sensation, though pleasing, became mournful; the heart seemed linked with the unknown, the mysterious events of ages that are for ever gone—feelings that make even a luxury of grief, prompted by that within us, “the joy of sorrow;” something more hallowed, more cherished in the heart’s holiest shrine, than all the glare and glitter of enjoyment—the present bliss—which we prize only when it departs.

Many years ago, this humble tenement was the abode of George Grimes, the fisherman to whom we have just alluded. It was a dwelling one story only from the ground, as the general use was in these regions, ere modern edifices, staring forth in red, white, and green—their bold and upstart pretensions outfacing and supplanting the lowly but picturesque abodes of the aboriginal inhabitants—had overtopped and overshadowed these meek, rural, and primitive displays of architectural simplicity.

Grimes, we repeat, was of that amphibious class, common upon every coast, combining the occupations incident to land and water in his own proper person. Half-fisherman, half-farmer, he ploughed the seas with his keel, when upon land his coulter was out of use. He was nigh sixty, and had long settled down into that quiet nap-like sort of existence, when the passions

are lulled, scarcely visible, as they creep over the stagnant current of life. He was hale and hard featured; the lines on his visage betokening, if need were, a stern, decisive, and obstinate bent in his disposition, that might have issued in deeds of high and noble daring had its possessor been thrown into circumstances favourable to the display. As matters stood, George was master of his own household. Here none questioned his authority; no profane, irreverent approach ever awakening the dormant energies of his character, or thwarting the current, visible only by opposition.

His wife was a round, brown, heavy-cheeked, dark-eyed dame, with a cap white as the whitest goose of the flock that marched every morning from her barn-doors to the common, where, by some little pool, a scanty and close-bitten herbage formed their daily subsistence. She wore a striped apron; the blue lines would have vied with the best Wigan check for breadth and distinctness. Her good-humoured mouth, reverse from her husband's, was usually puckered up at the corners into an expression of kindness, benignity, and mirth—the contrast greatly aided by proximity; for though George Grimes was benevolent and kind-hearted at the bottom, yet he was by no means apt to let these gentler feelings rise to the surface.

An only daughter was now passing within the precincts of womanhood. Her complexion, red, and—not white, reader—but of that rich, healthy, and wholesome tinge, perfect as an example of the real English brunette. Her face exhibited a beautiful modification of her father's hard and determined expression, blended with her mother's gentleness and placidity. A smile of thrilling sweetness would sometimes pass upon her calm and thoughtful countenance, always beautiful—if such a term can be allowed in speaking of a brown, rosy, plump, and well-conditioned girl, of good stature, whose form had not been squeezed into shape, nor her linsey woolsey flourished into flounce and farthingale. Her hair hung in bright clusters on her brow; fresh from Nature's toilet, their wild untutored elegance was singular and bewitching. Indeed, Katherine, or “Kattern,” as she was more generally called, was the cynosure of this clime—a jewel, that needed not the foil of its homely setting; the envy and admiration of the whole neighbourhood—well known at church, and at Ormskirk market, where she attended weekly—at the latter place to dispose of her produce. Here she was the torment of many a rustic, unable to conquer, or even to understand, the power by which his heart was taken captive.

Avarice was the besetting sin of her father. He was always fearful of becoming poor, and “not paying his way,” as he called it. Yet was it suspected that George Grimes had a “powerfu” hoard, concealed both from his family and friends. Money he doated on. It was an undoubted fact that many a shining face went into the coffer of old Grimes that was never again seen performing the common everyday functions of currency and traffic.

He was always a-dreaming, too, that he had found treasure. Often he would spend the greater part of a morning tide in pacing the brink of the boiling waves, hoping to find there some coinage of his brain that had been his dream on the preceding night. Southport then existed not, at least in name. No gay and laughing crowds fluttered on the margin of the deep. No lines of well-trimmed “green-eyed” houses looked on, nor boats with their dancing pennons and bright forms shone gallantly on the waves. All was bleak, bare, and unappropriated. The very air seemed tenantless, save when the solitary gull came sailing on heavily with the approaching tide, screaming over the gorge she beheld rising on the billows. The loud lunge of the sea was interrupted solely by the cry of the fisherman, and the “cockler's” whistle, plying his scanty trade among the shoals and sandbanks about the coast. It is scarcely possible to conceive a situation more desolate and uninviting. Hills of arid sand skirting the beach, without vegetation or enclosure, except where the withered bent and little golden-

starred stone-crop gave their own wild and peculiar aspect to the scene. The shore is flat and unbroken to the very horizon, where the tide, retreating to its extreme verge, throws up a dim sparkle in the distance—Nature even here displaying her never-ceasing round of reproduction and decay, of advance and retrocession.

We had almost forgotten that there was another inmate of the household—a tall, thick-browed, high-cheeked menial, whose coarse habiliments displayed a well-proportioned shape, and shoulders of an athletic width. He had been engaged at the farm barely twelve months before the date of our narrative; and, at the first, a more egregious simpleton, as to farming and fishing operations, never drew a net or whistled at the plough-tail. Yet he came well recommended by a Catholic gentleman in the neighbourhood as a stout servant of all work, who would serve Grimes honestly and for moderate wages. He had one excellence or defect, as it might be—that which we impute to one dumb from his birth, but not deaf. He perfectly understood what was spoken, though, to make known his wishes, he was obliged to have recourse to signs or writing. In the former accomplishment he seemed to be well skilled, for he often elucidated his meaning by rude sketches in chalk upon the floor and table. There was a mystery about his appearance he cared not to divulge. His country and connections, too, were equally unknown. By the neighbours it was often suspected that he dealt with the Evil One. The “evil eye” was sometimes attributed to him; and the signs and chalkings were supposed to be mystic emblems of the future, into the hidden secrets of which he had the power of directing his inquiries.

He was apt in learning, and served George Grimes diligently and faithfully. He soon became acquainted with the various duties of the farm; and could unreef a sail or make a net with the best labourer in the parish.

His only companion was Katherine. She taught him to knit, and to make nets; directed him how to find the best peats, and showed him where the rabbits burrowed and the larks and lapwings made their nests. Sometimes the instructress and her pupil would sit on the sandhills, and watch the sun sink down upon the ocean; sometimes they would gather shells, when the day’s work was over, and string them in fantastic chaplets, which “*Dummy*” was very expert in contriving. He could converse with Kattern without difficulty. He had taught her his vocabulary of signs, and the maiden liked to observe his strange remarks and inquiries on passing events.

In the forenoon of a dark, threatening, and squally day, just before high tide, Grimes and his assistant had trudged towards the beach, intending to go out with the boat for a little while. The weather having been stormy of late, supplies were becoming scanty, and he wanted a few fish for their own use. They proposed to take the smaller boat only, hoping to be back with the next flood.

Toiling through the sand-drifts, they came to an opening between the hills, which looked immediately on the beach. The sky was black and heavy on the horizon towards the south-west. Round hard-edged clouds rode on from the main body, like flying squadrons, “grim couriers” of the storm. Here and there, through an opening in the clouds, the sky was of a deep, vivid, and intense blue, contrasting wildly with the rolling forms that tumbled about in turbulent confusion over the whole hemisphere. The sea was rising in breakers over the banks, hillocks of white foam riding on the crest of the billows, while the margin of the waves boiled and frothed like some vast cauldron.

The old man was not in a particularly complaisant mood that day. He was cross and snappish at trifles; irritable and out of humour with himself. As he waded through the narrow defile,

the dumb assistant behind him whistled faintly, and perhaps inadvertantly. The fisherman looked back with a furious glance.

“Thou staring buzzard, is’t not enough to see sich a bellyful o’ wind i’ brewing but thou must whistle for more to keep it company? Hang thee for a he-witch; I never hear that accursed piping but the wind follows, like sea-gulls to the garbage.”

He had just turned a corner of the hill, when, looking round, he cried in a tone of terror and amazement—

“How now, Dick? Why, the boat is gone! what prank next? Thou careless unthrift, ill-luck follows i’ thy wake. She has slipped anchor, and the little *Kitty* is gone to the Manx herring-boats. I am ruined, thou limb of Old Nick! thou chub! thou”——

Epithets were accumulating with prodigious force, when Dick, half-closing his eyes, pointed to something dark, like a small boat, in the offing.

“What’s yon thee’rt pointing at? A porpoise-back, I warrant. Ay, shake thy head, fool; ‘twill bring my bonny *Kitty* back. Why, thou’rt staring like a bit-boomp in a gutter catching frogs!”

Soon, however, the black speck became less ambiguous. George beheld a white stern heaving up and down. He ran forward as if to accelerate her return, crying out to his companion—

“A murrain catch thy tail, thou hast ever a longer sight than beseems thee. But she’s coming, sure enough, whatever she be.”

The old man gazed in wonder and suspense. He saw a sail unfurl, and the bark—his own little tight, trim vessel—come prancing on the white billows toward the shore. Soon he observed, sitting therein, perfectly at his ease, and unmindful of the near approach to, and the portentous menaces of, the owner, a figure clad in a garment of grey frieze, and a dark hairy cap on his head. One hand grasped the helm, and in the other he held the sheet, while he managed the boat with the most seamanlike skill and composure. His eye was fixed alternately on the shore and on the vane at the masthead as he came dancing through the surf, until he ran right upon the sands, where the boat grounded, and he sprang out upon the beach. The astonishment of Grimes can hardly be conceived when, without once deigning to notice him, away went the stranger, vouchsafing neither thanks nor acknowledgments.

“Holloa, friend!” cried the incensed owner; “your disposition be freer than welcome, methinks. Holloa, I say, whither away so fast?” cried he impatiently, quickening his pace; but the stranger altered not his gait in the least, plodding steadily onwards, without appearing to notice the angry inquiries of his pursuer.

Soon the quick long strides of George Grimes brought him alongside of the person he addressed. Crossing before him, and almost intercepting his progress, he exclaimed—

“How now, friend? I’d be bold to know what thou be’st. I’m mightily beholden to thee for this favour.”

A malicious grin quivered on his pale and angry countenance; but the stranger was unmoved. He merely waved his hand, as though kindly admonishing the inquirer to depart and leave him unmolested.

“Nay, good man; I’m not so soon put off. Prithee, save thy wit, for I’m not i’ the humour for a jest this morning.”

A melancholy smile accompanied the reply.

“Friend,” said he, “I am beholden to thee for thy boat; and if thou art seeking conditions for the hire, I am willing to return its equivalent. Will this content thee?”

Here George saw a bit of gold twinkling in the stranger's hand, which, like a beam on the dark waters, cleared his brow immediately.

He doffed his bonnet with great humility; but he was still curious about the matter, and more particularly as to what errand could have been requisite that boisterous morning. He stammered out some inquiry, and the stranger replied—

“Seek not to know; ‘tis a doomed thing and accursed. I would have given thrice my revenue long ago, to have been rid o’ the pest. But the wave hath swallowed it—for ever, I would earnestly pray; and I am again free!”

Saying this, he passed on, leaving the astonished fisherman gaping mute with wonder, until a projecting sandhill shut him out from their sight. During this interview the dumb assistant was busily engaged with the boat, disposing of the nets and other implements, though at the same time evidently keeping a wary eye towards the stranger.

The little bark was soon afloat, the wind again filled the sails, and shortly she was seen flying over the billows in defiance of “wind, water, and foul weather.”

Grimes only purposed to cast the nets a mile or two from shore, for a good haul at that period was easily obtained much nearer the coast than is now practicable, the fish being driven away, as the inhabitants superstitiously but firmly believe, by the quarrels that have taken place amongst the fishermen.

The bark went merrily on, leaping over the waves, with the old mariner at her helm, and his dumb servant by the mainsheet. The wind was blowing more steadily; the short and squally gusts had increased into a roaring gale, driving right ahead from the west. To work, however, they went, when, after a haul or two, the old man being engaged with the tackling, up came something in the net—at least old Grimes saw it glittering amongst the fish when he turned round, and it could have come from none other quarter than the sea.

Grimes drew it forth, and a fair and weighty casket it was, apparently uninjured. It was ornamented in the arabesque or antique fashion, inlaid with great care and skill. He grasped the prize; he poised it, to ascertain its gravity. It seemed to be both heavy and well-filled.

This at last was the treasure he had often dreamt about, and the old man was almost frantic with joy. He hugged the unlooked-for messenger of wealth and good-fortune, and, putting the vessel about, made all sail for land.

Once more anchored as near the beach as the retiring tide would allow, Grimes was too much engaged with his prize to notice that “Dummy” took another route to the farm. Alone with his bundle, and a pelting storm at his heels, the old man came to his dwelling. His early appearance was unexpected, but the women, little used to question his movements, immediately set about preparing for dinner. Depositing the casket, which was locked, in the oaken chest or ark at his bedside, he purposed to break it open when he had procured the means, without harming the exterior.

The storm was rapidly gaining strength; the wind blew a hurricane; the thunder rolled on, louder and more frequent; and the rain came down in torrents. It was not an ordinary tempest, but more like one of those tropical tornadoes, when the elements—fire, air, and water—seem to mingle in universal uproar, fighting and striving for the mastery.

“I think, o’ my conscience, this wind is raised by the ould one,” said the elder female. Scarcely were the words uttered when the room seemed in a blaze, and a clap of thunder followed: so loud and appalling, that it made the very walls to rock and the whole fabric to reel with the stroke. The fisherman grew pale; the stranger’s words rang in his ears. Was it

the *casket* that he had committed to the deep, and of which he spake with such horror and execration? Strange as was the idea, yet he could not get rid of it; there seemed some connection between this fearful agony of nature and the mysterious treasure beneath his roof. The pipe fell from his mouth, and he sat listening, as he fancied, to the awful denunciations mingled with the howling storm, as though he had not power to move or to avert his gaze from the window.

“Bless me, I had forgotten you were by yourself, father,” said Katherine. “He will be almost drowned, if he has not ta’en shelter.”

“I know not,” muttered Grimes; “he left me on the shore. He might ha’ been here long since.” The rain and wind abated for a brief space, when old Isabel appeared to be listening near the chamber door, where Grimes had left the casket.

“Mercy! what’s that, George?”

The fisherman was immediately all eye and ear; his head bent towards the door, which stood ajar.

“Who is there in the chamber?” inquired the old woman. “I hear it again.”

“Hear! what?” replied he, in great agitation.

“Something like an’ it were a-whispering there,” replied the dame.

But a gust of wind again overwhelmed every other sound in its progress. Grimes thought he had heard a whisper that made his blood freeze, and the very flesh to creep over his bones with terror.

But Katherine fearlessly entered; she looked cautiously about, but all was still, and she returned. Ere she closed the door, however, she heard a soft whisper, as though behind her. Naturally courageous, she immediately went back, but all was quiet as before; nor could she find that any person had been concealed in the apartment. She opened the chest where Grimes had stowed his booty, and seeing the casket, she took it up, running hastily into the adjoining room.

“Why, father, what a pretty fairing you have brought me. I’se warrant, now, you would not have told me on’t till after the wakes, if I had not seen it.”

The old man looked as if he had seen a ghost. The whispers he had heard were, foolishly enough perhaps, connected in his mind with the presence of this mysterious thing.

“Take it back—back, wench, into the chest again. It was not for thee, hussy. A prize I fished up with the nets to-day.”

“From the sea. Oh me! it is—it is unholy spoil. It has been dragged from some wreck. Cast it again to the greedy waters. They yield not their prey without a perilous struggle,” said the girl.

The fisherman was silent. He looked thoughtful and disturbed, while Katherine went back to put the treasure into its hiding-place.

“I wonder what that whispering could be?” thought the maiden, as she opened the old chest. Ere the lid was pulled down, she cast one look at the beautiful but forbidden intruder, and she was sure—but imagination is a potent wizard, and works marvellously—else she was sure that a slight movement was visible beneath the casket. She flung down the lid in great terror; pale and trembling, she sprang out of the room, and sat down silent and alarmed. Again the mysterious whispers were audible in the momentary pauses of the blast.

“Save us!” said the elder female; “I hear it again.”

Bounce flew open the door of the bed-chamber, and—in stalked their dumb assistant, as though he had chosen this mode of ingress, through the window of the sleeping-room, rather than through the house-door.

“Plague take thee! Where hast thou been?” said the old woman, partly relieved from her terrors. Yet was the whispering precisely as incomprehensible as before. The dumb menial that stood before her was obviously incapable even of this act of incipient speech.

“Where hast thou been, Dick?” inquired Grimes, seriously. But the former pointed towards the beach.

“How long hast thou been yonder?—in the chamber, I mean.”

Dick here fell into one of his ordinary fits of abstraction, from which neither menace nor entreaty could arouse him. As the old man turned from the window he saw a blaze of light flashing suddenly upon the wall. The yard was filled with smoke. Rushing forth, the inmates found the barn thatch on fire, kindled probably by the lightning. The rain prevented it from extending with much rapidity; and Grimes, mounting on the roof, soon extinguished the burning materials before much damage had been the result. Misfortunes verily seemed to crowd upon each other; and that unlucky casket, doubtless, was the cause. When the old man, with his dame, returned into the house, Katherine was nowhere to be found. The “Dummy,” too, was unaccountably absent. Anxious and wondering, they awaited, hoping for their appearance at dinner; but their meal was cheerless and unvisited. Evening came, serene, deceitful as ever—but their child did not return. They went out to make inquiries, but could find no clue to aid them in the search. Katherine had never stayed from home so late. The parents were nigh distracted. There was evidently some connection between the disappearance of their servant and her own absence. Fearful surmises ensued. Suspicion strengthened into certainty. The casket was forgotten in this fearful distress; and, after a fruitless search, they were forced to return.

On the third night after this occurrence, Grimes and his disconsolate helpmate were sitting by the turf embers in moody silence, broken only by irregular whiffs from the pipe—the old man’s universal solace. After a longer pull than usual, he abruptly exclaimed—

“Three days, Isabel, and no tidings of the child. Who will comb down my grey hairs now, or read for us in the Book o’ nights? We must linger on without help to our grave; none will care to keep us company.”

“Woe’s me!” cried the dame, and she wept sore; “my poor child! If I but knew what was come to her, I think i’ my heart I would be thankfu’. But what can have happen’d her? unless it be Dick indeed; and yet I think the lad was honest, though lungeous at times, and odd-tempered. By next market, surely, we shall ha’ tidings fra’ some end. But I trow, ‘tis that fearsome burden ye brought with you, George, fra’ the sea, that has been the cause of a’ this trouble.”

Grimes started up. He threw the ashes from his pipe, and, without saying a word, went into the bed-chamber. Lifting up the chest-lid, he saw the casket safe, and apparently undisturbed. He drew it fearlessly forth, and vowed that he would throw it into the sea again, without further ado, on the morrow. It felt much lighter, however, than before; but not another night should it pass under his roof; so he threw it beside a turf-heap in the yard. His heart, too, felt lighter as he cast the abominable thing from him; and he was sure it was this mischievous inmate alone that had wrought such woe in his hitherto happy and quiet household.

Morning came; and Grimes, for the first time since his loss, took the boat, committing himself alone with the haunted casket on the sea. It was a lovely morning as ever sun shone upon; the waters were comparatively smooth; and the tide brought one of those refreshing breezes on its bosom, so stimulating and healthful to the invalid.

But Grimes thought not of the brightness or beauty of the morning. With the helm in his hand, one light sail being stretched out to the wind, he was steering through the intricate channel, and amongst the sandbanks which render the coast so dangerous even to those best acquainted with its perils.

He stood out to a considerable distance, intending to have depth and sea-room enough to drown his burden.

The breeze was fair, the sea was bright, and the mariner sailed on. He determined, this time at least, that the casket should be sent far enough out of harm's way.

"If that plaguy thing had been down deep enough before," thought he, "this mischief had not happened." He looked at it, and thought again, "How very sad to part with so beautiful a treasure." He had not observed before that the lid was unlocked. He might as well peep before it should be hidden for ever beneath the dark billows. He lifted up the rim of the coffer cautiously; he trembled as the hinges gave way; and—it was empty!

"I am a fool!" thought he; "a downright fool. An empty box can have nothing to do with——"

But, as if to belie his own conclusions, and to convince him that peril, and misfortune must attend the presence of that mysterious thing, he having just quitted the helm for a more convenient examination, a sudden squall nearly upset the boat. Fortunately she righted, but not before most of the movables were tossed out, including the cause of all his troubles. This at any rate was lucky, and cheaply purchased with the loss and breakage of his marine stores.

The tide was still coming in, though nearly at the height, and Grimes floated merrily to land. After hauling the boat ashore, he stood for a moment looking towards the sea, when he saw, dancing like a spectre on the very edge of the wave that broke in a thousand bubbles at his feet, the identical box he had taken such pains to commit to the safe keeping of that perilous deep. It was evidently pursuing him. He would have fled, but fear had arrested his footsteps. He did not recollect that the box was now empty, and floated from its own buoyancy.

"It will not drown," thought he. After a little reflection he resolved to dispose of it in some other manner.

"It will haunt me as long as it is above ground. I'll bury it." In pursuance of this wholesome resolve, he took it home again. Digging a deep grave in the peat-moss behind this cottage, he thrust in the object of his apprehensions, trusting that he was now safe from its power.

But noises horrid and unaccountable disturbed him. Demons had surely chosen his dwelling for their head-quarters. Nor day nor night could he rest—fancying that a whole legion of them were haunting him. He seemed to be the sport and prey of his own terrors; and with a heavy heart he resolved to quit, though suffering a grievous loss by the removal.

The story of the haunted casket, with many additions and improvements, soon got abroad. No one dared to pass the house after nightfall, and "The Lost Farm" has ever since been tenantless.

Grimes removed to another in a few weeks; but his happiness and his hopes were for ever dissipated by the mysterious intruder. Hearing no tidings from his daughter, he determined, several weeks after the adventure, to sally forth in quest of intelligence.

It was a cold blustery morning when the old man set out on his errand. He was clad in a coarse blue frieze coat, with the usual complement of large white-plated buttons. His head was sheltered by an oil case-covered hat, tied down with a blue and white check handkerchief, and he held a long stick before him at arm's length, on which his sorrowful and drooping frame hung more heavily than usual. He had grown a dozen years older at least in less than as many weeks; and when he came to Church Town, having taken the bypath through the hills, he was fain to rest himself a while at the inn-door. Before it stood several carts on their way towards Preston, whither they were bound for the disposal of their produce on the morrow. Grimes thought he might as well make some inquiries there; Katherine having at times visited that remote town to make purchases. He would have company too if he went with the carts, and a lift now and then if he were tired; so, throwing down his bundle, he entered the house intimating his wish that they should join company.

"To Preston, lad?" said a jolly carter, holding a pewter pot that seemed as if glued to his hard fist. "Rare doings there, old one. What! thee wants to look at the fun, I warrant. Why, the rebels ha' been packed off to Lunnun long sin'; but we han had some on 'em back again; that is, thou sees, their Papist heads were sent back i' pickle into these parts, and one on 'em grins savagely afore the Town Ha'."

Grimes knew little of political niceties, or whether kings *de facto* or *de jure* were better entitled to the throne.

The late disturbances had not reached these districts; so that the rebellion of 1745 might as well have happened in Kamtschatka or Japan for any personal knowledge that old Grimes had of the matter.

"Rebels!" said he; "I have heard a somewhat of this business; though I know nothing, and care less about them cannibals."

"Then what be'st thee for in such a hurry to Preston?"

"I had a daughter, but she has left me, the staff and comfort of my old age, when I stood most in need of the prop!" Here the old man drew his hat over his brows, partly turning aside.

"Cheer up, friend," saith another; "thy daughter, maybe, is gone wi' Prince Charlie, when he piped through Preston 'Hie thee, Charlie, hame again!'"

This malicious sally raised a loud laugh; but the old man heard it with great agony and consternation; for though a bow drawn at a venture—a chance expression merely, intended as a clever hit at the women's expense, who had followed in the train of the rebels—Grimes construed the passage literally; and from that time it ran continually in his head, that his daughter's absence would be found to have some connection with these events.

"Hang thy jibes!" said the first speaker, for whom this piece of wit was more especially intended; "hang thee, I'll knock thy neck straight; pepper me but I will!"

This worthy had a wife, who incontinently had contributed to augment the rebel train when the Prince, in far different plight, on the 27th of November 1745, passed through Preston, on his route to London, piping "The king shall have his own again."

A fray was nigh commencing—a circumstance not at all unusual in those turbulent times—but the master of the band speedily interfered, threatening displeasure and a wholesome discipline to his refractory servants.

Grimes accompanied them on their journey, riding, walking, and gossiping, at irregular intervals; during which he learned much news relating to the aspect and circumstances of the time, the names of the leaders, and those attainted and condemned, in this hasty and ill-timed

rebellion. A considerable number of Lancashire partisans, officers of the Manchester regiment, commanded by Colonel Townley, had been conveyed to London, and tried for high treason, in July 1746. Some were reprieved and pardoned; others were executed, with all the horrid accompaniments prescribed by the law. The heads of Townley and one Captain Fletcher were placed upon Temple Bar. The heads of seven others, having been preserved in spirits, were at that time ornamenting posterns and public thoroughfares in Manchester, Preston, Wigan, and Carlisle, to the great comfort of the loyal and well-disposed, and the grievous terror of the little children who passed in and out thereat. Others, the noble leaders of this short and ill-acted tragedy for the benefit of the selfish and bigoted Stuarts, suffered death; while others escaped, amongst whom was the titular Earl of Derwentwater, supposed to have been conveyed secretly aboard ship for Scotland.

In these rebellions, it may generally be said, that in the county of Lancaster, Catholics as well as Protestants displayed a firm attachment to the reigning family. Instances of defection were very rare; and, when they occurred, might be imputed to some peculiarity in the situation of the delinquents rather than to party or religious feelings. The romantic attempt of the young Chevalier, as displayed in this rebellion, had in it something imposing to ardent and enthusiastic minds; and those who embraced his cause south of the Tweed were principally young men of warm temperament, whose imaginations were dazzled by the chivalrous character of the enterprise.⁷⁴

About the close of day, the towers of “proud Preston” were seen rising above the broad sweep of the river below Penwortham Bridge. The situation chosen by our ancestors for the erection of “*Priest’s Town*”—so called because the majority of its inhabitants in former times were ecclesiastics—evinces the discriminating eye of a priest, and shows that, whether the religious orders selected a site for an abbey or for a city, they were equally felicitous in their choice. Placed at a convenient distance from the sea, upon the elevated banks of one of the finest rivers in England, with a mild climate and a dry soil, and commanding a rich assemblage of picturesque views, in one of the most interesting portions of Ribblesdale, the spirit of St Wilfred himself, to whom the parish church is dedicated, and who was the most accomplished ecclesiastic of his age, must have animated the mind that fixed upon this spot.⁷⁵

Grimes, adjusting his satchel and other appendages, trudged warily on, according to the directions he had procured from his guides, in respect to lodgings. His route lay up Fishergate; and on his way, near the Town Hall, his progress was interrupted by a dense crowd. The soldiers and local authorities were just conveying a prisoner of some note from the hall of justice to head-quarters at the Bull Inn, under a strong guard.

Grimes, impelled by curiosity, and likewise having an idea that it might be one of the rebels, with whom he still connected the disappearance of his daughter, thrust himself, edgeways, into the crowd; his primitive appearance causing no slight merriment amongst the bystanders.

Guarded by soldiery and a bevy of constables before and behind, came a tall, muscular figure, attired in a ragged suit—probably a disguise, and not of the most reputable or becoming description. He looked haggard and dejected—harassed, in all likelihood, by long watching and fatigue. His hair was intensely black, surmounted by a coarse cap or bonnet, such as the mechanics then wore at their ordinary occupations.

The old man looked steadfastly at the prisoner.

⁷⁴ Vide Baines’s *Lancashire*, vol. i. p. 78.

⁷⁵ Vide Baines’s *Lancashire*, vol. ii. p. 504.

"Surely it cannot be!" said he half-aloud. He pressed into the foremost rank, and near enough to receive a lusty blow from one of the constables; but not before he had, with an exclamation of joy and astonishment, recognised the features of his former servant and dumb inmate at the farm.

Grimes, caring not a whit for the blow, in his ready and imprudent zeal stepped up to the leader of the party, thinking there was doubtless some mistake in the person they had seized, and anxious, too, for an opportunity of speaking with the prisoner anent his errand.

"Stand back!" said the official representative gruffly.

"Friend, I know thy prisoner well. He was lodged and victualled at my house not six weeks ago."

"The—he was; then we may as well try a hand with thee too," said the constable.

But the simplicity and openness of the old man was his protection; for the constable walked on, without deigning to bend his truncheon to such low and inglorious enterprise.

"But look thee," said the pertinacious and unsuspecting fisherman, "he is my servant; and you are i' the wrong to capture him without my privity."

"And who art thou?" inquired another of these myrmidons of justice, eyeing Grimes and the cut of his habiliments from head to foot. "I do bethink me thou art i' the roll. Thee would make a grim fixture for a pole here hard by." He looked significantly towards the reward of treason hung in front of the Town Hall above them.

"Like enough!" said the other, taking the offender by the collar; who, astonished beyond measure at this proceeding, was unable for a while to give such an account of himself as to satisfy the officers and regain his liberty. The prisoner looked at him, but did not betray the least symptom of acknowledgment.

"Ill-mannered varlet!" thought the old man; "but what can they be a-wanting with our Dummy?"

Still urged on by the crowd, he resolved to see an end of the business; so, pushing with them through the gateway of the inn, he came so near the prisoner as to touch him gently by the sleeve during the press and scuffle in the entry. For a moment—and it was a glance observed by the fisherman alone—the pale features of the unfortunate rebel showed a glimpse of recognition; but immediately they relapsed into their former stern though melancholy expression.

Being much amazed at this conduct, the old man could not forbear exclaiming—

"Varlet!—my daughter—thou"——But the prisoner was out of sight and hearing, and the crowd were driven from the gateway. Grimes heard a few of the bystanders speaking of some great man that was taken, and of the reward that would be obtained for his apprehension; but the old fisherman smiled at their ignorance. He knew better. It was none other than his dumb retainer at the farm; and he set his wits to work—no despicable auxiliaries at a pinch—in order to procure an interview.

In vain he attempted to persuade such of the crowd as would give him a hearing of the real state of the case, and the great injustice of the man's arrest. But they listened to him with impatience and suspicion. The old man was doubtless either crazed or guilty as one of the rebel partisans.

"I tell thee what, old crony; if thou dost not change thy quarters, we will lay thee by the heels i' the cage, presently. Budge! move, quick; or"—— Here the speaker, a little authoritative-

looking personage, would have made a movement corresponding to the words; but Grimes, perceiving that he was not to be trifled with, unwillingly drew aside out of harm's way.

Hungry, weary, and dispirited, the old man inquired his way to an obscure lodging in one of the wynds near the market. It was a low, dismal-looking tavern, wherein sat two or three unwashed artificers, drinking beer and devouring the news.

"I'm right fain he's taken," said one of the politicians, whose black leathern apron and smutty face betokened his occupation. "There's but old Lovat, they say, now, to chop shorter by a handful of brains. Proud Preston, say I, for ever. Hurra!"

"Ay, and the mayor's wife too, say I; and may she never want a pair of garters to tuck round a rebel's neck!" replied a little giggling, good-humoured fellow, who seemed to imbibe ale as he drew his breath—both being vitally necessary to his existence.

"She's a rare wench, and would sooner see a rebel hanged, than bod her nose at a basin of swig and roasted apples."

"She played the husband's part to some purpose when Charles Edward levied the tribute forsooth, Mr Mayor being gone to look after his children, by Longridge; but old Sam the beadle says he was afeard o' the wild Highlanders, and slunk out of the way."

Whilst this conversation was going on Grimes untied his handkerchief, doffed his stocking boots, and embracing his satchel, drew forth a piece of hard, unsavoury cheese, and some barley-cake, with which he proceeded to entertain, if not satisfy, his stomach. A glass of beer finished this frugal repast, when the old man retired into the shadow of a huge projecting chimney, ruminating on the perplexities by which he was encompassed, and on the possibility of his final extrication. Opposite to him, in the shadow, as if shunning observation, sat another person who appeared wishful to avoid any intercourse with the guests. Grimes stretched his gaunt figure on a bench beside the hearth, as though desirous to let in the dark waters of oblivion upon his spirit.

The hostess was bustling in and out, doubtless impatient at this prolonged stay when the cup was empty; and, in one of these inspectory visits, the old man addressed her, scarcely raising his contemplative gaze from the embers, where he had been poking his eyes out for the last half-hour.

"I want a bed for the night, good dame."

"We have none to spare," said the dissatisfied landlady—"for such guests as thee," perhaps she would have added, but the stranger from the opposite corner interrupted her.

"He shall have mine: I can lie on the squab."

The voice of the speaker was soft and musical, apparently in a disguised tone.

"You're very kind, sir," said the hostess; "but this over-thrifty customer may find other guess places i' the town; unless, indeed, he chooses to pay handsomely for the lodging."

"And then, maybe," said the stranger, "the siller would find out a bed to lie in."

"I could lend him mine, perhaps," returned the accommodating landlady.

"Then here's a crown," said the other, "and let the old man be both fed and bedded. I have money enough; and his purse, I think, is not overstocked with provision, if we may guess by the lining of his wallet."

The dame, growing courteous in an instant, promised as good a bed as King George himself slept in that blessed night. The astonished fisherman could hardly credit his senses. He

thanked his stars for this unexpected interposition; nor would he refuse the gift, though from the hands of a stranger.

The latter shortly afterwards retired to rest; and the political weaver and blacksmith, having settled the hanging, drawing, and quartering of the unfortunate prisoner, not without a full and minute-description of this disgusting and barbarous, though to them diverting process, called for a parting cup, to drink confusion to the rebels and a speedy dismissal to the Chevalier.

Old Grimes retired also; and in a low wide room, white-washed and bare-walled, containing a broken chair, two-thirds of a table, and a bed without tester, covered with a thick blue quilt, was deposited the mortal fabric of the weary fisherman.

He could not sleep for a considerable time; the strange events he had witnessed, the excitement he had undergone, together with the rude brawls beneath his window, prevented him from closing his eyes until past midnight. He heard not a few loyal home-made songs, by the red-hot braggarts, pot-valiant and full of “gentle minstrelsie,” as they trolled lustily past his lodging. Amongst many others, the following seemed an especial favourite:—

1.

Down wi’ the Papists an’ a’, man,
Down wi’ the priest and confession;
Down wi’ the Charlies an’ a’, man,
And up wi’ the Duke an’ the nation.

2.

“There’s Townley, an’ Fletcher, an’ Syddal,
And Nairn, wi’ his breeks wrang side out, man;
Some ran without breeks to their middle,
But Charlie ran fastest about, man.”

After a while, the sounds began to mingle confusedly with the images floating on his own sensorium. He felt as though unable to separate them: ideal forms took up the real impressions, and arrayed themselves so cunningly withal, that to his mind’s eye the image of his daughter seemed to approach. The brawling ceased; the room was lighted up. It was his own chamber, and Katherine sprang towards him, smiling as she was wont, for her usual “Good-night.” “God bless thee, my child!” said he, as he threw his arms about her. Starting up, awake, at the sound of his own voice, he found that he had not grasped a shadow; but a being, real and substantial, was in his embrace. Grimes was horribly alarmed.

“Father, it is I,” said a soft whisper. It was the voice of his daughter.

“Hush!” said she; “be silent, for your life and mine. You shall know all; but not now. Fear not for me. I’m safe; but I will not leave *him*—my companion—yonder unfortunate captive. Help me, and I’ll contrive his rescue.”

“*Thy* companion, wench! why, how is this? Art”——

“Honest and true, as he is faithful. We may yet be happy as we once were, when this fearful extremity is past. Say no more; we may be overheard. Now aid me; for without our help he is lost! and, oh, refuse not this one, perhaps this last request of thy child!”

She fell upon his neck, and the old man was moved to an unwonted expression of tenderness; for truly his daughter was dearer to him than any earthly object; and still dearer in the moment when the lost one was restored.

“To-morrow night,” said the maiden, “bring your boat, with four stout rowers, to the quay at Preston Marsh. Let me see; ay, the moon is near two days old, and the tide will serve from nine till midnight. You know the channel well, and wait there until I come.”

“Kattern, thou shall go with me. I’ll not leave thee now.”

“Nay,” said the faithful girl; “I must not; I *will* not. There is life depending on my endeavours. Father,” continued she, throwing her arms round the old man’s neck, who now sobbed aloud, “hear me; no power shall force me to leave him now in misery and misfortune. I would move the very stones for his rescue; and cannot I move thee?”

“Well, Kattern, I am a silly and a weak old body, and thou—But thou art disguised. Where didst get that coat? and—I declare—trousers. For shame, wench!”

“Nay, you shall know all, father, when I return; when we have delivered him, and not before.”

The old man was too much overjoyed not to promise the requisite attendance.

“My life depends on ‘t, father; so good-night.”

“Stay—stay, wench—a moment!”

But a light step, and the sound of a gently-closing door, announced her departure; and Grimes was forced to remain, where he lay sleepless on his pallet, impatiently awaiting daybreak.

With the first peep of dawn was old Grimes astir; and the lark was but just fluttering from the dew when the quaint, angular form of the mariner was again seen plodding towards the coast.

“Since that plaguy box came into my fingers, I’ve had neither rest nor luck. I’ll ne’er meddle with stray goods again while I live!” and in this comfortable determination he continued, thinking of his bonny Kattern to lighten the toil of his long and lonesome journey.

The same day the sun lighted early on the towers and gables of “Proud Preston.” Longridge Fell threw off its wreath of mist; but on the river a long and winding vapour followed its course, everything betokening one of those pure, exhilarating days that so rarely visit our watery and weeping regions.

The mayor was but just awakened; yet Mrs Mayor had long been vigilantly engaged in household and political affairs (for she ruled the civic power in Preston’s thrice happy borough), when a stranger came on some business of importance.

“What is your will, my good friend?” inquired the mayoress, taking off a light pair of shagreen-mounted spectacles; for being of that debatable age when time is hardly known by his advances on the person, having just mounted these helps occasionally, as she said, when mending a pen or sewing fine work, she cared not to show that they were in use at other seasons more germane to their purpose.

“I would have a word in private with the mayor.”

“Mr Mayor has no words in private that come not through his lady’s ear. Once more, your business?”

“I must see him, and alone,” said the intruder.

“*Must* see him?” replied the female diplomatist; “I tell you that you shall not see him before I am acquainted with the cause. I hear your master on the floor above,” said she to a servant who had just entered; “tell him he need not hurry down; breakfast is not yet ready.”

The servant retired as he was bid; but, having heard more of the foregoing colloquy than his mistress intended, the message, as delivered to his worship, was of an opposite tenor from what he had been charged with. The stranger continued firm in his determination not to divulge his errand; and the anxiety of the ruling power to ascertain his motive would not suffer her to dismiss him.

Great was the disappointment and dark the storm on the lady's brow, when, beslippered and begowned, came in hastily the chief magistrate of this ancient borough.

"A word in your worship's ear," said the stranger; "my time is short and the affair is urgent."

"Speak out; my wife shares the burdens of this office, and, indeed"——

"But, sir, I crave an audience in private. Should you not grant my request, there be other ears shall have the benefit of what is meant for your own."

The magistrate quailed before the terrors of his wife's frown; but however dangerous the duty—and it was fraught with no ordinary peril—still, in his official capacity, he could not refuse to grant the stranger a private interview.

The mayor was a round, full-eyed personage, whose cheek and nose displayed the result of many a libation to the jolly god. Short-legged, short-breathed, and full-paunched, he strode, quick and laborious, like a big-bellied cask set in motion, as if glad to escape, into a small back chamber, furnished with two stools, a desk, and sundry big books—implements in use only as touching his private affairs.

"Now, sir," said his majesty's vicegerent, puffing from unwonted exertion, "it is my lot to fill the civic chair in these troublous times; and truly my portion is not in pleasant places; but I am loyal, sir, loyal. The king has knighted many a servant less worthy than myself; and, but that Mrs Mayor is looking forward to the title, there would be little good-will to the office from 'my lady' that is to be. Now, sir."

The garrulous and ambitious minister of justice here paused, more for lack of breath than words or will to utter them; and the stranger, who had hitherto kept his hat just below his chin, waiting for a pause in this monologue, replied—

"My message respects your prisoner."

"Well, sir, go on. Proceed, sir, I say. What! can't you speak? Why stand there as if stricken dumb in our presence?"

The stranger did proceed the moment that an interval was granted.

"I am brief, your worship."

"Brief—brief—so am I; and my lady—that is, Mrs Mayor—though she likes that I should, in some sort, furnish my tongue to an acquaintance with the speech, so that I often speak of and to her as such, you observe, that when it may seem good unto his Majesty's pleasure, knighting my poor honesty"—here he made a slight obeisance—"the words may fall trippingly off the tongue, as though we were used to the title, and wore our honours like they who be born to them, sir. Proceed, sir. Why stand dilly-dallying here? Am I to wait your pleasure?"

"Mine errand is simply this:—A plot is laid for the escape of your prisoner on his way to London; so that, unless means be taken to hinder it, he will be liberated."

"Escape!—what?—where? We will raise the soldiery. How say you? I will tell my lady instantly. Escape! If he escape I am undone. My knighthood—my knighthood, sir, is lost for ever; and my lady—she will ne'er look kindly on me again."

Here the little man arose, and, in great agitation, would have sought counsel from his wife, but the stranger prevented him.

“This must not be; ‘tis for your ear alone. Stay!”

His worship was too much alarmed to resist; and the other led him gently from the door.

“If you will be guided by me you may prevent this untoward event. Let him be conveyed with all speed aboard the king’s ship that is in the Irish Channel yonder; so shall you quit your hands of him, and frustrate the plans of his confederates. This must be done secretly, or his friends may get knowledge of the matter, who have had a ship long waiting for him privily on the coast to convey him forthwith to Scotland.”

“I will about it directly. Dear me, I have left my glasses. The town-clerk must be apprised. The jailer—ay, good—thinkest thou he had not best be committed to jail?”

“Peradventure it will be prudent to do this. I will bear your orders to the town-clerk for his removal.”

“What, immediately?”

“When your worship thinks best; but I would recommend despatch.”

“I will about it instantly. There—there—take this. I shall be at the clerk’s office myself shortly. Tell Mr Clerk to be discreet until I come.”

The little twinkling eyes of the functionary were overflowing at the good fortune which revealed to him alone this vile Popish treason. Thus happily frustrated by himself, it would doubtless be the means of raising him from plebeian ranks to the honours of knighthood, perhaps further. His head grew dizzy at the prospect. He shook the stranger by the hand, who bowed and withdrew.

Soon a little antiquated clerk, with green spectacles mounted in huge black rims, and a skin like unto shrivelled parchment, was seen accompanying the stranger to the inn.

The bolts opened to this demi-official, and they were at once ushered into the prisoner’s chamber. He had already arisen, and was pacing the apartment in great haste.

“We come, sir,” said the clerk, “to announce your removal; but first we search for plots. This rebel’s disguise—where, sayest thou, is it concealed?”

“Upon his person,” said the stranger.

“Pray doff that noble suit, sir,” said the jocose purveyor of justice.

The prisoner, with an angry scowl, in which both grief and astonishment were mingled, silently obeyed the mandate; and displayed, underneath these coarse habiliments, a complete suit of female apparel—the very clothes worn by Katherine Grimes at the time of her disappearance.

“A well-contrived disguise, sir, truly. I wot you can suddenly change your gender at a pinch,” said the clerk, chuckling at his own impertinence. But the prisoner, no longer dumb, as aforetime at the farm, answered, in a voice that awed even this presuming minion, with all the attributes of both law and power at his grasp.

“Why call you me sir, Sir Knave? I own no nicknames, and I answer to none. My title is Derwentwater.”

“The titular earl, truly; but now Charles Ratcliffe, since your brother was”——

“Hanged, thou wouldst say,” said the unfortunate and attainted peer, interrupting him; “it was his lot, as I pray thine may be, when the king shall have his own again. Silence!” continued he, in a commanding tone, as one accustomed to be obeyed. “I own it was my purpose to escape; but there is treachery in the camp—treachery in our own bosom—treachery”—here he cast a keen glance at the stranger—“ay, where our best feelings were cherished. I have leaned on a spear, and it hath pierced me! deeper than I thought—in this hard and seared heart.”

A strong and painful emotion came over his dark features; he clenched his hands; but the stranger betrayed no symptoms of compunction.

“Now, sir, I am ready,” said the earl; “make my fetters tight; or perhaps I may be spared that indignity.”

But the proud Earl of Derwentwater would not stoop to propitiate.

“Nay, bind them, and I will be prouder of their insignia than of all the honours, all the trappings, that George Guelph can bestow.”

“We have orders merely for your safe keeping in the jail,” said the clerk; “to which the proper officers will see you conveyed.”

He was accordingly removed to the town jail, then situated to the west of Friargate. This building had been formerly a Franciscan convent of Grey Friars, or Friars Minor, built by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, son of Henry III., in 1221, to which Robert de Holland, who impeached Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, for high treason, contributed largely, and was buried there. In its original state it was a small collegiate building, with a chapel attached to its quadrangular cloisters. By the mutations of time, it became the residence of the Breares of Hammerton, in Bowland; next a house of correction, until the prison at the bottom of Church Street was erected in 1790.

The clerk, being more particular in his inquiries than his worship, addressed the stranger as follows when their mission was ended:—

“Thou hast given good evidence of this plot, and too full of circumstance and confirmation to be disbelieved. The name is Oswald thou sayest, and one of the party who have plotted for his rescue?”

“I have told thee of this before,” replied the stranger, sullenly.

“What should prompt thee to betray him?”

“The same that prompts thee to minister to the hangman’s trade—gold!”

“Humph!” replied the other drily, wiping his spectacles; “and what will satisfy your craving?”

“Why, thinkest thou that I deserve not a reward for my loyalty and readiness to reveal this plot? I will to London with the prisoner; the king will not fail to grant me great largess for what this proud lack-land calls my treachery.”

“Why an it be a noose mayhap: for my part,” continued the greedy and disappointed man of law, “I have touched never a doigt of the bounty, though I have got many a sound rating, and am harder worked than a galley-slave, without even so much as a ‘thank ye’ for my pains. The mayor himself, who dreams he shall be knighted, may whistle a duet with ‘my lady’ as he calls her, as long as a county precept, or ere his title be forthcoming, though it be only a puff of empty breath. There’s no luck in being loyal; neither honour nor honesty thrive therein. But ‘tis the spoke that’s uppermost; and so are we.”

“Thinkest thou that I may get no share of the reward for his apprehension?” inquired the avaricious betrayer.

“Yes; Judas’s reward, maybe, who sold his Master,” said the indomitable clerk, much diverted by his own talents for tormenting. “Hold—I bethink me thou mayest claim the earl’s linsey-woolsey gown and petticoats.”

A loud laugh proclaimed that he had fully appreciated his own wit; though the stranger made no comments thereon.

“To-night, thou sayest, a boat will be in readiness, one hour before midnight and by the mayor’s orders?”

“Yes; arrangements will be made, and soon after daylight we shall have our prisoner safe aboard the king’s cruiser,” replied the stranger, “for I know her bearing to a league.”

“Thou wilt with us then?”

“Why, ay, if they will grant me a free passage. I would fain see him safe at head-quarters.”

“I know not but thou art right; though, rest thee satisfied, he shall be sufficiently guarded.”

The worthies here separated—one to his indictments and his desk, the other to gloat on the mischief he had either committed or prevented.

About an hour before midnight a heavy jarring sound announced to the prisoner that the time was at hand for his departure.

“Quick—quick, sir,” said the jailer; “the mayor and his posse will see you safe aboard.”

“The mayor! Wherefore comes he to swell the procession?”

“A prisoner of your rank and influence must be well looked after, I guess. The mayor will see you safely afloat, sir, and then he may go home with a quiet heart. He has had sore misgivings on account of your safety.”

The earl accompanied his keeper; a close carriage was at the gate, well guarded. Mr Mayor and his green-eyed clerk took their seats with the prisoner: and the heavy vehicle rumbled dismally through the now deserted streets, wakening many a drowsy burgher as it passed.

They gained the low landing-place without interruption, having taken the precaution to chain the legs and wrists of their prisoner to prevent escape. The mayor and his shadow, the gossiping clerk, stepped out first, the carriage being well guarded on each side. Conducted along a jet or wooden pier, they saw a fishing-boat lying beneath. The waves flapped heavily on her sides, beating to and fro against the pier. Four rowers were leaning silently on their oars, awaiting the arrival of their cargo; their dark, low-crowned hats heaving above the dim light which yet lay upon the water.

The wind howled in the rising sail, and the creaking cordage whistled through the block. The sail was hoisted. The wind was fresh, and the rowers raised their oars. The earl was lifted into the boat by two of the attendants. The jailer next stepped in; three other myrmidons of justice followed.

“You know the offing well, my lads, I guess?” said the jailer.

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied several voices.

“Where is the king’s cutter?” said he, addressing the stranger, who was already in the boat.

“Lying to, between us and the Peel of Fouldrey,” replied he.

“This is a strange boat I think,” said the inquisitive jailer.

“We came with fish to market from Church Town,” was the reply.

“One of your own men engaged her,” said the stranger; “and these have grumbled long and hard enough, that they should have the ill-luck to be pressed into this disagreeable service.”

“I would you had laid your paws on some other boat. We shall ha’ na’ luck after this,” said the elder of the seamen. “You may hire another now, and welcome.”

But there were none at hand. The jailer, with a hearty curse at his insolence, bade him be silent and push off.

“Hast thou gotten the memorial touching my poor services to the king?” inquired the trenchant mayor.

“Have ye gotten the warrant safe, and the prisoner in close custody?” inquired the clerk.

But the boat pushed from shore, and the answer was scarce heard, mingling with the rush of the waves and the hollow wind, while the trampling of horses and the rumbling of the coach announced the departure of Preston’s high and illustrious ruler and his learned clerk: one to dream of swords, knights, and drawing-rooms; the other to soar through those mystic regions, sublime and incomprehensible—the awful, inscrutable forms, fictions, and subtleties of law.

The boat soon gained the mid-channel. The wind was favourable, and the tide, beginning to return, swept them rapidly down the river. The stranger, at whose instigation this plan had been adopted, lay in the little cabin, or rather coop, wrapped in a fisherman’s coat, apparently asleep. Derwentwater sought not repose; he sat, moody and silent, in a deep reverie, unconscious or insensible to all but his own dark and untoward fate.

The loud dash and furrowing of the wave, the roar of the wind, and the cry of the boatman as he gave the soundings, were often the only audible sounds. No one was inclined to converse, and the roll and pitching of the boat when they approached the river’s mouth made the jailer and his friends still less willing to disturb their comrades.

After nearly four hours the lights of the little fishing hamlet of Lytham were passed, and they were fast entering upon the open sea. The stranger came out of the cabin, stationing himself by the steersman. They were evidently on the look-out for signals. It was not yet daybreak, and the wind was from the north, a bitter and a biting air, that made the jailer’s teeth to chatter as he raised himself up to examine their course and situation as well as the darkness would permit.

“How long run we on through these great blubbering waves ere we end our voyage? This night wind is worse than a Robin Hood’s thaw.”

“We will hoist signals shortly,” was the reply; “if the ship is within sight, she will answer and bring to.”

“Have ye any prog aboard?” inquired the officer.

A bottle was handed to him. He drank eagerly of the liquor, and gave the remainder to his assistants.

“I wish with all my heart,” said he, “the prisoner were safe out of my custody, and I on my way back. I had as lief trot a hundred miles on land bare-back as sit in this confounded swing for a minute. How my head reels!”

He leaned against one of the benches, to all appearance squeamish and indisposed.

A faint light now flickered on the horizon and disappeared. Again. It seemed to rise above the deep. They were evidently approaching towards it, and the stranger spoke something in a low tone to the steersman.

“Yonder it be, I reckon,” said the jailer, lifting up his head on hearing an unusual bustle amongst the crew. “I am fain to see it, for I am waundy qualmish dancing to this up-an’-down tune, wi’ nought but the wind for my fiddle.”

“And who pays the piper?” asked a wavering voice from below.

“Thee Simon Catterall, bumbailiff, catchpole, thieftaker, and”——

Here a sudden lurch threw the jailer on his beam-ends. A pause was the result, which this worthy official was not inclined to interrupt.

A light hitherto concealed, was now hoisted up to the masthead. This was apparently answered by another signal at no great distance.

“Friends!” said the stranger; “and now hold on to your course.”

They had passed the banks and were some leagues from shore. Morning was feebly dawning behind them, when the dark hull of a ship, rapidly enlarging, seemed to rise out, broad and distinct, from the thin mist towards the west. The loud and incessant moan of the waves, the dash and recoil of their huge tops breaking against the sides of the vessel, with voices from on board, were distinctly heard, and immediately the boat was alongside.

The transfer of their cargo was a work of more difficulty, partly owing to the clumsiness and unseamanlike proceedings of the men who had charge of the prisoner, and partly owing to the light being yet too feeble for objects to be distinctly seen. A considerable interval in consequence elapsed ere the jailer, his assistants, and their charge were hoisted on the deck, not of a trim, gallant war-ship, well garrisoned and appointed, but of a lubberly trading vessel, redolent of tar, grease, and fish-odours, bound for merry Scotland.

“Yoh-o-ih! There—helm down—back maintopsail. So, masters, we had nigh slipped hawser and away. Why, here have we been beating about and about for three long nights; by day we durst not be seen in-shore. Yon cruiser overhauls everything from a crab to a crab-louse. What! got part of your company in the gyves! Where is the earl?”

“Here!” said the prisoner, coolly.

“Hold, captain,” cried the wondering jailer, “the vessel goes not on her voyage until I and two of my friends here depart with the boat; we go not farther with our prisoner. The remaining two will suffice to see him delivered up at head-quarters. Yet, this cannot be.” Here the bewildered officer looked round. “I have a warrant to commit this rebel unto the safe keeping of—ay, the captain of his majesty’s cutter, the *Dart*. But this,” surveying the deck with a suspicious glance, “is as frowsy and fusty a piece of ship-timber as ever stowed coals and cods’ tails between her hatches. I pray we be not nabbed!” said he in a supplicating tone to his head craftsman.

The prisoner himself seemed as much surprised as any of the group; but the stranger, now addressing him, unravelled the mystery.

“My lord; I am no traitor; though until now labouring under that imputation; but you are amongst friends. Thanks to a woman’s wits, we are, despite guards, bolts, and fetters, aboard the vessel which was waiting for us when you were surprised and seized, unfortunately, as we were trying our escape towards the coast. With the aid of my parent, I have been at last successful. You are now free!” It was Katherine who said this.

She changed her hitherto muffled voice as she continued:—"Captain, we have nabbed as cunning a jailer as ever took rogue to board in a stone crib. We will trouble thee to use thy craft; undo these fetters, prithee. He must with you, captain, till you can safely leave him and his companions ashore; but use him well for his vocation's sake. My lord, through weal and woe I have been your counsellor—your friend; but we must now part—'tis fitting we should. While you were in jeopardy, that alone could excuse my flight. Should better times come!"—Her voice faltered; she could not proceed; and old Grimes drew his hat over his face.

"Father," said Katherine, "you will take me to our home again. I will be all to you once more; and to my mother, now that *he* is safe."

One kiss from the gallant earl, and the high-minded, though low-born, maiden stepped into the boat. One wave of the hand, when the morning mist interposed its white veil, and parted them for ever;—yet not before old Grimes, taking a last survey of the vessel, was quite sure he saw the magician of the casket looking at him over the ship's side. In all probability his fancy had not deceived him; the affair of the casket, though supposed by the fisherman to be altogether of a supernatural nature, was, in all likelihood, a means of supplying the earl with money and information to aid his escape.

The subsequent history of this unfortunate but misguided chieftain, whose daring and audacious bravery was worthy of a better cause and a more disinterested master, is but too well known.

The vessel, being ill equipped and hardly sea-worthy, was pursued—the earl taken, and an ignominious death gave to the world assurance of a traitor.

XXXVIII. The Maid's Stratagem; Or, The Captive Lover

"Let me alone with him. If I do not gull him into a nayword, and make him a common recreation, do not think I have wit enough to lie straight in my bed."

—*Twelfth Night*.

The following tale is perhaps the most apocryphal in our series. There has been considerable difficulty in fixing its locality: and, indeed, we are hardly sure that the names, dates, and places we have hit upon, will answer to the facts in every particular. We have done our best to verify it, and have succeeded, we trust, in the attempt, more to our reader's satisfaction than our own.

"There be more fools than farthingales, and more braggarts than beards, in this good land of ours. A bald-faced impertinent! it should cost the grand inquisitor a month's hard study to invent a punishment for him. This pretty morsel! Hark thee, wench; I'll render his love-billet to thine ear. Listen and be discreet.

"If my sighs could waft the soft cargo of their love to thy bosom, I would freight the vessel with my tears, and her sails should be zephyr's wings, and her oars love's fiercest darts. If I could tell but the lightest part of mine agony, your heart, though it were adamant, would melt in the furnace of my speech, and your torture should not abate till one kind glance had irradiated the bosom of your most unhappy, and most wretched of lovers,

Antonio.'

"Now for the *post scriptum*. If thy sighs be as long as thine ears,——help the furnace they are blown through. Again.

"If one ray of compassion lurks in your bosom, lady, let those radiant fingers illuminate your pen, touching one little word by way of answer to this love-billet, though it were but as a rope thrown out in this overwhelming ocean of love to keep from sinking your unhappy slave. These from my dwelling at ——.'

"O' my troth, answer thou shalt have, and that quickly, on thy fool's pate. Dost think, Marian, it were not a deed worth trying, to quell this noisome brute with a tough cudgel?"

"It were too good for him," replied the maid; "but if you will trust the rather to my conceits, lady, we will make this buzzard spin. He shall dance so rare a coarnto for our pastime; beshrew me, but I would not miss the sport for my best holiday favours."

But we leave the beauteous Kate and her mischief-loving maiden, to plot and machinate against the unsuspecting lover. It behoveth us, moreover, to be absent for a somewhat grave and weighty reason, to wit, that when women are a-plotting, another and a more renowned personage—the *beau ideal* of whose dress and personal appearance, according to the testimony of a reverend divine, consists of a black coat and blue breeches—generally contrives to be present, as was by that learned dignitary umquhile set forth in a well-known ditty, of which the veracity is only equalled by the elegance and propriety of the subject, and the classical dignity of its composition.

Leaving them, though in somewhat dangerous company, we just glance at the lover, whose epistle to the proud maiden proved so galling to her humours.

Master Anthony Hardcastle was the only son of a substantial yeoman of good repute long resident in ——. Dying he left him, when scarcely at man's estate, the benefit of a good name, besides a rich store of substance, in the shape of broad pieces, together with lands and livings. The sudden acquisition of so much loose wealth to one whose utmost limit of spending money aforetime had been a penny at Easter and a groat at Michaelmas, did seem like the first breaking forth of a mighty torrent, pent up for past ages, forming its own wild and wilful channel, in despite of all bounds and impediments. His education had been none of the most liberal or extensive; and, astonished at his own aggrandisement, he found himself at once elevated into an object of importance ere he could estimate his own relative insignificance in the great world around him. Thus he became an easy prey to the hordes of idlers and braggarts with whom he associated. He had been to town, kept company with some of the leading cut-and-thrust bullies of the day; but Nature had denied him the headstrong boldness, the desperate recklessness of disposition, requisite for this amiable occupation. His infirmity had consequently often led him to play the coward. At the same time it probably was the means of restraining him from many of those evils into which his lavish and simple disposition might have been enticed, and he was now settling down quietly in the character of a good-natured, well-furnished simpleton. Fond of dress and a gaudy outside, he aimed at ladies' hearts through the medium of silken cloaks and ponderous shoe-buckles;—designing to conquer not a few of the fair dames with whom he associated. But, alas! the perversity of woman had hitherto rendered his efforts unavailing; still an overweening opinion of his own pretensions to their favour prevented him from giving up the pursuit, every succeeding mishap in no wise hindering him from following the allurements of the next fair object that fluttered across his path. He had heard of the wit and beauty of Kate Anderton, only daughter to Justice Anderton of Lostock Hall, a bluff and honest squire who spent his mornings in the chase and his evenings in the revel incident thereto; a man well looked upon by his less distinguished neighbours, being of a benevolent disposition, and much given to hospitality. Kate's disposition was fiery and impetuous, but tempered withal so pleasantly by the sweetness of a naturally tender and affectionate spirit, that you loved her the better for these sharp and wayward ingredients, which prevented that sweetness from cloying.

Master Anthony, hearing of this goodly maiden, found himself, after secretly beholding her, moved to the exploit of winning and wearing in his bosom so precious a gem, which many a high-flown gallant had essayed to appropriate. He began the siege by consulting the most approved oracles and authorities of the time for the construction of love-billets. The cut and fashion of the paper, too, were matters of deep and anxious consideration. Folded and perfumed, the missile was despatched, and the result was such as we have just seen.

Upon this memorable day, it then drawing on towards eventide, Anthony, full of solicitude and musing on the fate of his billet, was spreading himself out, like a newly-feathered peacock, in the trim garden behind his dwelling. A richly-embroidered Genoa silk waistcoat and amber-coloured velvet coat glittered in the declining sun, like the church weathercock perched just above him at a short distance from the house.

The mansion of Squire Anderton lay a few miles off; yet there had been sufficient time for the return of his trusty valet, who was the bearer of this love-billet. Several times had he paced the long straight gravel walk stretching from the terrace to the Chinese temple, and as often had he mounted the terrace itself to look out for the well-known figure of Hodge, ere the hind was descried through a cloud of hot dust, urging on his steed to the extremity of a short but laborious trot. Needless were it to dwell upon the anxiety and foreboding with which he awaited the nearer approach of this leaden-heeled Mercury. To lovers the detail would be unnecessary, and to others description would fail to convey our meaning.

"I ha't, measter."

"What hast thou brought, Hodge?"

"A letter."

"Quick—quick, fellow. Canst not give it me?"

"Ay, i' fackens; but where is it?"

Great was the consternation depicted in the flat and vapid face of the boor as he fumbled in his pocket, turned out the lining, and groped down incontinently "five fathom deep," into his nether appendages; but still no letter was forthcoming.

"She gi'ed me one, though; an' where it is—I'se sure it waur here, an'——Bodikins if those de'ilments hanna twitched it out o' my——Thoose gigglin' wenches i' th' buttery took it when I waur but putting my nose to the mug the last time, for a lift i' the stirrup."

Terrible was the wrath and disapprobation evinced by Master Anthony at this disaster. He had nigh despoiled the curls of his new wig, which were become twisted and awry with choler.

Patiently to endure was the business of Hodge; and his master's fury having "sweeled" down into the socket, a few hasty flashes just glimmered out from the ignited mass, ere it was extinguished.

"But thou hadst a letter—dolt—ass!"

"Ay, master, as sure as I am virtuous and well-favoured."

"Then is the lady kindly affected towards my suit? But oh, thou gull—thou dunderpate—thou losel knave, to lose one line moved by her sweet fingers. Get in; I'll not defile my rapier with beating of thee. Thanks to the lady thou hast just left; her condescension so affecteth my softer nature that I could not speak an angry word without weeping. March, rascal, and come not into my presence until thou art bidden, lest I make a thrust at thee with my weapon. O Katherine! my life—my love,—'my polar star, my axle; where all desire, all thought, all passions turn, and have their consequence!"

Anthony had picked up this scrap from the players, with whom he had smoked, and committed the usual delinquencies, not peculiar to that age of folly and licentiousness.

"I'll go dream of thee where there be a bank of flowers. Here let me lose myself in a delirium of sweets."

Choosing a fair position, he squatted down upon a ripe strawberry bed, and great was the dismay with which he beheld the entire ruin of his best puce-coloured breeches. So sudden was the dissipation of his complacency, that he determined to beat Hodge forthwith; to which thrifty employment we commend him, whilst we address ourselves to the further development of our story.

Near to the lower extremity of the village dwelt a maiden whose bloom had been wasted, and whose matchless hopes were always frustrated ere their accomplishment. Many a simpering look had she cast towards the goodly raiment of Master Anthony, and some incipient notion was entertained that the indweller at the big house was not averse to a peep, now and then, more tender than usual, at the window of Mrs Bridget Allport. When a boy, Anthony had been a sort of spoiled pet of the maiden, who was then opening into bloom, and the bud of promise breaking forth in all its pride and loveliness. While Anthony's legs were getting rounder, and his face and figure more plump and capacious, the person of Mistress Bridget was, alas! proceeding, unluckily, in a manner quite the reverse. Anthony's love had not

quickened into fruition with his growth: but the lady kept a quick and wary eye upon his movements, and many a pang had his flattering favours caused in her too susceptible heart.

Distantly related to the family, she sometimes visited Lostock Hall; and at the period when our narrative begins she was located therein.

Kate had long been aware of her likings and mishaps, and was no stranger to her predilection for Master Anthony Hardcastle.

The first overt act of mischief resulting from the plots of Kate and her maid was a smart tap at the door of Mistress Bridget, her bed-chamber, where she was indulging in reverie and romance; but the day being hot, she had fallen asleep, and was dreaming of “hearts, darts, and love’s fires.” She started from this mockery of bliss at the summons.

“Prithee, Marian, what is it?”

“A billet from—I don’t care to tell who!”

“A billet, sayest thou?—eh!—who can it be? What! It is—go away, my good Marian; I cannot—oh! when will my poor heart——’*Waft a cargo of love to thy bosom.*’ ‘*Melt in the furnace.*’ Dear, delightful passion! How pure! Just like mine own, I declare. ‘*Harder than adamant.*’ Nay, thou wrongest me. Prithee, Marian, who—where is he?”

“A trusty messenger is below.” She dropped a handsome curtsy.

“Give me my tablets and my writing-stool. O Marian! little did I think of this yesterday. When I was telling thee of—of—oh, I am distraught!”

She commenced a score of times ere something in the shape of a communication could be despatched.

“There—there; let it be conveyed quick. Nay, I will see him myself. Lead me to him, girl. I will say how—and yet, this may look too bold and unmaidenly. Take it, good girl, and say—what thou thinkest best.”

Lightly did the laughing maiden trip through the great hall into the buttery, where Hodge was ambushed along with a huge pie, fast lessening under his inspection. Her intention was not to have given him the billet, but she was suddenly alarmed at the approach of Mistress Bridget. Fearful lest the deception might be discovered, she hastily gave Hodge the precious deposit, trusting to some favourable opportunity when she might extract the letter from his pouch. An occasion shortly occurred, and Hodge was despatched, as we have seen, billetless, and unconscious of his loss.

The lover was sore puzzled how to proceed. It was possible—nay, more than probable—that the message might have appointed a meeting; or twenty other matters, which he was utterly unable to conjecture, woman’s brain being so fertile in expedients; and if he obeyed not her injunctions it might be construed amiss, and unavoidably prove detrimental to his suit. Should he send back the messenger? She would perhaps laugh at him for his pains; and he was too much afraid of her caprice to peril his adventure on this issue. A happy thought crossed his brain; he capered about his little chamber; and could hardly govern himself as the brilliant conception blazed forth on his imagination. This bright phantasy was to be embodied in the shape of a serenade. It would be more in the romantic way of making love—would stimulate her passions—powerfully enlist her feelings in his favour, and doubtless bring on something like an appointment, or a permission, at any rate, to use a freer intercourse.

“To-morrow night,” said he, rubbing his hands and stroking his soft round chin, for be it understood, gentle reader, the youth was of a tender and fair complexion, with little beard,

save a slight blush on his upper lip. He was not ill-favoured, but there was altogether something boyish and effeminate throughout his appearance, which seemed not of the hue to win a lady's love. He could twang the guitar, and had at times made scraps of verse, which he trolled to many a damsel's ear, but to little purpose hitherto.

On the morrow he watched the sun creep lazily up the sky, and more lazily down again. The old dial seemed equally dilatory and unwilling to move. He had sorted out his best and most ardent love sonnet, and strummed as many jangling tunes as would have served a company of morris-dancers and pipers for a May festival. Twilight came on apace. The moon was fast mounting to her zenith. No chance of its being dark; so much the better—it would enable the lovers to distinguish each other the more easily.

Hodge had long been ready, and the steeds duly caparisoned. At length, reckoning that his arrival would take place about the time the lady had retired to her chamber, he set forth, accompanied by his trusty esquire. The road lay for some distance over a long high tract of moorland, while beautifully did the bright stars appear to shoot up from the black, bleak, level horizon. The moon seemed to smile suspiciously upon them, and even Hodge grew eloquent beneath her glance.

"It's brave riding to-night, master; one might see to pick up a tester if 'twere but i' the way. Well, I does like moonlight, ever since Margery came a-living at the parson's."

"Peace, sirrah!" Anthony was conning inwardly, and humming the soft ditty by which he proposed to excite his mistress' ear. "I think thou art mine evil destiny, doomed everlastingly to be my plague and annoyance."

"Body o' me, but you're grown woundily humoursome of a sudden," muttered the other at the lower end of his voice. "I waur but saying as how Margery"—

Hodge here received another interruption. A stray ass, turned out to browse on the common, seemingly actuated thereto by sympathy or proximity of either man or beast, burst into one of those hysterical, though exquisite cadences, which defy all imitation, and at the same time produce an extraordinary and irresistible effect on the animal economy.

"That is all along of thy prating," said the meditative lover, when the "*strain*" was concluded. "It bodes no good; and I'd as lief see a magpie, and hear a screech-owl, as one of those silly beasts. The salutation of an ass by night is ever held a sound of ill-omen; and lo! there be two of ye, reckoning thine own ugly voice."

"Then may two bode good, if one bode ill, as the maids say of the magpies," replied the indefatigable attendant.

"I'll cudgel thine infirmity out o' thee. Hold thy tongue! Hadst thou not been left me by my father, a precious bequest, I had sent thee a packing, long ere thou hadst worn a badge in my service."

The rest of their journey was accomplished in comparative silence, until a short ascent brought them to a steep ridge, down which the road wound into the valley. It was a scene of rich and varied beauty, now lighted by a bright summer moon. A narrow thread of light might be seen twining through the ground below them, broken at short intervals, then abruptly gliding into the mist which hung upon the horizon. Lights were yet twinkling about, where toil or festivity held on their career unmitigated. A mile or two beyond the hill they were now preparing to descend lay a dark wood, extending to the shallow margin of the adjacent brook. Above this rose the square low tower of Lostock Hall; clusters of long chimneys, irregularly marked out in the broad moonlight, showed one curl of smoke only, just perceptible above the dark trees, intimating that some of the indwellers were yet awake. Ere long a bypath

brought them round to a fence of low brushwood, where a little wicket communicated with the gardens and offices behind.

“Here stay with the beasts until I return,” said Anthony, deliberately untying the cover wherein reposed his musical accompaniment.

“And how long may we kick our heels and snuff the hungry wind for supper, master?”

“Until my business be accomplished,” was the reply.

Master Anthony commenced tuning, which aroused the inquiries of several well-ordered and decently-disposed rooks who were not given to disturb their neighbours at untimely hours, and were just at the soundest part of their night’s nap.

“These villainous bipeds do fearfully exorbitate mine ear,” said the agonised musician. “‘Tis not in the power of aught human to harmonise the strings.”

The clamour increased with every effort, until the whole community were in an uproar, driving the incensed wooer fairly off the field. Trusting that he should be able to eke out the tune in spite of these interruptions, he hastened immediately to his destination. He crossed a narrow bridge and passed through a gap into the garden, taking his station on one side of the house, where he commenced a low prelude by way of ascertaining if the lady were within hearing, and likewise the situation of her chamber. To his inexpressible delight a window, nearly opposite the tree under which he stood, was gently opened, and he could distinguish a figure in white moving gently behind the drapery. He now determined to try the full power of his instrument, and warbled, with no inconsiderable share of skill and pathos, the following ditty:—

“Fair as the moonbeam,
Bright as the running stream,
Sparkling, yet cold;
In Love’s tiny fingers
A shaft yet there lingers,

And he creeps to thy bosom, and smiles, lady.
Soon his soft wings will cherish
A flame round thine heart,
And ere it may perish
Thy peace shall depart.

Oh listen, listen, lady gay;
Love doth not always sue;
The brightest flame will oft decay,
The fondest lover rue, lady!
The fondest lover rue, lady!”

At the conclusion he saw a hand, presently an arm, stretched out through the casement. Something fell from it, which glistened with a snowy whiteness in the clear moonlight. He ran to seize the treasure—a scrap of paper neatly folded—which, after a thankful and comely obeisance towards the window, he deposited in his bosom. The casement was suddenly closed. The lover, eager to read his billet, made all imaginable haste to regain the road, where, mounting his steed, he arrived in a brief space, almost breathless with anticipation and impatience, at his own door. The contents of the despatch were quickly revealed in manner following:—

“I know thine impatience; but faith must have its test. Send a message to my father; win his consent to thy suit; but as thou holdest my favour in thine esteem come not near the house thyself ere one month have elapsed. Ask not why; ‘tis sufficient that I have willed it. Shouldst thou not obey, I renounce thee for ever.

“This shall be the test of thy fidelity.

Katherine.”

He kissed the writing again and again; he skipped round the chamber like unto one demented; and when the old housekeeper, who was in a sore ill-temper at being deprived of her accustomed allowance of rest, came in to know his intentions about supper, he bade her go dream of love and give supper to the hogs.

The morning found Anthony early at his studies. A letter, painfully elaborated, was despatched in due form “To Master Roger Anderton, these;” and the lover began to ruminate on his good fortune. The terms were hard, to be sure, and the time was long; but women, and other like superior intelligences, will not bear to be thwarted; at least, so thought Master Anthony Hardcastle, as he threw his taper legs over the opposite chair, screwing his forbearance to the test.

The same day an answer was received, briefly as follows:—

“Though thy person and qualifications be unknown to me, yet have I not been ignorant of the respect and esteem which thy father enjoyed. Shouldst thou win my daughter’s favour, thou shall not lack my consent, if thou art as deserving as he whose substance thou hast inherited.”

Leaving to Anthony the irksome task of minuting down the roll of time for one unlucky month, turn we to another personage with whom it is high time the reader should be acquainted. At Turton Tower, a few miles distant, dwelt a cavalier of high birth, whose pedigree was somewhat longer than his rent-roll. To this proud patrician Kate’s father had long borne a bitter grudge, arising out of some sporting quarrel, and omitted no opportunity by which to manifest his resentment. Dying recently, he had left an only son, then upon his travels, heir to the inheritance and the feud with Anderton.

Shortly after his return, Kate, being on a visit in the neighbourhood, saw him; and as nothing is more likely to excite love than the beholding of some forbidden object, unwittingly, in the first instance, she began to sigh; and with each sigh came such a warm gush of feeling from the heart as did not fail to create a crowd of sensations altogether new and unaccountable. On his part the feeling was not less ardent, though less inexplicable, at least to himself, and a few more glances fixed them desperately and unalterably in love. Hopeless though it might be, yet did the lovers find a sad and mournful solace in their regrets, the only sentiment they could indulge. They had met, and in vows of secrecy had often pledged unintermitting attachment.

Love at times had prompted some stratagem to accomplish their union, for which the capricious and unforgiving disposition of the old gentleman seemed to afford a fair excuse. It is a most ingenious and subtle equivocator that same idle boy, and hath ever at hand palliatives, and even justifications, in respect to all crimes done and committed for the aiding and comforting of his sworn lieges. And thus it fell out, Kate’s wits were now at work to make Anthony’s suit in some way or another subservient to this object. Once committed to a purpose of such duplicity, no wonder that contrivances and plots not altogether justifiable should ensue; and Kate’s natural archness and vivacity, coupled with the mischievous temper of her maid, gave their proceedings a more ludicrous character than the dignity of the passion would otherwise have allowed.

The month was nigh spent when Hodge one morning entered the chamber of his master, who sat there dribbling away the time over a treatise on archery.

“How now, sirrah?”

“Please ye, master, Mistress Kate is to be wed on the feast of St Crispin; an’ I’m a-thinking I’ve no body-gear fitting for my occupation.”

“Married, sayest thou?—to whom?”

“Nay, master, an’ ye know not, more’s the pity if it be not to your honour.”

“To me, sayest thou?”

“They ha’ so settled it, belike; and I thought, if it would please ye, to order me new boots and a coat for the wedding.”

“Peace!—where gattest thou the news?”

“At the smithy. I was but just getting the mare shoed, and a tooth hammered into the garden rake.”

“It is wondrous strange!” replied Anthony, musing; “but women are of a subtle and unsearchable temper. She did appoint me a month’s abstinence. Sure enough, the feast thou hast named happeneth on the very day of my release. She hath devised this plot for my surprise! Excellent!—and so the rumour hath gotten abroad? Now, o’ my troth, but I like her the better for’t. Go to; a new suit, with yellow trimmings, and hose of the like colour, shall be thine: thou shalt be chief servitor, too, at my wedding.”

Anthony seemed raving wild with delight. He resolved that the jade should know of his intelligence, and he would attack the citadel by a counterplot of a most rare and excellent device. To this end he resolved on going to the hall the night preceding his appointment; in the meantime diligently maturing his scheme for the surprise and delight of the cunning maiden.

With the evening of an unusually long and tedious day, whose minutes had been spun to hours, and these hours into ages, did Master Anthony Hardcastle, accompanied by his servant, set forth on this perilous exploit. Upon a rich and comely suit, consisting of a light blue embroidered vest, and a rich coat of peach-coloured velvet, with bag-wig and ruffles, was thrown a dark cloak, partly intended as a disguise, and partly to screen his gay habiliments from dust and pollution.

They passed slowly on for an hour or two, dropping down to the little wicket as aforetime, above which the crows were again ready with the usual inquiries. The squires being left with the steeds, Master Anthony once more scrambled over the garden hedge, and sustained his person in a becoming attitude against the pear-tree whence he had so successfully attacked and carried the citadel on his former visit. He now beheld, with wonder, lights dancing about in the house, frisking and frolicking through the long casements like so many jack-o’-lanterns. Indeed, the greater part of the mansion seemed all a-blaze, and of an appalling and suspicious brightness. Sounds, moreover, of mirth and revelry approached his ear. He would instantly have proceeded to ascertain the cause of this inauspicious merry-making had not Kate’s injunction kept him aloof. The noise of minstrelsy was now heard—symptoms of the marriage-feast and the banquet. More than once he suspected some witchery, some delusion of the enemy to beguile him by enchantments. However, he resolved to be quiet; and, for the purpose of a more extended vision, he climbed, or rather stepped into, the low huge fork of the tree. From this tower of observation he kept a wary eye, more particularly towards the window whence the billet was thrown, expecting to behold some token of his mistress’s

presence. But this chamber seemed to be the dullest and darkest in the whole house; not a ray was visible. It seemed shut out, impervious to the gladness which irradiated the bosom of its neighbours.

A white cur now came snarling about the bushes; then, cautiously smelling his way to the tree, suddenly set up a yell so deafening and continuous that he roused some of the revellers within. Two men staggered from the house, evidently a little the worse in their articulation by reason of the potations they had taken.

“Quiet, Vick! Hang thy neck, what’s a matter? Eh! the pear-tree? It’s the thief again—and before the fruit’s ripe. Bodikins! but we’ll catch thee now, ‘r lady. We’ll have a thong out of his hide; split me, if we ha’n’t!”

The men approached as cautiously as their condition would permit; while Anthony, overhearing the latter part of their dialogue, sat somewhat insecurely on his perch.

“Dan, get th’ big cudgel out o’ t’ barn. I see a some’at black like, an’ fearsome, i’ th’ tree.”

Probably they had imbibed courage with their liquor, otherwise the black “somewhat” in the tree might have indisposed them for this daring attack.

“I’ll have a blow at it, be’t mon or devil, hang me.”

Anthony pulled his cloak tightly about him; and while the weapon was providing he entertained serious thoughts of surrendering at discretion; but the effect which this premature disclosure might have on his mistress’s determination towards him retarded the discovery; and he was not without hope of eluding the drunken valour of the brutes.

“Now gie’t me, Dan—Tol de rol—

‘An’ back and sides go bare, go bare.’”

Approaching to the attack, Barnaby brandished his cudgel to the time and tune of this celebrated alehouse ditty. The concluding flourish brought the weapon waving within a very concise distance of the goodly person of Master Anthony Hardcastle.

“Murder!—Villains!” cried the terrified lover, unable to endure the menacing aspect of this fearful invader; “I’m Master Anthony, ye sots, ye unthrifths—your master, is to be; and I—I’ll have ye i’ the stocks for this.”

“Bodikins and blunderkins? hear’st him, Dan? Why, thou lying lackpenny, I’ll soon whack the corruption out o’ thee. Master Anthony, indeed! he be another guess sort of thing to thee, I trow. Thee be’st hankering after the good things hereabout; but I’ll spoil thy liquorish tooth for tasting. Come, unkennel, vermin!”

“I am Master Anthony, friend, as safe as my mother bore me. If thou lackest knowledge, go ask Hodge with the horses at the back gate.”

“Then what be’st thou for i’ the pear-tree? Na, na; Master Anthony is gone home a great whiles back. He’s to marry young mistress i’ the morn, an’ we’re getting drunk by participation. There’s for thee! I talks like ou’d Daniel the schoolmaster.”

Sorely discomposed with the infliction of this vile contumely, Anthony was forced to descend. Nothing, however, would convince the clowns of their mistake. He showed them his glossy raiment; but their intellects were too confused for so nice a discrimination; they consequently resolved to hold him in durance until the morrow, when their master would bring him to account for this invasion of his territory. But who shall depict the horror and consternation of the unhappy lover, on finding them seriously bent on his incarceration in a filthy den, used heretofore as a receptacle for scraps and lumber, near the stables.

Remonstrance, entreaty, threats, solicitations, were equally unavailing. He demanded an audience with the justice.

“Thee’ll get it soon enough, I warrant thee. And thee may think well o’ the stocks; but th’ pillory is no more than I’ll be bound for. The last we caught, Jem Sludge, we belaboured in such fashion as I verily think he waur more like a midden’ nor a man when he got his neck out o’ th’ collar. Come along—it’s not to th’ gallows, this bout, my pretty bird. Lend him a whack behind, Dan, if he do not mend his pace.”

A rude blow was here administered to the unfortunate captive. He cried out lustily for help; but the inquirers from the hall made merry at his captivity, rejoicing that the thief was now safely in the trap.

On the following morning, the eventful day of his daughter’s bridal, the justice rose earlier than he was wont. His features wore a tinge of anxiety as he paced the room with sharp and irregular footsteps. Suddenly he was disturbed by approaching voices, and a sort of suppressed bustle along the passage. On opening the door he saw Daniel and his doughty companion, Barnaby, whose red eyes and hollow cheeks betokened their too familiar indulgence in past festivities.

“We’ve caught him at last, master.”

“Who? What dost stand agape for?”

“Why, a rogue ‘at was robbing the gardens.”

“A murrain light on both of ye! I cannot be chaffed with such like matters now.”

“But your worship,” cautiously spake Dan, “he be the most comical thing you ever clapped eyes on. He says he be Master Anthony, your worship’s new son that is to be to-day.”

“How sayest thou? I think thy wits are the worse for bibbing o’ yesternight.”

“Nay, your worship’s grace, but we’ll e’en fetch him. He’s pranked out gaily; and a gay bird he be for your honour’s cage.”

Two or three domestics now entered, leading in their prisoner. His woe-begone looks were angrily bent on his conductors. He shook off their grasp, approaching the owner of the mansion where he had been so evil-entreated. His hair, released from its bonds, dangled in primæval disorder above his shoulders. His goodly raiment, no longer hidden, was rumpled and soiled, like the finery of a stage wardrobe. Indeed, the Squire guessed he was one of the village players that had been foraging for his supper after a scanty benefit.

“How now, braggart? What evil occupation brings thee about my house? What unlucky hankering, sirrah, brings thee, I say, a-robbing of my grounds and poultry-yards? Methinks thou hast but a sorry employment for thy gingerbread coat.”

“I came, sir, to wed your daughter,” replied Anthony, simpering, and with great modesty.

“My daughter!” cried Anderton, in a voice of thunder; “and pray may I inquire to whom I am beholden for this favour?”

“To Master Anthony Hardcastle,” said the lover, drawing himself up proudly, and casting a glance of triumph and defiance at his tormentors.

“Whew!” cried the other; “why, Master Anthony is no more like thee, thou tod-pate, than thou to St George or the dragon of Wantley. A rare device, truly—a cunning plot—a stage-trick to set the mob agape! Why, thou puny-legged Tamburlane!—thou ghost of an

Alexander!—how darest thou confront me thus? Now, i' lady, but I've a month's mind to belabour the truth out o' thee with a weapon something tough and crabbed i' the tasting."

Anthony's face lengthened inordinately at this unexpected rebuke, and a latent whimper quivered about the corners of his pale and pursy mouth. Sobs and protestations were useless; there seemed a base conspiracy to rob him even of his name and identity. He vowed, that the period of his proscription being past, Kate was hourly expecting him, and his appearance overnight was but to execute a little stratagem for her surprise. This explanation but served to aggravate; and in vain did he solicit an interview with the lady, promising to abide by her decision.

"Why, look thee," said the justice; "Anthony Hardcastle, whom thy lying tongue and figure most woefully defame, hath been our guest oftentimes during the past month, and truly his gallant bearing and disposition have well won my consent. No marvel at my daughter's love! But thou!—had she stooped from her high bearing to such carrion, I'd have wrung your necks round with less compunction than those of two base-bred kestrels."

Anthony was dumb with astonishment. The whole transaction had the aspect of some indistinct and troubled dream, or rather some delusion of the arch-enemy to entangle and perplex him. At this moment tripped in the pert maiden, whose share in the machinations we before intimated. She looked on the bewildered lover with a sly and equivocal glance. Craving permission to speak, she said—

"'Tis even so, your worship; this interloper is none other than the very person he represents; and here come those who will give the riddle its proper answer."

Immediately came in the blushing Kate, led in by a tall and comely gentleman, whom her father recognised as the real Anthony.

"We come but to crave your blessing," said this personage, bending gracefully on his knee, whilst Kate seized the hand of her parent.

"Forgive this deceit:" she looked imploringly at the old man, who seemed too astonished to reply: "it was but to win my father's knowledge and esteem for the man to whom my vows are for ever plighted."

"Nay, start not," said the bridegroom; "I but borrowed this ill-used gentleman's name, as I knew none other mode of access to your presence than the disguise that his *suit* afforded; and from him I now crave forgiveness."

"And I knew," said Kate, glancing round towards the real Anthony, "that the man of my choice would be yours, could I but contrive you should hold a fair judgment between them, as you now do this day."

A reconciliation was the result; but ere a "little month was old" were seen at the same altar, and with the same object, Master Anthony Hardcastle and Mistress Bridget Allport.

XXXIX. The Skull House

“That skull had a tongue in’t that could sing once.”

—*Hamlet*.

Wardley Hall, in the manor of Worsley, is an ancient building about seven miles west from Manchester. It was an old seat of the Downes family, and afterwards of Lord Barrymore. A human skull was formerly shown here, beside the staircase, which the occupiers would not permit to be removed. This grim fixture, it was said, being much averse to any change of place or position, never failed to punish the individual severely who should dare to lay hands on it. If removed or buried, it was sure to return, so that in the end each succeeding tenant was fain to endure its presence, rather than be subject to the terrors and annoyances consequent upon its removal. Its place was a square aperture in the wall; nor would it suffer this opening to be glazed, or otherwise filled up, without creating some disturbance. It seemed as if those rayless sockets loved to look abroad, peradventure on the scenes of its former enjoyments and reminiscences. It was almost bleached white by exposure to the weather, and many curious persons have made a pilgrimage there even in late years. Several young men from Manchester once going on this errand, one of them, unobserved of his fellows, thought he would ascertain the truth of the stories he had heard. For this purpose he privately removed the skull to another situation, and left it to find its way back again. The night but one following, such a storm arose about the house, that many trees were blown down, the roofs were unthatched, and the tenants, finding out the cause, as they supposed, replaced the skull, when these terrific disturbances ceased.

The occurrences detailed more fully in the following pages are usually assigned as the origin of this strange superstition.

“I wonder what that hair-brained brother of mine can be doing. No fresh brawl, I hope,” said Maria Downes to her cousin Eleanor, as they sat, mopish and disquieted enough, in a gloomy chamber of the old hall at Worsley.

“I hope not, too,” replied Eleanor; and there was another long and oppressive silence.

It was in the dusk of a chill, damp November evening. The fire shot forth a sharp uncertain glimmer, and the dim walls threw back the illumination.

“I know not why,” said Maria, “but my spirits are very sad, and everything I see looks mistrustful and foreboding!”

So thought her cousin; but she did not speak. Her heart was too full, and a tear started in her eye.

“Would that Harry had eschewed the frivolities and dissipations of yonder ungodly city; that he had stayed with us here, in safe and happy seclusion. I have hardly known pleasure since he went.”

Eleanor’s bosom again responded to the note of agony that was wrung from her cousin, and she turned her head to hide what she had too plainly betrayed.

“Since that unhappy fray in which peradventure an innocent and unoffending victim was the result of Harry’s intemperance, the bloody offence hath been upon my soul—heavier, I do fear, than upon his own. But unless he repent, and turn aside from his sinful courses, there will, there must, come a fearful recompense!”

“Do not sentence him unheard,” said Eleanor; but her words were quivering and indistinct. “It was in his own defence, maybe, however bitterly the tidings were dropped into your ear. Sure I am,” said she, more firmly, “that Harry was too kind, too gentle, to slay the innocent, and in cold blood!”

“Nay, Eleanor, excuse him not. It may be that the foul deed was done through excess of wine, the fiery heat of debauch, and amid the beastly orgies of intemperance; but is he the less criminal? I tell thee nay; for he hath added crime to crime, and drawn down, perchance, a double punishment. He is my brother, and thou knowest, if possible, I would palliate his offence; but hath it not been told, and the very air of yon polluted city was rife and reeking with the deed, that Harry Downes, the best-beloved of his father, and the child of many hopes, did wantonly, and unprovoked, rush forth hot and intemperate from the stews. Drawing his sword, did he not swear—ay, by that Heaven he insulted and defied, that he would kill the first man he met, and—oh, horror!—was not that fearful oath fulfilled?”

Eleanor had covered her face with her hands—a convulsive sob shook her frame; but though her heart was on the rack, she uttered no complaint. Maria, inflexible, and, as some might think, rigid, in those principles of virtue wherein she had been educated, yet sorrowed deeply for her cousin, who from a child had been her brother Harry’s playmate, and the proofs of mutual affection had been too powerful, too early, and too long continued, to be ever effaced. Timid as the frightened fawn, and tender as the wild flower that scarce bent beneath her step, she lay, a bruised reed; the stem that supported her was broken. Her fondest, her only hopes were withered, and the desolating blast of disappointment had passed upon her earliest affections. Her little bark, freighted with all a woman’s care and tenderness, lay shivered with the stroke, disabled and a wreck!

Just as the short and murky twilight was expiring, and other lights were substituted, there came a loud summons at the outer gate, where a strong barrier was built across the moat. The females started, as though rendered more than usually apprehensive that evil tidings were at hand. But they were, in some measure, relieved on hearing that it was only Jem Hazleden, the carrier from Manchester, who had brought a wooden box on one of his pack-horses, which said box had come all the way from London by “Antony’s” waggon. Maria thought it might be some package or present from her brother, who had been a year or two in town, taking terms; but a considerable period had now passed since tidings were sent from him. She looked wistfully at the box, a clumsy, ill-favoured thing, without the least symptom of any pleasant communication from such a source; so different from the trim packages that were wont to arrive, containing, maybe, the newest London chintz, or a piece of real brocade, or Flanders lace of the rarest workmanship.

“No good lurks in that ugly envelope,” thought she; and, stooping down, she examined the direction minutely. It was a quaint crabbed hand—not her brother’s, that was certain; and the discovery made her more anxious and uneasy. She turned it over and over, but no clue could be found, no index to the contents. It would have been easy, methinks, to have satisfied herself on this head, but she really felt almost afraid to open it, and yet——At any rate, she would put it off till the morrow. She was so nervous and out of spirits that she positively had not courage to open a dirty wooden box, tied round with a bit of hempen cord, and fastened with a few rusty nails. She ordered it to be removed to her bed-chamber, and morning, perchance, would dissipate these idle but unpleasant feelings. She went to bed, but could not sleep; the wind and rain beat so heavily against the casement, and the recent excitement kept her restless and awake. She tried various expedients to soothe and subdue her agitation, but without effect. The rain had ceased to patter on the windows, but the wind blew more fiercely and in more violent gusts than before. The sky was clearing, and a huge Apennine of clouds

was now visible as she lay, on which the moonbeams were basking gloriously. Suddenly a ray glided like a spirit into the chamber, and disappeared. Her eyes were at that moment directed towards the mysterious box which lay opposite, and her very hair moved with horror and consternation; for in that brief interval of light she thought she saw the lid open, and a grisly head glare out hideously from beneath. Every hair seemed to grow sensitive, and every pore to be exquisitely endued with feeling. Her heart throbbed violently, and her brain grew dizzy. Another moonbeam irradiated the chamber. She was still gazing on the box; but whether the foregoing impression was merely hallucinatory, an illusion of the feverish and excited sense, she knew not, for the box was there, undisturbed, grim, silent, and mysterious as before. Yet she could not withdraw her eyes from it. There is a fascination in terror. She could hardly resist a horrible desire, or rather impulse, to leap forth, and hasten towards it. Her brow felt cold and clammy; her eyes grew dim, and as though motes of fire were rushing by; but ere she could summon help she fell back senseless on her pillow.

Morning was far advanced ere she felt any returning recollection. At first a confused and dream-like sensation came upon her. Looking wildly round, her eyes rested on the box, and the whole interval came suddenly to her memory. She shuddered at the retrospect; but she was determined, whether it had been fancy or not, to keep the secret within her own breast, though more undetermined than ever to break open the fearful cause of her disturbance. Yet she durst not seek repose another night with such a companion. Her apprehensions were not easily allayed, however disposed she might be to treat them as trivial and unfounded.

“Will you not open yonder package that came last night?” inquired Eleanor, as they were sitting down to breakfast. Maria shuddered, as though something loathsome had crossed her. She shook off the reptile thought, which had all the character of some crawling and offensive thing as it passed her bosom.

“I have not—that is, I—I have not yet ordered it to be undone.”

“And why?” said Eleanor, now raising her soft blue eyes with an expression of wonder and curiosity on her cousin. “It did not use to be thus when there came one of these couriers from town.”

“‘Tis not from Harry Downes; and—I care not just now to have the trouble on’t, being jaded and out of spirits.”

“I will relieve you of the trouble presently, if you will permit me,” said Eleanor, who was not without a secret hope, notwithstanding Maria’s assertion, that it was a message of gladness from Harry, with the customary present for his sister, and perhaps a token of kindness for herself.

“Stay!” said Maria, laying her hand on Eleanor as she rose, whilst with a solemn and startling tone she cried, “Not yet!” She sat down; Eleanor, pale and trembling, sat down too; but her cousin was silent, evidently unwilling to resume the topic.

“To-morrow,” said she, when urged; but all further converse on the subject was suspended.

Maria, as the day closed and the evening drew on apace, gave orders that the box should be removed into a vacant outbuilding until morning, when, she said, it might be opened in her presence, as it probably contained some articles that she expected, but of which she was not just then in need.

“It’s an ugly cumbersome thing,” said Dick, as he lugged the wearisome box to its destination. “I wonder what for mistress dunna break it open. Heigho!”

Here he put down his burden, giving it a lusty kick for sheer wantonness and malice.

“What is’t sent here for, think’st ‘ou?” said Betty the housemaid, who had followed Dick for a bit of gossip and a sort of incipient liking which had not yet issued on his part into any overt acts of courtship and declaration. It was nigh dark, “the light that lovers choose;” and Betty, having disposed herself to the best advantage, awaited the reply of Dick with becoming modesty.

“How do I know the nature o’ women’s fancies? It would be far easier to know why there’s a change o’ wind or weather than the meaning o’ their tricks and humours.”

“I know not what thee has to complain on,” said Betty. “They behaven better to thee nor thou deserves.”

“Hoity, toity, mistress; dunna be cross, wench. Come, gie’s a buss an’ so——

“Keep thy jobbernowl to thyself,” said the indignant Betty, when she had made sure of this favour. “Thy great leather paws are liker for Becky Pinnington’s red neck nor mine,” continued she, bridling up, and giving vent to some long-suppressed jealousy.

“Lorjus days; but thou’s mighty quarrelsome and peevish; I ne’er touch’d Becky’s neck, nor nought belongin’ to her.”

“Hush,” said Betty, withdrawing herself from the approaches of her admirer. “Some’at knocks!”

Dick hastened to the door, supposing that somebody was dodging them.

“‘Tis somethin’ i’ that box!” said Betty; and they listened in the last extremity of terror. Again there was a low dull knock, which evidently came from the box, and the wooers were certain that the old one was inside. In great alarm they rushed forth, and at the kitchen-chimney corner Dick and his companion were seen with blanched lips and staring eyes, almost speechless with affright.

Next morning the story was bruited forth, with amendments and additions, according to the fancy of the speaker, so that, in the end, the first promulgers could hardly recognise their own. The grim-looking despatch was now the object of such terror that scarcely one of them durst go into the place where it stood. It was not long ere Maria Downes became acquainted with the circumstance, and she thought it was high time these imaginary terrors should be put an end to. She felt ashamed that she had given way to her own apprehensions on the subject, which doubtless were, in part, the occasion of the reports she heard, by the seeming mystery that was observed in her manner and conduct. She determined that the box should be opened forthwith. It was daylight, be it remembered, when this resolution was made, and consequently she felt sufficiently courageous to make the attempt.

But there was not one amongst the domestics who durst accompany her on this bold errand—an attack, they conceived, on the very den of some evil spirit, who would inevitably rush forth and destroy them.

Alone, therefore, and armed with the necessary implements, was she obliged to go forth to the adventure.

The terrified menials saw her depart; and some felt certain she would never come back alive; others did not feel satisfied as to their own safety, should their mistress be the victim. All was terror and distress; pale and anxious faces huddled together, and every eye prying into his neighbour’s for some ground of hope or confidence. Some thought they heard the strokes—dull, heavy blows—breaking through the awful stillness which they almost felt. These intimations ceased: and a full half-hour had intervened; an age of suspended horror, when—just as their apprehensions were on the point of leading them on to some desperate measures

for relieving the suspense which was almost beyond endurance—to their great joy, their mistress returned; who, though appearing much agitated, spoke to them rather hastily, and with an attempt to smile at their alarm.

“Yonder box,” said she, passing by, “is like to shame your silly fears. Some wag hath sent ye a truss of straw—for a scrubbing wisp, maybe.” But there was, in the hurried and unusual hilarity of her speech, something so forced and out of character, that it did not escape even the notice of her domestics. Some, however, went immediately to the place, and after much hesitation lifted up the lid, when lo! a bundle of straw was the reward of their curiosity. By degrees they began to rummage farther into the contents; but the whole interior was filled with this rare and curious commodity. They could hardly believe their eyes; and Dick, especially, shook his head, and looked as though he knew or suspected more than he durst tell; a common expedient with those whose mountain hath brought forth something very like the product of this gigantic mystery.

Dick was the most dissatisfied with the result, feeling himself much chagrined at so unlooked-for a termination to his wonderful story, and he kept poking into and turning about the straw with great sullenness and pertinacity. His labours were not altogether without success.

“Look! here’s other guess stuff than my lady’s bed straw,” said he, at the same time holding up a lock of it for the inspection of his companions. They looked and there was evidently a clot of blood! This was a sufficient confirmation of their surmises; and Dick, though alarmed as well as the rest, felt his sagacity and adroitness wonderfully confirmed amongst his fellows. They retired, firmly convinced that some horrible mystery was attached thereto, which all their guessing could not find out.

At night, as Dick was odding about, he felt fidgety and restless. He peeped forth at times towards the outhouse where the box was lying, and as he passed he could not refrain from casting a glance from the corner of his eye through the half-closed door. The bloody clot he had seen dwelt upon his imagination; it haunted him like a spectre. He went to bed before the usual hour, but could not sleep; he tossed and groaned, but the drowsy god would not be propitiated. The snoring of a servant in the next bed, too, proved anything but anodyne or oblivion to his cares. He could not sleep, do what he would. Having pinched his unfortunate companion till he was tired, but with no other success than a loud snort, and generally a louder snore than ever, in the end, Dick, rendered desperate, jumped out of bed, and walked, or rather staggered across the floor. He looked through the window. It was light, but the sky was overcast, though objects below might readily be distinguished. The outhouse where the box lay was in full view; and as he was looking out listlessly for a few minutes he saw a female figure bearing a light, who was gliding down stealthily, as he thought, in the yard below. She entered the building, and Dick could hardly breathe, he was so terrified. He watched until his eyes ached before she came out again, when he saw plainly it was his mistress. She bore something beneath her arm; and as Dick’s curiosity was now sufficiently roused to overcome all fear of consequences, he stole quickly down-stairs, and by a short route got sufficiently on her track to watch her proceedings unobserved. He followed into the garden. She paused, for the first time, under a huge sycamore tree in the fence, and laid down her burden. She drew something from beneath her cloak, and, as he thought, began to dig. When this operation was completed she hastily threw in the burden, and filled up the hole again; after which, with a rapid step, she came back to the house. Dick was completely bewildered. He hesitated whether or not to examine immediately into the nature of the deposit which his mistress seemed so desirous to conceal; but as he had no light, and his courage was not then screwed up to the attempt, he satisfied himself at present with observing

the situation, intending to take some other opportunity to explore this hidden treasure. That his mistress's visit had some connection with the contents of the mysterious box was now certain, and whatever she had concealed was part of its contents, a conclusion equally inevitable; but that she should be so wishful to hide it, was a problem not easy to be explained without examination. Was it money? The clotted blood forbade this surmise. A horrible suspicion crossed him; but it was too horrible for Dick to indulge.

Wondering and guessing, he retraced his steps, and morning dawned on his still sleepless eyelids.

Some weeks passed by, but he found none other opportunity for examination. Somebody or something was always in the way, and he seemed destined to remain ignorant of all that he was so anxious to ascertain.

After the arrival of the box Maria Downes never mentioned her brother unless he was alluded to; and even then she waived the subject as soon as possible, whenever it happened to be incidentally mentioned. Eleanor saw there was an evident reluctance to converse on these matters; and, however she might feel grieved at the change, in the end she forbore inquiry.

One morning her cousin entered the breakfast-room, where Eleanor was awaiting her arrival. Her face was pale—almost deathly—and her lips livid and quivering. Her eyes were swollen, starting out, and distended with a wild and appalling expression.

She beckoned Eleanor to follow; silently she obeyed, but with a deadly and heart-sickening apprehension. Something fearful, as connected with the fate of her cousin Harry, was doubtless the cause of this unusual proceeding. Maria led the way up the staircase, and on coming to the landing, she pointed to a square opening in the wall, like unto the loophole of a turret-stair. Here she saw something dark obstructing the free passage of the light, which, on a closer examination, presented the frightful outline of a human skull! Part of the flesh and hairy scalp were visible, but the whole was one dark and disgusting mass of deformity. She started back, with a look of inquiry, towards her cousin. Hideous surmises crowded upon her while she beheld the features of Maria Downes convulsed with some untold agony.

“Oh, speak—speak to me!” cried Eleanor, and she threw her arms about her cousin's neck, sobbing aloud in the full burst of her emotion. Maria wept too. The rising of the gush relieved her, and she spoke. Every word went as with a burning arrow to Eleanor's heart.

“I have hidden it until now; but—but Heaven has ordained it. His offence was rank—most foul—and his disgrace—a brother's disgrace—hangs on me. That skull is Harry's! Believe it as thou wilt, but the truth is no less true. The box, sent by some unknown hand, I opened alone, when I beheld the ghastly, gory features of him who was once our pride, and ought to have been our protection. My courage seemed to rise with the occasion. I concealed it with all speed until another opportunity, when I buried this terrible memorial—for ever, as I hoped, from the gaze and knowledge of the world. I thought to hide this foul stain upon our house; to conceal it, if possible, from every eye; but the grave gives back her dead! The charnel gapes! That ghastly head hath burst its cold tabernacle, and risen from the dust, without hands, unto its former gazing-place. Thou knowest, Eleanor, with what delight, when a child, he was accustomed to climb up to that little eyelet-hole, gazing out thereat for hours, and playing many odd and fantastic tricks through this loophole of observation.”

Eleanor could not speak; she stood the image of unutterable despair.

“In that dreadful package,” continued Maria, “this writing was sent:—’Thy brother has at length paid the forfeit of his crimes. The wages of sin is death! and his head is before thee. Heaven hath avenged the innocent blood he hath shed. Last night, in the lusty vigour of a

drunken debauch, passing over London Bridge, he encounters another brawl, wherein, having run at the watchman with his rapier, one blow of the bill which they carry severed thy brother's head from his trunk. The latter was cast over the parapet into the river. The head only remained, which an eye-witness, if not a friend, hath sent to thee!"

Eleanor fell senseless to the ground, whence her cousin conveyed her to the bed from which she never rose.

The skull was removed, secretly at first, by Maria herself; but invariably it returned. No human power could drive it thence. It hath been riven in pieces, burnt, and otherwise destroyed; but ever on the subsequent day it is seen filling its wonted place. Yet was it always observed that sore vengeance lighted on its persecutors. One who hacked it in pieces was seized with such horrible torments in his limbs that it seemed as though he might be undergoing the same process. Sometimes, if only displaced, a fearful storm would arise, so loud and terrible, that the very elements themselves seemed to become the ministers of its wrath.

Nor would this wilful piece of mortality allow of the little aperture being walled up; for it remains there still, whitened and bleached by the weather, looking forth from those rayless sockets upon the scenes which when living they had once beheld.

Maria Downes was the only survivor of the family. Her brother's death and deplorable end so preyed on her spirits that she rejected all offers of marriage. The estate passed into other hands, and another name owns the inheritance.

XL. Rivington Pike; Or, The Spectre Horseman

“Are you a man?

Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that

Which might appal the devil.”

—Shakespeare.

This beacon stands on a conical hill, at an elevation of 1545 feet from the level of the sea. An immense pile of wood was raised here when the alarm of the French invasion prevailed, at the beginning of the present century.

Rivington Hall was for many ages the seat of one of the Pilkingtons, of which family Fuller says—”The Pilkingtons were gentlemen of repute in this shire before the Conquest;” and the chief of them, then sought for after espousing the cause of Harold, was fain to disguise himself as a mower; in allusion to which the man and scythe was taken as their crest. James Pilkington, a descendant, and Master of St John’s, Cambridge, was one of the six divines appointed to correct the Book of Common Prayer; for which and other services he was in 1560 created Bishop of Durham. After the suppression of the great northern rebellion in 1569, headed by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, he claimed the lands and goods of the rebels attainted in his bishopric. In support of this claim he brought an action against the queen for a recovery of the forfeited estates; and though his royal mistress was accustomed to speak of unfrocking bishops, the reverend divine prosecuted his suit with so much vigour and success that nothing but the interposition of Parliament prevented the defendant from being beaten in her own courts.

The present erection, the scene of our story, was built in the year 1732, by Mr Andrews, the owner of Rivington Hall, whose family have for many generations—with, perhaps, one interruption only—had it in possession.

The evening was still and sultry. The clear and glowing daylight was gone, exchanged for the dull, hazy, and depressing atmosphere of a summer’s night. The cricket chirped in the walls, and the beetle hummed his drowsy song, wheeling his lumbering and lazy flight over the shorn meadows.

It was about harvest-time—the latter end of August. The moors were clothed in their annual suit of gay and thickly-clustered blossoms, but their bloom and freshness was now faded. Here and there a sad foretokening of dingy brown pervaded the once glowing brilliancy of their dye, like a suit of tarnished finery on some withering and dilapidated beau.

A party of sportsmen had that day taken an unusually wide range upon the moors, stretching out in wild and desolate grandeur through the very centre of the county, near the foot of which stands the populous neighbourhood of Bolton-le-Moors. Rivington Pike, an irregularly conical hill rising like a huge watch-tower from these giant masses of irreclaimable waste, is a conspicuous and well-known object, crowned by a stone edifice for the convenience of rest and shelter to those whom curiosity urges to the fatigue and peril of the ascent. The view from this elevated spot, should the day be favourable, certainly repays the adventurer; but not unfrequently an envious mist or a passing shower will render these efforts unavailing, to scan the wide creation—or rather but a circlet of that creation—from an insignificant hillock, scarcely an atom in the heap of created matter, that is itself but as a grain of dust in the vast space through which it rolls. But to our tale, or rather, it may be, to our task—for the author is now sitting in his study, with the twilight of as dull, hazy, and oppressive an atmosphere

about him as beset our adventurous sportsmen at the close of their campaign; enervating and almost paralysing thought; the veriest foe of “soaring fantasy,” which the mere accident of weather will prevent from rising into the region where she can reign without control, her prerogative unquestioned and unlimited.

The party to whom we have just referred consisted of three individuals, with their servants, biped and quadruped, from whom their masters derived the requisite assistance during their useful and arduous exploits—the results being conspicuous in the death of some dozen or two of silly grouse or red game, with which these hills are tolerably well supplied during the season. But alas! we are not sportsmen ourselves, and bitterly do we lament that we are unable to describe the desperate conflict, and the mighty issues of that memorable day; the hopes, fears, and *fire-escapes* of the whole party: the consumption of powder, and the waste of flint, or the comparative merits of Moll and Rover, we shall not attempt to set forth in our “*veritable prose*,” lest we draw down the wrath of some disappointed fowler upon us for meddling with matters about which we are so lamentably ignorant, and we are afraid to say, in some measure, wilfully deficient. To the spoils, when obtained, it may be that we are less indifferent; and we hail, with favourable reminiscences and anticipations, the return of another 12th of August—an era which we would earnestly and affectionately beseech our friends to remember likewise, for purposes too interesting in the history of our domestic arrangements to allow them willingly to forget.

But the August in which our narrative opens was many years ago—though not precisely in the olden time—when the belief in old-world fancies and delights was not in danger of being blazed out by “diffusions of useful knowledge,” which “useful” knowledge consists in dissipating some of our most pleasant dreams, our fondest and most cherished remembrances. We are afraid a writer of “Traditions” must be looked upon with inconceivable scorn by those worthies whose aim is to throw open the portals of Truth to the multitude; or, as the phrase goes, she is to be made plain to the “meanest capacity.” For our own parts, we were never enamoured with that same despotic, hard-favoured, cross-grained goddess, Truth: she “commendeth not” to our fancy; nor in reality is she half so worthy of their homage as her ardent and enthusiastic worshippers imagine. We are more than ever inclined to believe that imagination is the great source of our pleasures; and in consequence we look not with an eye of favour on those who would persuade us that our little hoard of enjoyment is counterfeit, not being the sterling coin of sovereign and “immutable truth.”

Little did we imagine or anticipate that we should be so deviously betrayed from our subject. We never had the temerity to speak of ourselves before. Thoughts, wishes, and opinions were studiously concealed; and if we have been led unwarily and unintentionally from the subject in this our concluding effort, that very circumstance alone is a sufficient warranty against a repetition of the offence.

The day was fast closing when the party had surmounted the last hill on their return to the valley. For the sake of proximity, they had spent the previous night in a little way-side tavern at the foot of the descent; and they now looked down towards the place of their destination, still some weary miles distant—their prospect partly interrupted by the huge hill called the Pike, of which we have before spoken. From the elevation whereon they now stood the ascent was but short to the summit of the beacon, though somewhat abrupt and difficult of access. When they had gained the ridge overlooking the valley, with the flat and fertile tract of low lands stretching out into the dark and apparently interminable vista towards the coast, the elder of the sportsmen exclaimed—

“Now, Mortimer, mayhap you have never seen a storm in our wilds; but, if my judgment err not, this happy event is in a very auspicious train for accomplishment.”

The speaker looked towards the south, where the grim clouds were already accumulated, evidently pouring out a copious blessing in their progress. From the direction of the wind they too were threatened with a speedy participation.

“These summer storms always make for the hills,” continued he; “and, looking yonder, I apprehend that we are precisely in the very line of its path.”

“I do like to watch the gathering of a storm, Pilkington,” replied Mortimer. “Surely the outpouring vials of its wrath must be terrifically sublime in these regions. I would not miss so glorious a sight for the world.”

“In a snug shelter maybe at our hostelrie below, with a mug of the right barley-bree buzzing at our elbow—oat-cake and cheese conformable thereto.”

“Nay, here; with the sky opening above our heads, and the broad earth reeking and weltering under the wide grasp of the tempest. See! how the crooked lightning darts between the coiled clouds, like a swift messenger from yon dark treasure-house of wrath!”

This was said by a third individual, named Norton, a young man who lived in the neighbourhood; a friend and former school-fellow of the preceding speakers—only one of whom, Mortimer, resided in a distant county, and was on a visit with Norton for the first time.

“Like a train of gunpowder, perhaps, thou meanest, Norton?” said the less enthusiastic Pilkington, whose residence, too, was but a few miles distant; “and, furthermore, I warn ye all, that unless we can house, and that right speedily, we shall have the storm about our heads, and maybe lose our way if the mist comes on, or get soused over head and ears in some bog-trap. We’ll climb yonder hill, Norton, whence we may survey the broil and commotion from our ‘watch-tower in the skies,’ under a tidy roof and a dry skin. Thou mayest tarry here an thou wilt, and offer thyself a sacrifice on these altars of Jupiter Pluvius.”

The whole party—dogs, helps, and servants—were soon sheltered in the little square tower upon the summit, and the predictions of the elder and more experienced of them were soon verified. Almost on the entrance of the last of the group came down the deluge in one broad sheet, an “even-down pour,” so loud and terrible, accompanied by a burst of hail, that they were threatened with an immediate invasion of their citadel through several crevices in both roof and windows.

A peal of thunder, loud, long, and appalling, shook their shelter to its base. The very foundations of the hill seemed to rock with the concussion. Their lofty tabernacle hung suspended in the very bosom of the clouds, big with their forked terrors. The lightning began to hiss and quiver, and the sky to open its wide jaws above them, as though to devour its prey. The roar and rattle of the wind and hail, mingled with the crash and roll of the contending elements, made the stoutest of them tremble, and silenced several loud tongues that were generally the foremost in jest and banter.

“Well, Norton,” said Pilkington, “I reckon you are not in the mind to try a berth abroad in this rude atmosphere during such an angry and merciless disposition of your deity. ‘Tis a *mêlée*, I imagine, to your heart’s content.”

“Norton is hearkening to these rude tongues that do speak so lustily!” said Mortimer. “He can, peradventure, interpret their mystic voice.”

Norton was in the attitude of intense and earnest expectation or inquiry; his head slightly turned and depressed on one side, the opposite ear raised, so as to catch the most distinct impressions of sound. His eyes might have been listening too, yet his vision was absorbed,

and apparently withdrawn from surrounding objects. He was standing near the window, and the workings of his countenance betrayed a strange and marvellous expression of wonder and anxiety.

It grew still darker, and the rain came down in torrents. The thunder-cloud, as though attracted by the height of their situation, kept hovering over the hill, and often seemed to coil round, and wrap them in its terrific bosom. Night, they knew, was about setting in, but they were still unable to issue forth without imminent danger. The thick cloud by which they were enveloped would have rendered it a hazardous attempt to proceed under any circumstances.

“We are in excellent condition for a night’s lodging in our good fortalice,” said Pilkington: “it hath stood many a close siege from the elements, and will abide a stouter brush before it yields.”

“But surely the storm is too violent to continue. I hope we may venture out ere it be long,” said Mortimer, anxiously.

“Maybe the clouds will either be driven off or disperse. Should a breeze spring up from the west, which is not unusual after such a turbulent condition of the atmosphere, it will clear us rapidly from these lumbering masses of almost impregnable vapour. I think Norton is still in close communion with the elements. I can yet see his outline by the window. I thought the last flash lighted on his visage as though it would tarry there a while ere it departed!”

The servants were huddled in a corner by the door, sitting on the ground, with the dogs between their legs; the timid animals, terrified exceedingly at every thunder-peal, and shivering, as though from cold and distress. Suddenly one of them began to growl; and a short, sharp bark from another, with eyes and ears turned towards the entrance, seemed to announce the approach of an intruder.

The brutes now stuffed their officious noses in the crevice beneath the door, but immediately withdrew them, evidently in great terror, as they slunk back, trembling and dismayed, to the opposite side of the chamber, where they crouched, as if to screen themselves from correction.

“What ails the cowards?” exclaimed Norton, who had apparently observed their proceedings by the scanty light that was yet left.

“They are witch’d, I think,” said one of the men; “or they’ve seen, or haply smelt, a boggart.”

“‘Tis o’er soon for such like gear; they stir not abroad before the bats and owls be gone to bed,” said another.

“Ay! your common everyday sort o’ breein’ darena’ show their bits o’ wizen cheeks by daylight; but there be some ‘at will abroad at all hours, without fear o’ being laid by the parson. The ‘*Spectre Horseman*’ I think they ca’ him. I’ve heard my granam tell as how it feared neither sunshine nor shade, but”——

Here the speaker’s voice failed him, every eye and ear being turned towards the entrance. There seemed to come a sound from without, as though a horse were urged to the utmost of its speed, his clattering hoofs driven to the very threshold, and there he paused, awaiting some communication from those within.

“Nought living or breathing,” cried Mortimer, “could come that bent. Perch’d as we are on this tall steep summit, ‘tis not possible for”——

“Hush!” said Norton. “I verily think ‘tis some adventure which I must achieve. What if I should turn giant-killer; this invisible steed being sent for mine especial use, whereon I may

ride, like Amadis or Sir Lancelot, or any other knight or knave o' the pack, delivering damsels, slaying dragons and old wicked magicians, by virtue of this good right arm alone."

"Thou art a strange enthusiast, Norton," said Pilkington. "Thy love of the marvellous will sooner or later thrust thee into some ridiculous or perilous scrape, from which not all thy boasted prowess can deliver thee unshent."

"Hark!" said one of the servants in a whisper. Is not that a knock?"

The loud uproar of the elements had suddenly abated, and the sound, from whatever source it might arise, was distinctly audible to the whole group. A dull hollow blow seemed to vibrate round the walls, as if they had been struck with some heavy instrument. They seemed to breathe the very atmosphere of terror. A strange feeling, portentous and unaccountable, pervaded every bosom. The quadrupeds too crept behind their masters for protection. Fear, like other strong and unreasonable impulses, rapidly becomes infectious. In all likelihood, the mere mention of the Spectre Horseman, together with their novel and somewhat dangerous situation, had disposed their minds for the reception of any stray marvels, however ridiculous or improbable. Yet this impression could not extend to the trembling brutes, evidently under the influence of alarm, and from a similar source.

Another blow was heard, louder than before. Those who were nearest crept farther from the entrance; but Norton, as though bent on some wild exploit, approached the door. He raised the latch, and, as it swung slowly back, most of the party beheld a figure on horseback, motionless before the opening. From the height they occupied this mysterious visitor was depicted in a clear bold outline against a mass of red angry-looking clouds, towards the south-east, on the edge of which hung the broad disc of the moon breaking through "Alps" of clouds, her calm sweet glance fast dissipating the wrath that yet lowered on the brow of Heaven. The intruder wore a dark-coloured vestment; a low-crowned hat surmounted his figure. His steed was black and heavily built. Probably, from the position whence he was seen, both horse and rider looked almost gigantic. Not a word was spoken. The stranger stood apparently immovable, like some huge equestrian statue, in the dim and mystic twilight.

Norton's two friends were evidently astonished and alarmed, but he scarcely evinced any surprise; some superior and unknown source of excitement overpowered the fear he might otherwise have felt. Silence continued for a few moments, the strange figure remaining perfectly still. Pilkington approached nearer to his friend, who was yet standing near the threshold, gazing intently on the vision before him. He whispered a few words over Norton's shoulder.

"Knowest thou this stranger, Norton?"

"Yes," he replied with great earnestness and solemnity; "years have gone by since I saw him. Thou never knewest mine uncle; but that is he, or one sense hath turned traitor to the rest. This very night, twelve years ago—it was just before I left home for school"—His voice now became inaudible to his friend, who observed him, after a gaze of inquiry on the stranger, suddenly disappear through the opening. The door was immediately closed by a loud and violent gust. Flying open again with the rebound, the figure of Norton was seen rapidly descending the hill towards the south-east, preceded by the mysterious horseman. The light was too feeble for enabling them to ascertain the course they took; but it seemed probable that Norton was away over the hills with the unknown messenger. Their first impulse was to follow; but the impossibility of overtaking the fugitives, and the near approach of night, would have rendered it a vain and probably a perilous attempt. Looking anxiously down the dark ravine where Norton had so strangely disappeared, Pilkington was startled by a voice from behind; turning, he saw it was the man who had previously dropped

those mysterious hints about the "Spectre Horseman," which now vividly recurred to his memory and imagination.

"Master," said this personage, respectfully touching his cap, "you had better not follow."

"Follow!" said Pilkington, as though bewildered; and the words were but the echo of his thoughts; "follow!—I cannot—yet why should we not make the attempt?"

"Step in, if you please, sir. I should not like to speak of it here." He said this hurriedly, in a tone of deep anxiety and apprehension, looking wistfully around and over the dark hills, fearful, apparently, that others were listening. Pilkington obeyed, but with reluctance. The door was cautiously latched; and to prevent the wind, which now began to rise in louder gusts, from bursting this crazy barrier, a heavy stone was laid to the threshold.

"It is—let me see"—said Martin, counting the lapse upon his fingers; "ay,—ten—eleven—'tis twelve years ago, on this very night, St Bartlemy's Eve, my father, a hale old man at that time of day, some 'at given, though, to hunting and fowling a bit o' moonlights—and a fine penny he made on 't, for many a week, selling the birds at Manchester. Well, as I was saying;—one evening before dusk—the sun had but just cooled his chin i' the water away yonder—he trudged off wi' the dogs, Crab and Pincher—two as cunning brutes as ever ran afore a tail. They might ha' known the errand they were going on, sneakin' about wi' such hang-dog looks, which they always took care to put on when t' ould man began to get ready for a night's foraging. They would follow at his heels, almost on their bellies, for fear o' being seen by the Squire's men; but when fairly astart for the game, they could show as much breeding as the best-trained pointer i' the parish. I am getting sadly wide o' my story, your honour; but I used to like the cubs dearly, and many a time I have played with 'em when I wasn't a bit bigger than themselves. They came to a sad end, sir, like most other rogues and thieves besides, and"——

"But we are not getting an inch nearer the end of the story all this time," said Pilkington.

"True, your honour; but I'll piece to it presently. I was a great lubberly lad, I know, and tented the cattle then upon the moors. Well, on this same night, as I was saying, my mother and the rest were gone to bed, my father was upon the hills, and I was watching at home, thinkin' maybe of the next Michaelmas fair, and many a fine bit of fun thereby. The fire was gone out, but I had lighted a scrap of candle, which sweeled sadly down, I remember, in the socket. Well, just as I was getting sleepy I heard a scratch, and then a whine at the door. 'What's to do now,' thinks I, 'that the dogs are here again so soon?' an' without more ado, I lifted the latch, when, sure enough, it was them, dirty draggled beasts, they might ha' bin possed through a slutch-pit. 'Where's yere master?' says I;—the things took no heed to me, but began licking themselves, an' tidying their nasty carcasses, till the house verily reek'd again. 'So, friends,' says I, 'if ye're for that gait, you may as well take a turn i' the yard,' an' without more ado, I bundled 'em off, with a sound kick into the bargain. Well, you see, I hearkened till my ears crack'd for my father's foot; but I heard nought except the crickets, and the little brook that runs behind the house, for everything was so still I could have heard a mouse stir. I opened the door, and looked out, I think, into as clear and mellow a night as ever gazed down from the sky upon our quiet hills. Then I went to the gate, and looked up the road which takes you into the little glen by a short path, away up to the high meadows; but I could neither see him, nor hear any likelihood of his coming. I could ha' told his footstep amongst a thousand, and his cough, too, for that matter. I felt myself growing all of a shake, an' the very hairs seemed crawling over my head; a pea might have knocked me down, and, for the life of me, I durst not venture farther—it was something so strange that the dogs should come back without their master—I was sure some mischief had happened to him. All at once it jumped

into my head that he had stuck fast in some of these bogs or mosses, and the rascal curs had left him there instead of their own pitiful carcasses; but that my father should be so forefoughten as to let himself be nabbed in one of these bog-traps I could hardly believe. Yet the dogs—ay, there was the mischief—and the lurching ne’er-do-weels coming back in such dismal pickle. I went back to the house, for I durst not stay abroad; and yet, when I was indoors, I could not bide there neither; so I walked up and down the house-flags, like as I waur dazed. I durst not go to bed; so there I was, and for a couple of hours too, in a roarin’ pickle, that I would not be steeped in again for a’ the moorgates between here and Chorley.”

“Go on;—we’ve no loitering time now,” said Pilkington; “thy story sticks fast, I fear, like thy father i’ the bog.”

“Why, I was but rincing the evil thoughts out of my mind, as it were, for they come about me like a honey-swarm at the thoughts on’t; and I don’t just like their company at present, it minds me o’ the time when this plaguy chance befell my father.”

“He did not tarry away for good and all, I reckon?”

“You shall hear, sir, if you but gie me a taste o’ the flask; for I feel just like to go into a swoon, or some tantrum or another.”

Martin took a strong pull at the bottle, and, thus refreshed, he resumed his story.

“Well, you see as how I waited, and my mind was like as it might ha’ been set on a pismire hillock, I waur so uneasy. The dogs, too, began to howl pitifully at the door, so I let the poor things in for a bit o’ company. I had not waken’d mother; for I kept thinking I’d wait a while longer, and a while longer, as I never in all my life liked to bring bad news. Well, it might be about two or three hours I went on at that gait, an’ just as I was pondering as to whether I should go up-stairs or not, I heard something come with a quick step through the gate and up the flags to the door. It was not like father’s foot, neither; it was so terrible sharp and hasty. I felt as if I’d been stricken of a heap. My knees shook an’ dither’d as if I’d had the ague. Up goes the latch; for I could not stir—I was holden fast to the floor. The door bangs open in a fearfu’ hurry, and in comes my father, as though ‘Legion’ had been at his heels. He looked pale, and almost fleered out of his wits, so I made sure he had seen the bogle that my granam used to frighten us with. ‘Father, father,’ says I, as soon as I could speak, ‘what’s happened? ha’ ye seen it?’ He did not say a word, but sat down in the big rocking-chair by t’ hob-end, when he tilted his head back, and began swingin’ back’ard and for’ard, moaning all the while as if he waur in great trouble. I looked at him, as well as I could, for I had lighted a whole candle a while before. I sat down, too, and not another word could I say. But, my conscience! what a racket the dogs made when they saw him! They jumped, and frisked, and almost cried for joy, as though they had gi’en him up for lost, and were desperately fain, poor things, at his return. The first word he spoke was to these dummies; for they whined, wriggled, and wagged their tails, and licked his fingers, enough to have drawn words from a stone wa’. ‘Ay, ay, ye sneaking rascals,’ said he, ‘ye left me wi’ yere tails down low enough, and as fast as your legs could lilt ye off, when I was forefoughten wi’—’ Here he looked round, with a face so dismal and disturbed that I verily think I should not forget it if I waur at my last shrift. Taking this opportunity, as I may say, I ventured a word or so. The old man gave me another of those terrible looks before he spoke—‘Eh, me!’ said he, ‘my days are but few now, I reckon. I’ve seen the’—He stopped and looked round again; then he said, almost in a whisper—‘I’ve seen him, Martin!’ ‘I thought so,’ says I. ‘I’ve seen the ould one, I believe,’ says he; ‘an’ that’s more nor I’ll like to do again, or thee either. We’ve done wi’ our night-work now, an’ the dogs may just go where they can get an honest bellyful.’ You may be sure I was sadly fear’d. I durst not ask him how it happened that he should have snapped upon

old Sootypaws; but in a while he saved me the speerin', and, as well as I can think, this was the account of his misadventure:—

“‘I was goin’ up by the Pike,’ said he, ‘and a brave shower of moonlight there was, weltering on the side of the hill, when, just as I got behind it there in the shadow, I thought I saw somethin’ big and black standing among a little clump of gorses afore me. I felt started a somehow, but I rubb’d my forehead and eyes, and looked again. It did not shift, so I thought I might as well make the best o’ the matter, an’ went for’ard without altering my speed. Well, what should I see when I got nearer, but a great spanking black horse, and a littleish man upon it, who seemed just waiting till I came up. I stood still when I got within a yard or two, expecting he would speak first, for I thought as how it might be some poor body belike that had lost his way in crossing the moors. But he did not say a word, which I thought mighty uncouth and uncivil. So making my best speech for the once, though fearful it was some fellow watching to waylay me, I asked him civilly how he did, and so on. Then I asked if he waur in want of a guide over the hills any way. The thing here set up a great rollickin’ horse laugh, that frightened my father worse than anything he said; but he durst not turn back for fear he might follow, and happen to catch him as he ran, so he stood still, dithering like a top all the while.

“‘Canst show me the road to the Two Lads?’⁷⁶ he ask’d, as soon as he had gotten his laugh out.

“‘That can I,’ says my father, ‘as well as anybody i’ the parish.’ ‘On with thee, then,’ says the devilkin, ‘and don’t mind picking your way, friend, for my horse can tread a bog without wetting a hair of his foot.’ My father walked on, but the dogs kept a wary eye towards the stranger, he thought, and hung their tails, an’ slunk behind, like as they were mightily afeard on him. But it wasn’t long afore my father began to wonder within himself what this unlikely thing could want there at the Two Lads, which, as you know, is scarcely two miles off yonder, and on the highest and ugliest part of the whole commoning; a place, too, which is always said to have a bad name sticking to it. He durst not ask him his business though, and they went on without speaking, until the Two Lads were just peeping out before them into the clear soft moonlight. ‘There they are,’ said my father; ‘and now I’ll bid your honour good-night.’ ‘Stay,’ said his companion: ‘I may want you a little while yet, so budge on, if you please.’ Somehow my father felt as though he durst not refuse, and however loth to such company, he trudged away till they came together to the spot. ‘Now,’ says the little gentleman, ‘lift up that big heap of stones there, and I’ll tell you what to do with them.’ ‘Sir,’ says my father, ‘you are in jest, belike.’ ‘Not a bit of it,’ replied the other; ‘see, ‘tis easy as flying.’ Wi’ that he leaps off his horse, and at one stroke of his switch, up they went, jump, jump, jump, like a batch of crows from a corn-field. The dogs set up a fearful howl, and, without once turning to see what was behind them, set off helter-skelter through bog and bush for the nearest, and left my father to himself with the foul fiend. All at once it popped into his head the tales he had once heard about the ‘*Spectre Horseman*,’ that was said to ramble about these hills, sometimes in the air, sometimes on the ground, like the dark clouds and their shadows upon the soft grass, without ever a footprint. My poor father could have wished the ground to gape and swallow him, he said, he was so frightened. Where the stones had been

⁷⁶ The Two Lads are heaps of loose stones, about ten or twelve feet in height, set up, as the story goes, to commemorate the death of two shepherd boys, who were found on the spot after a long search, missing their way during a heavy fall of snow. The tale is most probably incorrect; these mural monuments have been gradually accumulated by the passers-by;—a custom handed down from the most remote ages, and still observed as an act of religious worship in the East. There is little doubt but they are remnants yet lingering amongst us of the “altars upon every high hill,” once dedicated to Baal, or Bel, the great object of Carthaginian or Phoenician worship, from which our Druidical rites were probably derived.

there was a great hole gaping, like one of the mouths of the bottomless pit, and try how he would, he could not turn away his eyes from it. 'That's the place,' said this fearful thing; but my father was ready to cower down with terror. He could not speak, but he thought he saw a great long black arm thrust out of the hole. 'Take what he gives thee,' says Blackface, 'and make haste.' But he might as well have spoken to the whins and gorses, for the chance of being obeyed. 'Take it!' said this ill-tongued limb of Old Harry, in a voice like thunder. But my father could not stir, and then there waur shrieks, yells, and moans, and such noises as he had never heard. The creature looked angry, and full of venom as a toad. 'I shall miss my time,' said he; and with that he began to listen, for there came the sound of footsteps on the dark heather, and then the ugly thing did laugh for very gladness. 'Go, fool,' he cried, 'here comes one better than thee;' and with that he lent my father a kick that might have sent him across the valley, at a moderate calculation, had he not remembered an old witch charm which he mumbled as he fell. How long he lay there, and what happened the while, he did not know, but when he awoke, he saw the heap was in its place again, the moon looking down bright and beautiful as ever, as if she thought nothing particular had taken place. He could hardly persuade himself that he had not dreamed an ugly dream, until he remembered the spot, and how he had been enticed, or rather forced there against his will. You may be sure he made the best of his way home again, where he came in the condition I have just told you. Not many days after we heard that a gentleman of no mean condition, that lived not many miles off—I have forgotten his name—and who was supposed to be crossing the hills on that very night, was lost. He never appeared afterwards. It was generally thought he was swallowed up in some bog, but my father always believed that he had fallen into the clutches of that Evil One, from whom he himself had escaped but with the skin of his teeth. From that time to his dying day was he never known to ramble on the moors again; an altered man he became, sure enough, and our big Bible, with the pictures in it, was brushed fro' the dust. He might be seen with the book upon his knee at the doorstone on a summer's night, and the third bench from the Squire's pew at Blackrod church never missed a tenant till my father was laid quietly down in the churchyard."

During this recital there had been a close and almost breathless attention. As he concluded a buzz of agitation pervaded the group; not a word was spoken for a little while until Pilkington exclaimed, slowly passing one hand over his brow—

"A marvellous delivery, which I might have been disposed to treat like other marvels, had not our own senses in some measure left with us a show of truth, or probability at least, about the adventure, which, for my own part, I find it difficult to throw off. Exaggerated and full of improbabilities, I admit, yet the story hath some substratum of truth, no doubt by which it is supported. What it is, would be difficult to ascertain, but the mystery or misapprehension, whatever it be, shall be cleared up, and that speedily."

"Doubtless," said Mortimer; "but first let us return to our lodging. Marvels, being in the inverse ratio to truth, always appear greatest at a distance; and when the explanation comes, we may perhaps smile at our present embarrassment. The riddle is easy when solved."

"True; but how is that to be accomplished?"

"Let us return to our quarters; we may perhaps find that our companion has arrived there before us."

Pilkington shook his head incredulously. Indeed the whole affair had made a much greater impression upon him than he was willing to allow, even to himself.

The moon lighted them on their path as they took the nearest route to their temporary sojourn. Many a cautious glance was cast behind, and many a dark stone or bush—many a

grotesque shadow—assumed the form they feared to encounter. They arrived at their dwelling without molestation, but—Norton was not there!

“Here is foul play somewhere,” said Mortimer thoughtfully. “Think you, Pilkington, that we could find out our way in this quiet moonshine to that same ‘Two Lads’ which Martin pointed out? I fancy the louts we have about us durst not venture thither. Indeed I think it may be prudent to go unattended on several accounts.”

“That is my opinion,” said Pilkington; “and as for poking out the way, I can do that readily. I cannot rest without making the attempt, at any rate.”

“Let us not create any alarm, but steal quietly off when we have refreshed ourselves,” said Mortimer; “we need not tell them of our intent.”

“It were best,” replied Pilkington, “that we give these knaves a caution first that they bruit not forth the adventure at present, or until we have more exact information as to the nature of the proceedings it may be needful to adopt.”

It was not long ere they commenced their journey, traversing the hill-path in the requisite direction. By day, the pillars are easily seen from some parts of the valley below, and Pilkington had frequently passed them in crossing the moors. A pretty accurate notion of their bearing was thus formed from the point whence they started.

The greater part of the way was trodden in silence. The rivulets were swollen with the heavy rains, and great care was necessary to attain their object in safety. The path was not devoid of danger at any time, by reason of the spongy and uncertain nature of the bogs, accumulated masses of spumous unhealthy vegetation, showing patches of bright green verdure, holding water often to an unknown depth, and sometimes proving fatal to those who dare to venture upon this deceitful and perilous surface. By using great caution, and carefully ascertaining the nature of the ground before them, they passed on, without further inconvenience than that of wading through bogs and ditches, climbing stone-walls and embankments, aided by the uninterrupted light of a blazing harvest-moon.

They had now accomplished the most fatiguing part of the ascent, the dark heathery crown of the mountain, whereon the moonbeams lay so beautiful, as though nature were one vast region of universal silence, for ever unbroken and undisturbed. It was like gazing on a statue—there was the semblance of life, but all was silent and motionless, the very stillness startling like a spectre.

Soon they had passed through the creaking heather-bushes on the summit, when they saw two rude pillars peeping up from the dark line of the horizon before them. A sensation, not unallied to fear, passed with a sudden thrill across the deep, unseen sources of feeling—the sealed fountains of the spirit. They felt as though entering on mysterious or forbidden ground. The hour—the circumstances which led to their present situation—their companion’s recent and unaccountable disappearance, and the prevalent superstitions connected with this solitary spot—all contributed to their present alarms with a force and poignancy unusual, and even appalling. They almost expected the “*Spectre Horseman*” to rush by, or to rise up suddenly before them, and forbid their further progress into his domains.

“I am not prone to pay much heed either to marvels or superstitions, and yet”——said Mortimer, again pausing after a long silence.

“Why,” said Pilkington, “the very air feels rank with mystery. Whatever may be the cause, I never felt more i’ the mood for an hour of devotion in my life.”

“We may both have need for the exercise ere we depart hence, or my thoughts misgive me,” replied Mortimer.

“It may be the mystery connected with our expedition which operates in its own nature upon the mind,” said Pilkington. “I feel, as it were, every faculty impressed with some fearful and indissoluble spell. An atmosphere, impervious, and almost impalpable, seems to oppress the spirit. Surely we are on the trail of some demon, and his subtle influence is about us.”

“Ah!” said Mortimer, starting aside with a shudder, as though a serpent stung him.

“Heardest thou aught, Mortimer?”

“I thought there was a rushing past my ear.”

“I heard it too,” replied Pilkington, in a low and agitated tone; “but I heard more, Mortimer. A voice, methought, distinct as thine own, swept by: ‘*Go not,*’ was faintly uttered. I am sure I heard the words.”

“This place affects me strangely,” said Mortimer; “but I will not go back, though the very jaws of the pit were to interpose.”

Suddenly a mist gathered about them, not an unusual circumstance in these mountain regions, but a sufficiently portentous one to fasten strongly upon their imaginations, already predisposed to invest every appearance, however trivial, or according to the common course of events, with supernatural terrors. A gust of wind soon curled the vapour into clouds, which swept rapidly on; sometimes with the moonlight through their shattered rifts, then dark and impervious, shutting out the whole hemisphere, and wrapping them as with a cloak. Still they kept on their way, slowly, but in the direction, as near as they could ascertain, towards the place where they hoped to find some clue to their search. They felt convinced, though neither of them could state the nature of their convictions, that the mystery would here terminate.

The wind came on now in heavier and more continuous gusts, like the distant rumble of the ocean. They fancied other sounds were audible in the blast; yells and howlings that seemed to approach nearer with every successive impulse. A sound, like the rush of wings, brushed past them, and, instinctively, they grasped each other by the arm. A moan was distinctly heard; then another, louder and more terrible. A cry of agony succeeded, then a shriek, so loud and appalling that a cry of horror involuntarily burst from their lips.

“Save us, Father of Mercy!”

It was the cry of faith; a look fixed upon Him “who is not slow to hear, nor impotent to save.” The cloud rolled suddenly away, unfolding, as though for the disclosure of some mighty pageant. They saw before them, and within a very few paces, the dark, heavy pillars, looking more black and hideous in the garish light by which they were seen. A cloud or mist seemed to have rolled, as suddenly, from their mental vision; a weight was removed from their apprehensions. They felt as though scarcely acting, previously, as free agents, but impelled by some unseen power, to which every faculty and every thought was in thralldom.

Beside one of the heaps lay a figure, prostrate and motionless. It was the death-like form of Norton! He was, to all appearance, lifeless, with hands clenched, and his whole attitude betokening some recently desperate and painful struggle. They tried to arouse him, and a cordial with which they moistened his lips produced some slight symptoms of returning consciousness; but the spark disappeared with the breath that fanned it. The safest plan was evidently to attempt his removal. With as little delay as possible they bore him gently between them; and as the first streak of daylight was dawning over the hills, they had the satisfaction to see him safely disposed of in their little hostelry, whither a surgeon was

speedily summoned from the adjacent village. He was yet insensible, but life was not extinct; the medical attendant pronouncing him in great jeopardy, from some violent struggle and exertion, both of body and mind. Rest, and the most careful attention, were absolutely necessary, lest, with returning consciousness, reason should be disturbed, and the mind remain bewildered from the agitation previously undergone.

For several weeks this unfortunate victim, as they supposed, to his own vague and supernatural terrors, lay without showing the slightest symptom of recognition. Groans and incoherent murmurs, after long intervals of silence, proclaimed that life was yet lingering on the threshold of the tabernacle, unwilling for her flight. A cry of terror would sometimes break forth, and his whole frame become violently convulsed, while he seemed to exhaust himself in struggles to escape.

We will not prolong the recital, nor is it needful to relate how the first light glimpse broke through the clouds that had so long veiled his spirit. Fearful were the first awakenings of the soul. Like the last dread summons, it was not an awakening from oblivion. Every faculty wore the dark impress of terror, though he remained apparently unconscious of the interval that had passed.

Pilkington and his friend were unremitting in their attentions. The issue was long doubtful; but in the end he recovered from the dread hallucination under which he laboured.

With restored health, he disclosed, to them only, the events which had occurred in the brief interval of their separation.

“I think I before told you,” said he, reluctantly commencing the narrative, “that the figure who appeared so mysteriously at the door of our temporary shelter on the hill wore the very image of my uncle, whom you never knew, Pilkington. You may conceive that my surprise was excessive, though I cannot say that I felt so; but it will, in some measure, account for my apparent rashness and eager determination to follow, when I inform you that it was just twelve years previously, on that self-same night, the eve of St Bartlemy, when his unaccountable disappearance on these moors, of which I have before spoken, threw consternation and distress into the hitherto peaceful and happy community with which he was associated. I need not recount the family disasters and disagreements which his mysterious absence has originated. No trace was left of his disappearance; nor could his body ever be discovered. The night prior to our excursion I saw him; but it was in a dream. This circumstance, together with the place and the very time, twelve years since his departure, was the cause of my apparent thoughtfulness and abstraction prior to the appearance of our mysterious visitor. I felt an apathy; and, at the same time, a load upon my spirits for which I could not account. I remember that I was scarcely alarmed, or even surprised, when he presented himself; and that I felt as though I had been waiting for his arrival—more under the bewildering influence of a dream than the sober conceptions of waking truth. I made no doubt but that the mystery would now be elucidated. I followed the retreating horseman, who, I saw, beckoned me forward, and occasionally seemed to chide my tardiness and want of speed. I could not hear his voice, but I thought he pronounced my name. He descended the hill with considerable haste, and it was with difficulty that I could now keep him in sight. Fully bent on the discovery, I resolved, if possible, let the consequence be what it might, that I would follow. The storm had suddenly abated, and the clouds were rolling off in broken masses through the calm ether, from which the moon crept out, by whose aid I hoped to keep in view the object of my pursuit.

“The path he now took led up the ascent on the opposite hill. I clambered up with some difficulty, but the flying horseman before me seemed to accomplish the work without either

hesitation or inconvenience. He waited for me when he had surmounted the steepest part of the acclivity, and I grew more and more convinced that it was my uncle's form, as I had seen him in my boyhood. Memory was sufficiently tenacious on this head; and knowing the great need, as it concerned family affairs, that his fate should be clearly ascertained, I braved all hazards, and still followed this mysterious conductor. I do not recollect I felt any apprehension that I was following a supernatural guide; or that it might possibly be a phantom who was luring me on to misery and destruction. The mild, benevolent aspect of my relative was before me, and I could not associate an idea of danger with the guide and protector of my youth.

"As I gained the brow of the hill I saw the dark form of the horseman dilated upon the wide, bare, uninterrupted horizon, in almost gigantic proportions. It might be the distance that caused this illusion, but the huge black horse appeared to wax in magnitude with every step, and to become more fiend-like and terrible. Still I followed, and ere long I beheld the two pillars unto which our course was evidently tending. They seemed to rise up from the earth like huge giants waiting for their prey. My guide, whom I had previously attempted to overtake, stood still when he reached them, awaiting my approach. With feelings strangely akin to those of an ill-fated victim, urged by some resistless fascination into the very jaws of his destroyer, I drew nearer to the object of my hopes and apprehensions. I recognised the very dress my uncle wore on ordinary occasions, and the strong square-built form that in my childhood I was accustomed to view with a parental regard. Yet was I disquieted with alarm and agitation. Horrible images rushed upon my brain. I seemed to be the sport and prey of some power I could not withstand—a power that apparently might wield my very faculties at his will, and had already taken the reins of self-government into his own keeping. I began to fancy that it was some terrible vision by which I was harassed; and I well remember it was the precise feeling that haunts us in our dreams when a horrible doom is approaching from which apparently there is no escape; and yet we feel as though assured some way will be opened for our deliverance. While we endure all the horrors of our situation, we know of a surety that our miseries shall soon terminate. Yet a cloud was gathering upon my soul, and objects assumed another hue seen through its wild and chaotic elements. With all the vagueness and uncertainty of a dream, I felt that I was awake!

"Dost thou know me?" said the mysterious inquirer, in a tone which I immediately recognised. Still there was an awful and thrilling emphasis in the expression which alarmed me more than before.

"I know you," I replied, 'as the friend and guardian of my youth; but—to what end am I called hither, and why are you thus?'

"My path is hidden!" said he, in a voice terrible and foreboding.

"Tell me, where have you been? Is this your habitation? unless"—shuddering, I added in a low but energetic tone—"unless you are some evil one that hath ta'en his semblance to lure me to my hurt."

"When the moon rides o'er the blue south 'tis midnight; I will then reveal what thou hast desired, and the purpose of my coming."

"Art thou really he whose form thou bearest? Answer truly, as thou dost hope for my stay."

"I am!" he replied, in a tone so like that of my uncle that I was now satisfied his very form was before me. Conjecture was vain as to the motives that prompted this long and extraordinary concealment.

"Promise, Norton, that thou wilt tarry here until my return!"

“I will; but give me some pledge, some proof that thy being is real; that thou comest not as a phantom to delude my hopes.’

“He stretched out his hand. I again felt the warm pressure of my earliest friend, whom I had so long mourned as dead. I would have embraced him, but he shrunk back, and I saw the black steed again preparing and impatient to depart.

“‘Remember,’ said he, in a hollow voice, ‘at midnight I will return.’

“I leaned against the stone, determined to await the arrival of my mysterious relative, who would, I was convinced, on his return satisfactorily elucidate his proceedings. Occupied with vain surmises and reflections, time passed on almost unperceived; and ere I was aware the black steed was at my side. The rider suddenly dismounted. I drew back, instinctively, as he approached; for I saw, in the still clear light of the unclouded moon, his countenance hideously distorted and almost demoniacal in its expression.

“‘Thou art mine!’ said he, laying one hand upon my shoulder; ‘and thou shall know too soon my terrible secret.’ He came nearer; I felt his breath upon my face; it was hot and even scorching; I was unable to resist; he clung round me like a serpent; his eyes shot livid fire, and his lips—hideous, detestable thought—his lips met mine! His whole spirit seemed diffusing itself throughout my frame. I thought my body was destined to be the habitation of some accursed fiend—that I was undergoing the horrid process of demoniacal possession! Though gasping, almost suffocating, for I could not disengage myself from his deadly fangs, I exerted my utmost strength. One cry was to Heaven, but it was the last; the soul seemed to have exhausted herself with the effort. All subsequent and sensible impressions vanished; and I remember nothing save horrible incoherent dreams, wherein I was the sport and prey of demons, or my own body the dwelling-place of some ever-restless and malicious fiend! From the long night of insensibility that ensued I would be thankful that reason has awaked without injury; and though fearful beyond the common lot of mortals has been my destiny, yet I would render homage to that Power whose might rescued me from the very grasp of the Evil One!”

The listeners were appalled, horror-struck beyond measure, at this fearful narrative. Its mysteries they could not solve by any reference to the usual course of natural events; no key that nature holds would unlock this dark and diabolical mystery. To his dying day Norton firmly believed that his uncle’s body was the abode of some foul spirit, permitted to sojourn upon earth only on the fearful condition that he should effect his entrance, at stated periods, into a living human frame, whose proper occupant he might be able to dispossess for this horrible purpose. Many circumstances would seem to corroborate this belief. The adventure of the old poacher, in particular, happening precisely on the night of his uncle’s disappearance, led Norton to conclude that the foul fiend was obliged to renew his habitation upon every twelfth return of the holy festival of St Bartholomew. That a solution so inconsistent with our belief in the constant care and control of an all-wise and an all-powerful Providence was incorrect, we need not be at any pains to prove in this era of widely-disseminated knowledge and intelligence. Still, a mystery, inscrutable under the ordinary operations of nature, appears to hang over the whole proceeding, and though a legend only, yet the events bear a wonderful semblance and affinity to truth, even in their wildest details.

It is said that the “*Spectre Horseman*” appeared no more, and that having failed in fulfilling the terms by which his existence upon earth was, from time to time, permitted and prolonged, he was driven to his own place, where he must abide for ever the doom of those kindred and accursed spirits whose aim it is continually to seduce and to destroy.

XLI. Mother Red-Cap; Or, The Rosicrucians

A LEGEND OF THE NORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

In the wild and mountainous region of East Lancashire, at the foot of the long line of hills called Blackstonedge, and not far from the town of Rochdale, stood one of those old grim-looking mansions, the abode of our Saxon ancestors; a quiet, sheltered nest, where ages and generations had alike passed by. The wave of time had produced no change; the name and the inheritance were the same, and seemingly destined to continue unaltered by the mutations, the common lot of all that man labours to perpetuate. This state of things existed at the date of our story; now, alas! the race of its former possessors is extinct, their name only remains a relic of things that were—their former mansion standing,⁷⁷ as if in mockery, amidst the hum of wheels, and in melancholy contrast with the toil and animation of this manufacturing, money-getting district.

Buckley Hall, to which we allude, is still an object of interest to the antiquary and the lover of romance, telling of days that are for ever departed, when the lords of these paternal acres were the occupants, not impoverishers, of the soil from unrecorded ages—constituting a tribe, a race of sturdy yeomanry attached to their country and to the lands on which they dwelt. But they are nigh extinct—other habits and other pursuits have prevailed. Profuse hospitality and rude benevolence have given place to habits of business as they are called, and to a more calculating and enterprising disposition. The most ancient families have become absorbed or overwhelmed by the mighty progress of this new element, this outpouring of wealth as from some unseen source; and in many instances their names only are recognised in these old and rickety mansions, now the habitation of the mechanic and the plebeian.

Many of these dwellings remain—a melancholy contrast to the trim erections, the symbols of a new race, along with new habits and forms of existence, sufficiently testifying to the folly and the vain expectations of those who toil and labour hard for a long lease with posterity.

This mansion, like the rest of our ancestral dwellings of the better sort, was built of wood, on a stone basement. The outside structure curiously vandyked in a zigzag fashion with wooden partitions, the interstices were filled with wicker-work, plastered with well-tempered clay, to which chopped straw imparted additional tenacity. When newly embellished, looking like the pattern, black and white, of some discreet magpie perched on the wooden pinnacles terminating each gable, or hopping saucily about the porch—that never-failing adjunct to these homely dwellings. Here, on a well-scoured bench, the master of the house would sit in converse with his family or his guests, enjoying the fresh and cheering breeze, without being fully exposed to its effects. The porch was universally adopted as a protection to the large flagged hall called the “house-part,” which otherwise might have been seriously incommoded by the inclement atmosphere of these bleak districts. On one side of the hall, containing the great fireplace, was the “guest parlour.” Here the best bed was usually fixed; and here, too, all great “occasions” took place. Births, christenings, burials—all emanated from, or were accomplished in, this family chamber. Every member was there transmitted from the cradle to the grave. The low wide oaken stairs, to the first bending of which an active individual might have leaped without any such superfluous media. The naked gallery, with its little quaint doors on each side, hatched in the usual fashion, this opening into the store-room, that

⁷⁷ Within the last few years, since this story was written, the old house itself has been levelled with the ground.

into the servants' lodging, another into the closet where the choicest confections were kept. Opposite were the bed-chambers, and at the extremity of the gallery a ladder generally pointed the way to a loft, where, amongst heaps of winter stores, dried roots, and other vegetables, probably reposed one or two of the male servants on a straw mattress, well fortified from cold by an enormous quilt.

Our description will apply with little variation to all. We love these deserted mansion-houses that speak of the olden time, its good cheer and its rude but pleasant intercourse; times and seasons that are for ever gone, though we crave pardon for indulging in what may perhaps find little favour in the eyes of this generation, whose hopes and desires are to the future, who say the past is but the childhood of our existence: it is gone, and shall not return. But there are yet some who love to linger on the remnants, the ruins of a former state, who look at these time-honoured relics but as links that bring them into closer communion with bygone ages, and would fain live in the twilight of other years rather than the meridian splendour of the present. But we must not be seduced any further by these reflections; our present business concerns the legend whose strange title stands at the head of this article.

In one of the upper chambers at Buckley Hall before named, and not long ago, was an iron ring fixed to a strong staple in the wall; and to this ring a fearful story is still attached. The legend, as it is often told, is one of those wild improbable fictions, based on facts distorted and embellished to suit the taste of the listener or the fancy of the narrator. It will be our task to make out from these imaginative materials a narrative divested as much as possible of the marvellous, but at the same time retaining so much as will interest and excite the reader and lover of legendary lore.

It was in one of those genial, mellow, autumnal evenings—so dear to all who can feel their influence, and so rare a luxury to the inhabitants of this weeping climate—when all living things wear the hue and warmth of the glowing atmosphere in which they are enveloped, that two lovers were sauntering by the rivulet, a “wimpling burn” that, rising among the bare and barren moorlands of this uncultivated region, runs past Buckley Hall into the valley of the Roch.

It was near the close of the sixteenth century, in the days of good Queen Bess, yet their apparel was somewhat homely even for this era of stuffed doublets and trunk-hose. Such unseemly fashions had hardly travelled into these secluded districts; and the plain, stout, woollen jacket of their forefathers, and the ruffs, tippets, stays, and stomachers of their grandmothers, formed the ordinary wear of the belles and beaux of the province. Fardingales, or hooped petticoats, we are happy to say, for the sake of our heroine, were unknown.

“Be of good cheer,” said the lover; “there be troubles enow, believe me, without building them up out of our own silly fears—like boys with their snow hobgoblins, terrible enough in the twilight of fancy, but a gleam of sunshine will melt and dissipate them. Thou art sad to-night without reason. Imaginary fears are the worst to cope withal; having nor shape nor substance, we cannot combat with them. ‘Tis hard, indeed, fighting with shadows.”

“I cannot smile to-night, Gervase; there’s a mountain here—a foreboding of some deadly sort. I might as soon lift ‘Robin Hood’s Bed’ yonder as remove it.”

“No more of this, my dearest Grace; at least not now. Let us enjoy this bright and sunny landscape. How sharply cut are those crags yonder on the sky. Blackstonedged looks almost within a stride, or at least a good stone’s-throw. Thou knowest the old legend of Robin Hood; how that he made yonder rocks his dormitory, and by way of amusement pitched or quoited huge stones at a mark on the hill just above us, being some four or five miles from his station.

It is still visible along with several stones lying near, and which are evidently from the same rock as that on which it is said he slept.”

“I’ve heard such silly tales often. Nurse had many of these old stories wherewith to beguile us o’ winter nights. She used to tell, too, about Eleanor Byron, who loved a fay or elf, and went to meet him at the fairies’ chapel away yonder where the Spodden gushes through its rocky cleft,—’tis a fearful story,—and how she was delivered from the spell. I sometimes think on’t till my very flesh creeps, and I could almost fancy that such an invisible thing is about me.”

With such converse did they beguile their evening walk, ever and anon making the subject bend to the burden of their own sweet ditty of mutual *unchanging* love!

Grace Ashton was the only daughter of a wealthy yeoman, one of the gentry of that district, residing at Clegg Hall, a mile or two distant. Its dark low gables and quiet smoke might easily be distinguished from where they stood. It was said that the Cleggs, its original owners, had been beggared and dispossessed by vexatious and fraudulent lawsuits; and the Ashtons had achieved their purpose by dishonesty and chicanery. However this might be, busy rumour gave currency and credit to the tale, though probably it had none other foundation than the idle and malevolent gossip of the envious and the unthinking.

They had toiled up a narrow pathway on the right of a woody ravine, where the stream had evidently formed itself a passage through the loose strata in its course. The brook was heard, though hidden by the tangled underwood, and they stopped to listen. Soothing but melancholy was the sound. Even the birds seemed to chirp there in a sad and pensive twitter, not unnoticed by the lovers, though each kept the gloomy and fanciful apprehensions untold.

Soon they gained the summit of a round heathery knoll, whence an extensive prospect rewarded their ascent. The squat, square tower of Rochdale Church might be seen above the dark trees nestling under its grey walls. The town was almost hidden by a glowing canopy of smoke gleaming in the bright sunset—towards the north the bare bleak hills, undulating in sterile loneliness, and associating only with images of barrenness and desolation. Easterly, a long, level burst of light swept across meadow, wood, and pasture; green slopes dotted with bright homesteads, to the very base apparently of, though at some distance from, Blackstonedge, now of the deepest, the most intense blue. Such a daring contrast of colour gave a force and depth to the landscape, which, had it been portrayed, would, to critical eyes perhaps, have outraged the modesty of Nature.

The sky was already growing cold and grey above the ridge opposed to the burning brightness of the western horizon, and Grace Ashton pointed out the beautiful but fleeting hues of the landscape around them. Her companion, however, was engrossed by another object. Before them was an eminence marking the horizon to the north-west, though not more than a good bowshot from where they stood. Between this and their present standing was a little grassy hollow, through which the brook we have described trickled rather than ran, amidst moss and rushes, rendering the ground swampy and unsafe. On this hill stood “Robin Hood’s coit-stones;” and on the largest, called the “marking-stone,” a wild-looking and haggard figure was crouched. Her garments, worn and tattered, were of a dingy red; and her cap, or *coiffure* as it was then called, was of the same colour. Her head was bent forward beyond the knee, as though she were listening towards the ground, or was expecting the approach of the individuals who now came suddenly, and to themselves unexpectedly, in view. Her figure, in the glow of that rich autumnal sky, looked of the deepest crimson, and of a bloody and portentous aspect.

“What strange apparition is yonder,” said Gervase Buckley, “on the hill-top there before us? Beshrew me, Grace, but it hath an evil and a rancorous look.”

But Grace, along with a short scream of surprise, betrayed, too, her recognition of the object, and clung with such evident terror to her companion that he turned from the object of his inquiries to gaze on his mistress.

“What!” said he, “hath yonder unknown such power? Methinks it hath moved thee strangely. Speak, Grace; can that hideous appearance in any way be linked with our destiny?”

“I am ignorant as thou. But its coming, as I have heard, always forebodes disaster to our house. Hast not heard of a Red Woman that sometimes haunts this neighbourhood? I never saw her until now, but I’ve heard strange and fearful stories of her appearing some years ago, and blighting the corn, poisoning the cattle, with many other diabolical witcheries. She is best known by the name of ‘Mother Red-Cap.’”

“I’ve heard of this same witch in my boyhood. But what should we fear? She is flesh and blood like ourselves; and, in spite of the prevailing belief, I could never suppose power would be granted to some, generally the most wicked and the most worthless, which from the rest of mankind is capriciously withholden.”

“Hush, Gervase; thou knowest not how far the arch-enemy of mankind may be permitted to afflict bodily our guilty race. I could tell thee such tales of yonder creature as would stagger even the most stubborn of unbelievers.”

“I will speak to her, nevertheless. Tarry here, I prithee, Grace. It were best I should go alone.”

“Oh, do not—do not! None have sight of her, as I’ve heard, but mischief follows. What disaster, then, may we not expect from her evil tongue? I shudder at the anticipation. Stay here. I will not be left; and I cannot cross this dangerous swamp.”

Buckley was, however, bent on the adventure. His natural curiosity, inflamed by forbidden longing after the occult and the mysterious, to which he was too prone, even though sceptical as to their existence, rendered him proof against his mistress’ entreaties.

Probably from situation, or rather, it might be, the distance was judged greater than in reality it proved, but the form before them looked preternaturally enlarged, and as she raised her head her arms were flung out high above it like withered and wasted branches on each side. Trembling in every limb, Grace clung to her lover, and it was after long persuasion that she suffered him to lift her over the morass, and was dragged unwillingly up the hill. As though she were the victim of some terrible fascination, her eyes were constantly riveted on the object. A raven wheeled round them, every moment narrowing the circle of its flight, and the malicious bird looked eager for mischief.

As they approached nearer to the summit, this ill-omened thing, after having brushed so close that they felt the very breath from its wings, alighted beside the Red Woman, who hardly seemed to notice, though well aware of their proximity.

They paused when several paces distant, and she rose up suddenly, extending both arms, apparently to warn them from a nearer approach. Her skinny lips, rapidly moving to and fro, and her dark withered, bony, and cadaverous features, gave her more the appearance of a living mummy or a resurrection from the charnel-house than aught instinct with the common attributes of humanity.

Buckley was for a moment daunted. The form was so unlike anything he had ever seen. He was almost persuaded of the possibility that it might be some animated corpse doomed to wander forth either for punishment or expiation. Her lips still moved. A wild glassy eye was

fixed upon them, and as she yet stood with extended arms, Gervase, almost wrought to desperation, cried out—

“Who art thou? Thy business here?”

A hollow sound, hardly like the tones of a human voice, answered in a slow and solemn adjuration—

“Beware, rash fools! None approach the Red Woman but to their undoing.”

“I know no hindrance to my free course in this domain. By whose authority am I forbidden?” said he, taking courage.

“Away—mine errand is not to thee unless provoked.”

“Unto whom is thy message?”

“To thy leman—thy ladye-love, whom thou wilt cherish to thine hurt. Leave her, ay, though both hearts break in the separation.”

“I will not.”

“Then be partaker of the wrath that is just ready to burst upon her doomed house.”

“I told thee,” said Grace, “she is the herald of misfortune! What woe does she denounce? What cruel judgment hast thou invoked upon our race?” cried she to this grim messenger of evil.

“Evil will—evil must! I will cling to ye till your last sustenance be dried up, and your inheritance be taken from ye.”

“Her fate be mine,” said Buckley, indignantly. “Her good or evil fortune I will share.”

“Be it so. Thou hast made thy choice, and henceforth thou canst not complain.”

She stretched out her two hands, one towards Clegg Hall, the abode of the maiden, and the other towards Buckley, her lover’s paternal roof, from which a blue curl of smoke was just visible over the rising grounds beneath them.

“A doom and a curse to each,” she muttered. “Your names shall depart, and your lands to the alien and the stranger. Your honours shall be trodden in the dust, and your hearths laid waste, and your habitations forsaken.”

In this fearful strain she continued until Buckley cried out—

“Cease thy mumbling, witch. I’ll have thee dealt with in such wise thy tongue shall find another use.”

Turning upon him a look of scorn, she seemed to grow fiercer in her maledictions.

“Proud minion,” she cried, “thou shall die childless and a beggar!”

The cunning raven flapped his great heavy wings and seemed to croak an assent. He then hopped on his mistress’ shoulder, and apparently whispered in her ear.

“Sayest thou so?” said the witch. “Then give it to me, Ralph.”

The bird held out his beak, and out popped a plain gold ring.

“Give this to thy mother, Dame Buckley. Say ‘tis long since they parted company; and ask if she knows or remembers aught of the Red Woman. Away!”

She threw the ring towards them. Both stooped to pick it up. They examined it curiously for a short space.

“‘Tis a wedding-ring,” said Buckley, “but not to wed bride of mine. Where was this”——

He stopped short in his inquiry, for lifting up his eyes he found the donor was gone!

Neither of them saw the least trace of her departure. The stone whereon she sat was again vacant. All was silent, undisturbed, save the night breeze that came sighing over the hill, moaning and whistling through the withered bent and rushes at their feet.

The shadows of evening were now creeping softly around them, and the valley below was already wrapped in mist. The air felt very chill. They shuddered, but it was in silence. This fearful vision, for such it now appeared to have been, filled them with unspeakable dread.

Gervase yet held the ring in his hand. He would have thrown it from him, but Grace Ashton forbade.

“Do her bidding in this matter,” said she. “Give it thy mother, and ask counsel of the sage and the discreet. There is some fearful mystery—some evil impending, or my apprehensions are strangely misled.”

They returned, but he was more disturbed than he cared to acknowledge. He felt as though some spell had been cast upon him, and cowed his hitherto undaunted spirit.

They again wound down beside the rivulet into the meadows below, where the mist alone pointed out the course of the stream. The bat and the beetle crossed their path. Evil things only were abroad. All they saw and felt seemed to be ominous of the future. As they passed through a little wicket to the hall-porch, Nicholas Buckley the father met them.

“Why, how now, loiterers? The cushat and the curlew have left the hill, and yet ye are abroad. ‘Tis time the maiden were at home and looking after the household.”

“We’ve been hindered, good sir. We will just get speech of our dame, and then away home with the gentle Grace. Half-an-hour’s good speeding will see her safe.”

“Ay—belike,” said the old man. “Lovers and loiterers make mickle haste to part. Our dame is with the maids and the milkpans i’ the dairy.”

The elder Buckley was a hale hearty yeoman, of a ruddy and cheerful countenance. A few wrinkles were puckered below the eyes; the rest of his face was sleek and comfortably disposed. A beard, once thick and glossy, was grown grey and thin, curling up short and stunted round his portly chin. Two bright twinkling eyes gave note of a stirring and restless temper—too sanguine, maybe, for success in the great and busy world, and not fitted either by education or disposition for its suspicions or its frauds. Yet he had the reputation of a clever merchant. Rochdale, even at that early period, was a well-known mart for the buyers and sellers of woollen stuffs and friezes. Many of the most wealthy merchants, too, indulged in foreign speculations and adventures, and amongst these the name of Nicholas Buckley was not the least conspicuous.

They passed on to the dairy, where Dame Eleanor scolded the maids and skimmed the cream at the same moment, by way of economy in time.

“What look ye for here?” was her first inquiry, for truly her temper was of a hasty and searching nature; somewhat prone, as well, to cavilling and dispute, requiring much of her husband’s placidity to furnish oil for the turbulent waters of her disposition.

“Thou wert better at thy father’s desk than idling after thine unthrifty pleasures: to-morrow, maybe, sauntering among the hills with hound and horn, beating up with all the rabble in the parish.”

“Nay, mother, chide not: I was never made for merchandise and barter—the price of fleeces in Tod Lane, and the broad ells at Manchester market.”

“And why not?” said the dame, sharply; “haven’t I been the prop and stay of the house? Haven’t I made bargains and ventures when thou hast been idling in hall and bower with love-ditties and ladies’ purples?”

She was now moved to sudden choler, and Gervase did not dare to thwart her further—letting the passion spend itself by its own efforts, as he knew it were vain to check its torrent.

Now Dame Eleanor Buckley was of a sharp and florid countenance—short-necked and broad-shouldered, her nose and chin almost hiding a pair of thin severe lips, the two prominences being close neighbours, especially in anger. In truth she guided, or rather managed, the whole circle of affairs; aiding and counselling the speculations of her husband, who had happily been content with the produce and profit of his paternal acres, had not his helpmate, who inherited this mercantile spirit from her family, urged her partner to such unwonted lust and craving for gain.

A huge bundle of keys hung at her girdle, which, when more than usually excited, did make a most discordant jingle to the tune that was a-going. Indeed, the height and violence of her passion might be pretty well guessed at by this index to its strength.

When the storm had in some degree subsided, Gervase held up the ring.

“What’s that, silly one? A wedding-ring!”

She grew almost pale with wrath. “How darest thou?—thee!—a ring!—to wed ere thou hast a home for thy pretty one. Ye may go beg, for here ye shall not tarry. Go to the next buckle-beggar! A pretty wedding truly! When thou hast learned how to keep her honestly ‘twill be time enough to wed. But thou hast not earned a doit to put beside her dower, and all our ready moneys, and more, be in trade; though, for the matter o’ that, the pulling would be no great business either. But I tell thee again, thy father shall not portion an idler like thyself and pinch his trade. Marry, ‘tis enough to do, what with grievous sums lost in shipwrecks, and the time we have now to wait our returns from o’er sea.”

She went on at this rate for a considerable space, pausing at last, more for lack of breath than subject-matter of discourse.

“Mother,” said he, when fairly run down; “‘tis not a purchase—’tis a gift.”

“By some one sillier than thyself, I warrant.”

“I know not for that; I had it from a stranger.”

“Stranger still,” she replied sharply, chuckling at her own conceit.

“Look at it, mother. Know you such a one?”

The dame eyed it with no favour, but she turned it over with a curious look, at the same time lifting her eyes now and then towards the ceiling, as some train of recollection was awakening in her mind.

“Where gat ye this?” said Dame Eleanor, in a subdued but still querulous tone.

“On the hill-top yonder.”

“Treasure-trove belongs to Sir John Byron.⁷⁸ The lord of the manor claims all from the finders.”

“It was a gift.”

“Humph. Hast met gold-finders on the hills, or demons or genii that guard hidden treasure?”

“We’ve seen the Red Woman!”

Had a sudden thunder-clap burst over them, she could not have been more startled. She stood speechless, and seemingly incapable of reply. Holding the ring in one hand, her eyes were intently fixed upon it.

“What is it that troubles you?” said Gervase. “Yon strange woman bade me give you the ring, and ask if so be that you remembered her.”

The dame looked up, her quick and saucy petulance exchanged for a subdued and melancholy air.

“Remember thee! thou foul witch? ay long, long years have passed; I thought thy persecutions at an end; thy prediction was nigh forgotten. It was my wedding-ring, Gervase!”

“More marvellous still.”

“Peace, and I’ll tell thee. Grace Ashton, come forward. I know thine ears are itching for the news. Well, well, it was when thou wast but a boy, Gervase, and I remember an evening just like this. I was standing by the draw-well yonder, looking, I now bethink me, at the dovecot, where I suspected thieves; and in a humour somewhat of the sharpest, I trow. By-and-by comes, what I thought, an impudent beggar-woman for an alms. Her dress was red and tattered, with a high red cap to match. I chided her it might be somewhat harshly, and I shall not soon forget the malicious look she put on. ‘I ask not, I need not thy benison,’ she said; ‘I would have befriended thee, but I now curse thee altogether:’ and stretching out her shrivelled arm, dry and bare, she shook it, threatening me with vengeance. Suddenly, or ere I was aware, she seized my left hand, drew off my wedding-ring; breathing upon it and mumbling a spell, she held it as though for me to take back, but with such a fiendish look of delight that I hesitated. All on a sudden I remembered to have heard my grandmother say that should a witch or warlock get your wedding-ring, and have time to mutter over it a certain charm, *so long as that ring is above ground* so long misery and misfortune do afflict the owner. Lucky it was I knew of this, for instead of replacing it I threw it into the well, being the nearest hiding-place. And happy for me and thee it was so near; for, would you believe, though hardly a minute’s space in my hand, the black heifer died, the red cow cast her calf, and a large venture of merchandise was wrecked in a fearful gale off the gulf. I had no sooner thrown it into the well than the witch looked more diabolical than ever. ‘It will come again, dame,’ said she, ‘and then look to it;’ and with this threat she departed. But what am I doing? If it be the ring, which I doubt not, I’ve had it o’er long in my keeping. Even now disaster may be a-brewing; and is there not a richly-freighted ship on its passage with silks and spices? I’ll put it out of her reach this time anyhow. No! I’ll hide it where never a witch in Christendom shall poke it out.”

⁷⁸ In the 39th of Eliz. Sir John Biron held the manor of Rochdale, subsequently held by the Ramsays; but in the 13th of Charles I. it was reconveyed. The Biron family is more ancient than the Conquest. Gospatrick held lands of Ernais de Buron in the county of York, as appears by Domesday Book. Sir Nicholas Byron distinguished himself in the civil wars of Charles I.; and in consequence of his zeal in the royal cause the manor of Rochdale was sequestered. After the Restoration it reverted to the Byrons. Sir John, during these troubles, was made a peer, by the title of Baron Byron of Rochdale. In 1823 the late Lord Byron sold the manor, after having been in possession of the family for nearly three centuries.

Dame Eleanor went to the little burn below. Stooping, she scooped a hole in the gravel under water; there she laid the ring, and covered it over with stones.

“Thou’rt always after some of thy megrims, dame,” said the elder Buckley, who had been watching her from the porch. “Some spell or counter-charm, I’s warrant.”

With a look of great contempt for the incredulity of her spouse, she replied—

“Ay, goodman, sit there and scoff your fill. If’t hadn’t been for my care and endeavours you had been penniless ere now. But so it is, I may slave night and day, I reckon. The whole roof-tree, as a body may say, is on my shoulders, and what thanks? More hisses than thanks, more knocks than fair words.”

Never so well pleased as when opportunity was afforded for grumbling, the dame addressed herself again to her evening avocations.

Pondering deeply what should be the issue of these things, Gervase set out with Grace Ashton to her house at Clegg Hall, a good mile distant. Evening had closed in—a chill wind blew from the hills. The west had lost its splendour, but a pure transparent brightness filled its place, across which the dark wavy outline of the high moorlands rested in deep unvarying shadow. In these bright depths a still brighter star hung, pure and of a diamond-like lustre, the precursor, the herald of a blazing host just rising into view.

As they walked on, it may well be supposed that the strange occurrences of the last few hours were the engrossing theme of their discourse.

“My mother is a little too superstitious, I am aware,” said Gervase; “but what I have witnessed to-night has rendered me something more credulous on this head than aforetime.”

“I don’t half like this neighbourhood,” said his companion, looking round. “It hath an ill name, and I could almost fancy the Red Woman again, just yonder in our path.”

She looked wistfully; it was only the mist creeping lazily on with the stream.

They were now ascending the hill towards Beil or Belfield, where the Knights Templars had formerly an establishment. Not a vestige now remains, though at that period a ruinous tower covered with ivy, a gateway, and an arch, existed as relics of their former grandeur.

“Here lived the Lady Eleanor Byron,” said Grace, pointing to the old hall close by, and as though an unpleasant recollection had crossed her. She shuddered as they passed by the grim archway beneath the tower. Whether it was fancy or reality she knew not, but as she looked curiously through its ivied tracery she thought the Red Woman was peering out maliciously upon them. She shrank aside, and pointed to the spot; but there was nothing visible save the dark and crumbling ruins, from which their steps were echoed with a dull and sullen sound.

The night wind sighed round the grey battlements, and from its hidden recesses came moans and whispers—at least so it seemed to their heated imaginations.

“Let us hasten hence,” said Grace; “I like not this lonely spot. There was always a fear and a mystery about it. The tale of the invisible sylphid and Eleanor Byron’s elfish lover haunts me whenever I pass by, and I feel as though something was near, observing and influencing every movement and every thought.”

“Come, come, adone I pray. Let not fear o’ermaster reason, else we shall see bogles in every bush.”

Above the gateway, in the little square tower now pulled down, was a loophole, nearly concealed by climbing shrubs, which rendered it easy for a person within to look out without being observed. As they passed a low humming din was heard. Then a rude ditty trolled from

some not unskilful performer. The lovers stayed to listen, when a dark figure issued out of the gateway singing—

“The bat haunts the tower,
And the redbreast the bower,
And the merry little sparrow by the chimney hops,
Good e’en, hoots master owl,
To-whoo, to-whoo, his troll,
Sing heigho, swing the can with”——

“What, thee, Tim! Is that thy stupid face?” said Gervase, breaking in upon his ditty, and right glad to be delivered from supernatural fears, though the object of them proved only this strolling minstrel. “Thou might as well kill us outright as frighten us to death.”

He that stood before them was one of those wandering musicians that haunt fairs and merry-makings, wakes, and such like pastimes; playing the fiddle and jewtrump too at weddings and alehouses; in short, any sort of idleness never came amiss to these representatives of the old Troubadours. A tight oval cap covered his shaggy poll; he was clad in a coarse doublet or jerkin slashed in the fashion of the time, while his nether integuments were fastened in the primitive mode by a wooden skewer. He could conjure too, and play antics to set the folks agape; but as to his honesty, it was of that dubious sort that few cared to have it in trust. He was apt at these alehouse ditties—many of them his own invention. He knew all the choicest ballads too, so that his vocation was much akin to the *jogleurs* or *jongleurs* of more ancient times, when Richard of the Lion’s Heart and other renowned monarchs disdained not “*the gentle craft of poesie*.”

Wherever was a feast, let it be a wedding or a funeral, Tim, like the harpies of old, scented the meat, and some of his many vocations were generally in request.

This important functionary now stood whistling and singing by turns with the most admired unconcern.

“What’s thy business here?” cried Gervase, approaching him.

“The maid was fair, and the maid was coy,
But the lover left, and the maid said ‘Why?’
Sing O the green willow!”

“Answerest thou me with thy trumpery ditties? I’ll have thee put i’ the stocks, sirrah.”

“Oh, ha’ mercy, master! there’s naught amiss ‘at I know. I’m but takin’ roost here wi’ the owls an’ jackdaws a bit, maybe for want o’ better lyin’.”

“It were hard to have a better knack at lying than thou hast already. Hast gotten the weather into thy lodgings? When didst flit to thy new quarters?”

“Th’ hay-mow at Clegg is ower savoured wi’ the new crop, an’ I want fresh air for my studies.”

“Now art thou lying”——

“Like a lover to his sweetheart,” said Tim, interrupting him, and finishing the sentence.

“Peace, knave! There’s some mischief i’ the wind. Thou’rt after no good, I trow.”

“What te dickons do I ail here? Is’t aught ‘at a man can lift off but stone wa’s an’ ivy-boughs? Marry, my little poke man ha’ summut else to thrive on nor these.”

“There’s been great outcry about poultry an’ other farmyard appendances amissing of late, besides eggs and such like dainties enow to furnish pancakes and fritters for the whole parish. Hast gotten company in thy den above there?”

“Jacks an’ ouzles, if ye like, Master Gervase. Clim’ up, clim’ up, lad, an there’ll be a prial on us. Ha, ha! What! our little sweetheart there would liefer t’ be gangin.’ Weel, weel, ‘tis natural, as a body may say—

“One is good, and two is good,
But three’s no company.”

“Answer me quick, thou rogue. Is there any other but thyself yonder above?”

“When I’m there I’m not here, an’ when I’m here”——

“Sirrah, I’ll flog the wind out o’ thy worthless carcase. Hast any pilfering companions about thee? I do smell a savoury refection—victuals are cooking, or my nose belies its office.”

“Fair speech, friend, wins a quiet answer; a soft word and a smooth tongue all the world over. What for mayn’t I sup as well as my betters?”

“As well?—better belike. There’s no such savour in our hall at eventide, nor in the best kitchen in the parish.”

“It’s not my fau’t, is’t?”

“By’r lady, there’s somebody in the chamber there. I saw the leaves fluttering from the loophole. Villain, who bears thee company?”

“Daft, daft. What fool would turn into roost wi’ me? Clean gone crazy, sure as I’m livin’.”

“Nay, nay, there’s some plot here—some mischief hatching. I’ll see, or”——

He was just going to make the attempt; but Tim withstood him, and in a peremptory manner barred the way.

“How! am I barred by thee, and to my face?”

“It’s no business o’ thine, Master Gervase. What’s hatching there concerns not thee. Keep back, I say, or”——

“Ha! Thou jingle-pated rascal, stand off, or I’ll wring thy neck round as I would a Jackdaw.”

“Do not, do not, Gervase!” said Grace Ashton, fearful of some unlucky strife. “Let us begone. We are too late already, and ‘tis no business of ours.”

“What! and be o’erfoughten by this scurvy lack-wit. Once more, who is there above?”

“An’ what if I shouldn’t tell thee?”

“I’ll baste thy carcase to a mummy; I’ll make thee tender for the hounds.”

“Another word to that, master, an’ it’s a bargain.”

“Let me pass.”

“Not without my company.”

He whistled, and in a moment Gervase felt himself pinioned from behind. Looking round, he saw two stout fellows with their faces covered; and any other possibility of recognition was impracticable in the heavy twilight.

“Who’s i’ t’ stocks now?” cried the malicious rogue, laughing.

“Unhand me, or ye’ll rue that ever ye wrought this outrage.”

“Nay, nay, that were a pretty stave, when we’ve gotten the bird, to open the trap,” said Tim.

Gervase immediately saw that another party had seized Grace Ashton. He raved and stamped until his maledictions were put an end to by an effectual gag, and he did not doubt but she had suffered the same treatment, for a short sharp scream only was heard. Being immediately blindfolded, he could only surmise that her usage was of a similar nature.

He was so stupefied with surprise that for a short period he was hardly sensible to their further proceedings. When able to reflect, he found himself pinioned, and in a sitting posture. A damp chill was on his forehead. He had been dragged downwards, and, from the motion, steps were the medium of descent. A door or two had been raised or opened, a narrow passage previously traversed, and a short time only elapsed from the cool freshness of the evening air to the damp and stifling atmosphere that he now breathed. What could be the cause of his seizure he was quite incompetent to guess. He could not recollect that he had either pique or grudge on his hands; and what should be the result he only bewildered and wearied himself by striving to anticipate.

It was surely a dream. He heard a voice of ravishing sweetness; such pure and silvery tones, that aught earthly could have produced it was out of the question; it was like the swell of some Æolian lyre—words, too, modifying and enhancing that liquid harmony. It was a hymn, but in a foreign tongue. He soon recognised the evening hymn to the Virgin—

“Mater amata, intemerata,
ora, ora, pro nobis.”

So sweetly did the music melt into his soul, that he quite forgot his thrall, and every sense was attuned to the melody. When the sound ceased he made an effort to get free. He loosened his hands, and immediately tore off the bandage from his eyes. A few seconds elapsed, when he saw a light streaming through a crevice. Looking through, he saw a taper burning before a little shrine, where two females in white raiment, closely veiled, were kneeling.

The celebration of such rites, at that time strictly prohibited, sufficiently accounted for their concealment, and plainly intimated that the parties were not of the Reformed faith.

By the light which penetrated his cell from this source he saw it was furnished with a stone bench, and a narrow flight of steps in one corner communicated with a trap-door above.

The old mansion at Belfield, contiguous to these ruins, once belonging to the Knights of St John, had been for some years untenanted, and, as often happens to the lot of deserted houses, strange noises, sights, and other manifestations of ghostly occupants were heard and seen by passers-by, rendering it a neighbourhood not overliked by those who had business that way after nightfall.

Gervase Buckley was pretty well assured that he had been conveyed into some concealed subterranean chamber, but for what purpose he could not comprehend. He was not easily intimidated; and though in a somewhat sorry plight, he now felt little apprehension on the score of supernatural visitations: but his seizure did not hold out an immunity as regards corporeal disturbers. He had not long to indulge these premonitory reflections ere a door was opened. A figure, completely enveloped in a black cloak, on which a red cross was conspicuously emblazoned, stood before him. He carried a torch, and Gervase saw a short naked sword glittering in his belt.

“Follow me,” said the intruder; and, without further parley, pointed to where another door was concealed in the pavement. This being opened, Gervase beheld, not without serious

apprehension, a flight of steps evidently communicating with a lower dungeon. His conductor pointed to the descent, and it would have been useless folly to disobey. A damp and almost suffocating odour prevailed, as though from some long-pent-up atmosphere, which did not give the prisoner any increasing relish or affection for the enterprise. He looked at his conductor, whose face and person were yet covered. Had he been a familiar of the Holy Inquisition, he could not have been more careful of concealment. Gervase looked now and then with a wistful glance towards his companion's weapon. Being himself unarmed, it would have been madness to attempt escape. He merely inquired in his descent—

“Whence this outrage? I am unarmed, defenceless.” But there was no reply. The guide, with an inclination of the head, pointed with his torch to the gulf his victim was about to enter. There was little use in disputation where the opposite party had so decided an advantage, and he thought it best to abide the issue without further impediment. He accordingly descended a few steps. His conductor fastened the door overhead, and they soon arrived at the bottom, at a low arched passage, where his guide dashed his flambeau against the wall, and it was immediately extinguished.

Gervase was left once more in doubt and darkness. There was little space for explanation. He felt himself seized by an invisible hand, hurried unresistingly on, till, without any preparation, a blaze of light burst upon him.

It was for a moment too overpowering to enable him to distinguish objects with any certainty. Soon, however, he saw a tolerably spacious vault or crypt, supported by massy pillars. He had often heard there existed many unexplored subterranean passages reaching to an incredible distance, made originally by the Knights Templars for their private use. One of these, it was said, extended even to the chantry just then dissolved at Milnrow, more than a mile distant. Many strange stories he had been told of these warrior monks. But centuries had elapsed since their suppression. For a moment he almost believed they were permitted to reappear, doomed at stated periods to re-enact their unhallowed orgies, their cruelties, and their crimes. The chamber was lighted by three or four torches, their lurid unsteady life giving an ever-varying character to the surrounding objects.

Opposite the entrance was a stone bench, occupied by several figures attired in a similar manner to his conductor. An individual in the centre wore in addition a belt covered by some cabalistic devices. The scene was sufficiently inexplicable, and not at all elucidated by the following interrogation:—

“Thou hast been cited to our tribunal,” said the chief inquisitor.

“I know ye not,” said Gervase, with great firmness, though hardly aware of the position he occupied.

“Why hast thou not obeyed our summons?”

“I have not heard of any such; nor in good sooth should I have been careful to obey had your mandate been delivered.”

“Croix Rouge,” said the interrogator, “has this delinquent been cited?”

The person he addressed arose, bowed, and presented a written answer.

“I have here,” continued the chief, “sufficient proof that our summons hath been conveyed to thee, and that hitherto thine answer hath been contumaciously withheld. What sayest thou?”

“I have yet to learn, firstly,” said Gervase, with more indignation than prudence, “by what authority you would compel me to appear; and secondly, how and in what form such mandate had been sent?”

“Bethink thee, is our answer to the last: the first will be manifested in due time. We might indeed leave thee ignorant as to what we require, but pity for thy youth and inexperience forbids. Clegg Hall is, thou knowest, along with the estate, now unlawfully holden by the Ashtons.”

“I know that sundry Popish recusants, plotting the overthrow of our most gracious Queen, do say that other and more legitimate rights are in abeyance only; but the present owners are too well fortified to be dispossessed by hearsay.”

“In the porch at Clegg thou wast accosted not long ago by a mendicant who solicited an alms.”

“Probably so.”

“Did he not hold out to thee the sign of the Rosy Cross, the token of our all-powerful fraternity of Rosicrucians?”

“I do remember such a signal; and furthermore, I drove him forth as an impostor and a pretender to forbidden arts.”

“He showed thee the sign, and bade thee follow?”

“He did.”

“And why was our summons disobeyed?”

“Because I have yet to learn what authority you possess either for my summons or detention.”

“The brotherhood of the Red Cross are not disobeyed with impunity.”

“I have heard of such a fraternity—as well too that they be idle cheats and lying impostors.”

“We challenge not belief without sufficient testimony to the truth of our mission. In pity to man’s infirmity this indulgence is permitted. We unfold the hidden operations, the very arcana of Nature, whom we unclothe as it were to her very nakedness. Our doctrines thereby carry credence even to the most impious and unbelieving. Ere we command thy submission, it is permitted to behold some manifestation of our power. By means derived from the hidden essences of Nature, the first principles which renovate and govern all things, the very elements of which they consist, we arrive at the incorporeal essence called spirit, holding converse with it undebased, uninfluenced by the intervention of matter. Thus we converse in spirit with those that be absent, even though they were a thousand leagues apart.”

“And what has this jargon to do with my being despatched hither?”

“Listen, and reply not; the purport will be vouchsafed to thee anon. We can compel the spirits even of the absent to come at our bidding by subtle spells that none have power to disobey. We too can renew and invigorate life, and by the universal solvent bring about the renovation of all things—renovation and decay being the two antagonist principles, as light and darkness. As we can make darkness light, and light darkness at our pleasure, so can we from decay bring forth life, and the contrary. Seest thou this dead body?”

A black curtain he had not hitherto observed was thrown aside, and he beheld the features of Grace Ashton, or he was strangely deceived. She was lying on a little couch, death visibly imprinted on her collapsed and sunken features.

“Murderers! I will have ye dealt with for this outrage.” Maddened almost to frenzy, he would have rushed towards her, but he was firmly holden by a power superior to his own.

“She is now in the first region of departed spirits,” said the chief. “We have power to compel answer to our interrogatories. Listen, perverse mortal. We are well assured that a vast treasure

is concealed hereabouts, hidden by the Knights of St John. 'Tis beyond our unassisted power to discover. We have asked counsel of one whom we dare not disobey, and she it is hath commanded that we cite thee and Grace Ashton to the tribunal of the Rosy Cross. This corporeal substance now before us, by reason of its intimate union with the spirit, purged from the dross of mortality, will answer any question that may be propounded, and will utter many strange and infallible prophecies. It will solve doubtful questions, and discourse of things past, present, and to come, seeing that she is now in spirit where all knowledge is perfect, and hath her eyes and understanding cleared from the gross film of our corruption. But as spirit only hath power over those of its own nature by the law of universal sympathy, so she answers but to those by whom she is bidden that are of the same temperament and affinity, which is shown by your affiance and love towards each other."

The prisoner heard this mystic harangue with a vacant and fixed expression, as though his mind were wandering, and he hardly understood the profundity of the discourse. Every feeling was absorbed in the conviction that some horrid incantation had for ever deprived him of his beloved. Then he fancied some imposition had been practised upon him. Being prevented from a closer examination, at length he felt some relief in the idea that the form he beheld might possibly be a counterfeit. He knew not what to say, and the speaker apparently waited his reply. Finding he was still silent, the former continued after a brief space:—

"Our questions to this purport must necessarily be propounded by thee. Art thou prepared?"

"Say on," said Gervase, determined to try the issue, however repugnant to his thoughts.

Two of them now arose and stood at each end of the couch. The superior first made the sign of the cross. He then drew a book from his girdle, and read therein a Latin exorcism against the intrusion of evil spirits into the body, commanding those only of a heavenly and benign influence to attend. He lighted a taper compounded of many strange ingredients emitting a fragrant odour, and as the smoke curled heavily about him, flickering and indistinct, he looked like some necromancer about to perform his diabolical rites.

The occupant of that miserable couch lay still as death.

"The first question," cried out the chief; and he looked towards the prisoner, who was now suffered to approach within a few paces of the bed.

"Is there treasure in this place?"

Gervase tried to repeat the question, but his tongue clave to his mouth. For the first time probably in his life he felt the sensation of horrible, undefined, uncontrollable fear—that fear of the unknown and supernatural, that shrinking from spiritual intercourse even with those we have loved best. It seemed as though he were in communion with the invisible world—that awful, incomprehensible state of existence; and with beings whose power and essence are yet unknown, armed, in imagination, with attributes of terror and of vengeance.

With a desperate effort, however, he repeated the question. Breathless, and with intense agony, he awaited the response. It came! A voice, not from the lips of the recumbent victim, but as though it were some inward afflatus, hollow and sepulchral. The lips did not move, but the following reply was given:—

"There is."

Even the guilty confederates started back in alarm at the success of their own experiment. All was, however, still—silent as before.

Taking courage, the next question was put in like manner.

“In what direction?”

“Under the main pillar of the south-eastern corner of the vault.”

After another pause, the following questions were asked:—

“How may we obtain the treasure sought?”

“By diligence and perseverance.”

“At what time?”

“When the moon hath trine to Mercury in the house of Saturn.”

“Is it guarded?”

“It is.”

“By whom?”

“By a power that shall crush you unless propitiated.”

“Show us in what manner.”

“I may not; my lips are sealed. That power is superior to mine; the rest is hidden from me.”

The treasure-seekers were silent, as though disappointed at this unexpected reply. Another attempt was, however, made.

“Shall we prosper in our undertaking?”

“My time is nigh spent. I beseech you that I may depart, for I am in great torment.”

“Thou shall not, until thou answer.”

“Beware!”

But this admonition was from another source, and in a different direction. The obscurity and smoke from the torches made it impossible to judge with any certainty whence the interruption proceeded.

Gervase started and turned round. It might be fancy, but he was confident the features of the Red Woman were present to his apprehension. Horrors were accumulating. Even the united brotherhood seemed to tremble as though in the presence of some being of whom they stood in awe. They awaited her approach in silence.

“Fool! Did I not warn thee to do *my* bidding only? And thou art hankering again, pampering thy cruel lust for gold. How darest thou question the maiden for this intent? Hence, and thank thy stars thou art not even now sent howling to thy doom!”

This terrible and mysterious woman came forward in great anger, and the Rosicrucian brotherhood were thereby in great alarm. “The maid is mine—begone!” said she, pointing the way.

Like slaves under their master’s frown, they crouched before this fearful personification of their unhallowed and forbidden practices, and departed.

“Gervase Buckley,” she cried, “thou art betrothed to the heiress of yon wide possessions.”

“I am,” said he, roused either to courage or desperation, even in the presence of a being whose power he felt conscious was not derived from one common source with his own.

“Dost thou confirm thy troth?”

“I do; in life and in death she is mine.”

“Pledge thyself, body and soul, to her.”

“I am hers whilst I live, body and soul. Nothing but death shall part us.”

“On thy soul’s hope thou wilt fulfil this pledge!”

“I will.” Gervase looked wistfully towards his beloved. The inanimate form was yet pale and still; but a vague hope possessed him that the witch would again quicken her.

“‘Tis enough. But it must be sealed with blood!”

He felt her clammy hand on his arm, and a sharp pain as though from a puncture. He quickly withdrew it, and a blood-drop fell on the floor.

“Thou art mine—for ever!”

A loud yell rang through the vaults, and Gervase felt as though the doom of the lost spirits were his—that a whole troop of fiery demons had assailed him, and that he was borne away to the pit of torment. Happily his recollection forsook him, and he became unconscious of future suffering.

PART THE SECOND.

Morning rose bright and ruddy above the hills. The elder Buckley was up and stirring betimes. Agreeably to his usual practice, he had retired early to bed, leaving the household cares and duties to his helpmate. He was sitting in the porch when his dame, with a disturbed and portentous aspect, accosted him:—

“I know not what hath come to the lad.”

“Gervase—what of him?” said Nicholas, carelessly.

“He came home very late yesternight. But he did not speak, and he looked so wan and woe-begone that I verily thought he had seen a ghost or some uncanny thing yonder on his road home. I’ve just now been to rouse him, but he will not answer. Prithee go and get speech of him, good or bad. I think i’ my heart the lad’s bewitched.”

Nicholas Buckley was a man of few words, especially in the presence of his helpmate, so he merely groaned out an incredulous wonder, and went off as he was bidden. He saw Gervase evidently under the influence of some stupefying spell. His eyes were open, but he noticed neither the question nor the person who accosted him. There was something so horrible and mysterious in his whole appearance that the good man felt alarmed, and went back to his dame with all possible expedition. What *could* have happened? They guessed, and made a thousand odd surmises, improbable enough the greater part, but all merging in the prevailing bugbear of the day—witchcraft, which was resorted to as a satisfactory explanation under every possible difficulty. Had his malady any connection with the unexpected appearance of the Red Woman and the ring? It was safe buried, however, and that was a comfort. But after all, her thoughts always involuntarily recurred to this unpleasant subject. She could not shake off her suspicions, and there was little use in attempting further measures unless she could fight the Evil One with his own weapons. To this end, she began to cast about for some cunning wizard who might countervail the plots of this malicious witch.

Now at this period, Dr Dee, celebrated for his extraordinary revelations respecting the world of spirits, had been promoted by Queen Elizabeth (a firm believer in astrology and other recondite pursuits) to the wardenship of the Collegiate Church at Manchester. His fame had spread far and wide. He had not long been returned from his mission to the Emperor Rodolph

at Prague, and his intercourse with invisible things was as firmly believed as the common occurrences of the day, and as well authenticated.

The character of Dee has both been underrated and misunderstood. By most, if not all, he has been looked upon merely as a visionary and an enthusiast—credulous and ambitious, without the power, though he had sufficient will, to compass the most mischievous designs. But under these outward weaknesses and superstitions, tinctured and modified by the prevailing belief in supernatural interferences, there was a bold and vigorous mind, frustrated, it is true, by circumstances which he could not control. Dee aimed at the entire change and subjugation of affairs, ecclesiastical and political, to the dominion of an unseen power—a theocracy or millennium—himself the sole medium of communication, the high priest and lawgiver. To this end he sought the alliance and support of foreign potentates; and his diary, published by Casaubon, the original of which is in the British Museum, is a remarkable and curious detail of the intrigues resorted to for this purpose. His mission to the Emperor Rodolph, offering him the sceptre of universal dominion, is told with great minuteness; and there is little doubt that Elizabeth herself did not disdain to converse and consult with him on this extraordinary project. Her visits to his house at Mortlake are well known. He had been consulted as to a favourable day for her coronation, and received many splendid promises of preferment that were never realised. At length, disappointed and hopeless as to the success of his once daring expectations, he settled down to the only piece of preferment within his reach—to wit, the wardenship of the Collegiate Church of Manchester, where he arrived with his family in the beginning of February 1596. His advice and assistance were much resorted to, and particularly in cases of supposed witchcraft and demoniacal possession—articles of unshaken belief at that period with all but speculatists and optimists, the Sadducees of their day and generation. His chief colleague throughout his former revelations had been one Edward Kelly, born at Worcester, where he practised as an apothecary. In his diary Dee says they were brought together by the ministration of the angel Uriel. He was called Kelly the Seer. This faculty of “*seeing*” by means of a magic crystal not being possessed by the Doctor, he was obliged to have recourse to Kelly, who had, or pretended to have, this rare faculty. Afterwards, however, he found out that Kelly had deceived him; those spirits which ministered at his bidding not being messengers from the Deity, as he once supposed, but lying spirits sent to deceive and to betray.

Kelly was an undoubted impostor, though evidently himself a believer in magic and the black art. Addicted to diabolical and mischievous practices, he was a fearful ensample of those deluders given up to their own inventions to believe the very lies wherewith they attempted to deceive.

He was a great treasure-hunter and invoker of demons, and it is said would not scruple to have recourse to the most disgusting brutalities for the gratification of his avarice and debauchery. In Weaver’s *Funereal Monuments*, it is recorded that Kelly, in company with one Paul Waring, went to the churchyard of Walton-le-Dale, near Preston, where a person was interred at that time supposed to have hidden a large sum of money, and who had died without disclosing the secret. They entered precisely at midnight, the grave having been pointed out to them the preceding day. They dug down to the coffin, opened it, and exorcised the spirit of the deceased, until the body rose from the grave and stood upright before them. Having satisfied their inquiries, it is said that many strange predictions were uttered concerning divers persons in the neighbourhood, which were literally and remarkably fulfilled.

At the date of our legend Kelly had been parted from the Doctor for a considerable time. The Doctor having found out his proneness to these evil courses, Kelly bore no good-will to his former patron and associate.

We have not space, or it would be an interesting inquiry, as connected with the superstitions of our ancestors, to trace the character and career of these individuals—men once famous amongst their contemporaries, forming part of the history of those times, and exerting a permanent influence immediately on the national character, and remotely on that of a future and indefinite period.

Dame Eleanor Buckley was morally certain, firstly, that her son was witched; and secondly, that no time should be lost in procuring relief. Nicholas therefore took horse for Manchester that very forenoon, with the intention of consulting the learned Doctor above-named on his son's malady. Ere he left, however, there came tidings that Grace Ashton had not returned home, and was supposed to have tarried at Buckley for the night.

Trembling at this unexpected news, the dame once more applied to her son. He was still wide awake on the couch, in the same position, and apparently unconscious of her presence. In great anxiety she conjured him to say if he knew what had befallen Grace Ashton.

"She is dead!" was his reply, in a voice strangely altered from his usual careless and happy tone. Nothing further, however, could be drawn from him, but shortly after there came one with additional tidings.

"Inquiry has been set on foot," said the messenger, "and Tim, well known at wakes and merry-makings, doth come forward with evidence which justifies a suspicion that is abroad—to wit, that she has met death by some unfair dealing; and further, he scruples not to throw out dark and mysterious hints that implicate your son as being privy to her disappearance."

At this unlooked-for intelligence the mother's fortitude gave way. Tribulation and anguish had indeed set in upon them like a flood. The ring, so unaccountably brought back by the Red Woman, was beyond doubt the cause of all their misfortunes—its reappearance, as she anticipated, being the harbinger of misery. What should be the next arrow from her quiver she trembled to forebode. But in the midst of this fever of doubt and apprehension one hope sustained her, and that was the result of her husband's mission to Dr Dee, who would doubtless find out the nature of the spell, and relieve them from its curse.

Let us follow the traveller to Dee's lodgings in the Deanery, where at that time this renowned astrologer was located. Nicholas Buckley found him sitting in a small dismal-looking study, where he was introduced with little show either of formality or hesitation. The Doctor was now old, and his sharp, keen, grey eyes had suffered greatly by reason of rheum and much study. Pale, but of a pleasant countenance, his manner, if not so grave and sedate as became one of his deep and learned research, yet displaying a vigour and vivacity the sure intimation of that quenchless ardour, the usual concomitant of all who are destined to eminence, or to any conspicuous part in the age on which they are thrown;—not idle worthless weeds on the strand of time, but landmarks or beacons in the ocean of life, to warn or to direct.

He was short in stature, and somewhat thin. A rusty black velvet cap, without ornament, surmounted his forehead, from which a few straggling grey hairs crept forth, rivalling his pale, thoughtful brow in whiteness.

He sat in a curiously embossed chair, with a brown-black leathern cushion, beside an oaken table or tressel, groaning under the weight of many ponderous volumes of all hues and subjects. Divers and occult were the tractates there displayed, and unintelligible save to the

initiated. Alchemy was just then his favourite research, and he was vainly endeavouring to master the jargon under which its worthlessness and folly were concealed.

Nicholas Buckley related his mishap, and, as far as he was able, the circumstances connected with it. The Doctor then erected a horoscope for the hour. After consulting this, he said—

“I will undertake for thee, if so be that my poor abilities, hitherto sorely neglected, and I may say despised, can bring thee any succour. Indeed the land groans by reason of the sin of witchcraft—a noisome plague now infesting this afflicted realm, and a grievous scandal to the members and ministers of our Reformed Church. The ring is of a surety bewitched, and by one more powerful and wicked than thou canst possibly imagine. I tell thee plainly, that unless the charm be broken, the recovery of the young man were vain—nay, in all likelihood, thine own ruin will be the result.”

The merchant groaned audibly at this doleful news. He thought upon his merchandise and his adventures o’er sea—his treasures and his argosies, committed to the tender mercies of the deep; and he recounted them in brief.

“Cannot these be rescued from such disaster?” inquired he dolefully.

“I know not yet,” was the reply. “Saturn, that hath his location here, governing these expected treasures, now beholds the seventh house of the figure I have just erected with a quartile aspect. They be evil tokens, but as regards this same Mother Red-Cap or the Red Woman, who hath doubtless brought you into grievous trouble, I know her. Nay, look not incredulous. How, it is not needful to inquire. Suffice it that she hath great power, through from a different source from mine. She is of the Rosicrucian order, one of the sisters, of which there are five throughout Europe and Asia. They have intercourse with spirits, communicating too with each other, though at never so great a distance, by means of this mystical agency. She hath been here, ay, even in the very place where thou sittest.”

The visitor started from his chair.

“And I am not ignorant of her devices. She is of a papistical breed; and the recusant priests, if I mistake not, are at the working of some diabolical plot; it may be against the life and government of our gracious Queen! They would employ the devil himself, if need were, to compass their intent. She hath travelled much, and doubtless hath learned marvellous secrets from the Moors and Arabian doctors. It is, however, little to the purpose at present that we continue this discourse. What more properly concerns thee is how to get rid of this grievous visitation, which, unless removed, will of a surety fall out to thine undoing. By prayer and fasting much may be accomplished, together with the use of all lawful means for thy release.”

“Alas!” said Buckley, “I fear me there is little hope of a favourable issue, and I may not be delivered from this wicked one!”

“Be of good heart; we will set to work presently, and, if it be possible, counterplot this cunning witch. But to this end it is needful that I visit the young man, peradventure we may gather tidings of her. I know not any impediment to my journey this very day. Ay! even so,” said he, poring over some unimaginable diagrams. “Good! there is a marvellous proper aspect for our enterprise thirty minutes after midnight. Thou hast doubtless taken horse with thy servant hither. I will take his place and bear thee company.”

The Doctor was soon equipped for travel, much to the comfort of the afflicted applicant, who was like to have taken his departure with a sorry heart, and in great disquietude. On their arrival at Buckley, Dee would needs see the patient instantly. No change had taken place since morning, and he still refused any sustenance that might be offered. The Doctor examined him narrowly, but refrained from pronouncing on his case.

It was now evening. The sun shot a languid and fitful ray athwart the vapours gathering to receive him, and its light shone on the full couch of the invalid. The astrologer was sitting apart, in profound meditation. Dame Eleanor suddenly roused him.

“He has just asked for the Red Woman,” said she, “and I heard him bemoaning himself, saying that he is betrothed to her, and that she will come ere long to claim his pledge. Hark, he mutters again!”

Dee immediately went to the bedside.

“I did not kill her,” said the victim, shuddering. He dashed the cold sweat from his forehead with some violence. He then started up. “Is she come?” said he in a low, hollow voice, and he sat up in the attitude of intense expectation. “Not yet, not yet,” he uttered with great rapidity, and sank down again as though exhausted.

A stormy and lowering sky now gathered above the sun’s track, and the chamber suddenly grew dark. The inmates looked as though expecting some terrific, some visible manifestation of their tormentor. Dee looked out through the window. There was nothing worthy of remark, save an angry heap of clouds, rolling and twisting together—the sure forerunner of a tempest.

“The whole country is astir,” said Dame Eleanor. “They are seeking for the body of Grace Ashton in pits and secret places. Woe is me that I should live to see the day;—the poor lad there is loaden with curses, and fearful threatenings are uttered against us. We are verily in jeopardy of our lives.”

Hereat she fell a-weeping, and truly it was piteous to behold.

“We must first get an answer from him,” said the Doctor, “ere measures can be devised for his recovery.”

“‘Tis said there will be a warrant for his apprehension on the morrow,” said the elder Buckley.

“There is some terrible perplexing mystery, if not knavery, in this matter,” said Dee; “and I have been thinking—nay, I more than suspect—that rascal Kelly hath a hand in it. He is ever hankering after forbidden arts, and many have fallen the innocent victims to his diabolical intrigues. He hath become a great adept of late, too, as I am told, in this Rosicrucian philosophy; and if we have here a clue to our labyrinth, depend on it we’ll get to the end speedily. To spite and frustrate that juggling cheat I will spare neither pains nor study; though of a surety we only use lawful and appointed means. Prayers and exorcisms must be resorted to, and help craved from a higher source than theirs.”

At length the forms and usages generally resorted to on such occasions were entered upon. Loud and fervent were the responses, continuing even to a late hour, but without producing any change.

The wind, hitherto rushing only in short fierce gusts through the valley, now gathered in loud heavy lunges against the corner of the house, almost extinguishing the solitary light on the table near to which Dee sat; the casements rattled, and the whole fabric shook as they passed by. At length there came a lull, fearful in its very silence, as though the elements were gathering strength for one mighty onslaught. On it came like an overwhelming surge, and for a moment threatened them with immediate destruction. Dust, pebbles, and dead branches were flung on the window, as though bursting through, to the great terror of the inmates. Again it drew back, and there was stillness so immediate, it was even more appalling than the loudest assaults of the tempest. The household, too, were silent. Even Dee was evidently disturbed, and as though in expectation of some extraordinary occurrence.

A sharp quick tapping was heard at the casement.

“What is that?” was the general inquiry. Gervase evidently heard it too, and was apparently listening.

Dee arose. He went slowly towards the window, as if carefully scrutinising what might present itself. He put his face nearly close to the glass, and manifestly beheld some object which caused him to draw back. His forehead became puckered by intense emotion, either from surprise or alarm. He put one finger on his brow, as though taking counsel from his own thoughts, deliberating for a moment what course to pursue. At length, much to the astonishment of his companions, he opened the latch of the casement, when, with a dismal croak, a raven came hopping in. With outstretched wings he jumped down on the floor, and would have gone direct to the bed, but the Doctor caught him, and by main force held him back.

Fluttering and screaming, the bird made every effort to escape, but not before Dee was aware of a label tied round his neck. This he quickly detached; after which the winged messenger flew back through the open window, either having finished his errand, or not liking his entertainment. Dee opened the billet—a bit of parchment—and out dropped the ring! In the envelope was a mystical scroll, encompassed with magic emblems, wherein was written the following doggerel, either in blood or coloured so as to represent it:—

“By this ring a charm is wound,
Rolling darkly round and round,
Ne’er beginning—ending never;
Woe betide this house for ever!
Thou art mine through life—in death
I’ll receive thy latest breath.
Plighted is thy vow to me,
Mine thy doom, thy destiny,
Sealed with blood; this endless token,
Like the spell, shall ne’er be broken.”

Alarm was but too legible on the Doctor’s brow. He was evidently taken by surprise. He read it aloud, while fearful groans responded from the victim.

“‘Tis a case of grievous perplexity,” said he, “and I am sore distraught. If he have sworn his very soul to her, as this rhyme doth seem to intimate, I am miserably afflicted for his case. Doubtless ‘tis some snare which hath unwillingly been thrown about him. Nevertheless, I will diligently and warily address myself to the task, and Heaven grant us a safe deliverance. Yet I freely own there is both danger and extremity in the attempt. She will doubtless appear and claim the fulfilment of his pledge. But I must cope with her alone; none else may witness the conflict. It is not the first time that I have battled with the powers of darkness.”

“But what motive hath she for this persecution? it is not surely out of sheer malice,” said the dame, weeping.

“Belike not,” replied Dee thoughtfully. “It doth savour of those incantations whereof I oft read in diverse tractates, whereby she expects to gain advantage or deliverance if she sacrifice another victim to the demon whereunto she hath sold herself. Indeed, we hear of some whose tenure of life can only be renewed by the yearly substitution of another; and it is to this possible danger that our feeble efforts must be directed. But I trust in aid stronger than the united hosts of the Prince of Darkness. This very night, I doubt not, will come the final struggle.”

The wind was now still, but ever and anon bursts of hail hurtled on the window. Thunder growled in the distance, waxing louder and louder, until its roar might have appalled the stoutest heart.

With many anxious wishes and admonitions the distressed parents left the Doctor to himself.

He took from his pocket an hour-glass, a Bible, and a Latin translation from the Arabic, being a treatise on witches, genii, demons, and the like, together with their symbols, method of invocation, and many other subjects equally useful. Intent on his studies, he hardly looked aside save for the purpose of turning the glass, when he immediately became absorbed as before.

Now and then he cast a glance towards the bed. His patient lay perfectly quiet, but the Doctor fancied he was listening.

About midnight he heard a groan; he shut his book, and, looking aside, beheld the terrible eye and aspect of the Red Woman glaring fiercely upon him. She had in all likelihood been concealed somewhere within hearing; for a closet-door, on one side of the chamber, stood open as though she had just issued from it.

With great presence of mind he adjured her that she should declare her errand.

“I am here on my master’s business; mine errand concerns not thee,” was the reply. Her terrible eyes glanced, as she spoke, towards the bed where the unfortunate Gervase Buckley lay writhing as though in torment.

“By what compact or agreement is he thine, foul sorceress? Knowest thou not that there are bounds beyond which ye cannot prevail?”

“He hath sworn—the compact is sealed with blood, and must be fulfilled. I am here to claim mine own; and it is at thy peril thou prevent me.”

“I fear thee not, but am prepared to withstand *thee* and all thy works.”

“Beware! There’s a black drop in thine own cup,” said she. “Thou thyself hast sought counsel by forbidden arts, and I can crush thee in a moment.”

Dee looked as though vanquished on the sudden. He was not altogether clear from this charge, having, though at Kelly’s instigation, been led somewhat farther than was advisable into practices which in his heart he condemned. He, however, now felt convinced that Kelly had some hand in the business, knowing, too, that he would associate with the most wicked and abandoned, if so be that he might compass his greedy and unhallowed desire.

“Depart whilst thou may,” she continued. “I warn thee. Yonder inheritance is mine, though the silly damsel they have lost be the reputed heir. Aforetime I have told thee. Wronged of our rights, I have sold myself—ay, body and soul—for revenge! By unjust persecutions we have been proscribed, those of the true faith have been forced to fly, and even our lands and our patrimony given to yon graceless heretics.”

“But why persecute this unoffending house?—they have not done *thee* wrong.”

“It is commanded—the doom must be fulfilled. One condition only was appointed. A hard task, to wit—but what cannot power and ingenuity compass?—‘When one shall pledge himself thine and for ever, then the inheritance thou seekest is thine also, which none shall take from thee. But he too must be rendered up to me.’ This was the doom! ‘Tis fulfilled. He hath pledged himself body and soul, and that ring, if need be, is witness to his troth.”

“Is Grace Ashton living or dead?” inquired Dee, with a firm and penetrating glance.

“When he hath surrendered to his pledge it shall be told thee.”

“Wicked sorceress,” said the Doctor, rising in great anger, “he shall not be thy victim; thine arts shall be countervailed. The powers of darkness are not, in the end, permitted to prevail, though for a time their devices seem to prosper. Listen, and answer me truly, or I will compel thee in such wise that thou dardest not disobey. Was there none other condition to thy bond?”

The weird woman here broke forth into a laugh so wild and scornful that the arch-fiend himself could hardly have surpassed it in malice.

“Fret not thyself,” she said, “and I will tell thee. Know, then, I am scathless from all harm until that feeble ring shall be able to bind me; none other bonds may prevail.”

“This ring bind thee?”

“Even so; and as a blade of grass I could rend it! Judge, then, of my safety. Fire, air, and water—all the elements—cannot have the power to hurt me; I hold a charmed life. The price is paid!”

Dee looked curiously round the little thin ring which he held, and indeed it were hopeless to suppose so frail a fetter could restrain her.

“Thou hast told me the truth?”

“I have—on my hope of prospering in this pursuit of our patrimony.”

“And what is thy purpose with the lad?”

“I have need of him. He is my hostage to him whom I serve.”

“Thou wilt not take him by force!”

“I will not. He will follow whithersoever I lead. He has neither will nor power to disobey.”

“Grant a little space, I prithee. ‘Tis a doleful doom for one so young.”

“To-morrow my time hath expired. Either he or I must be surrendered to”——Here she pointed downwards.

“Agreed. To-morrow at this hour. We will be prepared.”

The witch unwillingly departed as she came. The closet-door was shut as with a violent gust of wind, after which Dee sat pondering deeply on the matter, but unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion. He never suspected for one moment what in this evil and matter-of-fact generation would have occurred even to the most credulous—to wit, that either insanity or fanaticism, aided by fortuitous events, if we may so speak, was the cause of this delusion, at least to the unhappy woman now the object of Dee’s most abstruse speculations. His thoughts, however, would often recur to his quondam associate, Kelly, and, if in the neighbourhood, which he suspected, an interview with him might possibly be of use, and afford some clue to guide their proceedings.

Committing himself to a short repose, he determined to make diligent search for this mischievous individual—having comforted in some measure the unhappy couple below stairs, who were in a state of great apprehension lest their son had already fallen a victim, and were ready to give up all for lost.

Early on the ensuing day the Doctor bent his steps towards Clegg Hall, whence the old family of that name had been dispossessed, and from whom that mysterious individual, the Red Woman, claimed descent.

The air was fresh and bracing after the night's tempest. Traces of its fury, however, were plainly visible. Huge trees had been swept down, as though some giant hand had crushed them. Rising the hill towards Belfield, he stayed a moment to look round him. There was something in the loneliness and desertion of the spot that was congenial to his thoughts. The rooks cawed round their ancient inheritance, but all was ruin and disorder. His curiosity was excited; he had sufficient local knowledge to remember it was once an establishment of the Knights of St John some centuries before, and he remembered too, that according to vulgar tradition, great riches were buried somewhere in the vaults. A thought struck him that it was not an unlikely spot for the operations of Master Kelly. Impressed with this idea, a notion was soon engendered that his errand need not carry him farther. He drew near to the ivied archway beneath the tower. The mavis whistled for its mate, and the sparrow chirped amongst the foliage. All else was silent and apparently deserted. He entered the gateway. Inside, on the right hand, was a narrow flight of steps, and, impelled by curiosity, he clambered, though with some difficulty, into a dilapidated chamber above. Here the loopholes were covered with ivy, but it was unroofed, and the floor was strewn with rubbish, the accumulation of ages. Through a narrow breach at one corner he saw what had once been a concealed passage, evidently piercing the immense thickness of the walls, and leading probably to some secret chambers not ordinarily in use. He now heard voices below, and taking advantage thereby, crept into the passage, probably expecting to gather some news by listening to the visitors if they approached. Two of these ascended the broken steps, and every word was audible from his place of concealment. He instantly recognised the voice of Kelly. The other was a stranger.

"Ah, ah! old Mother Red-Cap, I tell thee, says we can never get the treasure. By this good spade, and a willing arm to wit, the gold is mine ere two hours older," said Kelly.

"I am terribly afeard o' these same boggarts," replied his companion. "T'owd an—'ll come sure enough among us, sure as my name's Tim, some time or another."

"Never fear, nunkey; thee knows what a lump I've promised thee; an' as for the old one, trust me for that; I can lay him in the Red Sea at any time. Haven't I and that old silly Doctor, who pretends, forsooth, to have conscience qualms when there's aught to be gotten, though as fond o' the stuff as any of us—haven't we, I say, by conjurations and fumigations, raised and laid a whole legion o' them? Why, man, I'm as well acquainted with the kingdom of Beelzebub, and his ministers to boot, as I am with my own."

"Don't make sich an ugly talk about 'em, prithee, good sir. I thought I heard some'at there i' the passage, an' I think i' my heart I darna face 'em again for a' th' gowd i' th' monk's cellar."

"Tush, fool! If we get hold on 't now it shall be ours, and none o' the rest of our brethren o' the Red Cross need share, thee knows. But thou be'st but newly dubbed an' hardly initiated yet in our sublime mysteries. Nevertheless, I will be indifferent honest too, and for thy great services to us and to our cause I do promise thee a largess when it comes to our fingers—that is to say, one-fifth to thee, and one-fifth to me; the other three shares do go to the general treasure-house of the community, of which I take half."

"A goodly portion, marry—but I'd liefer 't not gang ony farther."

"Villain! thou art bent on treachery; if thou draw back I'll ha' thee hanged or otherwise punished for what thou hast done. Remember, knave, thou art in my power."

The guilty victim groaned piteously, but he was irretrievably entangled. The toils had been spread by a master-hand. He saw the gulf to which he was hurried, but could not extricate himself.

“Yonder women, plague take ‘em,” said Tim; “what’s up now? I know this owd witch who’s sold hersel’ to—to—Blackface I’m afeard, is th’ owner o’ many a good rood o’ land hereabout, an’ t’owd Ha’ too, wi’ its ‘purtenances. But she’s brought fro’ Spain or Italy, as I be tou’d, a main lot o’ these same priest gear; an’ they’re lurkin’ hereabout like, loike rabbits in a warren, till she can get rid o’ these Ashtons. Mony a year long past I’ve seen her prowling about, but she never could get her ends greedly till now.”

“By my help she shall,” said Kelly; “it’s a bargain between us. She’s brought her grandchildren too, who left England in their youth, being educated in a convent o’er seas. They’re just ready to drop into possession.”

“But poor Grace Ashton; she’s gi’en me mony a dish of hot porritch an’ bannocks. She shauna be hurt if I can help it.”

“Fool!—the wench must be provided for. Look thee—if she get away, she’ll spoil all. When dead, young Buckley must be charged with the murder.”

“Weel, weel; but I’ll ha’ nought more to do wi’ t. E’en tak’ your own fling—I’ll wash my hands on’t altogether, an’ so”——

“I want help, thou chicken-faced varlet—come, budge—to thy work; we may have helpers to the booty, if time be lost.”

“Mercy on us!” said Tim, in great dolour, “I wish I had ne’er had aught to do wi’ treasure-hunting an’ sich-like occupation. If ever I get rid of this job, if I don’t stick to my old trade, hang me up to dry.”

“Hold thy peace, carrion! and remember, should a whisper even escape thee, I will have thee hanged in good earnest.”

“Ay, ay; just like Satan ‘ticing to iniquity, an’ then, biggest rogue al’ays turns retriever.”

“None o’ thy pretences: thou hast as liquorish a longing after the gold as any miser in the parish, and when the broad pieces and the silver nobles jingle in thy fob, thoult’ forget thy qualms, and thank me into the bargain. Now to work. Let me see, what did the sleeping beauty say? Humph—’Under the main pillar at the south-east corner.’ Good. Nay, man, don’t light up yet. Let us get fairly underground first, for fear of accidents.”

To the great alarm of Dr Dee, who heard every word, these two worthies came straight towards the opening. He drew on one side at a venture. Luckily it proved the right one; they proceeded up the passage in the opposite direction. He heard them groping at the further end. A trap-door was evidently raised, and he was pretty well convinced they had found the way to the vaults; probably it had been blocked up for ages until recently, and in all likelihood Tim had pointed it out, as well as the notion that treasure was concealed somewhere in these labyrinths.

How to make this discovery in some way subservient to his mission was the next consideration; and with a firm conviction, generally the forerunner of success, he determined to employ some bold stratagem for their detection. They were now fairly in the trap, and he hoped to make sure of the vermin. For this end he cautiously felt his way to the opposite extremity of the passage, where he found the floor emitted a hollow sound. This was assuredly the entrance; but he tried in vain—it resisted every effort. Here, however, he determined to keep watch and seize them if possible on their egress, trusting to his good fortune or his courage for help in any emergency that might ensue. At times he laid his ear to the ground, but nothing was audible as to their operations below. This convinced him they were at a considerable distance from the entry, but he felt assured that ere long they must

emerge from their den, when, taken by surprise, he should have little difficulty in securing the first that came forth, keeping fast the door until he had made sure of his captive.

He watched patiently for some time, when all on a sudden he heard a rumbling subterraneous noise, and he plainly felt the ground tremble under his feet. A loud shriek was heard below, and presently footsteps approaching the entrance. He had scarcely time to draw aside ere the door was burst open, and some one rushed forth. The Doctor seized him by the throat, and ere he had recovered from his consternation, dragged him out of the passage.

“Villain! what is it ye are plotting here about? Confess, or I’ll have thee dealt with after thy deserts.”

“Oh!—I’ll—tell—all—I will”—sobbed out the delinquent, gasping with terror. Tim, for it was none other, fell on his knees crying for mercy. “Whoever thou art,” continued he, “come and help—help for one that’s fa’n under a heavy calamity. Bad though he be, we maunna let him perish for lack o’ lookin’ after.”

“Hast got a light, knave?”

“I’ll run an’ fetch one.”

“Nay, nay; we part not company until better acquainted. Is there not a candle below?”

“Alas! ‘tis put out—and—oh! I’d forgotten; here’s t’ match-box i’ my pocket.”

He drew forth the requisite materials, and they were soon equipped, exploring the concealed chambers we have before described. With difficulty they now found their way, by reason of the dust arising from the recent catastrophe. Dee followed cautiously on, keeping a wary eye on his leader lest some deceit or stratagem should be intended.

They now approached a heap of ruins almost choking the entrance to the larger vault. He thought groans issued from beneath.

“He’s not dead yet,” said Tim. “Here, here, good sir; help me to shift this stone first.”

They set to work in good earnest, and, with no little difficulty and delay, at length succeeded in releasing the unfortunate treasure-hunter. Eager to possess the supposed riches, they had incautiously undermined one of the main supports of the roof, and Kelly was buried under the ruins. Fortunately he lay in the hollow he had made, otherwise nothing but a miracle could have saved him from immediate death. He was terribly bruised, nevertheless, and presented a pitiable spectacle. Bleeding and sore wounded, he was hardly sensible as they bore him out into the fresh air. Apparently unable to move, they laid him on the ground until help could be obtained. In a while he recovered.

“Thou art verily incorrigible,” said the Doctor to his former associate. “Where is the maiden ye have so cruelly conveyed away?”

But Kelly was dogged, and would not answer.

“I have heard and know all,” continued Dee; “so that, unless thou wilt confess, assuredly I will have thee lodged in the next jail on accusation of the murder. Thy diabolical practices will sooner or later bring thee to punishment.”

“Promise not to molest me,” said Kelly, who feared nothing but the strong arm of the law, so utterly was he given over to a reprobate mind, even to commit iniquity with greediness.

“What! and let thee forth to compass other and maybe more heinous mischief! I promise nothing, save that thou be prevented from such pursuits. Thou hast entered into covenant with the woman whom it is our purpose in due time to deliver up to the secular arm. You think to

compass your mutual ends by this compact; but be assured your schemes shall be frustrated, and that speedily.”

At this Kelly again fell into a sulky mood, maimed and helpless though he was; and revenge, dark and deadly, distorted his visage.

Tim here stepped forward.

“I do repent me of this iniquity, an’ if ever I’m catched meddling wi’ sich tickle gear again, I’ll gie ye leave to hang me up without judge or jury.”

“The best proof of repentance is restitution,” said the Doctor. “Knowest thou aught of the maiden?”

“I’ll find her, if ye can keep that noisome wizard frae hurting me. He swears that if I tell, e’en by nods, winks, or otherwise, he’ll send me to —— in a whirlwind.”

“I will give thee my pledge, not a hair of thy head shall be damaged.”

“He has the key in his pocket.”

“What of that?”

“It’s the key to the old house door yonder, an’ she’s either there or but lately fetched away.”

The Doctor proceeded, though not without opposition, to the search. The key was soon produced, and accompanied by the repentant ballad-monger, he approached the mansion, which, as we have before noticed, was near at hand, apparently untenanted.

“Yonder knave, I think, cannot escape,” said Dee.

“No, no,” said his conductor, “unless some’at fetches him; he’s too well hampered for that. His legs are aw smashed wi’ that downfa’.”

They entered a little court almost choked up with leaves and long grass. The door was unlocked, and a desolate scene presented itself. The hall was covered with damp and mildew—all was rotting in ruin and decay. Tim led the way up-stairs. The same appearances were still manifest. The dark shadow of death seemed to brood there—an interminable silence. They entered a small closet, nearly dark; and here, on a miserable pallet, lay the form of Grace Ashton, now, alas! pale and haggard. She seemed altogether unconscious of their presence. The horrible events of the preceding night had brought on mental as well as bodily disease. It was the practice of these treasure-seekers either to raise up a dead body for the desired information, or to throw the living into such a state of mental hallucination that they should answer dark and difficult questions whilst in that condition. It not unfrequently happened, however, that the unfortunate victims to these horrid rites either lost their lives or their reason during the experiment.

We will not pursue the recital in the present case: suffice it to say, that Grace Ashton was immediately removed and placed under the care of her friends; the Doctor went back to Kelly for further disclosures, but what was his surprise to find that by some means or another he had escaped. He now lost no time in returning to Buckley, communicating the painful, though in some degree welcome, intelligence that Grace Ashton had been rescued from her persecutors.

It was now time to adopt measures for their reception of the witch, who would doubtless not fail in her appointment.

Dee was yet in doubt as to the issue, and he thought it needful to acquaint them with the only method by which the spell could be broken. How it were possible that the ring should ever

bind her was a mystery that at present he could not solve. Dame Eleanor listened very attentively, then sharply replied—

“I have heard o’ this charm aforetime, or——By’r lady, but I have it!”

She almost capered for joy.

We will not, however, anticipate the result, but entreat our readers to suspend their guesses, and again accompany us to the chamber where lay the heir of Buckley, still grievously tormented.

Midnight again approached. Dee was sitting at the table, apparently in deep study. He had examined the closet, and found it communicated by another passage to an outer door; and it was through this that the Red Woman had contrived to enter without being observed. The learned Doctor was evidently awaiting her approach with no little anxiety. Once or twice he fancied some one tapped at the casement, but it was only the wind rushing by in stormy gusts, increasing in strength and frequency as the time drew nigh.

Hark! was not that a distant shriek? It might be the creaking of the boughs and the old yew-tree by the door, thought Dee; and again, in a while, he relapsed into a profound reverie. Another! He heard the jarring of rusty hinges; a heavy step; and—the Red Woman stood beside him; but with such a malevolent aspect that he was somewhat startled and uneasy at her presence.

“I am beguiled of my prey!—mocked—thwarted. But beware, old man; thy meddling may prove dangerous. I will possess the inheritance, though every earthly power withstood me! That boy is mine. He hath sworn it—sealed it with his heart’s blood—and I demand the pledge.” The victim groaned. “Hearest thou that response? ‘Tis an assent. He is mine in spite of your stratagems.”

This was probably but the raving of a disordered intellect, but Dee was too deeply imbued with the superstitions of the age to suppose for a moment that it was not a case of undisguised witchcraft, or that this wicked hag was not invested with sufficient power to execute whatever either anger or caprice might suggest.

“What is thy will with the wretched victim thou hast ensnared?” he inquired.

“I have told thee.”

“Thou wilt not convey him away bodily to his tormentors?”

“Unless they have a victim the inheritance may not be mine.” She said this with such a fiendish malice that made even the exorcist tremble. His presence of mind, however, did not forsake him.

“The ring—I remember—there was a condition in the bond. In all such compacts there is ever a loophole for escape.”

“None that thou canst creep through,” she said, with a look of scorn.

“It is not permitted that the children of men be tempted above measure.”

“When that ring shall have strength to bind me, and not till then. All other bonds I rend asunder. Even adamant were as flaming tow.”

“Here is a ring of stout iron,” said Dee, pointing to an iron ring fixed by a stout staple in the wall. “I think it would try thy boasted strength.”

“I could break it as the feeble reed.”

The Doctor shook his head incredulously.

“Try me. Thou shall find it no empty boast.”

She seemed proud that her words should be put to the test; and even proposed that her arms should be pinioned, and her body fastened with stout cords to the iron ring which had been prepared for this purpose.

“Thou shalt soon find which is the strongest,” said she, exultingly. “I have broken bonds ere now to which these are but as a thread.”

She looked confident of success, and surveyed the whole proceeding with a look of unutterable scorn.

“Now do thy worst, thou wicked one,” said Dee, when he had finished.

But lo! a shriek that might have wakened the dead. She was unable to extricate herself, being held in spite of the most desperate efforts to escape. With a loud yell she cried out—

“Thou hast played me false, demon!”

“‘Tis not thy demon,” said Dee; “it is I that have circumvented thee. In that iron ring is concealed the charmed one, wrought out by a cunning smith to this intent—to wit, the deliverance of a persecuted house.”

The Red Woman now appeared shorn of her strength. Her charms and her delusions were dispelled. She sank into the condition of a hopeless, wretched maniac, and was for some time closely confined to this chamber.

Buckley, recovering soon after, was united to Grace Ashton, who, it is confidently asserted, and perhaps believed, was restored to immediate health when the charm was broken.

XLII. The Death-Painter; Or, The Skeleton's Bride

"This will hardly keep body and soul together," said Conrad Bergmann, as he eyed with a dissatisfied countenance some score of dingy kreutzers thrust into his palm by a "patron of early genius,"—one of those individuals who take great merit to themselves by just keeping their victims in that enviable position between life and death, between absolute starvation and hopeless, abject poverty, which effectually represses all efforts to excel, controls and quenches all but longings after immortality—who just fan the flame to let it smoke and quiver in the socket, but sedulously prevent it rising to any degree of steadiness and brilliance.

Conrad that morning had taken home a picture, his sole occupation for two months, and this patron, a dealer in the "fine arts," dwelling in the good, quiet city of Mannheim, had given him a sum equivalent to thirty-six shillings sterling for his labour. Peradventure, it was not in the highest style of art; but what Schwartzen Bären or Weisse Rösse—Black Bears, White Horses, Spread Eagles, and the like, the meanest, worst-painted signs in the city—would not have commanded a higher price?

In fact, Conrad had just genius enough to make himself miserable—to wit, by aspiring after those honours it was impossible to attain, keeping him thereby in a constant fret and disappointment, instead of being content with his station, or striving for objects within his reach. Could he have drudged on as some dauber of sign-posts, or taken to useful employment, he might doubtless have earned a comfortable sustenance. He had, however, like many another child of genius, a soul above such vulgarities; yearning after the ideal and the vain; having too much genius for himself and too little for the world; suspended in a sort of Mahomet's coffin between earth and heaven—contemned, rejected, by "gods, men, and columns."

Conrad Bergmann was about two-and-twenty, of good figure and well-proportioned features, complexion fair, bright bluish-grey eyes, whiskers well matched with a pale, poetical, it might be sickly hue of countenance, and an expression more inclining to melancholy than persons of such mean condition have a right to assume. His father had brought him up to a trade—an honest thriving business—to wit, that of *knopfmacher* (button-maker). But Conrad, the youngest, and his mother's favourite, happened to be indulged with more idle time than the rest, which, for the most part, was laudably expended in scrawling sundry hideous representations—all manner of things on walls and wainscots. Persevering in this occupation he was forthwith pronounced a genius. About the age of fifteen, Conrad saw a huge "St Christopher," by a native artist, and straightway his destiny was fixed. He struggled on for some years with little success save being pronounced by the gossips "marvellously clever." His performances wanted that careful and elaborate course of study indispensable even to the most exalted genius. They were not only glaring, tawdry, and ill-drawn, but worse conceived; flashy, crude accumulations of colour only rendering their defects more apparent. He was in a great measure self-taught. His impetuous, ardent imagination could not endure the labour requisite to form an artist. He would fain have read ere he had learned to spell; and the result might easily have been foretold.

His father died, and the family were but scantily provided for. Conrad was now forced to make, out a livelihood by what was previously an amusement, not having "a trade in his

fingers;" and he toiled on, selling his productions for the veriest trifle. He had now no leisure for improvement in the first elements of his art.

"Better starve or beg, better be errand-boy or lackey, than waste my talents on such an ungrateful world. I'll turn conjurer—fire-eater—mountebank; set the fools agape at fairs and pastimes. Anything rather than killing—starving by inches. Why, the criminals at hard labour in the fortress have less work and better fare. I wish—I wish"——

"What dost wish, honest youth?" said a tall, heavy-eyed, beetle-browed, swarthy personage, who poked his face round from behind, close to that of the unfortunate artist, with great freedom and familiarity.

"I wish thou hadst better manners, or wast i' the stocks, where every prying impertinent should be," replied Conrad, being in no very placable humour with his morning's work. The stranger laughed, not at all abashed by this ill-mannered, testy rebuke, replying good-humouredly—

"Ah, ah! master canvas-spoiler. Wherefore so hasty this morning? My legs befit not the gyves any more than thine own. But many a man thrusts his favours where they be more rare than welcome. I would do thee a service."

"'Tis the hangman's, then, for that seems the only favour that befits my condition."

"Thou art cynical, bitter at thy disappointment. Let us discourse together hard by. A flask of good Rhenish will soften and assuage thy humours. A drop of *kirchenwasser*, too, might not be taken amiss this chill morning."

Nothing loth, Conrad followed the stranger, and they were soon imbibing some excellent *vin du pays* in a neighbouring tavern.

"Conrad Bergmann," began the stranger. "Ay, thou art surprised; but I know more than thy name. Wilt that I do thee a good office?"

"Not the least objection, friend, if the price be within reach. Nothing pay, nothing have, I reckon."

"The price? Nothing. At least nothing thou need care for. Thou art thirsting for fame, riches; for the honours of this world; for—for—the hand—the heart of thy beloved."

Amongst the rest of Conrad's calamities he had the misfortune to be in love.

"Thou art mighty fluent with thy guesses," replied he, not at all relishing these unpleasant truths; "and what if I am doomed to pine after the good I can never attain? I will bear my miseries, if not without repining, at least without thy pity;" and he arose to depart.

"All that thou pinest after is thine. All!" said the stranger.

"Mine! By what process?—whose the gift? Ha, ha!" and he drained the brimming glass, waiting a solution of his interrogatory.

"I will be thy instructor. Behold the renowned Doctor Gabriel Ras Mousa, who hath studied all arts and sciences in the world, who hath unveiled Nature in her most secret operations, and can make her submissive as a menial to his will. In a period incredibly short I engage to make thee the most renowned painter in Christendom."

"And the time requisite to perform this?"

"One month! Ay, by the wand of Hermes, in one month, under my teaching, shalt thou have thy desire. I watched thy bargain with the dealer yonder, and have had pity on thy youth and misfortunes."

“Humph—compassion! And the price?” again inquired Conrad, with an anxious yet somewhat dubious expression of tone.

“The price? Once every month shalt thou paint me a picture.”

“Is that all?”

“All.”

Now Conrad began to indulge some pleasant fancies. Dreams of hope and ambition hovered about him; but he soon grew gloomy and desponding as heretofore. He waxed incredulous.

“One month? Nothing less than a miracle! The time is too short. Impossible!”

“That is my business. I have both the will and the power. Is it a bargain?”

Conrad again drained the cup, and things looked brighter. He felt invigorated. His courage came afresh, and he answered firmly—

“A bargain.”

“Give me thy hand.”

“O mein Herr—not so hard. Thy grip is like a smithy vice.”

“Beg pardon of thy tender extremities. To-morrow then, at this hour, we begin.” Immediately after which intimation the stranger departed.

Conrad returned to his own dwelling. He felt restless, uneasy. Apprehensions of coming evil haunted him. Night was tenfold more appalling. Horrid visions kept him in continual alarm.

He arose feverish and unrefreshed. Yesterday’s bargain did not appear so pleasant in his eyes; but fear gave way apace, and ere the appointed hour he was in his little workroom, where the mysterious instructor found him in anxious expectation. He drew the requisite materials from under his cloak, a well-primed canvas already prepared. The pallet was covered, and Conrad sat down to obey his master’s directions.

“What shall be our subject?” inquired the pupil.

“A head. Proceed.”

“A female?”

“Yes. But follow my instructions implicitly.”

Conrad chalked out the outline. It was feebly, incorrectly drawn: but the stranger took his crayon, and by a few spirited touches gave life, vigour, and expression to the whole. Conrad was in despair.

“Oh that it were in my power to have done this!” he cried, putting one hand on his brow, and looking at the picture as though he would have devoured it.

“Now for colour,” said the stranger; and he carefully directed his pupil how to lay in the ground, to mingle and contrast the different tints, in a manner so far superior to his former process, that Conrad soon began to feel a glow of enthusiasm. His fervour increased, the latent spark of genius was kindled. In short, the unknown seemed to have imbued him with some hitherto unfelt attributes—invested him either with new powers, or awakened his hitherto dormant faculties. As before, by a few touches, the crude, spiritless mass became living and breathing under the master’s hand. Not many hours elapsed ere a pretty head, respectably executed, appeared on the canvas. Conrad was in high spirits.

He felt a new sense, a new faculty, as it were, created within him. He worked industriously. Every hour seemed to condense the labour and experience of years. He made prodigious advances. His master came daily at the same time, and at length his term of instruction drew to a close. The last morning of the month arrived; and Conrad, unknown to his neighbours, had attained to the highest rank in his profession. His paintings, all executed under the immediate superintendence of the stranger, were splendid specimens of art.

In the year ——, all Paris was moved with the extraordinary performances of a young artist, whose portraits were the most wonderful, and his miniatures the most exquisite, that eyes ever beheld. They looked absolutely as though endowed with life—real flesh and blood to all appearance; and happy were those who could get a painting from his hand. The price was enormous, and the marvellous facility with which they were despatched was not the least extraordinary part of the business. There was a mystery, too, about him, provokingly delightful, especially to the female portion of the community. In place of living in a gay and fashionable part of the city, his lodging was in a miserable garret, overlooking one of the gloomiest streets of the metropolis. His manners, too, were forbidding and reserved. Instead of exhibiting the natural buoyancy of his years, he looked careworn and dejected; nor was he ever known to smile.

After a period whispers got abroad that several of his female subjects came to strange and untimely deaths. They were seized with some dangerous malady, accompanied by frightful delusions. In general they fancied themselves possessed. Wailings, shrieks, and horrible blasphemies proceeded from the lips of the sufferers. These reports were doubtless exaggerated, the marvellous being a prodigiously accumulative and inventive faculty; yet enough remained, apparently authentic, to justify the most unfavourable suspicions.

About this time a young Italian lady of a noble house arrived on a visit to her brother in the suite of the Florentine embassy. This princely dame, possessed of great wealth and beauty, was not long unprovided with lovers; one especially, a handsome official in the royal household, De Vessey by name, and as gallant a cavalier as ever lady looked upon. But her term of absence being nigh expired, the lovers were in great perplexity; and nothing seemed so likely to contribute to their comfort during such unavoidable separation as a miniature portrait of each from the hands of this inimitable painter. Leonora sat first, and the lover was in raptures. Hour by hour he watched the progress of his work in a little gloomy chamber, where the artist, like some automaton fixture, was always found in the same place, occupied too as it might seem without intermission.

“The gaze of that strange painter distresses me inexpressibly,” said Leonora to her companion, as they went for the last time to his apartment. “I have borne it hitherto without a murmur, but words cannot describe the reluctance with which I endure his glance; yet while I feel as though my very soul abhorred it, it penetrates—nay, drinks up and withers my spirit. Though I shrink from it, some influence or fascination, call it as thou wilt, prevents escape; I cannot turn away my eyes from his terrible gaze.”

“Thou art fanciful, my love,” said De Vessey; “the near prospect of our parting makes thee apt to indulge these gloomy impressions. Be of good cheer; nothing shall harm thee in my presence. ‘Tis the last sitting; put on a well-favoured aspect, I beseech thee. Remember, this portraiture will be my only solace during the long long hours of thine absence.”

As they entered the artist’s chamber, the picture lay before him, which he seemed to contemplate with such absorbing intensity that he was hardly aware of their entrance. He did not weep, but grief and pity were strangely mingled in his glance. It was but for a moment; he

quickly resumed his usual attitude and expression. Whether the previous conversation had made her lover liable to take the tone and character of her own thoughts, we know not; but for the first time he fancied Leonora's apprehensions were not entirely without excuse. He looked on the artist, and it excited almost a thrill of apprehension. But speedily chiding himself for these untoward fancies, he felt that little was apparent either in look or manner but what the painter's peculiar and unexampled genius might sufficiently explain.

Suddenly his attention was riveted on the lady. He saw her lips quiver and turn pale as though she would have swooned. In a moment he was at her side. The support seemed to re-animate the fainting maiden, her head drooping on his shoulder. Almost gasping for utterance, she whispered, "Take me hence, I want breath—air, air!" De Vessey lifted her in his arms and bore her forth into the open doorway. Trembling, shuddering, and looking round, the first words she uttered were—

"We are watched—by some unseen being in yonder chamber, I am persuaded. Didst not mark an antique, dismal-looking ebony cabinet immediately behind the painter?"

"I did, and admired its exquisite workmanship, as though wrought by some cunning hand."

"As I fixed my eyes on those little trceries, it might be fancy, but methought I saw the bright flash of a human eye gazing on me."

"Oh! my Leonora, indulge not these gloomy impressions. Throw off thy wayward fancies. 'Tis but the reflex image the mind mistakes for outward realities. When disordered she discerns not the substance from the shadow. Thou art well-nigh recovered. Come, come, let us in. To-day is the last of our task; prithee take courage and return."

"On one condition only; if thou take the chair first, and note well an open scroll to the right where those fawns and satyrs are carved."

"Agreed. And now shake off thy fears, my love."

De Vessey led her again to the apartment, and as though without consideration sat down, his face directly towards the cabinet. He fixed his eyes thereon a few seconds only, when Leonora saw him start up suddenly with a troubled aspect and grasp the hilt of his sword. Then turning to the painter he said, sternly—

"So!—We have intruders here, I trow."

"Intruders? None!" was the artist's reply, without betraying either surprise or alarm.

"That we'll see presently," said the cavalier, hastening to the cabinet; which, with hearty good-will, he essayed to open.

"Why this outrage?" inquired the painter, colouring with a hectic flush.

"Because 'tis my good pleasure," was the haughty reply. The door resisted his utmost efforts.

"Doubtless held by some one within. Open, or by this good sword I'll make a passage through both door and carcase."

The hinges slowly gave way, the folding-doors swung open, and displayed a grinning skeleton.

"Ah! what lodger is this?"

"Mine art requires it," said the painter, with a ghastly smile; but in that smile was an expression so fearful, yet mysterious, that even De Vessey quailed before it. Another miniature portrait, a precise copy of the one in hand, hung from the neck of the skeleton.

Leonora, with a loud shriek, covered her face; but the lover, though far from satisfied himself, strove to assure his mistress, and besought her not to indulge any apprehension.

“You are disturbed, lady,” said the artist. “‘Tis but a harmless piece of earth, a mouldering fabric of dust, a thing, a form we must all one day assume. But to-morrow, to-morrow, if you will, we resume our work.”

Leonora, relieved by the intimation, gladly consented, fain for a while to escape from this terrible chamber.

“Nought living was there, of a truth,” said the cavalier, in evident perplexity, as they regained their coach. “But I saw plain enough, or imagination played me the prank, a semblance of a bright and flashing eye on the spot pointed out. Something incomprehensible hangs about the whole!”

Leonora agreed in this conclusion, expressing a fear lest harm should happen to themselves thereby. They were not ignorant of the whispers afloat, but hitherto treated them either with ridicule or indifference. Suspicion, however, once awake, mystery once apprehended, every circumstance, even the most trivial, is seized upon, the mind bending all to one grand object which haunts and excites the imagination.

Having left his companion at her brother’s dwelling, De Vessey came to his own, moody and dispirited. A vague sense of some grievous but impending misfortune hung heavily upon him. Night brought no mitigation of his fears. Spectres, skeletons, and demon-painters haunted his slumbers. He awoke in greater torment than ever. The duplicate portrait was brought to his remembrance with a vividness, an intensity so appalling, that he almost expected to behold the skeleton wearer at his bedside.

Involved in a labyrinth of inextricable surmises, and not knowing what course to pursue, he arose early, and walked forth without aim or design towards the church of Notre Dame.

The red sun was just bursting through a thick atmosphere of mist, illuminating its two dark western towers, which looked even more gloomy under a bright and glowing sky, like melancholy in immediate contrast with hilarity and joy.

He passed the Morgue, or dead-house, where bodies found in the Seine are exposed, in order that they may be owned or recognised. Impelled by curiosity, he entered. One space alone was occupied. He could not surely be deceived when he saw the body of the unfortunate painter! Those features were too well remembered to be mistaken. Here was new ground for conjecture, fresh wonder and perplexity. He left this melancholy exhibition and entered the cathedral. Mass was celebrating at one of the altars. De Vessey joined in adoration, strolling away afterwards towards the vaults: one of them was open. From some vague, unaccountable impulse, he thus accosted the sexton:—

“Whose grave is this, friend?”

“A maid’s—mayhap.”

“Her name?”

“The only remaining descendant of the Barons Montargis.”

“I have some knowledge of that noble gentlewoman; she was just about to be married. What might be the nature of her malady?”

“Why, verily there be as many guesses as opinions. The doctors were all at fault, and, ‘tis said, even now in great dispute. The king’s physician tried hard to save her. Old Frère

Jeronymo, the confessor, will have it she was possessed; but all his fumigations, exorcisms, paters, and holy water could not cast out the foul fiend. She died raving mad!”

“A miserable portion for one so young and high-born. Was there no visible cause?”

“Cause!—Ay, marry; if common gossip be not an arrant jade. Her portrait had been taken by that same limner who, they say, has been taught in the devil’s school, and can despatch a likeness with the twirl of his brush.”

“And what of that?” cried De Vessey, in an agony of impatience.

“Why, the same fate has happened to several of our city dames. That is all.”

“What has happened?”

“They have gone mad, and either felt or fancied some demon had gotten them in keeping. For my part, I pretend not to a knowledge of the matter. But you seem strangely moved, methinks.”

The cavalier was nigh choking with emotion. Sick at heart, and with a fearful presentiment of impending evil, he turned suddenly away.

His next visit, as may be supposed, was to his mistress. He found her in great agitation. The portrait had been sent home the preceding night, and completely finished, lay before her—an exquisite—nay, marvellous—specimen of art. She was gazing on her own radiant counterpart as he entered. They both agreed that something more than ordinary ran through the whole proceedings, though unable to comprehend their meaning. De Vessey related his discovery in the Morgue, but not his subsequent interview with the sexton.

Ere night, Leonora was seized with a strange and frightful disease. Symptoms of insanity were soon developed. She uttered fearful cries; calling on the painter in language wild and incoherent, but of terrific import.

The lover was at his wits’ end. He vowed to spare no efforts to save her, though scarcely knowing what course to pursue, or in what quarter to apply for help.

His first care was to seek the dwelling of a certain renowned doctor, a German, whose extraordinary cures and mode of treatment had won for him great wealth and reputation. Though by some accounted a quack and impostor, nevertheless De Vessey hoped, as a last resource, so cunning a physician might be able to point at once to the source and cure of this occult malady.

Doctor Herman Sichel lived in one of those high, antique, dreary-looking habitations, now pulled down, situate in the Rue d’Enfer. A common staircase conducted to several suites of apartments, tenanted by various occupants, and at the very summit dwelt this exalted personage.

A pull at the ponderous bell-handle gave notice of De Vessey’s approach, when, after due deliberation, it might seem, and a long trial to the impatient querent, a little wicket was cautiously slid back, behind a grating in the door. A face, partially exhibited, demanded his errand.

“Thy master, knave!”

“He is in the very entrails of a sublime study. Not for my beard, grey though it be, dare I break in upon him.”

“Mine errand is urgent,” said De Vessey; “and, look thee, say a noble cavalier hath great need of succour at his hands.”

“Grammercy, Sir Cavalier, and hath not everybody an errand of like moment?—thy business, peradventure, less urgent than fifty others whose suit I have denied this blessed day. I tell thee, my master may not be disturbed!”

De Vessey held up a coin temptingly before the grating. It would not go through, and the crusty Cerberus gently undid a marvellous array of chains, bars, and other ingenious devices, opening a slit wide enough for its insertion.

“Wider! thou trusty keeper,” said the artful suitor outside. “I cannot fly through a key-hole!”

A hand was carefully protruded. The cavalier, espying his opportunity, thrust first his sword, afterwards himself, through the aperture, in spite of curses and entreaties from the greedy porter. He was immediately within a dark entrance or vestibule; the astonished and angry menial venting his wrath in no measured phrases on the intruder. De Vessey, in a peremptory tone, demanded to be led forthwith into the doctor’s presence. The old man delayed for a while, almost speechless from several causes. His breath was nigh spent. Wrath on the one hand, fear of his master’s displeasure on the other, kept him, like antagonistic forces, perpetually midway between both.

“Lead the way, knave, or, by the beard of St Louis, I’ll seek him through the house! Quick! thou hast legs; if not, speak! Mine errand is urgent, and will not wait.”

A stout and determined cavalier, with a strong gripe, and a sword none of the shortest, was not to be trifled with; and, after many expostulations, warnings, threats, had failed of their effect, he at length doggedly consented.

“Thou wilt give me the coin, then, Sir Cavalier?”

“Ay, when thou hast earned it. Away!”

Passing through a narrow passage, lighted from above, his conductor paused before a curiously-carved oaken door, at which three taps announced a message.

“Now enter, and pray for us both a safe deliverance. But, prithee, tell him it was not my fault thou hast gotten admission.”

The door slowly opened, as though without an effort, and De Vessey was immediately in the presence of the physician, evidently to the surprise of the learned doctor himself, who angrily demanded his business and the ground of his intrusion.

“Mine hour is not yet come, young man. Wherefore shouldst thou, either by stratagem or force, thrust thyself, unbidden, into our presence?”

“To buy or beg thine aid, if it be possible. The case admits not of delay. I crave thy pardon, most reverend doctor, if that content thee; and, rest assured, no largess, no reward shall be too great, if thou restore one, I fear me, beyond earthly aid.”

“Thus am I ever solicited,” replied the sage, with a portentous scowl. He was clad in a gown of dark stuff, with slippers to match; his poll surmounted by a small black velvet skull-cap, from which his white, intensely white, hair escaped in great profusion. His visage was not swarthy, but of a leaden, pale complexion, where little could be discerned of the wondrous microcosm within. Books, and manuscripts of ancient form and character, emblazoned in quaint and mystic devices, lay open on a long oak table, on which rested one elbow of the wise man; the other was thrown over an arm of the high-backed chair whereon he sat. The room contained plenty of litter in the shape of phials, boxes, and other strange furniture. A cupola furnace was just heated, the doctor apparently concocting some subtle compound.

“I am expected to wrest these helpless mortals even from the ravening jaws of the grave! My skill never tried until beyond other aid!”

“But this disorder is of a sudden emergency. A lady of high birth and lineage, a few hours since, was seized with a raging frenzy.”

“A female, then?”

“Ay, and of such sweet temper and excellent parts, there be none to match with her, body or mind, in Christendom.”

“When did this malady attack her?”

“Almost immediately after a portrait, made by the celebrated painter, was finished. Of him thou hast doubtless heard.”

“The painter—ay! There be more than thou have rued his skill. Young man, thy pretty one is lost!”

“Lost? Oh, say not so! I will give thee thine utmost desire—riches—wealth thou hast never possessed, if thou restore her!”

“She is beyond my skill. Hast visited him since?”

“I have seen him. She is the last victim, if such be her fate. This very morning, betimes, I saw his body in the Morgue.”

“They have found him, then?” said the doctor, sharply. “Yet our bodies are but *exuviae*. When cast off, this thinking, sentient principle within has another tabernacle assigned to it, until the great consummation of all things. But these are fables, idle tales, to the unlearned. Nevertheless, I pity thy cruel fate, and, if aid can be afforded, will call another to thine help. Hence! Thou shalt hear from me anon.”

“And without loss of time; for every moment, methinks, our succour may come too late.”

“I will forthwith seek out one whom I have heretofore taken knowledge of. Every science has its votaries—its adepts; and this evil case hath its remedy only by those skilled in arts called, however falsely, supernatural. Even now there be intelligences around us which the corporeal eye seeth not, nor can see, unless purged from the dross, the fumes of mortality. Some, peradventure, by long and patient study, have arrived on the very borders, the confines that separate visible from invisible things, and become, as it were, the medium of intercourse for mortals, who are by this means mightily aided in matters beyond ordinary research. Put thine ear to this shell. Mark its voice, like the sound of many waters. Are not these the invisible source, the essence of its being? Has not everything in like manner, even the most inanimate, a tongue, a language, peculiar to itself—a soul, a spirit, pervading its form, which moulds and fashions every substance according to its own nature? Now, this voice thou canst not interpret, being unskilled—knowing not the languages peculiar to every form and modification of matter; else would this beautiful type of the ever-rolling sea discourse marvellously to thine ear. But thou hast not the key to unclothe its mystic tongue; hence, like any other unknown speech, ‘tis but a confused jumble of unmeaning sound. I have little more knowledge than thyself, but there be those who can interpret. Vain man—presumptuous, ignorant—scoffs at knowledge beyond his reach, and thinks his own dim, nay, darkened reason, glimmering as in a dungeon, the narrow horizon that circumscribes his vision, the utmost boundary of all knowledge and existence, while beyond lies the infinite and unknown, utterly transcending his capacity and comprehension.”

De Vessey drank up every word of this harangue; and something akin to hope rose in his bosom as he withdrew.

“Thou wilt have a message ere nightfall. An awful trial awaits thee ere the spell can be countervailed.”

The cavalier withdrew, suffering many wistful remarks from the old doorkeeper, who marvelled greatly at the interview so graciously conceded by his master; while at the same time holding out his palm for the promised largess.

De Vessey waited impatiently at his own dwelling for the expected message. Evening drew on, dark and stormy. The wind roared along the narrow streets in sharp and irregular gusts; while, pacing his chamber in an agony of suspense, he fancied every sound betokened the approaching communication. At length, when expectation was almost weary, a louder rumbling was heard; a coach drew up at the door; a hasty knock, and a heavy tramp; then footsteps ascending the staircase. The door opened, and two *gens-d’armes* entered.

“We have authority and instructions for the arrest of one Sigismund de Vessey, on a charge of murder, made this day by deposition before the Mayor and Prefecture of the Ville de Paris. The individual so named, we apprehend, is before us.”

“The same; though assuredly there is some mistake. Of whose death am I accused?”

“Of one Conrad Bergmann, a painter, whose body, last night thrown into the Seine, was to-day exposed in the Morgue. The rest will be explained anon.”

“But an engagement—one, too, of a most important nature—demands my presence.”

“No discretion is allowed us in this matter. The carriage waits.”

However reluctant, De Vessey was forced to obey. Though confident of a speedy release, this arrest at so important a juncture was provoking enough. Leonora’s recovery might probably depend on his exertions for the next few hours, which were now suddenly wrested from him.

Leaving word that he would shortly return, the cavalier stepped into the vehicle, which immediately drove off.

In a little space the coach stopped, and De Vessey was invited to alight. He was led up a narrow staircase; a door flew open. He entered. Could it be; surely imagination betrayed his senses! He could scarcely believe himself once more in the apartment of the painter! Yet there was no mistaking what he saw. The ebony cabinet, the easel, table, chair—all left as he saw them yesterday. But the living occupants were strangely diverse. Two or three functionaries of the civil power; and in one corner a black cloth, spread on the floor, concealed some unknown object. The whole was lighted by a feeble lamp from the ceiling. A dusky haze from the damp, foggy atmosphere rendered objects ill-defined, indistinct, almost terrific to an excited imagination. In addition to the usual articles of furniture was a desk, with writing materials, at which one of the officers of justice appeared dictating something to his secretary.

On De Vessey’s entrance, the scribe made some minute preparatory to his examination, which commenced as follows:—

“Sigismund de Vessey?”

“The same.”

“Being accused upon oath before us of murder, thou art brought hither to confront thine accusers, and to answer this heinous charge. First, let the body be produced.”

The cloth was removed, and De Vessey beheld the corpse lying on a mattress.

“Knowest thou this body?”

“I do,” said the cavalier, firmly.

“When was he seen by thee alive, the last time?”

“Yesterday, about noon.”

“Where?”

“In this chamber.”

“Not since?”

“Yes, but not living.”

“Dead, sayest thou?”

“This morning in the Morgue.”

“Not previously?”

“I have not. But pray to what purport this examination?”

“This will appear presently. When taken out of the river marks were found upon the throat, as though from strangulation. Knowest thou aught of these?”

“I do not,” said the accused, indignantly.

This answer being written down, the examination was resumed.

“We have testimony that the unfortunate victim and thyself were seen together about midnight; and, further, a short but violent struggle was heard, and a heavy plunge; afterwards an individual, with whom thou art identified, was seen departing in great haste, and entering the house well known as thy residence in the Rue de”——

“A most foul and wicked fabrication, for purposes of which as yet I am ignorant. Of such charges I hardly need affirm that I am innocent.”

“Let the accuser stand forth.”

To the surprise and horror of De Vessey there appeared from a recess the German doctor, Hermann Sichel, who, without flinching, recapitulated the foregoing accusation. Moreover, he swore in the most positive terms to his identity, and that not a doubt rested on his mind but De Vessey was the murderer.

“In this very apartment,” said the witness, “he, De Vessey, drew his sword upon the painter yesterday, doubtless either from grudge or jealousy; being enamoured of a fair Italian dame, Leonora da Rimini.”

“Most abominable of liars!” said the accused, eyeing him with a furious look. “How darest thou to my face bring this foul accusation. Thou shalt answer for it with thy blood!”

“Hear him! What need of further testimony? His own betrays him,” said the doctor, with unblushing effrontery.

“We have other witness thou wilt not dare to gainsay,” said the presiding officer. “This learned person is amply corroborated by evidence that must effectually silence all denial. He hath referred us to her who was present, Leonora da Rimini.”

“Leonora! what, my own—my betrothed? She my accuser?”

“Spare thy speech and listen. We could not bring the maiden hither, insomuch as the nature of her malady admits not of removal: but her evidence and accusation are duly attested, taken at her own request, not many hours ago. The substance of her deposition is as follows:—A confession to her of thine intention to murder Conrad Bergmann, the artist aforesaid, being jealous of his attentions; and furthermore, in the agony of guilt, thou didst confess in her presence, having first strangled, and afterwards thrown him into the river, hoping thereby to conceal thy crime; then forcing her to swear she would keep the matter secret, and threatening her life in case it were divulged. This outrage, and this alone, hath nigh driven her frantic; her life being in jeopardy from thy violence. What sayest thou, Sigismund de Vessey?”

“A lie, most foul and audacious, trumped up by that impostor! Leonora? Impossible. I would not believe though it were from her own lips. Some demon hath possessed her. This disorder is more than common madness.”

He looked around. The whole was like the phantasma of some terrible dream. Bewildered, and hardly knowing what course to pursue, in vain he attempted to shake the testimony of the hoary villain before him; and having at present none other means of rebutting the accusation, he was ordered into close custody until the morrow.

Utterly unprepared with evidence, he knew not where to apply. That he was the victim of some foul plot so far appeared certain; but for what purpose, and at whose instigation, was inexplicable.

Ere an hour had elapsed De Vessey found himself in one of the cells of a public dungeon, with ample leisure to form plans for proving his innocence. He determined early on the morrow to acquaint his friends, and employ a celebrated advocate to expose this villainous doctor, who no doubt had designs either on his purse or person.

In a while the prisoner fell asleep from fatigue and exhaustion. He was awakened by a sudden glare across his eyelids. At first, imagining he was under the influence of some extravagant dream, he made little effort to arouse himself. A figure stood beside the couch, a lamp lifted above his head. A friar's cowl concealed his features; his person, too, was enveloped in a coarse garment, with a huge rosary at his girdle.

“Mortal, awake and listen,” said the unknown visitor. “Art weary of life, or does this present world content thee?”

“Who art thou?” said De Vessey, scarcely raising himself from the pallet.

“I am thy friend, thy deliverer, an' thou wilt.”

“Thanks!” said the knight, springing from his recumbent posture.

“Stay!” replied the intruder; “there be conditions ere thou pass hence. Miserable offspring of Adam, ye still cling to your prison and your clay. Wherefore shrink from the separation, afraid to shake off your bonds, your loathsome carcase, and spring forth at once to life? Art thou prepared to fulfil one—but one condition for thy release?”

“Name it. Manifest my innocence; and if it be gold, thou shalt have thy desire. No hired advocate e'er yet held such a fee.”

“Keep thy gold for baser uses; it buyeth not my benefits. But remember, thy life is not worth a week's purchase, neither is thy mistress's, forsooth, shouldest thou be witless enough to refuse. An ignominious death, a base exit for thyself—for her, madness and a speedy grave. One fate awaits ye both. Life and health, if thou consent, are yours.”

“Thou speakest riddles. It were vain trying to comprehend their import. Name thy conditions. Aught that honour may purchase will I give.”

The stranger threw back his cowl, displaying the features of the renowned Doctor Hermann Sichel. A gleam of lurid intelligence lighted his grim grey eyes, that might betoken either insanity or excitement.

Without reflecting for one moment on the hazard or imprudence of his conduct, De Vessey immediately rushed forward, grappled with his adversary, and threw him.

“Now will I have deadly vengeance, fiend! Take that!” said he, drawing forth a concealed poniard and thrusting with all his might. Scorn puckered the features of the pretended monk. The weapon’s point was driven back, refusing to enter, as though his enemy held a charmed existence.

“Put back thy weapon; thou wilt have need of it elsewhere, silly one.”

De Vessey was confounded at this unlooked-for result. His foe seemed invulnerable, and he slunk back.

“I forgive thee, poor fool! Put it back, I say. There—there; now to work—time hastens, and there is little space for parley.”

“What is thy will?”

“Thy welfare, thy life: listen. Yonder unhappy wretch I have loaden with benefits, rescued from poverty, disgrace; lifted him to the pinnacle of his ambition—the highest rank in art. Base ingrate, he threatened to betray, to denounce, and I crushed the reptile. He is now what thou shalt be shortly unless my power be put forth for thy rescue. Not all the united efforts of man can deliver thee. Beyond earthly aid, thou diest the death of a dog!”

“Why dost thou accuse me of a crime, knowing that I am innocent?”

“To drive thee, helpless, into my power. Think not to escape save on one condition.”

“Name it,” said De Vessey.

“Self-preservation is the great, the paramount law of our nature; the most powerful impulse implanted in our being. All, all obey this impulse; and who can control or forbid its operation? Will not the most timid, the most scrupulous, if no alternative be afforded, slay the adversary who seeks his life; and does not the law both of earth and heaven hold him guiltless? Thou art now denounced. Innocent, thy life must be sacrificed. Thou diest, or another; there is no choice.”

“But shall I murder the innocent?”

“And suppose it be. What thinkest thou? Two persons, equally guiltless, one of them must die. Self-preservation will prompt instinctively to action. Does not the drowning man cling to his companions; nay, rescue himself at the expense of another’s life?”

De Vessey felt bewildered, if not convinced. Need we wonder if he yielded. Life or death; honour, disgrace. His mistress restored; his innocence proved. Life, with him, had scarcely been tasted. A glorious career awaited him; his lady-love smiling through the bright vista of the future; and——The tempter prevailed!

But who must be the victim? The appalling truth was not then disclosed. De Vessey promised to obey.

“But remember, no power, not even flight, can screen thee from my vengeance shouldst break thy vow. Take warning by the painter; the poor fool but hesitated, and his doom was

swift as it was sure. Take this cowl and friar's garment; I was admitted by the jailer for thy shrift. The lamp will guide thee. Be bold, and fear not. I will remain; to-morrow they will find out their mistake, but I have other means of escape."

"And Leonora. How shall she be recovered?"

"That is a work of peril, and will need thine utmost vigilance. Rememberest thou the skeleton?"

"In the ebony cabinet?" inquired the cavalier, with a cold shudder.

"He hath her portrait, and will not lightly be persuaded to give his prey. *Every month I am bound to furnish him a bride!* My own life pays the forfeit of omission. Leonora is the next victim, unless thou prevail, betrothed to that grisly type of death!"

"Oh, horrible! Mine the bride of a loathsome skeleton! Of an atomy! A fiend! Monster, I will denounce thee. I care not for my own life. Of what worth if torn from hers. Wretch, give back my bride or"——

"Spare these transports. I am now thine only friend. Thou art now cut off from thy kin, shunned by mankind. To whom, then, wilt thou turn for help? Mine thou art for ever!"

De Vessey gasped for utterance.

"Nevertheless," continued his tormentor, "I will direct and help thee in this matter also. But 'tis a fearful venture. Hast thou courage?"

"If to rescue her, aught that human arm can achieve shall be done."

"He holds the portrait, I tell thee, with a steady gripe. Those skeleton fingers will be hard to unloose."

"I will break them or perish. This good"——

"Touch them not for thy life. Death, sure but lingering, awaits whomsoever they fasten upon. Take this key. It will admit thee to the apartment. To-night the deed must be accomplished, or to-morrow the maiden is beyond succour."

"And how is this charmed picture to be wrested from him?"

"An ebony wand lies at his feet; he will obey its touch. But whatsoever thou seest, be nothing daunted, nor let any silly terror scare thee from thy purpose. Now to thy task. But keep these marvels to thyself. If thou whisper—ay, to the winds—our compact, thou art not safe."

Soon De Vessey, enveloped in his disguise, found egress without difficulty. Once outside the prison, he hurried on, scarcely giving himself time for reflection.

The night was dark and stormy. Torches, distributed about the streets, rocked and swung to and fro in their sockets, the flames, with a strange and flickering glare, giving an unnatural distorted appearance to objects within reach; and to some solitary individual, at this late hour hurrying alone, the grim aspect of a demon or a spectre to the disturbed imagination of the lover. His courage, at times on the point of deserting him, revived when he remembered that another's life, dearer than his own, depended on his exertions. The streets, almost deserted, swam with continually accumulating torrents; but he felt not that terrible tempest; the turmoil, the conflict within, was louder than the roar and tumult of outward elements.

Almost ere he was aware he found himself opposite the entrance of the painter's habitation; a shudder, like a death-chill, shot through his frame. He applied his key. A distant gleam, a dim lurid light, seemed to quiver before him. He heard the quick jar, the withdrawing bolt, that gave him admittance, as though it were a spectral voice warning him to desist.

The unknown dangers he anticipated, rendered more terrific by their vague indefinite character, were enough to appal a stouter bosom. De Vessey would have faced and defied earthly perils, but these were almost beyond his fortitude to endure. Love, however, gave excitement, if not courage, and he resolved either to succeed or perish in the attempt. The stairs were partially illumined by an uncertain glimmer from a narrow window into the street. He felt his way, and every step sent the life-blood curdling to his heart. He reached the topmost stair; laid one hand on the latch. He listened; all was still save the hollow gusts that rumbled round the dwelling.

With a feeling somewhat akin to desperation he entered. A lamp, yet burning, emitted a feeble glare, but was well-nigh spent, giving a more dismal aspect to this lonely chamber. It was apparently unoccupied. The chair, the black funeral pall left by the officers of justice over the pallet, the mysterious cabinet, the desk where the painter usually sat, all remained undisturbed. De Vessey's attention was more particularly directed towards the cabinet; there alone, according to his instructions, were the means of deliverance. A cold, clammy perspiration, a freezing shiver, came upon him as he approached. He laid one hand on the latch; it resisted as before. He tried force, a loud groan was heard in the chamber. Every fibre of his frame seemed to grow rigid; every limb stiffened with horror; and he drew back.

This was a sorry beginning to the adventure, and he inwardly repented of his rashness. Looking round in extreme agony, his eyes rested on the black pall. Could it be, or was it from the expiring glimmer of the lamp? The drapery appeared to move. Another and a deeper groan! De Vessey for a space was unable to move; but his courage came apace, inasmuch as it was some relief, and a diversion from the awful mysteries of that grim cabinet. He approached the pallet hastily, throwing off the heavy coverlet. The recumbent body was yet beneath, but convulsed, as though struggling to free itself from an oppressive burden. De Vessey watched, while his blood froze with terror. Gradually these convulsive movements extended to the features. The lips quivered as though essaying to speak; the eye-balls rolling rapidly under their lids. A slight flush dawned upon the cheek; the hands were tightly closed, and another groan preceded one desperate attempt to throw off the load which prevented returning animation. At length the eyes opened with a ghastly stare; but evidently conveying no outward impression to the inward sense. With a loud shriek the body started up; then, uttering a wild and piercing cry, rolled on the floor, foaming and struggling for life as though with some powerful adversary.

"Save me!—save me!" was uttered in a tone so harrowing and dreadful, more than mortal agony, that De Vessey would have fled, but his limbs refused their office.

"He strangles me! Fiend—have—have mercy! Wilt thou not? Oh, mercy, mercy, Heaven!" His senses, though evidently bewildered, resumed their functions. With a glare of intense anguish he appeared as though supplicating help and deliverance.

"Who art thou?" was the first inquiry and symptom of returning reason. "I know thee, De Vessey. But why art thou here? Another victim. Yes, to torture me. Where am I? In my own chamber! Oh—that horrid cabinet! Yet—yet these cruel torments. Will they never end?"

De Vessey immediately perceived there was no delusion; the mortal form of the artist was really before him. Terrible though it were, yet it was a relief to have companionship with his kind, a being of flesh and blood beside him. He might now peradventure accomplish his task. Providence, maybe, had opened a way for his deliverance, and hope once more dawned on his spirit. He helped the miserable artist to regain his couch, and sought to soothe him, beseeching the helpless victim not to give way to frenzy, doubtless resulting from his strange and emaciated condition. A miracle or a spell had been wrought for his resuscitation; but the

events of the last few hours were alike enigmas, beyond the common operations of nature to explain.

“Yesterday I attempted suicide,” said the artist, “taking poison to escape a life insupportable to me. Fain would I have broken the chain which binds me to this miserable existence. But yon tyrant hath given me a charmed life. I cannot even die!”

“Thy body was dragged from the Seine.”

“How?” inquired the artist, with an incredulous look.

“And exposed this morning in the Morgue,” continued De Vessey.

“When will my sufferings cease? How have I prayed for deliverance from this infernal thrall!”

“Yon deceiver hath doubtless thrown thee into the river, and supposing thou wert dead, he designs me to supply thy place; to carry on the dark mystery of iniquity, a glimpse of which hath already been revealed.”

“Would that I had been left to perish—that my doom were ended. Avarice—ambition—how enslaved are your victims! How have I longed for my miserable cottage, my poverty, my obscurity—cold and pinching want, but a quiet conscience to season my scanty meal! I bartered all for gold, for fame and—misery! A cruel bondage! compared to which I could envy the meanest thing that crawls on this abject earth. In my trance I dreamed of green fields and babbling streams; of my brethren, my playmates, my days of innocence and sport, when all was freshness and anticipation—life one bright vista beyond, opening to sunny regions of rapture and delight. And now, what am I?—a wretch, degraded, undone—a spectacle of misery beyond what human thought can conceive. Doomed to years, ages it may be, of woe—to scenes of horror such as tongue ne’er told, and even imagination might scarce endure, and my miseries but a foretaste of that hereafter!”

Here the guilty victim writhed in a paroxysm of agony; his veins swollen almost to bursting. Whether real or imaginary, whether a victim to insanity or of some supernatural agent, its influence was not the less terrible in its effects. Starting suddenly from his grovelling posture, he cried, fixing his eyes on De Vessey with a searching glance—

“What brings thee hither?”

“Leonora is in jeopardy by your spells. I seek her deliverance.”

“She is beyond rescue. Leonora da Rimini is The Skeleton’s Bride.”

Here the painter threw such a repulsive glance towards the cabinet that the cavalier shrank back as though expecting some grisly spectre from its portals; yet, himself the subject of an extraordinary fascination, he could not withdraw his gaze.

“Fly, fly, or thou art lost! My tormentor will be here anon—I would have saved her, and he fixed his burning gripe here, I feel it still; not a night passes that he comes not hither. Away! shouldest thou meet him thy doom is fixed, and for ever. I would not that another fell into his toils. Coudest thou know, ay, but as a whisper, the secrets of this prison-house, thy spirit would melt, thy flesh would shrink as though the hot wind of the desert had passed over it. What I have endured, and what I must endure, are alike unutterable.”

“Thy keeper comes not to-night. He hath sent me to this chamber of death instead. He knows not thou art alive.”

“Thee!—to—but I must not reveal; my tongue cleaves to my mouth. Nay, nay, it cannot be; none but a fiend could do his behest. Away! for thy life, away!”

De Vessey related the events of the last few hours. The artist ruminated awhile, then abruptly exclaimed—

“He hath some diabolical design thereupon which I am not yet able to fathom. That it is for thine undoing, Sir Knight, for thy misery here and hereafter, doubt not. Thou hast promised, but not yet offered him a victim. Thus far thou art safe; but he will pursue thee; and think not to escape his vengeance. How to proceed is beyond my counsel. Should midnight come, thou wouldest see horrors in this chamber that might quail the stoutest heart. Thou art bereft of life or reason if thou tarry.”

“I leave not without an attempt, even should I fail, to wrench her, who is dearer to me than either, from that demon’s grasp. I will not hence alone.”

“Alas! I fear there is little hope; yet shall he not escape yonder prison before to-morrow. Even his arts cannot convey him through its walls; the magician’s body, if such he be, is subject to like impediments with our own. This night, for good or ill, is thine.”

“To work, then, to work,” said De Vessey, as though inspired with new energy, “to the rescue, and by this good cross,” kissing the handle of his sword, “I defy ye!”

By main force he attempted, and in the end tore open the door of the cabinet. The grinning skeleton was before him, the miniature in its grasp. A moment’s pause. The cavalier carefully surveyed his prize. Suspended by an iron chain, the links entwined round its bony arm, rendered the picture difficult, if not impossible, to detach without touching the limbs. Gathering fresh courage from the countenance and smile of his beloved, he snatched the portrait, but the wearer was too tenacious of the charmed treasure, and resisted his utmost efforts. He thought a savage, a malicious grin crept upon his features. A smile more than usually hideous mocked him. From those hollow sockets too, or his imagination played strange antics, a faint glare shot forth. A dizzy terror crept over him. His brain reeled. His energies were becoming prostrate; and unless one desperate attempt could be made, all hopes of rescue were past. He sought the ebony wand, but forgetful or incautious, laid hold of the chain which encircled the skeleton’s wrist. A bell answered to the pressure,—a deep hollow reverberation, like a death-knell, in his ear.

“Hark! that iron tongue—lost—lost! Oh! mercy, mercy!” shrieked the death-painter, covering his eyes.

At this moment De Vessey heard a noise like the jarring of bolts and hinges. Ere he was aware the skeleton’s arms were fastened round him; the doors closed; the floor gave way under his feet. He felt the pressure relaxing; he fell; the hissing wind rushed in his ears. Stunned with his fall, he lay for a while in the dark, scarcely able to move. It was not long ere he was able to grope about. Rotting carcases and bones met his touch—a noisome charnel-house gorged with human bodies in all the various stages of decay. His heart sickened with a fearful apprehension that he was left to perish by a lingering death, like those around him. Despair for the first time benumbed his faculties. His courage gave way at the dreadful anticipation, and he grasped the very carcase on which he trod for succour.

Suddenly, a loud yell burst above him. A blaze of burning timbers flashed forth—crackling, they hissed, and fell into the vault. Through an opening overhead he saw the skeleton seized by devouring flames. They twined, they clung round it. Their forked tongues licked the bones that appeared to writhe and crawl in living agony.

Soon the chain which held the portrait gave way, and it dropped at his feet unhurt. A shriek issued from the flaming cabinet, and he saw the painter with a burning torch above. A maniac

joy lighted up his features; he shouted to De Vessey, and with frantic gestures beckoned that he should escape.

“If thou canst climb yonder stair,” he cried, “before the flames cut off thy retreat, thou art safe. See, Leonora is already free. Haste—this way—there—there—now leap—mind thy footing—’tis too frail—creep round—those rafters are unbroken; another spring, and thou mayest reach them in safety.”

The flames were close upon him. He was nigh suffocated. A perilous attempt; but at length he gained the upper floor, and his deliverer exclaimed—

“Thanks, thanks, he is safe! By this good hand, too, that wrought your misery. Oh! that a life of penitence and prayer might atone for my guilt. It was a thought inspired by Heaven, prompted me to set on fire that insatiate demon, to whom my taskmaster offered those wretched victims, and every month a bride, on pain of his own destruction. What might be the nature of that skeleton form, or their compact, thou canst neither know nor understand. Even I, though nightly witnessing horrors which have given to youth the aspect and decrepitude of age, cannot explain. A connection, if not inseparable, yet intimate as body and soul, existed between those demon-haunted bones and yon monster who sought and accomplished my ruin. What I have seen must not, cannot be told. My lips are for ever sealed. But the flames are fast gaining on us. Let us hasten ere they prevent our retreat. The whole fabric will shortly be enveloped, and every record of this diabolical confederacy consumed. Go to thy lady-love. She is recovered, and as one newly-awakened from some terrific dream. With the earliest dawn hie thee to the prison lest *he* escape. Let him be instantly secured. When summoned, I will not fail to confront, to denounce the wretch. He cannot penetrate yonder walls save by fraud or stratagem. How I have escaped death is one of the mysteries which time perchance may never develop. One might fancy the cunning leech who supplied the drug did play me false. Instead of poison, mayhap, one of those potions of which we have heard, that so benumb and stupify the faculties that for a space they mimic death, nor can anything rouse or recover from its influence until the appointed time be past.”

They hurried away as he spoke. De Vessey could scarcely wait until daylight. His first care was to secure the old sorcerer. He sought aid from the police, and, as far as might be, revealed the dreadful secret.

An immediate visit was made to the cell. On entering, its inmate was in bed—a scorched, a blackened corpse!

It may be supposed the lover was not long in attending on his mistress. She was free from disorder, and happily unconscious of what had passed during the interval, save that an ugly dream had troubled her. Nor was she aware that more than one night had elapsed. In a few days afterwards De Vessey led her to the altar.

The mystery was never fully penetrated. That imposture and partial insanity might be involved, and have the greatest share in its development, is beyond doubt; but they cannot explain the whole of these diabolical proceedings. That the powers of darkness may have power over the bodies of wicked and abandoned men cannot be denied.

Whether this narration discloses another instance of such mysterious agency our readers must determine.

What the painter knew was buried in eternal silence. The monks of La Trappe received a brother whose vows were never broken!

XLIII. The Crystal Goblet. A Tale Of The Emperor Severus

This tale was written for the Traditions of the County of York. It appeared by permission in an Annual entitled The White Rose of York: but having only had a local circulation at the time, and having been carefully revised by the author during the last winter of his life, it finds a place here.

It was midnight—yet a light was burning in a small chamber situated in one of the narrowest and least frequented streets of Eboracum, then the metropolis of the world. York at that period being the residence of the Emperor Severus, his court and family were conveyed hither; and the government of the world transferred to an obscure island in the west, once the *ultima Thule* of civilisation, its native inhabitants hardly yet emerged from a state of barbarism, and addicted to the most gross and revolting superstitions.

A lamp of coarse earthenware was fastened on a bronze stand, having several beaks, and of a boat-like shape. Near it stood the oil-vase for replenishing, almost empty—while the wicks, charred and heavy with exuviae, looked as though for some time untrimmed. On the same table was a Greek and a Coptic manuscript, an inkhorn, and the half of a silver penny, the Roman *symbolum*. Breaking a piece of money as a keepsake between two friends was, even at that period, a very ancient custom. A brass rhombus, used by magicians, lay on a *cathedra* or easy chair, which stood as though suddenly pushed aside by its occupier in rising hastily from his studies. An iron chest was near, partly open, wherein papers and parchments lay tumbled about in apparent disorder. Vellum, so white and firm as to curl even with the warmth of the hand; purple skins emblazoned in gold and silver, and many others, of rare workmanship, were scattered about with unsparing profusion. It was evidently the study, the *librarium* of some distinguished person, and consisted of an inner chamber beyond the court, having one window near the roof, and another opening into a small garden behind. From the ceiling there hung a dried ape, a lizard, and several uncouth, unintelligible reptiles, put together in shapes that nature's most fantastic forms never displayed. Vases of ointments, and unguents of strange odours, stood in rows upon a marble slab on one side of the apartment. *Scrinia*, or caskets for the admission of rolls and writing materials, were deposited on shelves, forming a library of reference to the individual whose *sanctum* we are now describing: it was apparently undisturbed by any living occupant save a huge raven, now roosting on a wooden perch, his head buried under a glossy tissue of feathers, and to all appearance immovable as the grinning and hideous things that surrounded him. A magpie, confined in a cage above the door, was taught to salute those who entered with the word "χαῖρε" (*chaire*), a Grecian custom greatly in vogue amongst the most opulent of the Romans.

Ere long there came a footstep and a gentle summons at the door. The bird gave the usual response; and straightway entered a stout muscular figure, wrapped in a *chlamys*, fastened on the shoulder with a richly-embossed *fibula*. Beneath was the usual light leathern cuirass, covered with scales of shining metal; the centre, over the abdomen, ornamented with a gorgon's head and other warlike devices; a short sword being stuck in his girdle. From the lowest part hung leathern straps, or *lambrequins*, highly wrought and embellished. He wore breeches or drawers reaching to the knees, and his feet and the lower part of the leg were covered with the *cothurnus*, a sort of traveller's half-boot. A sumptuous mantle, made of leopard skin, was thrown carelessly about his head, hardly concealing his features, for the

folds, relaxing in some measure as he entered, showed a youthful countenance, yet dark and ferocious, indicating a character of daring and vindictive energy, and a disposition where forgiveness or remorse rarely tempered the fiercer passions. As he looked round the raven raised his head on a sudden, and peering at him with that curious and familiar eye so characteristic of the tribe, gave a loud and hollow croak, which again arrested the notice of the intruder.

“Most auspicious welcome truly, ill-omened bird. Is thy master visible?”

There was no reply; and the inquirer, after a cautious glance round the chamber, sat down, evidently disconcerted by this unexpected reception. Scarcely seated, he felt the clasp on his shoulder suddenly risen, as though by an intruder from behind. Looking round, he saw the raven with the bauble in his beak, hopping off with great alacrity to his perch. The magpie set up a loud scream, as though vexed he was not a participator in the spoil. The owner, angry at his loss, pursued the thief, who defied every attempt to regain it, getting far above his reach; ever and anon the same ominous croak sounding dismally through the gloom by which he was concealed. Finding it fruitless, the stranger gave up the pursuit, and again sat down, examining carelessly the papers which lay open for perusal. But it might seem these feathered guardians were entrusted with the care of their master’s chamber during his absence.

“Beware!” said the same querulous voice that before accosted him. Looking up, he saw the magpie, his neck stretched to the utmost through the bars of his cage, and in the act of repeating the injunction.

“‘Tis an ill augur to my suit,” he muttered, hastily. “Destiny!” Starting up at the word, which he spoke aloud, he clenched his hand.

“The inexorable gods may decree, but would it not be worthy of my purpose to brave them; to render even fate itself subservient to me!”

He hurried to and fro across the chamber with an agitated step. Suddenly he stood still in the attitude of listening. He drew the folds of his mantle closer about his head, when, by another entrance, there approached a tall majestic figure, clad in dark vestments, who, without speaking, came near and stood before him. A veil of rich net-work fell gracefully below his mantle, being in that era the distinctive garb of soothsayers and diviners. His hair, for he was an Asiatic, was twisted in the shape of a mitre, investing his form with every advantage from outward appearances.

“I would know,” said he, “by what right thou art at this untimely hour an intruder on my privacy?”

“By a will which even thou darest not disobey,” was the answer.

“It is past midnight. Knowest thou of my long watching, and the dark portents of the stars?”

“Nay. But passing, I saw the door of the vestibule partly open. The fates are propitious. I crossed the court, intending to consult the most famous soothsayer in the emperor’s dominions.”

“Peradventure ‘tis no accidental meeting. To-night I have read the stars, the book of heaven. Comest thou not, blind mortal, at their bidding?”

“I have neither skill nor knowledge in the art”——

The stranger hesitated, as though he had as lief the conversation was resumed by the diviner himself.

“Thy father. What of him?” said the Chaldean, with a look as though he had penetrated his inmost thoughts.

“True, ‘tis mine errand,” said the intruder. “But the event?”

“The augury is not complete!”

“Thine auguries are like my good fortune—long in compassing. The best augur, I trow, is this good steel. I would sooner trust it than the best thou canst bestow.”

“Rash mortal! Impatience will be thy destruction. Listen!”

The raven hopped down upon his shoulder. A low guttural sound appeared to come from this ill-omened bird. The augur bent his ear. Sounds shaped themselves into something like articulation, and the following couplet was distinctly heard:—

“While the eagle is in his nest, the eaglet shall not prevail;
Nor shall the eagle be smitten in his eyrie.”

“Azor,” said the warrior, clenching his sword, “these three times hast thou mocked me, and by the immortal gods thou diest!”

“Impious one! I could strike thee powerless as the dust thou treadest on. Give me the bauble,” said he, addressing the raven. The bird immediately gave the clasp he had purloined into his master’s hand.

“This shall witness between us,” continued he. “Dare to lift thy hand, the very palace shall bear testimony to thy treason—that thou hast sought me for purposes too horrible even for thy tongue to utter. Hence! When least expected I may meet thee. If it had not been for thy mother’s sake, and for my vow, the emperor ere this had been privy to it.”

Stung with rage and disappointment, he put back his weapon, and with threats and imprecations departed.

On a couch inlaid with ivory and pearl, within a vaulted chamber in the Prætorian Palace of the royal city, lay the emperor, in a coverlid of rich stuff. Disease had crushed his body, but the indomitable spirit was unquenched. Tossing and disturbed, at length he started from his bed. Calling to his chamberlain, he demanded if there had not been footsteps in the apartment. The ruler of the world, whose nod could shake the nations, and whose word was the arbiter of life or death to millions of his fellow-men, lay here—startled at the passing of a sound, the falling of a shadow! His face, whose chief characteristic was power—that strength and determination of spirit which all acknowledge, and but few comprehend—was furrowed with deeper marks than care had wrought. Sixty years had moulded the steady and inflexible purpose of his soul in lines too palpable to be misunderstood. His beard was short and grizzled; and a swarthy hue, betraying his African birth, was now become sallow, and even sickly in the extreme; but an eagle eye still beamed in all its fierceness and rapacity from under his scanty brows. His nose was not of the Roman sort, like the beak of that royal bird, but thick and even clumsy, lacking that sharp and predacious intellect generally associated with forms of this description.

Such was Septimus Severus, then styled on a coin just struck “*Britannicus Maximus*,” in commemoration of a great victory gained over the Caledonians, whom he had driven beyond Adrian’s Wall. Though suffering from severe illness, he was carried in a horse-litter; and, marching from York at the head of his troops, penetrated almost to the extremity of the island, where he subdued that fierce and intractable nation the Scots. Returning, he left his son Caracalla to superintend the building of a stone wall across the island in place of the

earthen ramparts called Adrian's; a structure, when completed, that effectually resisted the inroads of those barbarians for a considerable period.

He called a third time to Virius Lupus, one, the most confidential of his attendants, to whom many of the most important secrets of the state were entrusted.

"Thrice have I heard it, Virius. Again and again it seems to mock and elude my grasp." He paused, the officer yet listening with becoming reverence. The emperor continued, more like one whose thoughts had taken utterance than as if he were addressing the individual before him.

"When I led the Pannonian legions to victory; when Rome opened her gates at my command; when I fought my way through blood to the throne—I quailed not then! Now—satiated with power, careless of fame, the prospects of life closed, and for ever—when all that is left for me to do is to die—behold, I tremble at the shaking of a leaf! I start even at the footstep that awakes me!"

"Long live the emperor!" said the cringing secretary. Interrupting him, as he would have proceeded with the customary adulations, the emperor again continued as though hardly noticing his presence—

"Caracalla yet remains with the army. Once I censured the misguided clemency of Marcus, who by an act of justice might have prevented the miseries that his son Caligula brought upon the empire; and yet I, even I," said the haughty monarch, bitterly, "nourish the very weakness that in others I despise!"

He dashed away the sweat from his brow, ashamed of the weakness he could not quell.

"He hath sought your life," said the wily sycophant.

"He hath. Traitor! parricide! the distinctions he would have earned. But my better genius triumphed, and history hath been spared this infamy. It may be, this temporary exile from our court with the northern army shall tame his spirit to submission. My life or his, once the bitter alternative, may yet be avoided."

"But may not his presence with the army be impolitic, should he turn the weapon wherewith you have girded him to your own hurt?"

"'Tis an evil choice; whichever way I turn, mischief is before me."

"Were it not best that he be recalled?"

"What? To plot and practise against my life! To mount upon my reeking body to the throne! He will not reign with Geta. The proud boy disdains a divided empire. And was not mine own soul fashioned in the same mould? When Niger would have ruled in Syria, and Albinus in Britain, I scattered their legions to the winds, and levelled their hopes with their pride. 'Tis nature; and shall I, the author of his being, punish him for mine own gift?"

He raised himself on his couch. The fierce blaze of ambition broke the dark cloud of bodily infirmities, and the monarch and the tyrant again dilated his almost savage features.

The secretary, used to these fiery moods, stood awaiting his commands. The emperor, as though exhausted, sank down on his pillow, exclaiming—

"I have governed the world, but I cannot govern a wayward heart!"

Thus did he often lament, and provoke himself the more with these vain regrets; forgetting that, if he had exercised the same firmness in his private as public capacity, the government of his own house would have been easy as the government of the world.

“Virius Lupus, there is danger—and to-night. As I have told thee, the stars do betoken mischief. But the peril is at my threshold. Let Caracalla remain; so shall we avert his weapon. Should the assassin come, it will not be with the blow of a parricide. Thou mayest retire to thy couch, but first let the guards be doubled, the watchword and countersign changed. And, hark thee, tell the tribune that he look well to the *tessera*, and have the right count from the inspectors. Should despatches come from Rome, let the messenger have immediate audience.”

Again the emperor stretched himself on the couch, and again his slumbers were interrupted. A murmur was heard along the halls and passages where the guards were stationed. The noise grew louder, approaching the very door of the royal chamber. The monarch started as from a dream, and the door at that moment opened. The Chaldean soothsayer stood before him.

“Azor!” said the emperor, “at this hour? What betides such unseemly greeting?”

“Cæsar trembles on his throne; but the world quakes not! The angel of death is at thy door. Caracalla hath returned.”

“Returned? Surely thy wits are disturbed. Caracalla! Ay, even yesterday, we had despatches from the camp.”

“Howbeit, he is at thy threshold. The sound of his feet is behind me.”

“Impossible! the mischief is not from him.”

“Even now I looked in the crystal, and behold”——The soothsayer paused. Horror was gathering on his features. The light suspended above him began to quiver; and as it waved to and fro his countenance assumed a tremulous and distorted expression.

Severus watched the result with no little anxiety. The magician drew a crystal cup from his girdle. Looking in apparently with great alarm, he presented it at arm’s length to the emperor, who beheld a milky cloud slowly undulating within the vessel.

“Take this,” said the soothsayer, “and tell me what thou seest.”

The monarch took it at his bidding. The cloud seemed to be clearing away, as the morning mist before the sun.

“I see nothing,” said the emperor, “but a silver clasp at the bottom.”

“And the owner?”

“As I live,” said the astonished parent, drawing forth a curiously-embossed clasp from the goblet, and holding it out to the light, “this token of rare workmanship did the empress present to Caracalla ere he departed. Whence came it? and wherefore hast thou brought it hither?”

“A silent witness to my word. Within the hour thy son returns; and”——The seer’s voice grew more ominous whilst he spake. “Beware! there’s mischief in the wind. The raven scents his prey afar off!”

“If in this thou art a true prophet I will give thee largess; but if a lying spirit of divination possess thee, my power is swift to punish as to reward.”

“I heed not either. Do I serve thee for lucre? Look thee, in less time than I would occupy in telling thee on’t I could fill thy palace with gold and silver!—and do I covet thy paltry treasures? The kingdoms of this world are his whom I serve, and shall I seek thy perishing honours? Behold, I leave this precious goblet as my pledge. I must away. Thou shalt render it back on my return. I would not part with that treasure for the dominion of the Cæsars.

Beware thou let it not forth from thy sight, for there be genii who are bound to serve its possessor, and peradventure it shall give thee warning when evil approaches.”

The soothsayer departed, and the emperor laid the crystal goblet on a table opposite his couch. He clapped his hands, and the chief secretary approached.

“What said our messenger from the north? Read again the despatch they brought yesterday.”

The secretary drew forth a roll from his cabinet, and read as follows:—

“Again the supreme gods have granted victory to our legions. Favoured by the darkness and their boats, the barbarians attacked us from three separate points. Led on by Fingal and his warriors, whom beforetime we erroneously reported to be slain, they crossed over to the station where we had pitched our tents. But the Roman eagle was yet watchful.

Though retreating behind our last defences, we left not the field until a thousand, the choicest of our foes, bit the dust. Morning showed us the red-haired chief and his bards, but they were departing, and their spears were glittering on the mountains.”

“Enough!” said the emperor. “Caracalla tarries yet with the camp. Our person is not menaced by his hand. Prithee, send a brasier hither. The night is far spent, and slumber will not again visit these eyelids.”

A bronze tripod was brought supported by sphinxes, the worship of Isis being a fashionable idolatry at that period. Charred wood was then placed in a round dish pierced with holes, and perfumes thrown in to correct the smell. The emperor commanded that he should be left alone. Covering his shoulders with a richly-embroidered mantle, he took from behind his pillow a Greek treatise on the occult sciences, to the study of which he was passionately addicted.

It is said of him by historians that he was guided by his skill in judicial astrology to the choice of the reigning empress, having lost his first wife when governor of the Lyonnese Gaul. Finding that a lady of Emesa in Syria, one Julia Domna, had what was termed “a royal nativity,” he solicited and obtained her hand, thus making the prophecy the means of its accomplishment.

A woman of great beauty and strong natural acquirements, she was at the same time the patron of all that was noble and distinguished in the philosophy and literature of the age. It was even said that secretly she was a favourer of the Christians. Be this as it may, we do not find she ever became a professor of the faith.

Sleep, that capricious guest which comes unbidden but not invited, was just stealing over the monarch’s eyelids when the roll fell from his grasp. The unexpected movement startled him. His eye fell on the bright crystal opposite. He thought a glimmer was moving in the glass. He remembered the words of the sage, and his eye was riveted on the mystic goblet. A sudden flash was reflected from it. He started forward, when a naked sword fell on the couch: the stroke he only escaped by having so accidentally changed his place! The glass had revealed the glitter of the blade behind him, and he was indebted to a few inches of space for his life!

Looking round, he beheld a masked figure preparing to repeat the stroke. Severus, with his usual courage and presence of mind, threw his mantle across the assassin’s sword. He cried out, and the chamber was immediately filled with guards; but whether from treachery or inadvertence, the traitor was nowhere to be found. He had escaped, leaving his weapon entangled in the folds of the mantle. On examination, the emperor’s surprise was visibly increased when he recognised the sword as one belonging to Caracalla! The soothsayer’s prediction was apparently fulfilled. To the emperor’s superstitious apprehensions the crystal goblet was charged with his safety. But lo! on being sought for, the charmed cup was gone!

The next morning, as the sun was just rising over the green wolds, and the fresh air came brisk and sharply on the traveller's cheek, a stranger was noticed loitering through the narrow streets of the imperial city. He had passed the great Galcarian or western gate, from which the statue of the reigning emperor on that memorable morning was found razed from its pedestal. The outer and inner faces of the gate were whitened for the writing of edicts and proclamations by the government scribes, and likewise for the public notices of minor import, these being daubed on the walls with various degrees of skill, in red or black pigments, according to the nature of the decrees that were issued by the prætor, and the caprice of the artist.

On that morning a number of idlers had assembled about the gate. The statue of the emperor, fallen prostrate, had been removed, and an edict promptly supplied, to the purport that an impious hand, having attempted the life of the monarch, a reward of one hundred thousand *sestertia* would be the price of his apprehension. Another reward of the like sum was offered for the discovery of a crystal goblet stolen from the emperor's chamber.

The individual we have just noticed wore the common sleeved tunic of coarse wool; over it was a cloak buckled on the right shoulder, the yarn being dyed in such wise that, when woven, it might resemble the skin of a brindled ox—such was the dress of the ancient Britons. His head was covered with a close cap, but his feet were naked; and the only weapon he bore was a two-handed sword, stuck in his girdle.

Ere he passed the gate it might be supposed that his business and credentials would have been rigidly scrutinised by the guards; but he merely showed a large signet-ring to the superior officer, and was immediately allowed to pass. He soon came to the wooden bridge over the river, now kept by a body of the Prætorian guards. Here, on attempting to pass, he was immediately seized. With an air of stupid or affected concern, the prisoner drew the same signet from his hand, the sight of which again procured him immediate access. The bridge was crossed, and after passing along the narrow winding streets he came to a small triumphal arch leading into the Forum. This was an area of but mean extent, surrounded by a colonnade, serving as a market for all sorts of wares, and the trades carried on under its several porticoes. The outer walls behind the columns were painted in compartments, black and red, and here a number of citizens were assembled. There was hurrying to and fro. Soldiers and messengers, even so early, were bustling about with ominous activity. The stranger looked on for a while with a vacant sort of curiosity, then, turning to the left hand, went forward towards the gate of the palace. On a corner of the building he saw another edict to the same purport as before. Near it was the announcement of a spectacle at the theatre, the gift of a wealthy patrician for the amusement and gratification of the people. Still the stranger passed on, apparently uninterested by all, until he came to the outer gate, where he merely paused a few moments, as though to observe the movements of the soldiers and the changing of the guard. The sound of the trumpet seemed to attract especial notice from this barbarian, whose uncouth air and rude manners drew upon him the gaze of many as they passed by. He now turned into a narrower street behind the palace, and here he sought out a common tavern, where the chequers newly painted on the door-posts betokened good entertainment for travellers. Having entered, the hostess, whose tucked-up dress and general appearance Martial, in his epigrams, so cunningly describes, brought him a vase or flagon of wine. It was not of the true Falernian flavour, as may be readily surmised, but a mixture of stuff which can hardly be described, of nauseous taste, smelling abominably of resin or pitch, and flavoured with myrrh and other bitters. Both hot and cold refectations solicited the taste and regaled the sight of the visitor. Fitches of bacon were suspended from above, and firewood stuffed between the

rafters, black and smoky with the reeking atmosphere below. At his own request, the stranger was installed in a small chamber behind the public room, where stood a couch, a three-footed table, and a lavatory. Here he was served with radishes, cheese, and roasted eggs in earthen vessels, with a relish of cornels in pickle. Ere this refection was brought in the table was rubbed over with a sprig of mint, and the coarse pottery betrayed an exquisite odour of thyme and garlic.

After the needful refreshments and ablutions he sallied forth, first inquiring for the residence of the Chaldean soothsayer, before whose door, in due time, he arrived. The gate leading to the vestibule was open, and he entered by a narrow passage terminated by a small inner court. He paused, and looked round. No fountain played in the centre; a clump of rank, unwholesome grass was the only decoration; but the object of his search was a crooked wooden staircase, which led to a sort of gallery above. After a little hesitation he ascended; his country manners showing a determination to persevere, until fairly delivered of his errand. A door at the extremity of the gallery stood ajar, and through this he made bold to enter. A Numidian slave, dwarfish and deformed, was sweeping his master's chamber. He stopped short as the barbarian, with a stupid and wondering look, entered the apartment. After surveying the new comer with an air of deliberate scrutiny, the dwarf burst forth into a violent fit of laughter.

"Mercury hath sent us precious handsel this morning, truly," said he, when his diversion was concluded. "A pretty hound to scent out master's lost goods. The gods do verily mock us in thy most gracious person."

The visitor looked on with dismay during this ungracious and taunting speech. At length he stammered forth—

"Thy master, is he not the Chaldean to whom my mistress, knowing I was bound for the city, hath sent me privily with a message?"

The Briton spoke this in a sort of guttural and broken Latin, which the apish dwarf mimicked in the most mischievous and provoking way imaginable. The messenger, irritated beyond endurance, placed both hands on his weapon, but his antagonist, with little ado, tripped up his heels, and the poor aborigine was completely at the mercy of this grotesque specimen of humanity.

Grinning over him with spite and mischief in his looks, the dwarf stamped on the floor; presently there came two slaves, who, without further notice than a blow now and then when resistance was offered, bound him with stout cords, and bade him lie there until he should be further disposed of. Inquiry was vain as to the cause of this treatment. Bound hand and foot, he was then tossed with little ceremony and less compunction into a corner of the room, and there left to bemoan his hard fate. Perched just above his head sat the cunning raven, who eyed him as though with serious intentions of pecking at him in his present defenceless condition. He was soon aware of this additional source of alarm, and as the bird's eye brightened and twinkled with greedy anticipation, he rubbed his rapacious beak on the perch, apparently whetting it for the feast. He then jumped down on the floor, and hopping close to his victim, gave a hoarse and dismal croak, a death-warning, it might be, to the unfortunate captive. He tried to burst his bonds, and shrieked out in the extremity of his alarm. His struggles kept the bird at a distance, but it continued to survey him with such a longing, liquorish eye, that the poor culprit felt himself already writhing, like another Prometheus, under the beak of his destroyer. His terror increased. It might be some demon sent to torment him; and this conviction strengthened when he saw the dismal and hideous things that surrounded him. Just as his agony was wrought to the highest pitch he heard footsteps. Even

the sound was some relief. He knew not what further indignities—not to say violence—he might expect; but at all events there would be a change, and it was hailed as an alleviation to his misery.

The soothsayer presented himself, attended by the ugly dwarf.

“A stupid barbarian thou sayest the Fates have sent us?” said the Chaldean, as he entered.

“Bridle thine impious tongue, Merodac; what the dweller in immortal fire hath decreed will be accomplished, though by weak and worthless creatures such as these. What ho! stranger, whence art thou? and why art thou moved so early across our threshold?”

“My lord,” said the prisoner, in a tone of entreaty, “these bonds are unlawful—I am a freed man. Though a Briton, I am no slave; and I beseech you to visit this indignity on that rogue who hath so scurvily entreated me.”

“I was privy to it, else would he not have dared this.”

“And to what end, good master?”

“That we may have an answer propitious to our suit.”

“What! are ye about to sacrifice me to your infernal deities?” cried the captive, almost frantic with the anticipation.

“My friend, thou art bound for another purpose—to wit, that through thy instrumentality we may discover the divining cup the emperor hath lost. Knowest thou aught of this precious crystal?” inquired the Chaldean, with a searching look.

But it were vain to describe the astonishment of the victim. He looked almost in doubt of his own identity, or as if he were trying to shake off the impression of some hideous dream. At length he replied—

“‘Tis some device surely that ye may slay me!”

He wept; and the tears trickling down his cheek were indeed piteous to behold. “I know not,” said he, “your meaning. Let me depart.”

“Nay, said the soothsayer, “thou mayest content thyself as thou list, but the cup shall be found, and that by thy ministry. The emperor hath offered rewards nigh to the value of three silver talents for the recovery, and assuredly thou shalt be held in durance until it be regained.”

“And by whose authority?” inquired the Briton.

“Why, truly, it becometh thee to ask, seeing thou art a party interested in the matter. The emperor in whose care the jewel was left, hath sworn by the river Styx that unless the cup be brought back to the palace ere to-morrow’s dawn, he will punish the innocent with the guilty, and that with no sparing hand. He hath already laid hands on some of the more wealthy citizens, and amerced them in divers sums; others are detained as hostages for suspected persons who are absent from the city. The loss of this cup being connected with a daring attempt on the emperor’s life by some unknown hand, he doth suspect that the very palace wants purging from treason; yet where to begin, or on whom to fasten suspicion, he knoweth not. Mine art has hitherto failed me in the matter. The tools they work with baffle my skill, save that the oracle I consult commanded that I should lay hold on the first male person that came hither to-day, and by his ministry the lost treasure should be restored. Shouldst thou refuse, thou art lost; for assuredly the emperor will not be slow to punish thy contumacy.”

The miserable captive fell into great perplexity at this discourse. He vowed he knew no more of the lost cup than the very stones he trod on; that he had come since nightfall from his

master, Lucius Claudius, lieutenant and standard-bearer of the sixth legion, then at Isurium,⁷⁹ on a mere casual errand to the city; and that his mistress, who was a British lady of noble birth, had instructed him, at the same time, to consult the soothsayer on some matters relative to her nativity, which the sage had calculated some years back. Almost a stranger in these parts, how could he pretend to begin the search? He begged piteously for his release; promising, and with great sincerity, that he would never set foot in this inhospitable region again. The magician inquired his name.

“Cedric with the ready foot,” was the reply. Unmoved by his entreaties, the soothsayer said he had the emperor’s command for the use of every method he could devise for the recovery of this precious and priceless jewel; and that, furthermore, the safety and even lives of many innocent persons depended on the stranger’s exertions, and the speedy execution of his mission. But how to begin, or in what quarter to commence the search, was a riddle worthy of the Sphinx. A most unexpected and novel situation for this rude dweller in woods and morasses, to be suddenly thrust forth into a mighty city, without guide or direction, more ignorant of his errand than any of its inhabitants. Besides, he was not without a sort of incipient and instinctive dread that the catastrophe might procure him an interview with the emperor; and he was filled with apprehension lest his own carcase might afford a special treat, a sacrifice to the brutal appetite of the spectators in the amphitheatre, after the manner of the *bestiarii*, or gladiators, of whom he had often heard. Even could he have gotten word of this mishap to his master, he was by no means certain it would be attended with any beneficial result. The time was too short, and the will and mandate of the emperor would render futile any attempt to obtain deliverance from this quarter.

A few moments sufficed for these considerations. The glance of the mind, when on the rack for expedients, is peculiarly keen, and hath an eagle-like perception that appears as though it could pierce to the dim and distant horizon of its hopes and apprehensions.

“Unbind these withes,” said the captive; “I cannot begin the search in this extremity.”

“Merodac, undo these bonds; and see thou guard thy prisoner strictly; thy life answers for his safe keeping.”

The dwarf, who seemed never so well pleased as when tormenting the more fortunate and better shapen of his species, unloosed the cords with something of the like feeling and intention as a cat when liberating some unfortunate mouse from her talons.

“There’s a chance of rare sport i’ the shows to-morrow,” said the ugly jailer. “We are sure of *thee*, anyhow. Didst ever see the criminals fight with wolves, Hyrcanian bears, and such like? I would not miss the sight for the best feather in my cap.”

The cruel slave here rubbed his hands, and his yellow eyes glistened with the horrible anticipation. His victim groaned aloud.

“I’ll tell thee a rare device,” continued he, “whereby thou mayest escape being eaten at least a full hour; and we shall have the longer sport. Mind thee, the beasts do not always get the carcasses for dinner. If they be cowardly and show little fight, we give the dead *bestiarii* to the dogs. I remember me well the last we threw into the emperor’s kennel, the dogs made such a fighting for the carrion that he ordered each of us a flagellation for the disturbance. Let me see, there was—ay”——Here the knave began to count the number of shows and human sacrifices he had seen, recounting every particular with the most horrible minuteness. Cedric felt himself already in the gripe of the savages, and his flesh verily quivered on his bones.

⁷⁹ Aldborough.

Brutal and demoralising were those horrid spectacles. The people of Rome, it has been well observed by a modern writer, were generally more corrupt by many degrees than has been usually supposed possible. Many were the causes which had been gradually operating towards this result, and amongst the rest the continual exhibition of scenes where human blood was poured forth like water. The continual excitement of the populace demanded fresh sacrifices, until even these palled upon the cruel appetites of the multitude. Even the more innocent exhibitions, where brutes were the sufferers, could not but tend to destroy all the finer sensibilities of the nature. "Five thousand wild animals, torn from their native abodes in the wilderness and the forest," have been turned out for mutual slaughter in one single exhibition at the amphitheatre. Sometimes the *lanista*, or person who exhibited the shows and provided the necessary supplies, by way of administering specially to the gratification of the populace, made it known, as a particular favour, that the whole of these should be slaughtered. These, however, soon ceased to stimulate the appetite for blood. From such combats "the transition was inevitable to those of men, whose nobler and more varied passions spoke directly, and by the intelligible language of the eye, to human spectators; and from the frequent contemplation of these authorised murders, in which a whole people—women as much as men, and children intermingled with both—looked on with leisurely indifference, with anxious expectation, or with rapturous delight, whilst below them were passing the direct sufferings of humanity, and not seldom its dying pangs, it was impossible to expect a result different from that which did, in fact, take place—universal hardness of heart, obdurate depravity, and a twofold degradation of human nature, the natural sensibility and the conscientious principle." "Here was a constant irritation, a system of provocation to the appetite for blood, such as in other nations are connected with the rudest stages of society, and with the most barbarous modes of warfare."

"Whither wilt thou that we direct our steps?" inquired Merodac, with mock submission, when the cords were unloosed.

"Lead the way—I care not," said his moody victim; "'tis as well that I follow."

A bitter and scornful laugh accompanied the reply of the dwarf.

"That were a pretty device truly—to let thee lag behind, and without thy tether. Ah, ah," chuckled the squire as they left the chamber, "Diogenes and his lantern was a wise man's search compared with ours."

How the slave came to be so learned in Grecian lore we know not. His further displays of erudition were cut short by the soothsayer, who cried out to him as they departed—

"Remember, thy carcase for his if he return not."

Now, in York, at this day, may be observed, where an angle of the walls abuts on the "Mint Yard," a building named "the Multangular Tower," and supposed to have been one of the principal fortifications of the city. However this might be, its structure has puzzled not a little even those most conversant with antiquities. The area was not built up all round, but open towards the city. The foundations of a wall have latterly been discovered, dividing it lengthwise through the centre, and continued for some distance into the town; so that the whole may not inaptly be represented by a Jewtrump—the tongue being the division, the circular end the present Multangular Tower, continued by walls on each side. This building, we have every reason to conjecture, was the Greek *stadium* or Roman circus, which authors tell us was a narrow piece of ground shaped like a staple; the round end called the barrier. The wall dividing it lengthwise is the *spina*, or flat ridge running through the middle, which was generally a low wall, and sometimes merely a mound of earth. This was usually decorated with statues of gods, columns, votive altars, and the like. As a corroboration of this

opinion, there have been found here several small statues, altars, and other figures, betokening a place of public resort or amusement.

The circus was not used merely for horse and chariot races, but likewise for wrestling—the *cæstus*, and other athletic games. It was noted as the haunt of fortune-tellers, and thither the poorer people used to resort and hear their fortunes told.⁸⁰

Near this place stood the barracks, or *castra*. Long ranges of rooms divided into several storeys, the doors of each chamber opening into one common gallery, ascended by a wooden staircase.

Hither we must conduct our readers at the close of the day on whose inauspicious morning “Cedric with the ready-foot” was placed in such jeopardy.

The whole city meanwhile had been astir. The emperor’s wrath and desire of revenge were excited to the utmost pitch. He suspected treachery even amongst the Prætorian guards—his favourite and best-disciplined troops; and there was an apprehension of some terrible disgrace attaching even to them. Still, nothing further transpired implicating the soldiery, save that the assassin had escaped, and apparently through the very midst of the guard; yet no one chose to accuse his fellow, or say by whose means this mysterious outlet was contrived. Not even to his most confidential minister did the emperor reveal the discovery of his son’s weapon. Neither that son, nor his guilty accomplices, if any, could be found; and the day was fast closing upon the monarch’s threat, that on the morrow his vengeance should have its full work unless the crystal goblet was restored.

There had been a public spectacle at the theatre, but the emperor was not present; and such was the consternation of the whole city that the performance was but scantily attended. The city was apparently on the eve of some sad catastrophe, and the whole population foreboding some fearful event.

In the circus were yet some stray groups, who, having little employment of their own, were listening for news, and loitering about either for mischief or amusement.

In one part was exhibited a narrow wooden box, not unlike to our puppet-show, wherein a person was concealed having figures made of wood and earthenware that seemed to act and speak, to the great wonder and diversion of the audience.

As the rays of the declining sun smote upon the city walls and the white sails of the barks below, there came into the circus the dwarf who had charge of Cedric. The captive now looked like a sort of appendage to his person—being strapped to his arm by a stout thong of bull’s hide, such as was used for correcting refractory slaves. The hours allotted for search were nearly gone. Day was drawing to a close, and Cedric had done little else than bemoan his hard fate. The whole day had been spent in wandering from place to place, urged on by the scoffs and jeers of his companion. Some furtive attempts to escape had been the cause of his present bondage. Hither, at length, they arrived. Tired and distressed, he sat down on one of the vacant benches, and gave vent to his sorrows in no very careful or measured language.

“What can I do?” said he, “a stranger in this great city—to set me a-finding what I never knew? A grain of wheat in a barn full of chaff, mayhap—a needle in a truss of hay—anything I might find but what was sheer impossible. And now am I like to be thrown to the dogs, like a heap of carrion!”

“But the oracle, friend.”

⁸⁰ Lubinus in Juven. p. 294.

“Plague on the oracle, for”——Here his speech was interrupted; for happening to look up, he saw, as he fancied, the eyes of one of the little figures in the show-box ogling him, and making mouths in such wise as to draw upon him the attention of the spectators, now roaring with laughter at his expense. Reckless of consequences, and almost furious from sufferings, he suddenly jumped up, and dragging the dwarf along with him, made a desperate blow at the mimic, which, in a moment, laid sprawling a whole company of little actors, together with the prime mover himself, and the showman outside to boot. The fray, as may readily be conceived, waxed loud and furious. The owners and bystanders not discriminating as to the main cause of the attack, would have handled both the keeper and the captive very roughly, had not the noise awakened the attention of the soldiers in the neighbouring barracks. Hearing the affray, a party ran to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and seeing two men whom a whole crowd had combined to attack, concluded they were culprits, and forthwith haled them before the captain of the guard, a centurion, Diogenes Verecundus by name.

Cedric and the dwarf being rescued from a sound beating, began to abuse one another as the cause of the disturbance; but the officer, by dint of threats and inquiries, soon learned the truth of the matter.

“Thank the stars, I shall be rid of this pestilence to-morrow,” said Merodac; “my master could not have found me such another; and how the Fates could pitch upon such a sorry cur for the business seems passing strange. If he find the cup I’ll be beaten to a jelly in it. Thy carcass will be meat for the emperor’s hounds to-morrow.”

“If, as thou sayest,” said the centurion, “thou art so mightily weary of thy charge, leave him to my care; I would fain have some discourse with him privily touching what thou hast spoken.”

The slave hesitated.

“On the word of a Roman soldier he shall be forthcoming. Tell thy master that Verecundus the centurion hath taken thy prisoner captive. Here is money for thee.”

The Ethiop showed his teeth like ivory studs on a coral band, while the rings shook in his wrinkled ears as he took the largess. Yet his brow contracted, and he hung his head. He hesitated to unloose the bonds.

“By what token?” he at length inquired.

“By this!” said the centurion, taking up a thong for his correction. “Stay,” continued he, laying it down, “I will not punish thee undeservedly. Take these; they will bear thee harmless with thy master.”

The dwarf took the writing thankfully, and made the best of his way to the dwelling of the soothsayer.

The officer now beckoned Cedric that he should follow. In a low room by the guard-chamber at the gate the following conversation took place.

“There is evil denounced us of a truth,” said Verecundus; “but it may be the gods have sent thee hither for our rescue, as the oracle hath said.”

The Briton fixed his wondering eyes on the soldier whilst he continued.

“I have pondered the words well, and if thou prove trusty, ere this night pass the plot shall be discovered and the ringleaders secured. We have need of such a one as thou—a stranger, whom they will not suspect, and will use the intelligence he obtains with a vigilant and cunning eye. There is work for thee, which, if well done, may bring thee to great wealth and

honour. If thou fail, we fall together in the same ruin. There is a plot against the emperor; and one which hath its being, ay in the very secrets of the palace. Those nearest him I am well assured are the chief movers in the conspiracy. 'Tis this makes it so perilous to discover, and without a fitting agent the mischief will not be overcome. I have thought to throw myself at the emperor's feet, but having no proof withal to support my suspicions, I should in all likelihood fall a sacrifice to my own fidelity."

"But how," asked the bewildered Cedric, "shall I discover them? Verily it doth seem that to-day I am destined to work out impossibilities. How it comes to pass that a poor ignorant wretch like myself should compass these things, it faileth my weak fancy to discover!"

"The soothsayer's speech is not lightly to be regarded. Hark thee, knave! Is life precious unto thee?"

"Yea, truly is it. I have a wife and children, besides a few herds and other live stock, likewise sundry beeves i' the forest. But unless I can find favour in your eyes, my goods, alas! I am not like to see again."

"Nor wilt thou peradventure again behold the light of yon blessed sun which hath just gone down. The shades of evening are upon us, and the shadows of death are upon thine eyelids; for, hark thee, I do suspect some treasonable message in thine errand to the city."

Cedric, with a look of terror and incredulity, stammered out—

"As I live, I know not thy meaning!"

"Thou art in my power; and unless thou servest me faithfully, thou diest a cruel and fearful death. What was the exact message wherewith thou was entrusted?"

The Briton's countenance brightened as he replied—

"I give it to thee with right good-will. No treason lurks there, I trow. 'Take this,' said my master, yesternight, giving me a signet ring; 'take it to York by daybreak. At the gate show it to the guard. If they let thee pass, well. If not, return, for there is mischief in the city. At the bridge, shouldest thou get so far, again show it, where, I doubt not, thou shalt find thereby a ready passage. Seek thee out some by-tavern where thou mayest refresh; then about mid-day go into the street called the Goldsmiths', and there inquire for one Caius Lupus, the empress' jeweller. Show him the signet, and mark what he shall tell thee.'"

"Thou hast given him the signet, then?" said the centurion, sharply.

"Nay. For my mistress, as ill-luck would have it, hearing of my journey, and she having had some knowledge of the soothsayer's art aforetime, bade me consult him ere my errand was ready with the goldsmith, and deliver a pressing request for the horoscope which had been long promised. What passed then, as thou knowest, is the cause of my calamity."

"But didst thou not search out the dwelling of this same Caius, and do thine errand?"

"I did. But in the straits which I endured I was not careful to note the time. An hour past mid-day I sought out his dwelling; but he was gone to the palace on urgent business with the empress, nor was it known when he might return."

"Sayest thou so, friend? I would like to look at this same potent talisman."

Cedric drew forth the ring. It was a beautiful onyx, on which, engraven with exquisite workmanship, was a head of the youthful Caracalla encircled by a laurel wreath, showing marks of the most consummate skill.

"Was thine errand told to the soothsayer?" was the next inquiry.

“Verily, nay,” said the messenger; “there was little space for parley ere I was thrust forth.”

“He saw not the signet, then?”

“Of a truth it has not been shown save to the guards for my passport.”

“Now, knave, thy life hangs on a thread so brittle that a breath shall break it. This same goldsmith I do suspect; but thou shalt see him, and whatsoever he showeth I will be at hand that thou mayest tell me privily. I will then instruct thee what thou shalt do. If thou fail not in thy mission, truly thou shalt have great rewards from the emperor. But if thou whisper—ay to the walls—of our meeting, thou diest! Remember thou art watched. Think not to escape.”

The poor wretch caught hold on this last hope of deliverance, and promised to obey.

There was a narrow vault beneath the women’s apartments in the palace, communicating by many intricate passages with an outlet into the Forum. Here, on this eventful night, was an unusual assemblage. The vault was deep, even below the common foundations of the city, and where the light of day never came. An iron lamp hung from one of the massy arches of the roof; the damp and stagnant vapours lending an awful indistinctness to the objects they surrounded. Chill drops lay on the walls and on the slippery floor. The stone benches were green with mildew; and it seemed as though the foot of man had rarely passed its threshold.

In this chamber several individuals were now assembled in earnest discourse, their conversation whispered rather than spoken; yet their intrepid and severe looks, and animated gestures, ever and anon betrayed some deep and resolute purpose more than usually portentous.

“An untoward event truly,” said one of the speakers, Virius Lupus himself, the emperor’s private secretary. “If the old magician could have been won, it had been well.”

“He might have saved the encounter and hazard we must now undergo. But let him hold his fealty. We have stout hearts and resolute hands enow to bring the matter to a successful issue.” Thus spoke Caracalla, the unnatural eldest born of his father.

“And yet,” replied the secretary, “he hath a ready admittance to his person, and a great sway over thy father’s councils.”

“I heed him not, now that brave men work. It were time that our trusty servant, the commander at Isurium, had sent the message, with the token I left him on my departure. Ere this we ought to have known the hour we may expect his troops to move on the capital. I had thought to have made all safe—to have put it beyond the power of fate to frustrate our purpose; but I was foiled like a beardless boy at his weapons.” He gnashed his teeth as he spoke; and this monster of cruelty breathed a horrible threat against the life even of a parent and a king.

“Here is the roll,” said one, who from his inkhorn and reed-pen seemed to be the scribe, and whose ambition had been lured by a promise that he should have the office of sextumvir in the imperial city.

“Here be the names and disposition of the troops; the avenues and gates to which they are appointed.”

“We but wait a messenger from Isurium to make our plans complete,” said Caracalla. “By the same courier I send back this cypher. Examine it, Fabricius. The troops of Lucius Claudius are to march directly on the Forum, and slay all who attempt resistance. Thou, Virius Lupus, wilt guide them through the secret passage into the palace.”

The secretary bowed assent.

“Though the empress knows not our high purpose, it is by her connivance we are here, safe from the emperor’s spies. Under her mantle we are hidden. Suspicion hath crossed her that I am about to head the troops; that my father, oppressed with age and infirmities, will retire to Rome; and that I, Caracalla, rule in Britain.”

“Then she knows not the mishap of yesternight?”

“She knows of the attempt, but not the agent. I would the messenger were come. ‘Tis an unforeseen delay. I pray the gods there be not treachery somewhere. The officers and guards at the Calcarian gate and the bridge are ours; they were instructed to obey the signet.”

“We will vouch for the fidelity,” said two or three of the conspirators.

“Should he not arrive before midnight we must strike,” said Fabricius.

“Ay, as before,” said the more cautious secretary. “But we may now get a broken head for our pains.”

“The time brooks not delay,” said Caracalla. “Every moment now is big with danger to our enterprise.”

“Be not again too hasty,” replied the secretary; “there be none that will divulge our plans. Let every part be complete before we act. We cannot succeed should there be a disjointed purpose.”

Caracalla, vehement, and unused to the curb, was about to reply, when the door opened and a dumb slave slowly entered. He crossed his hands, and pointed to the door.

“A messenger,” said they all.

“The gods are at last propitious,” said Caracalla. “Let him approach.”

Soon one was led in by the sentinel, blindfolded, and the latter immediately withdrew.

“The sign,” cried the secretary.

The stranger, without hesitation, presented a ring.

“‘Tis the same,” said Caracalla. He touched a concealed spring in the signet, and from underneath the gem drew forth a little paper with a scrap of writing in cypher. It was held before the lamp, and the intelligence it contained rendered their plot complete. Ere break of day, the deed would be accomplished. The morning would see Caracalla proclaimed, and Severus deposed.

“Have ye any token to my master?” inquired the messenger.

“Take back this writing,” said Virius Lupus. “Thou wilt find him not far from the city. We wait his coming.”

“This leaden-heeled Mercury should have a largess,” said the chief, “but in this den we have not wherewithal to give him. Hold! here is a good recompense, methinks,” continued he, taking the crystal goblet from a recess. “Take this to thy mistress, and tell her to buy it from thee. We will see her anon. That charmed cup hath foiled me once, but I will foil thee now, and the powers thou servest. Thou shall not again cross my path!”

Cedric took the gift, wrapping it beneath his cloak.

“Thou mayest depart.”

The dumb sentinel again took charge of him, and led him away by many intricate passages towards the entrance, where it seems the goldsmith had directed him on presenting the signet

of Caracalla. The person who took charge of him was a dumb eunuch, a slave in the service of the empress.

But the terrors of death were upon the wretched victim. He knew the centurion would assuredly be at hand to receive his report, and he could not escape. He had not brought back one word of intelligence; and being blindfolded, he knew not whither he had been taken. The writing he carried would assuredly be unintelligible save to those for whom it was intended. His mission, he could perceive, had utterly failed. The centurion would not be able to profit by anything he had brought back, and must inevitably, according to his pledge, at once render him up to the soothsayer. Whilst ruminating on his hard fate a sudden thought crossed him. There was little probability of success, but at all events it might operate as a diversion in his favour, and the design was immediately executed. Skulking for a moment behind the slave, he tore off the bandage, and tripped up the heels of his conductor. Before the latter could recover himself the Briton's gripe was on his throat.

"Now, slave, thou art my prisoner! Lead on, or by this good sword, thou diest!"

The torch he carried was luckily not extinguished in the fall. The eunuch, almost choking, made a sign that he would obey. With the drawn blade at his throat, the slave went on; but Cedric, ever wary, and with that almost instinctive sagacity peculiar to man in his half-civilised state, kept a tiger-like watch on every movement of his prisoner, which enabled him to detect the fingers of the slave suddenly raised to his lips, and a shrill whistle would have consigned him over to certain and immediate destruction; but he struck down the uplifted hand with a blow which made his treacherous conductor crouch and cringe almost to the ground.

"Another attempt," said Cedric, "and we perish together!"

The wily slave looked all penitence and submission. Silently proceeding, apparently through the underground avenues of the palace, Cedric was momentarily expecting his arrival at the place where the centurion kept watch. A flight of steps now brought them to a spacious landing-place. Suddenly a lamp was visible, and beneath it sat a number of soldiers, the emperor's body-guard. They gave way as the eunuch passed by, followed by Cedric, his sword still drawn. Several of these groups were successively cleared: the guide, by a countersign, was enabled to thread his way through every obstacle that presented itself. The Briton's heart misgave him as they approached a vestibule, before which a phalanx of the guards kept watch. Here he thought it prudent to sheath his weapon, though he still followed the eunuch, as his only remaining chance of escape. Even here they were instantly admitted, and without any apparent hesitation. The door turned slowly on its pivot, and Cedric found himself in a richly-decorated chamber, where, by the light of a single lamp, and with the smell of perfumed vapour in his nostrils, he saw a figure in costly vestments reclining on a couch. The slave prostrated himself.

"What brings thee from thy mistress at this untimely hour? A message from the empress?"

Here the speaker raised himself from the couch, and the slave, with great vehemence, made certain signs, which the wondering Briton understood not.

"Ah!" said the emperor, his eyes directly levelled at the supposed culprit; "thou hast found the thief who, in the confusion of yesternight, bore away the magic cup. Bring him hither that I may question him ere his carcase be sent to the beasts."

The doomed wretch was now fairly in the paws of the very tyrant he had so long dreaded. The death which by every stratagem he had striven to avoid was now inevitable. He was betrayed by means of the very device he had, as he thought, so craftily adopted; but still his

natural sagacity did not forsake him even in this unexpected emergency. As he prostrated himself, presenting the cup he had stowed away safely in his cloak, he still kept a wary eye on the slave who had betrayed him. He saw him preparing to depart; and knowing that his only hope of deliverance lay in preventing his guide from giving warning to the conspirators they had just left, Cedric, with a sudden spring, leaped upon him like a tiger, even in the presence of the monarch.

The latter, astounded at this unexpected act of temerity, was for a few moments inactive. This pause was too precious to be lost. Desperation gave him courage, and Cedric addressed the dread ruler of the world even whilst he clutched the gasping traitor.

“Here, great monarch, here is the traitor; and if I prove him not false, on my head be the recompense!”

He said this in a tone of such earnestness and anxiety that the emperor was suddenly diverted from his purpose of summoning his attendants. He saw the favourite slave of the empress writhing in the gripe of the barbarian; but the events of the last few hours had awakened suspicions which the lightest accusations might confirm. He remembered his son’s guilt; the facility of his escape; and it might be that treason stood on the very threshold, ready to strike. He determined to sift the matter; and the guard now summoned, the parties were separated—each awaiting the fiat of the monarch.

“Where is Virius Lupus?” was the emperor’s first inquiry.

“He hath not returned from the apartments of the empress.”

“Let this slave be bound,” cried Cedric. “Force him to conduct you even to the place whence, blindfold, he hath just led me; and if you find not a nest of traitors, my own head shall be the forfeit.”

Dark and fearful was the flash that shot from the emperor’s eye on the devoted eunuch. Pale and trembling he fell on his knees, supplicating with uplifted hands for mercy. He knew it was vain to dissemble.

“And what wert thou doing in such perilous company?” inquired the emperor, turning to Cedric, and in a voice which made him shrink.

“Let the centurion, Diogenes Verecundus, be sought out. He waits my return by the Forum gate. To him the city owes a discovery of this plot, and Rome her monarch!”

The faithful centurion was soon found. The eunuch conducted them secretly to the vault. The conspirators were seized in the very height of their anticipated success. The roll containing the names of the leaders, the plan of attack, and the disposition of the rebellious troops, was discovered; and the morning sun darted a fearful ray on the ghastly and bleeding heads uplifted on the walls and battlements of the imperial palace.

But with misplaced clemency the monster Caracalla was again pardoned. The centurion Diogenes Verecundus was raised to the dignity of Sexumvir. The only reward claimed by the generous and sturdy Briton was an act of immunity for his master, who was merely dismissed from his post and banished the kingdom.

END OF VOLUME TWO

THE END

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