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"This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle;
Fire and sleet, and candle lighte
And Christe receive thy saule.

The Lyke

ORDER·GHOST·STORIES·

BY ·HOWARD·PEASE

When thou from hence away are paste,
Every nighte and alle;
To Whinny Muir thou comest at laste,
And Christe receive thy saule."

e·Dirge

R·J·S·Bertram del.

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BORDER GHOST STORIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Tales of Northumbria
Magnus Sinclair
The Lord Wardens of the Marches, etc.

BORDER GHOST STORIES

BY

HOWARD PEASE

AUTHOR OF
'TALES OF NORTHUMBRIA,' 'MAGNUS SINCLAIR'
'THE LORD WARDENS OF THE MARCHES OF
ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND,' ETC.

ERSKINE MACDONALD LTD.
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TO

THE MEMORY OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

THE TUTELARY GENIUS OF THE BORDERLAND

THESE TALES ARE INSCRIBED BY A

LATTER DAY BORDERER

PREFACE

CERTAIN places, said Stevenson, cry out for a story, and Scott, in any new surroundings, straightway invented an appropriate tale, if there were not already a story or tradition in existence. One might even believe that the place itself tells its own tale to the sympathetic imagination.

Thus Mr. Bligh Bond in his book, *The Gate of Remembrance*, implies that the whisperings of the *genius loci* enabled him to make his astonishing discovery of the lost Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey.

> 'Multa modis simulacra videt volitantia miris,
> Et varias audit voces, fruiturque Deorum
> Colloquio, atque imis Acheronta affatur Avernis.'

The scene of the following ghost stories usually becomes manifest in the text, but it might be mentioned that 'Castle Ichabod' stands for Seaton Delaval, that the 'Lord Warden's Tomb' is a reminiscence of Kirkby Stephen, and that 'The Cry of the Peacock' is a suggestion from the Vale of Mallerstang.

If the ghost is not always visible in the tale, it is at least born of it.

Thus if there be no actual ghost in 'Ill-Steekit Ephraim' or in 'The Blackfriars Wynd' there are at least sufficiently 'ghostly' occurrences.

Again, in 'Apud Corstopitum' Penchrysa is held to haunt the Roman Wall beside the limestone crags; Tynemouth Priory is thought to be revisited by Prior Olaf whenever the wind stays long in the eastern airt, and the 'outbye' moors beside 'The Bower' may now be haunted by the spirit of 'Muckle-Mouthed Meg.'

The stories marked by an asterisk have already been published in the *Border Magazine*; 'In the Cliff Land of the Danes' appeared originally in the *Northern Counties Magazine* under the title of 'An Antiquary's Letter' (supposed to have been dictated by John Hall Stevenson of Skelton Castle, author of *Crazy Tales*, to his friend the Reverend Laurence Sterne at Coxwold), and has been slightly altered, as has also 'The Muniment Room,' which appeared in the *Queen* and the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. He desires to thank the various editors concerned and the Northern Newspaper Syndicate for their courtesy in permitting republication.

In his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*,

written nearly one hundred years ago, Sir Walter Scott says apologetically at the close of the book: 'Even the present fashion of the world seems to be ill-suited for studies of this fantastic nature; and the most ordinary mechanic has learning sufficient to laugh at the figments which in former times were believed by persons far advanced in the deepest knowledge of the age.'

But surely the belief in, and love of ghosts will persist 'as long as the moon endureth,' for fancy, imagination, and conscience combine against materialism, be it never so scientific, and even if the vision of the affrighted criminal be subjective it is a terrible reality to himself.

'*What! not see that little boy with the bloody pantaloons?*' exclaimed the secret murderer, so much to the horror of his comrade that he requested him, if he had anything on his mind, to make a clear conscience as far as confession could do it.'[1] And, further, it is but some seventeen years since the present writer was taken to see a certain nonagenarian—one Bobby Dawson—for some fifty years, if memory serve, whipper-in to the Bilsdale hounds, who related in all good faith how he with his hounds had once hunted a witch in the shape of a hare that

[1] *Demonology and Witchcraft.* Letter x.

escaped by a cundy, or underground drain, into a barn. When Dawson entered, there was the witch in the form of an old woman lying panting on the hay.

Again, the writer has in his possession the copy of an '*Old Charm to make Brave*,' which was transcribed by Mr. R. Blakeborough, author of *Yorkshire Wit, Character, Folklore, and Customs*, from the MS. book of one David Naitby, a Bedale schoolmaster, during the early days of 1800. It may interest the reader to quote a few lines therefrom :

> '*We hid there (on the mountain top) in the shadow of the moon.*
> *We left there an acorn yet green in its cup,*
> *We left also a firchatt upon the great stone hurled by Thor ;*
> *To a fir branch we tied with a fine whang drawn from a bear we slew*
> *The wing feather of an eagle which span towards us,*
> *Yet it fell not to the earth, we twain caught it,*
> *The one by the quill, the other by the feather part.*'

After this the tale of 'In the Cliff Land of the Dane' may appear to be not so very improbable.

Once more, the uprising of the thrawn corpse from the coffin in 'Ill-Steekit Ephraim' was narrated to the writer and his companion by a bed-ridden but very intelligent moorland 'wife' some years ago when walking along the Roman Wall beside Hot Bank farm or cottage. Finally,

he can still remember his early thrills over strawberries and cream when told of the appearances of 'the Silky' or 'little grey lady' at Denton Hall, which suggested the harsher variant of 'In my Lady's Bedchamber.'

In conclusion, it might perhaps be mentioned that the altar to Sylvanus alluded to in 'Apud Corstopitum' is preserved at Stanhope Rectory on the Wear, and that the writer possesses an altar dedicated—Deo (Mithras), by L. Sentius Castus of the 6th Legion, which was formerly excavated at Rutchester Camp, North Wylam, and is now at Otterburn.

Sir Walter Scott once said that no one had made more use of ghosts than himself, but that he did not believe in them. Another authority expressed his disbelief in them, 'because he had seen too many of them.'

Professor George Sinclair wrote his book, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, to prove 'against the Saducees and Atheists of the present age, that there are Devils, Spirits, Witches, and Apparitions, from Authentic Records, Attestation of Famous Witnesses, and undoubted Verity,' but as, *inter alia*, he includes in them an account of the 'Strange Pranks plaid by the Devil at Woodstock in England, anno 1649,' it is evi-

dent that he simply accepted without any investigation the common hearsay, for it is well known that the Woodstock Devil was none other than the Commissioners' clerk, Giles Sharp,[1] who played these tricks upon his masters.

Modern investigation proceeding on scientific lines and by means of actual experience and experiment, seems to provide an explanation—mental and moral—for manifestations which our ancestors regarded as physical and material. One need only mention in this connection the writings of William James, the psychologist, the proceedings of the Psychical Research Society, the wonderful results of psycho-therapeusis dealing with the unconscious self, the

[1] Readers of *Woodstock* will remember Sir Walter Scott's account of 'Joseph Collins, commonly called Funny Joe—who, under the feigned name of Giles Sharp, hired himself as a servant to the Commissioners.'

'The account of this by the Commissioners themselves, or under their authority, was repeatedly published. . . .'

It is amusing to note that 'this narrative gave equal satisfaction to the Cavaliers and Roundheads: the former conceiving that the licence given to the demons was in consequence of this impious desecration of the King's furniture and apartments, so that the citizens of Woodstock almost adored the supposed spirits, as avengers of the cause of royalty; while the friends of the Parliament, on the other hand, imputed to the malice of the Fiend the obstruction of the pious work, as they judged that which they had in hand.'

subliminal 'consciousness,' or as Captain Hadfield prefers to call it, 'heightened personality' in his paper on this subject 'The Mind and the Brain' in *Immortality*, to realise not only the greatness of the advance in psychical knowledge, but also the vast new field of investigation thus opened out to the student.

Otterburn Tower
Northumberland
April 1919

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IN THE BLACKFRIARS WYND

IN THE BLACKFRIARS WYND

'*'Twill be a black day for auld Scotland when she ceases to believe in the muckle Deil,*' commented 'the Meenister' of the Tron Kirk, when I had explained to him my troubles and sought his 'ghostly counsel and advice,' as the English service has it, 'to the quieting of my conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.' My father had been English, but my mother was Scotch, and she had sent me to my uncle, Deacon Abercrombie, to be entered as apprentice to his craft of the goldsmiths. He was a widower, lived alone, and was reputed to be eccentric, but as far as worldly gear was concerned the Deacon was a highly responsible citizen; as burgess, guild brother, and deacon of his craft he could hold his head as high on the causeway as any other, be he who he might, in the city.

Not even the 'stairhead critics,' who, as Auld Reekie's poet writes,

> '*wi' glowering eye*
> *Their neighbours' sma'est faults descry,*'

could point at any speck in his general repute.

The Reverend Andrew Geddes was somewhat stricken in years; his beard was white as snow, his thrapple loose below his chin, and the flesh had ebbed from his bones, but his mind was as alert as ever, and his goodness stood manifest in his face.

We were sitting in his lodging, situate in a high 'timberland' in the Canongate, just without the Nether Bow, on the same side as the Tron Kirk, and from his little *tourelle* we could survey as from an eyrie the coming and going of the citizens upon the street.

'Ay,' said he again, 'it will be a gey evil day for Scotland when she ceases to believe i' the muckle black Deil. Whatten temptations he can offer is oft forgot. Ye 'll hae heard tell o' Major Weir—the whilom "Bowhead Saint," as they callit him—ye 'll hae heard tell o' him, laddie? I mind my father talkin' o' his ain greetin' sair for bein' ower young to gang to his hangin'.'

Had I no? Ay, and of his staff that went before him like a link boy, and of the coach with six black horses that carried him and his sister backwards and forwards from hell!

'Eh, laddie, what a sermon I could preach to ye on this tremendous problem!' he said regretfully, bethinking him of my youthful years.

'Aweel,' he added discreetly, 'I dinna ken your uncle—the responsible Deacon—save by sight and repute, as ane that disna spend, an' isna verra sociable; yet he attends the Great Kirk, "comes forrit," does he not, to the Holy Table?' I nodded assent.

'Is as reputable a citizen as any that treads on the High Street, and yet for a' that he may hae a canker o' the soul. Aiblins Davie Hume has sappit his belief, and the muckle Deil, kennin' that, is thrawin' a flee ower him as for a saumon the noo.'

As I sat there shivering all down my spine, my companion looked upon me very kindly from his thoughtful, gentle eyes of blue that faded to grey at the marge, and said, 'Stop up your ears, laddie, like the adder, to any temptin' o' your uncle. Keep watch and ward, and, if need arise, run for me instantly, for, though I 'm auld the noo, I 'm aye ready for a warsil wi' auld Hornie.'

Heartened by the minister's sympathy and courage I returned to my uncle's lodging in Blackfriars Wynd, and continued to devote myself to his craft in the back of his booth in the High Street, which appealed to me greatly for ingenuity and skill.

In accord with my mother's advice I had en-

deavoured to cherish an affection for my uncle, yet withal there was something about the man that misliked me much, and, to speak straight to the point, that actually 'fley'd' me, for he would gloat o' night over his glass of toddy on any scandal afloat concerning the 'unco guid,' and would speak with tongue i' the cheek of virtue in general, as if indeed hypocrisy were the true king of this world. I thought at first his purpose was to tease me and draw me out, but I soon came to believe it was all a part of the horrid nature of the man himself.

Further again than this, he seemed to exercise a dreadful and secret power over 'Brownie' —his pathetic little serving boy, orphan and mute.

I had realised that 'Brownie' lived in terror of his employer, though I never saw him the victim of any physical ill-treatment; one night indeed he came shivering and terrified into my bedroom, and by signs gave me to understand that my uncle was hunting for him, and it was not till I had bolted my door that he grew somewhat calmer.

He would not leave me, but insisted on lying down at the foot of my bed throughout the night.

I thought possibly the poor lad might labour

under some hallucination, but I felt fear myself, for I distinctly heard some one attempt to open my door very stealthily a short time after 'Brownie' had taken refuge in my room.

No, it was not surprising, I reflected, that 'Brownie' should be 'feared' of my uncle when I was myself in the like case, for there was 'no milk of human kindness' in him. His eyes were shielded by a *chevaux de frise* of bristles, and when one caught a glint from them 'twas as if one had encountered the malevolent gleam of a ferret intent upon his own ruthless schemes.

He was short of stature, possessed abnormally long arms, had a heavy moustache, and very hairy, flexible fingers, with which he performed wondrous feats of craftsmanship, but to my fearful imagination he seemed to resemble at times a tarantula spider of alarming proportions.

There had been of late an epidemic of crime in the city, which had seriously perturbed the good burgesses; various shops had been broken into, and cash and valuables had been 'lifted,' but as no arrests had been effected a general feeling of insecurity was rife in Auld Reekie; all which was a constant theme of merriment on my uncle's sardonic lips.

What had led me to approach 'the Meenister' and confide my apprehension to him, as I have shown above, was the mute, appealing look in poor 'Brownie's' eyes. But as 'Brownie' looked much brighter and happier during the next few weeks I regained my own equanimity, and grew somewhat shamed of my first nervous fears. This being so I thought it only right that I should visit 'Meenister Geddes' once more and report to him my belief in the groundless nature of my vague imaginations. I had found him at home, and stayed 'cracking' on with him till past ten of the clock.

Then as I returned somewhat in haste and doubtful how to effect my entry into my uncle's lodging undiscovered, or how, if discovered, to explain my absence, I brushed against a wayfarer at the corner of the Blackfriars Wynd.

''Tis a footpad,' I thought, for he was velvet-footed, and I heard no tread on the pavement. I glanced narrowly at the swift-passing stranger, and beneath the smouldering 'bowet' I had borrowed from the 'Meenister' I recognised with a start the slight, shrunken figure of 'Brownie' with his white, pathetic face. It was the swiftest of visions, yet I had seen enough to give me a 'gliff,' *for the eyes were not those of 'Brownie,' but of my uncle.*

This chance encounter reawoke all my previous apprehensions. The very fact that I had only an eerie suspicion on which to build increased my mental discomfort. There was something behind to which my watch and ward had afforded me no clue.

Nothing more transpired for another few weeks when one night as I lay awake meditating I heard a footstep on the stair without. It was late, for my uncle had been out, and I had sat up reading, and had forgotten how time was passing. As I continued to listen I heard a strange moaning proceeding, I felt sure, from 'Brownie's' attic, which was situate a foot or two above my chamber on the top turn of the newel stairway. I had recognised, I thought, the tread on the stairs, for my uncle's footstep was peculiar, since he had a slight limp ; it was this that had aroused my attention and re-awakened my apprehension.

The moaning had been that of a dumb animal, and I had heard it once or twice before when poor 'Brownie' had been in pain.

Stealing out of my room a-tiptoe I very gently laid my hand on the 'sneck' of 'Brownie's' den and tried to lift it without noise.

But, though it lifted, the door was 'steekit' from within.

There was no sound to be heard therein; I stood there with pricked ear, but could learn nothing by listening. Perhaps I might be able to discern somewhat through the aperture above the pin of the 'sneck.' 'Brownie's' den had, as I knew, a window in its *tourelle*, and as the night was moonlit though stormy, I might in a flitting moonbeam perhaps espy somewhat.

Stooping, I placed my eye to the tiny slit, and waited impatiently for a gleam of white light that might penetrate from the westward airt which it faced.

A quarter of an hour, perhaps, elapsed; I could see nothing, and my patience was almost exhausted, when on a sudden the beam of moonlight so earnestly expected filtered fitfully into the den, and there, though faintly, was revealed to me the form of my uncle lying motionless upon the truckle bed—apparently in deep slumber.

Where then was 'Brownie?' I searched the small den for him, but nowhere could I discover him. The window was open. Just as I made this discovery the moonlight faded away and left me in darkness, filled with a horrid suspicion. I waited on in hope of the moonlight returning, but rain set in, and I returned to my own chamber much perplexed as to what to do. Leaving the door ajar I determined to sit up and

listen for any further sound, or the creak of a footstep on the stair, but though I listened till grey dawn came I heard no sound at all.

Then once again I stole a-tiptoe to 'Brownie's' door, and peeped through the aperture. Once again I was astounded, for I could now discern that 'Brownie's' figure lay upon the truckle bed instead of that of my uncle, which I had seen before.

Could I have been mistaken previously? No, I was certain my eyesight had not deceived me. How could it have? What I had descried had quite belied my expectation, and had been totally unforeseen.

I returned to my bed determined to investigate the open window at the first opportunity.

I slept ill, and when I rose I found the door of 'Brownie's' den open. Entering in, I saw that 'Brownie' had got up and the window was closed. Investigating further, I opened it cautiously and looked forth to see if there were any exit either to the ground or on to the roof.

Evidently there could be none to the ground, for the room was situate at the height of the tall 'land.' Nor was there any opening on to the roof, so far as I could discover, for the little *tourelle* overhung the wall, and no foothold was possible.

Yet there was one way out. The 'land' stood

in the narrowest part of the wynd; right opposite, and not more than five feet away rose the opposite wall, finishing off into a gable end with corbie-steps affording easy access to the further roof.

Could 'Brownie' have leaped across? It was not impossible, as the space was so narrow, and though the window was small there was room to pass through. Then as I thus measured the spaces I caught sight of a plank below the window resting on the floor. 'Twas perhaps a foot and a half broad, in length about six feet—sufficient to act as a bridge across the wynd. I had discovered enough to excite my most vivid apprehensions as to its use, but nothing else in the little den gave any clue to the mystery.

Descending the stairs I found my uncle already engaged upon breakfast. He seemed in high good-humour, and roasted me heartily upon my unpunctuality. 'Brownie' came in at that moment carrying some scones, and I noted out of the tail of my eye that he looked extremely haggard and miserable.

Assuming a woebegone air I told my uncle that 'Auld Reekie' suited me poorly, and that the climate was too 'snell' for my southern constitution.

'Hae ye heard the sad bruit?' he asked sud-

denly, 'the causeway 's fair ringin' wi't. Puir Tom Macalister, the rich shipper o' Leith, has been found wi' his throat cut lyin' ahint the dyke by the Leith walk. There 's an unco scandal afoot anent it—some says a merry-begot o' his ain has done it oot o' revenge for bein' kep' short o' siller by his father.' He paused a moment, then added significantly, 'Ay, ay, Macalister was aye verra generous to the Foundlings' Hospital. Wha kens ? ' He heaved a sigh, but his eye twinkled satirically, 'The hairt o' man is deceitfu' an' daisperitly wicked,' and he lifted the whites of his eyes heavenward like a hound mourning.

'Was the poor man robbed ? ' I inquired shortly.

'Ay, was he,' returned my uncle ; 'he was seemingly stuffed wi' bank-notes for payin' his men the day. He was gangin' hame after supper—gey fou, maist like. Eh, laddie ! ' he continued, 'sic an end to ane wha was regairded as belongin' to the Saints ! Wae 's me for the godly,' and again he lifted his eyes upward as a hound crying u-lu-lu for his lost master. Then he gave me a sharp look, somewhat askance, as he asked me swiftly, 'Whatten a discourse, think ye, will ye get frae your meenister o' the Tron Kirk the morn ? '

I blenched, I felt, at this sudden thrust. Had his familiar informed him of my interview ?

'It will be a sair blow to him,' I said, with apparent unconcern, 'but it cannot affect him directly.'

'No affect him ?' returned my uncle, seemingly shocked at my indifference, 'not when he was aye hand an' glove wi' him ?'

'He was no his bairn,' I retorted, hastily finishing off my "parritch" with a gulp. 'I 'm late, as ye said,' I added, rising, 'I must be off to my work at the booth.'

'Ay, ay,' returned my uncle, 'wark 's aye best in an evil day.'

As soon as my work was finished for the day I hastened to call upon 'the Meenister,' and, finding him at home, at once informed him of my discovery of the night, and of my uncle's satirical mention of poor Mr. Macalister's fate.

'Laddie,' he exclaimed earnestly as I concluded 'ye hae dune well to come to me. Puir Tom Macalister was just as decent, straight-leevin' a Christian man as could be found i' braid Scotland. There 's somethin' gey wrang wi' your uncle, I 'm fearin' sadly. I 'll no let any one blacken the memory o' Thomas Macalister. Noo, laddie, keep ye a quiet watch—sayin' naethin' ; but aye wait on

wi' eye an' ear for onything further suspeecious at hame, an' if ye hear puir " Brownie " skreighin' come your ways straucht here for me—an' we 'll see if we canna tackle the evil—an' with the help o' Heaven, scotch it.' His eye lit, his mouth tightened; he clenched his fist, ready for immediate ' warsil wi' auld Hornie.'

I promised faithfully, and withdrew with a heart somewhat relieved, though not relishing the thought of being alone with my uncle in the lonely house wherein either suspected the other.

My uncle that evening scarcely alluded to the murder again save to ask if I had had any news, and to mention that the funeral was to be the next day. Then he laughed uncannily, leering upon me over his spectacles.

' I 'm tell't that he 's left a muckle legacy to the Foundlings. What think ye o' that, laddie ?'

' He might have done worse,' I replied, almost angrily, though inwardly I shivered. ' He might have left it to the cadies of the toon for drink.'

A fortnight perhaps passed without event; the City Guards were said to have found a clue, and the Town Council had offered a large reward for any information that might lead to the apprehension of the murderer, but nothing definite had been discovered.

Gossip was rife, and in the taverns 'twas bruited that my uncle's conjecture had come nighest to the bull's-eye. For my own part I had quietly made what arrangements I thought feasible in case of any further suspicious act of my uncle. I kept watch and ward with eye and ear, as Minister Geddes had directed, but not till another fortnight had elapsed did I hear his footstep on the stair, by 'Brownie's' den. Then one night as I lay half-dozing I was certain I did hear the lame footfall. Instantly I was broad awake, and waited in alarmed expectancy. Ha! there it was again—the low skreigh o' pain I had heard before. I was 'gliffed' indeed, horribly afeared, yet I must act, so a-tiptoe I stole out, and like a cat stealthily approached 'Brownie's' door. The hour was somewhat after eleven, for I had heard the Tron Kirk chap recently; the moon in her last quarter had risen, and I could dimly descry the interior of the den.

I shrank back after peering through the small aperture, for there was my uncle stretched out on 'Brownie's' truckle bed. The window was opened, and I could see that the board or plank I had previously measured lay on the sill.

Of 'Brownie' I could not see a sign.

I turned away on the instant. Now was the time to go fetch 'the Meenister.'

Noiselessly I descended the stairs, let myself out by a low side window in the cellar, and made straight for the lodging of 'the Meenister.' I dared not rouse the porter of the Nether Bow Port, but climbed the wall beyond even as Bothwell had done after the explosion at Kirk o' Field, and made my way down the Canongate. Minister Geddes was within, and fortunately had not yet gone to bed. He was ready in a moment to come with me. With a Bible under his oxter, and a 'bowet' new lit in his right hand, he accompanied me swiftly up the street. His courage was wonderful; he seemed like 'Great-heart'—valiant to meet Apollyon in battle. I caught hold of the end of his plaid, and followed him *non passibus æquis* like the *parvus Iulus*, for he hastened onward with his loins girded up. I do not know that more than twenty minutes had elapsed when we arrived at the cellar window and I had helped him through. Together we noiselessly mounted the stairs; then when we arrived at 'Brownie's' den he reached me the 'bowet' to hold while he peered through the aperture.

Then he turned to me and said in a whisper:

'Laddie, we mun just break doon the door. If it is as I 'm thinkin' he winna hear us. His evil spirit is awa i' puir 'Brownie's' body, bent

on Deevil's wark. Here 's for it ! ' and as he spake he thrust swiftly with his foot and broke down the wooden bolt that fastened the door.

In we went—I holding the little ' bowet ' on high to give us light. ' Ay,' whispered my companion in my ear, ' I 'm richt. He 's in a swoond ; he disna see or hear us.' I gazed in horror on my uncle's face. His eyes were not closed, but were as unseeing as a blind man's. There was, I thought, a hateful look as of triumphant evil on his lips, but his breath came regularly as of one in deep sleep.

' Noo, laddie,' said the good minister, ' we mun act. " Brownie " will be returnin' before daybreak, an' we hae to keep the twa o' them apairt. *His* evil spirit is awa wi' the puir laddie, and we mun prevent body an' spirit comin' thegither again. It is like to be a fearfu' warsil, but wi' the help o' the Bible an' our God we 'll triumph.' I could see his eye glow and his brow light with inspiration, and I drew in courage as I looked upon him in his intrepidity.

' Gang ye oot ower by the bit plankin', laddie,' he commanded me, pointing to the window. ' Gang, an' wait for " Brownie," then when he comes back grup him fast and pray tae Heaven. I 'll shut tae the windie and grup the figure here on the bed.'

I could not disobey, but I trembled horribly as I crawled slowly forth upon the plank. The minister had sat himself down by the bedside, and was reading aloud by the light of the 'bowet' from out of Genesis of Jacob's wrestling all night long with the angel of God. I could hear his voice as I slithered slowly across my plank of dread.

> '*And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh . . .*'

The faith of the old man alone in the den with the fearsome figure on the bed heartened me greatly. I reached the end of the plank, grasped firmly the coping of the corbie-step, pulled myself up and felt for firm footing in the lead gutter of the roof below.

There for a few minutes I lay still, my heart palpitating, and reflected on what was next to be attempted.

All was still about me. Save for a belated roysterer singing on his way homeward, and one or two nightbirds on the street below whose footfalls sounded fitfully, no whisper broke on the eerie night.

I looked around and about in the moonlight,

and noted a passage behind me between the roofs of the 'lands.' Here surely would be the way by which 'Brownie' would return from his nocturnal excursion. I sat crouched beside the gable end and waited fearfully for any sound of his returning. The Minister's 'bowet' had now gone out; the window was closed. I felt tremors assail me in my loneliness. Then I caught sight of Orion above the further roofs —advancing with glittering sword—as a champion to challenge of combat—and at once a great composure stole within my heart, for I too was engaged in a great combat against evil.

The good Minister had assuredly probed the problem to the quick; even as Elijah had breathed life into the body of the son of the Shulamite widow so had my uncle like a fiend from the pit breathed an evil spirit into poor 'Brownie's' body, and through him executed horrid deeds.

Our great task was to prevent body and spirit from coming together again. 'Twas certain that the Minister trusted to be able to prevent this re-union by prayer and exorcism, and I was his assistant therein.

I trembled at the struggle so imminent upon me, and prayed God for assistance in my hour of need.

Crouching quietly there, I noticed that the

wind had now arisen from the west and was driving heavy spume of cloud across the moon so that she was overwhelmed and sank from sight. Soon again, however, she emerged from her labours, and, clothed in white, paced serene as a Madonna faring to her churching.

Just then I heard a furtive sound behind me, and gazing swiftly backward I caught sight of a slight form in grey creeping prone upon the gutter.

The moment of trial had come. Drawing in my breath I crouched lower still and moved not till the grey form rose up as if to lay hold of the coping-stone. Then swiftly I turned and seized him by the waist, pulling him down backward.

Like a ferret—sudden as a flash—he bit my hand, and we were down in the gutter together.

'Brownie' was of frail build, but he now seemed to be possessed of a demoniac's strength, and my arms failed to hold him. I felt his hands upon my neck and grew dizzy.

I prayed then as I had never prayed before, and on the sudden a thought lit in my brain. I remembered one of 'Brownie's' infirmities—his breathing through his mouth. I had strength to pluck at my bonnet, thrust it into his mouth, and leaned my chin upon the cloth with all my force.

I was still uppermost, and though he twined and twisted like a serpent, I held on while my

head seemed almost bursting. The thought of Jacob wrestling through the night sustained me, and now at last 'Brownie's' clutch upon my throat relaxed.

I shook my head free. I breathed again in the cold air—I felt all the energy ebb from the body beneath me. I had conquered at last. 'Brownie' lay quietly in the gutter, breathing gently as a babe.

I rose to my feet and peered across the chasm. There in the chamber opposite was the Minister wrestling on his knees with the figure on the bed. Just at that moment a cock crew from far below in the purple depth of the city. The silence seemed to shiver about me.

Thank God! Daybreak at last after the horror of darkness.

As I watched I saw the struggling figure fall suddenly backward on the bed. The Minister rose from his knees and came towards the window.

He opened it, and I saw his face shining in the moonlight—like a saint's—haggard yet triumphant.

'Gie thanks to God, laddie,' he cried to me, as he bent his head reverently, 'we hae striven like Jacob an' hae prevailed. *There's a deid man lies upon the bedstraw.*'

BY PEDEN'S CLEUCH

INSCRIBED TO

WILSON PEASE

TO WHOSE SUGGESTION THE TALE IS OWING

BY PEDEN'S CLEUCH

THE Border hounds had gone right away up Redewater after an old dog fox they had picked up on the rocks beside the Doure; twice had he circled the Doure, then setting his mask westwards had crossed the Rede, and, turning right-handed, made straight for Carter Fell.

My mare had gone splendidly for the first hour, but by the time we passed the cairn on the Carter she had lost a shoe, and in addition had sustained a bad 'over-reach,' so I was fain to pull up and dismount, while I watched the Master and whip, and one other intrepid horseman, struggling gamely on towards Carlin's Tooth on the Scottish side of the Border after the tail of the vanished hounds.

I determined to descend to the grass-grown Hawick road which leads into the Jedburgh-Newcastle road half a mile from the ancient Border boundary line. The early morning that particular April day had been lovely; curlews newly returned had luted their love-song overhead; golden plovers had piped upon the bents;

there was a scent of heather-burning in the snell air, but suddenly the weather had changed, and with an idle motion snowflakes now drifted down the wind. Cheviot was fast disappearing behind a white shroud; the triple Eildons showed like breaking billows; Ruberslaw alone was black against the sky.

I stayed a minute or two more to give my mare a mouthful of water at the springs of Jed, but whereas I had intended an inch she insisted upon an ell.

As I tried to drag her head out of the little pool of water, a stranger—evidently an old shepherd—accompanied by a frail old collie bitch came up beside me.

'Hae ye had guid huntin'?' he inquired. 'Hae ye killed the fox? They 're mischievous beasts at the best, but worst o' a' at this season —aye seekin' for the puir lambs.'

I said I thought the fox had got right away, and would probably save his brush by taking refuge in some stronghold by Carlin's Tooth.

'Ay,' he replied absently, then added, 'D' ye ken the name o' this cleuch?'

'No,' I replied; 'I come from the wrong side of the Border,' finally succeeding, as I spoke, in drawing my mare's head out of the water.

''Tis Peden's Cleuch,'[1] he said with animation; ''tis the place where blessed Master Peden was preachin' when the bloody "Clavers" was huntin' him like a fox on the fells; ay, and would hae worrited him wi' his hounds had na the Lord sent down His mist and wrapped him awa frae the hunters.'

He paused a moment, then continued slowly:

'They still hunt for him—"Clavers" and Grierson o' Lag; 'tis the weird they hae to dree till the Day o' Doom for their wickedness i' pursuin' the Saints o' God.'

'Have you ever seen them?' I asked lightly.

'Ay, I hae,' came the unexpected response, 'whiles i' the "oncome" or "haar," or by the moonlicht.

'D' ye no ken the bit ballant?

"Soondless they ride—for aye i' search o' their boon—
They ha' died, but God's feud is for aye unstaunched,
And aye they mun ride by the licht o' the moon."'

'No,' I replied, astonished, 'but how—supposing you have seen them—could you know them to be "Clavers" and Grierson o' Lag?'

[1] Peden, the Covenanter, was undoubtedly on the Border in the 'killing times,' and is said to have escaped from the hunters when preaching on Peden Pike by intervention of a mist, but as in old maps this rounded hill west of Otterburn is spelt Paden, the derivation seems doubtful. Peden's Cleuch on the north side of Carter seems undoubtedly to have been his refuge.

'Not only hae I seen them, but I aince heard them talking,' my companion replied quietly as before.

'When was that?' I asked, still more astonished, as I looked more keenly at the speaker.

He was a man of middle stature, dressed in rough shepherd's costume, with a plaid about his shoulders; he had a gentle aspect, with tremulous mouth, and a far-away look in his eyes of speedwell blue.

'I 'll tell ye,' he replied simply. 'Blessed Master Peden had been here i' the "killing times," ye ken, preachin' till the puir hill folk, an' baptizin' their bairns—he baptized a forebear o' my ain—and it would likely be the anni-vairsary o' the day when he escaped frae the hans o' the hunters through the "haar," when I chanced to come by here an' saw a bit tent pit up, an' heard folk carousin' within.

'I creepit up, an' I keeked within the openin' o't, an' there I saw twa hunters sittin' at board —eatin', and whiles drinkin' the blood-red wine —ane o' them was the bonniest man e'er I saw i' my life, but he had the sorrowfullest eyes e'er set i' a man's face. There was ne'er a bit colour to his cheeks save where a trickle o' claret had stained the corner o' his lip.

'His comrade was juist the opposite till him;

foul he was, an' discoloured wi' lust an' liquor—mair like a haggis nor a human face ava.

'There was a wumman beside him—dootless his whure, that had ridden oot frae Jedburgh to be wi' him—nestlin' in at his side like a ewe till her ram i' the autumn; not that he was takin' muckle thocht o' her, though—an' then he cries oot loud:

'"'Tis a moonlicht nicht, my Lord Claverhouse," he cries; "we'll hunt oor quarry ower muir an' fell, an' aiblins hae mair luck than we had i' the day; we'll run the auld brock to ground before dawn, I'll haud ye a handfu' o' Jacobuses."

'"I'll haud ye," replied Claverhouse, wi' a smile on his bonny, sad face,

> "*Ye'll tak the high road an' I'll tak the low road,*
> *An' I'll be in North Tyne afore ye.*

So up an' tak wing, my grey-lag goose," he says, "an' wing your way straight to the North Tyne water."

'"Then here's a last toast," cries Lag, holdin' up his bicker fu' o' wine.

'Noo, what think ye was his toast?' my companion broke off to inquire of me with eye agleam.

I shook my head, and laid hold of my saddle

to remount, for the eerie communication, the loneliness of the spot, and the isolation of the drifting snowflakes had all combined to give me a 'scunner.'

'It was their ain damnation,' my companion whispered in my ear; 'he was proposin' the murder o' the Saints o' God—juist the "sin against the Holy Ghaist"—that was his fearsome health.'

I had climbed into my saddle, and at that moment an unseen plover wailed through the mist.

'Hark!' cried my companion, lifting a finger. 'Hark to his soul i' torment!'

My mare took fright, and made a great spring forward; I let her go, for I was 'gliffed' myself, and right glad was I to reach the road made by human hands that led homeward, for I feared if I stayed on that I too might meet the wraiths of Claverhouse and Lag hunting the moorlands for blessed Master Peden.

'ILL-STEEKIT' EPHRAIM

‘ILL-STEEKIT’ EPHRAIM

‘About the middle of the night
The cocks began to craw:
And at the dead hour o’ the night
The corpse began to thraw.’
Ballad of Young Benjie.

We—that is, the four members of our Oxford reading party—were bathing in a deep pool in many-terraced Tees, and I was seated on a rock’s edge, drying in the September sunshine, and quoting from Clough’s ‘Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich’:

‘How to the element offering their bodies, down shooting the fall,
They mingled themselves with the flood and the force of imperious water,’

when from the central black cauldron immediately below me appeared the face of Sandie—our best diver—with a most curiously perturbed expression on his countenance. I had been watching a little circlet of foam that eddied round on the outskirts of the current, and seemed to wink at me with a hint of hidden and evasive mystery.

Then it vanished, for Sandie's head had shattered it.

'Hello, Sandie!' I cried to him, 'what's up? It's not cramp, is it?'

He climbed out and up to where I sat on the rock above, and shook the water from his hair.

'Ugh!' he said in disgust. 'I've just been to the bottom, and there I swear I came across a drowned body; I felt a corpse and touched long hair. I believe it was a woman's.' He looked at his hands in disgust, and perceptibly shivered.

'Nonsense!' said I. 'It must have been a drowned cow or sheep, or possibly a pony.'

'Go down and look, or rather feel for yourself,' he retorted.

'How deep down was it?' I inquired.

'Twenty feet, perhaps,' he said, 'for it's a deep pool, and I believe the poor thing's tethered—sunk with a stone tied to her feet.'

'Surely not,' I exclaimed, 'for if it was a case of murder it would be known.'

'Go down and see for yourself,' cried Sandie testily. 'I've had enough of it.' Calling our other two companions I told them of Sandie's discovery, and we came to the conclusion that it was our duty to try to verify or disprove Sandie's assertion.

These two dived, but did not get down far enough in the water; it seemed to me as I watched their attempts that the stream carried them too swiftly forward, so when my turn came I dived in somewhat higher up, and got as far down as I could in my dive, and kept on striking downwards till I calculated I was close to the spot Sandie had indicated. Treading the water I felt about in the amber swirl for Sandie's gruesome find, but the circling eddy swept me onward.

Knowing my breath was all but exhausted I made a final effort, sank a little deeper, striving against the current, and spread my hands abroad. I touched something—surely it was hair! Kicking against the stream I felt again.

Yes, it was hair floating in the current—the hair of a woman. I touched with a shrinking hand a human head, then almost suffocated, I rose to the surface and slowly regained the shore.

'Well?' interrogated Sandie, watching my face closely.

'I believe you 're right,' I said faintly, still short of breath. 'Yes, I believe it 's some poor woman, for I could just touch the skull, and the hair was long and floating in the current.'

'Good Lord!' exclaimed the two others.

'Can she have got wedged in between two rocks?'

'I think she's been thrown in,' said Sandie gloomily. 'I felt her body swaying to the stream. Some ruffian's knocked her on the head, tied a stone to her feet, and flung her in.'

'No more bathing for me,' I said, shivering. 'We'll just have to dress and go back and report to "the Dean."'

When we had returned to the inn where we were lodging we reported our discovery to our tutor, 'the Dean,' and asked his advice. 'Granted that you have "viewed the corpse," as coroners insist, I suppose you should report it to the Inspector of Police,' said he thoughtfully, 'but perhaps I might find out first from our landlord if there has been any story about of a woman being missed. Possibly a "village tragedy" may come to light. When we've had tea I will have a pipe and a "crack," as they call it here, with our landlord. Perhaps at supper I may have something to report.'

We were well content to leave it in 'the Dean's' hands, for he was most astute in management of men, and loved to fathom a mystery.

At supper, which was an informal meal, whereat we waited on ourselves, he told us

that he had found out nothing in course of his ‘ crack ’ with the landlord, for the simple reason that he had only been a month in possession, and nothing eventful had occurred in that time.

‘ I think,’ suggested ‘ the Dean,’ ‘ that you two divers should run down on your bikes to-morrow to the Inspector of Police at Middleton, and tell him privately of your discovery.’

This Sandie and I willingly agreed to, and started off after breakfast down the valley. We found on arrival that the Inspector was away at the county town attending the Assizes, and was not expected back till the end of the week.

We got back just in time to escape a drenching, for a ‘ thunder plump ’ broke in the heaven above the moors as we ascended the last rise to the inn, which effectually prevented all thought of further investigation of the Black Lynn pool.

The next morning was brilliant after the storm, and naturally suggested an expedition.

‘ Let ’s go for a walk right across the moors,’ said Sandie to me; ‘the other two want to work, but I ’ve turned restless.’

I agreed at once, for I was restless also in disappointment of our errand. We ordered sandwiches, obtained leave from ‘ the Dean,’ and prepared to start off at once.

'Don't fret if we don't get back to-night,' cried Sandie, the 'second-sighted,' to our tutor as we departed; 'we may get lost, Ted may break down under his weight of learning, or one of Saint Cuthbert's Cross Fell fiends may "lift" him.'

We wanted to get as far as Brough under Stanemoor, and back by the great 'Nick,' and then athwart Cross Fell's desolate moor, but we had not taken the weather into our consideration, nor thought of possible sopping peat-hags on our return journey.

Thus when we had toiled up 'the Nick' by a narrow path from Brough to the wild moorland we found our track across the waste very difficult to follow. By six o'clock the clouds had gathered black above us, and another thunderstorm grew imminent.

Suddenly the lightning flared through the serrated gloom, and thunder reverberated over the heather.

The rain descended javelin-like upon us as we struggled through the heavy peat-hags; we lost our bearings and determined to make for any light that we might descry in lonely farm or shepherd's sheil on this forsaken waste. We had almost given up hope when we saw a faint glimmer through the increasing gloom three-

quarters of a mile away, perhaps, on our left hand.

We made for our beacon as straightly as we could; then in a dip we lost sight of it, but eventually succeeded in discovering it again, and judged the light to proceed from the window of a small farm, as indeed proved to be the case when we had traversed another mile of broken moorland.

After knocking on the door repeatedly, we heard some one moving within. We went up to the window, and asked for shelter from the storm, as we were strangers who had lost our way.

The door slowly opened, and a man bearing a tallow dip in a battered sconce showed himself in the entry.

'We 've little accommodation here the night,' he said, as he looked at us somewhat suspiciously; 'the goodman has died and lies steekit in his coffin, but ye can come in for shelter if ye have a mind.'

This did not sound very inviting, but any shelter was preferable to a night in a peat-hag; so we accepted his offer, and followed the man within.

It was a strange scene that met our eyes in the little kitchen. On trestles in the middle of the

room stood the coffin ; in a box-bed to one side of the hearth an old woman in a white mutch or cap sat up against pillows ; on the farther side of the hearth sat an untidy, foolish-faced girl who peeled potatoes with an uncanny disconcern.

The old woman, on the contrary, had exceedingly bright eyes, and seemed to note everything with extraordinary interest. 'Wha 's there ?' she asked, as we bowed in a hesitating manner to our hostess.

Sandie explained who we were and how we had chanced to intrude upon her in such an untimely hour.

'Ay,' she replied, 'the goodman 's dead, and is to be lifted the morn, but ye can bide the night ; and if ye dinna mind such company,' she pointed contemptuously at the man who had let us in, 'ye can sleep wi' him i' the room above.'

'Whisht, mother, whisht wi' yer talk afore strange gentlemen,' said he, and he seemed to be very uneasy beneath her scorn.

'Why should I whisht ?' she said angrily. 'Why hae na ye brocht my daughter Jean to her father's burying ?'

The man turned to us eagerly, evidently anxious to divert our attention.

'Be seated, gentlemen,' he said, drawing up two chairs to the fire; 'ye 'll be ready for something to eat belike. Mary can give ye some bacon and eggs and potatoes for supper whilst ye dry your coats.'

'Ay,' interrupted the old lady, 'ye shall have meat and drink. Nane shall come to a burying at my hoose and no have meat and drink before they gang awa. Set oot the bannocks and honey and milk, Mary, for the lads, then mak ready the bacon and eggs.'

Mary with a strange disordered giggle that brought a chill to my bones, looked up at this and half spoke, half sang, aloud to herself by way of reply. 'Meat and drink for Dad's burying. But wherefore not for Jean's? Puir lassie, she was aye kind to me, was Jeannie.'

'Don't heed her, gentlemen,' said the man in a husky voice, 'she 's a bit daft, poor girl,' and as he spoke he trod noisily on the stone floor, evidently trying to drown her voice, and forthwith dragged a table that stood in the window somewhat nearer the hearth.

Mary had now finished with her potatoes, and was cutting rashers of bacon which were soon sizzling delightfully in the pan. Meantime Sandie was talking to our bedridden hostess, whom he had discovered to be of Scottish

extraction, and I was conversing with the son-in-law about the danger of being lost on Cross Fell.

There was a lull in the storm at this time, but one could hear the long lances of rain striking on the stone tiles above; it was good to be within doors, and to dry one's coat by the peat embers. We insisted on our hostess partaking of supper, which we served up to her in bed; then Sandie and I, the girl and the man, set ourselves down by the table and stretched forth our hands, in the Homeric phrase, 'to the good things set before us.'

Sandie and I had our backs to the coffin, and had forgotten all about it and the 'goodman,' its occupant; Mary and her brother-in-law sat at the corners of the table, and their features were lit up by the flickering peats. The man had shifty, furtive eyes, set rather deep beneath an overhanging forehead, lined cheeks, and a clean-shaven heavy jaw; Mary, with sallow face, light eyes, and disordered hair sat opposite him, evidently apprehensive.

A strange party amid strange surroundings, thought I, for a moment, as I framed an etching of the black coffin, the bright-eyed old woman in the night mutch abed, the daft girl and dour man and two Oxford undergraduates eating

heartily amid the flickering light of the dip and the peat flames.

But what a splendid moorland supper it was! Bacon and eggs and fried potatoes, bannocks with butter, heather honey and milk.

'What luck!' I murmured in Sandie's ear, 'to be hopelessly lost, and to find this!' and I stretched forth my legs at glorious ease. 'Shifty eyes' now produced a 'cutty' and suggested a smoke, which Sandie and I were thinking was the one thing left to complete our satisfaction. Suddenly and without warning I heard a creak behind my chair, but I took no heed. Then a further creaking and a grinding noise—and I looked round. *I saw the coffin-lid lift upward and a white shroud show below.* Slowly the shrouded corpse rose with creaking bones before my staring eyes—rose to a sitting posture, and sat still. The coffin-lid clanged to the ground; then all was still, an awful silence filled the room. A moment more, and a cry of terror rose to the roof, for the man beside me was down on his knees before the corpse in an ecstasy of terror. 'Never accuse me, Ephraim! Dinnot terrify us that gate, feyther!' he cried in anguish. 'Poor Jean just happened an accident—fell and was drowned in the river.' The man's face held me rigid. Never had I seen

mortal fear like this. Suddenly I heard a louder voice beside me, for Sandie—moved by an uncontrollable impulse—shot forth an accusing arm, and cried accusingly, '*She lies in the Black Linn pool—her head knocked in—a stone fast to her feet.*' The man's face turned to ashes. Awfully he twisted his head about to the voice. He could not remove his eyes from Sandie's accusing countenance, spittle dropped from his bloodless lips, his eyes were like to pillars. Then he began to shuffle off—still upon his knees—away from Sandie and towards the door—with his face twisted over his shoulder as if it were made of stone.

He shuffled a little faster—still upon his knees—his head still twisted over his shoulder—' thrawn ' in terror of Sandie and the accusing corpse. He reached the door, groped for the handle, opened it, then shambled to his feet, passed through the outer door, and so into the black night.

I saw the lightning swoop down upon the moorland. I caught a glimpse of a man running as one blinded—his hands above his head to protect himself—vaguely through the inky peat-hags. Then I turned to look on Sandie who was also gazing into the darkness—his face like the archangel Michael's. I had not yet found

my voice, and could not speak for tension, when I heard a foolish titter from the girl beside me who was suddenly overcome with laughter.

'*Tee-hee*,' she went, '*tee hee! What a funny face Tom had on him. Tee hee!*'

Then I heard a voice from the bed speaking composedly. 'Ay, I aye kenned he'd murdered puir Jeannie. Whaur wast ye fund my puir lassie?' she asked Sandie.

As Sandie replied to her I looked at the fearful figure of the shrouded corpse that sat upright facing the doorway, whence his son-in-law had fled, and wondered if there could be any spark of life left within. As I looked the composed voice spoke again, 'Dinna be fleyed! Puir Ephraim's been *ill-steekit*. It's twa-three days since the doctor certifiedst him; noo his muscles hae stiffened and raxed him up. Ye mun lay him doon again, Maisters, for I'll no can sleep wi' him glowering that gate.'

The speaker in the night mutch was the only one of us who seemed unaffected by the extraordinary events we had just witnessed. Her eyes gleamed a trifle more brightly than before. That was the only difference.

I looked at Sandie in dismay at the task assigned to us, but he had risen, and now beckoned me to the coffin side. Handling the poor corpse

as reverently as we could we found it very difficult to re-confine it to its resting-place, for the muscles had turned so stiff and rigid that we had to exert force, and seek heavy stones from outside to keep the lid shut down securely.

This done, and the door fastened against the return of the fugitive, at the old woman's command, though I felt sure in my own mind that the man would never come back again of his own accord, Sandie and I took the battered sconce and dying wick and went up to the bedroom above.

We sat upon the bed, smoked another pipe and conversed about the soul-stirring incidents we had just been witnesses of.

'Do you remember,' asked Sandie, 'the mediæval legend of the dead man's wounds bleeding afresh in the presence of his murderer? I believe that the spirit of the dead man down below us must have been moved by the presence of his daughter's murderer.'

'To think of our having come across in such a mysterious and fortuitous way the poor daughter—Jean!' I said, occupied by another aspect of these extraordinary occurrences.

As we smoked and talked thus our dip went out, which was an intimation that we had better try to sleep.

We slept but fitfully, and rose early to help prepare our breakfast. Scarcely had we finished our repast when a neighbour arrived with a cart and horse wherewith he had promised to 'lift' the corpse and convey it over the rough track down the valley to the spot where the hearse from Middleton was to meet it.

We found a rope and bound the coffin-lid lightly down, and having given our promise to our hostess to recover, if we could, the body of her daughter Jean and give it proper burial, we bade her good-bye for the present and set off to the inn where the 'Dean' would be anxiously expecting us.

We related our experiences to the 'Dean,' we got the Inspector to come up, but failed entirely to discover the body in the Linn. For my part I thought the thunderstorm might be accountable for the disappearance, but Sandie had his own opinion on this matter. As to the criminal, some say he escaped the country, but I firmly believe he perished in a peat-hag, and to this day haunts the bleak spaces of Cross Fell.

THE COCK-CROW

THE COCK-CROW

A CLOUD hung over the bishopric—the ancient patrimony of Saint Cuthbert.

Bishop van Mildert had died and, *sede vacante*, great changes were impending, for Parliament was about to shear off a large portion of the privileges of the ancient franchise, to reduce the endowments, and to hand over the mines to the Ecclesiastical Commission.

. . . . . .

The Reverend Arthur Egglestone — the youngest of the 'Golden Canons' and Lord of the Manor of Midhope, high up in Weardale—sat in his spacious, oak-panelled dining-room above the Wear, discussing the situation with his two companions over a very *recherché* supper prepared by the French chef of the Dean and Chapter.

The time was Lent, the eve of Good Friday, but the 'Golden Canon' had forgotten the season in his perturbation and his desire to show hospitality to a distant cousin newly arrived from America, who was full of curiosity and

admiration of the city and cathedral of Saint Cuthbert.

His other guest was a Minor Canon who had just been appointed to instruct and train the choir-boys of the cathedral.

The 'Golden Canon' was of an imposing figure, a fine type of the English country gentleman of the old school—admirably fitted for the post of Chairman of Quarter Sessions.

It was not that he had mistaken his vocation so much as that his vocation had mistaken the canon, for owing to the death of his two elder brothers—one by an accident out hunting, one by drowning at sea when admiral—he had unexpectedly succeeded to the family seat and rich possessions.

On this very day he had driven himself into his prebend's house in the close in his four-in-hand to welcome his young American cousin.

The 'Golden Canon' was of a sturdy build, fair of complexion, a lover of field sports, and an excellent judge of a horse and good claret.

An admirable host, he sat in his arm-chair looking after the comfort of his two companions, passing the *Château-Laffite*, and discoursing learnedly of the ancient glory of the bishopric.

His American cousin was an undergraduate of Harvard. eager as a hawk, keen-faced, avid

of every form of life : he drank down his *Laffite* with evident enjoyment, listening to the music of the water on the weir below, and eagerly following the wisdom of the ‘ Golden Canon.’

The Minor Canon, on the other hand, was not entirely at his ease, for he was divided between his reverence to his host and his consciousness that it was Lent, for hitherto he had always prided himself upon mortifying the flesh during the Lenten fast.

He was of a delicate and distinguished appearance ; not much more than a lad yet,—sensitive and impressionable—one whom the Jesuits of the sixteenth century would have trained to be a ‘ staff ’ in their hands to be turned this way and that in the interests of the Church.

Gradually, however, he forgot his scruples in the charm of his surroundings, the good cheer, and his superior’s conversation ; he helped himself joyfully as the claret went swiftly about, and joined with delight in converse about the great past of the cathedral.

‘ ’Tis a thousand pities,’ said the ‘ Golden Canon,’ ‘ to diminish in any way the dignity of the bishop and the dean and chapter, since reverence for the established order of the State is fast dying out.

‘ Now just as it is thought well to maintain

the dignity of the judges on assize by the attendance of the High Sheriff with his javelin men and trumpeters, so it is needful to keep up the estates of the bishops and the deans and chapters.

'In the old days of the great prince bishops,' continued the 'Golden Canon,' 'the successor of St. Cuthbert was in reality a greater power than the successor of St. Augustine. For myself I had rather have reigned and ruled between Tees and Tyne than have lived in Lambeth Palace. I should have had regal powers in regard to jurisdiction, coinage, Chancery, Admiralty dues, and so forth, and when I journeyed to London, on my way to my palace in the Strand, would have lain at my various palaces on my way up.

'Then again as lord of many manors throughout the Palatinate I should have had all the old feudal dues coming in to my treasury—waifs and strays, treasure trove, deodands——'

'And merchet of women?' queried his cousin mischievously.

'Ay,' replied the 'Golden Canon' with a responsive twinkle in his eye, '"merchet of women" also, but as an antiquary I must tell ye that it's not what you two young men would wish it to be——'

He glanced at the blushing face of the Minor

Canon, and the eager visage of the undergraduate, and bade them fill their glasses yet again, while they had the chance, for the Chapter's binn of *Laffite* was now running very low in its deep cellar.

'No,' he went on regretfully, ''twas not the *Droit de Seigneur* which we have all read of, and perhaps envied, but a fine upon marriage—a feudal due exercised over women, as over all property on the feudal lord's manor. Not but that I take it occasionally the Prince Bishop may have indulged himself in what Richelieu styled "the honest man's recreation," yet the *jus primae noctis*, of which also you will have heard, was not the privilege of the seigneurial bishops, but the fine or compensation paid to the Church by the impatient bridegroom, who in early days of clerical discipline was enjoined to mortification of the flesh for the first three nights of marriage.

'A lawsuit 'twixt the mayor and corporation of Amiens and the bishop before the Parliament of Paris in the fifteenth century is still on record, and proves this clearly.'

'St. Cuthbert, sir,' interposed the blushing but now emboldened Minor Canon, 'would have severely reprehended Cardinal Richelieu in that event, for 'tis said that the saint had a

perfect horror of women ; we know of the line drawn beside the cathedral beyond which no woman was allowed to pass.'

'Ay,' responded his host, 'St. Cuthbert was a great saint doubtless, but an extremely ungallant man. He would allow no cow upon Holy Island, for where there was a cow there was a woman, and where there was a woman there was the Devil.'

'Luther and the Reformation changed all that,' said the young American, with a laugh.

'"Who loves not woman, wine and song,
He is a fool his whole life long."

Which of the two is in the right ?'

'Luther !' replied the Minor Canon, somewhat unexpectedly, flushed with *vol-au-vent* and generous claret, who was now beginning to look upon himself as a gay Lothario. 'Asceticism for its own sake is mere vanity.'

'Here 's then to Luther !' cried the 'Golden Canon,' with enthusiasm. 'Fill and drink a bumper to his memory !'

'Not but what I regret the Reformation myself, since had it not been for Anne Boleyn, the bishopric might still be a Palatinate and the estates of the canons inviolate.'

Curiously enough the Minor Canon had not

on this especial occasion filled up his glass; on the contrary he was now staring in dismay towards the window recess opposite, which was suffused with a pale light. On the right hand there hung a crucifix, and the moonbeams gently illuminated the cross with its burden.

The two cousins continued their gay converse, but the Minor Canon was completely absorbed in his contemplation of a vision which was being unfolded before his affrighted eyes in the recess opposite. A figure took shape in the misty light —the form of an old man rugged of aspect, with grizzled locks like a fisherman's, appeared before his eyes; he held forth his hand and pointed menacingly to the crucifix with fiercely gleaming eyes.

At that very moment there rose up from far away to the ears of the stricken gazer the sound of a cock-crow. The gazer wilted back in his seat; turning white, he held his hands to his eyes, his whole frame trembling. His two companions, who had now been aroused by his movement, looked upon him with astonishment.

'What's the matter, my dear fellow?' inquired the 'Golden Canon.' 'You look as if you had seen a ghost.'

'I thought,' stammered the gazer—'I

thought I saw St. Cuthbert—I mean some apparition—in the recess there.'

'It 's only the moon,' the 'Golden Canon' replied, after a cursory glance in that direction. 'If you don't like it just draw the curtains.'

But the Minor Canon had already risen from his seat, and, with unsteady footsteps, passed to the door murmuring brokenly to himself, '*Peccavi, peccavi,*' as he withdrew from the dining-room.

'A nice fellow,' commented the 'Golden Canon,' 'but he has, I fear, a rotten digestion.

'Help yourself to that white port, cousin; then we 'll finish our talk over a pipe of tobacco.'

BY THE SHRINE OF SAINT CUTHBERT

BY THE SHRINE OF SAINT CUTHBERT

The bells were ringing to evensong in the great cathedral dedicated to Saint Cuthbert, that stands like a fortress on its rock above the murmuring Wear—

> *'Half house of God, half castle 'gainst the Scot'*—

in the windy dusk of a November evening.

The people of the saint, however—the 'Haliwer folc,' the 'folk of the Holy Man'—were few in attendance that afternoon, and the great nave seemed very empty as I sat down in a seat in front of the 'Galilee' beside the north door of entry.

I looked about me and admired the mighty Norman pillars diapered and fluted with exceeding skill by the great master builders of old, who built to, even as their great duke swore by, the 'Splendour of God.' My eye wandered upward and rested upon the great chevrons resembling sword-cuts that seemed deep-hacked within the rounded arches of the Triforium. Thence onward my gaze fluttered like a butterfly, and rested upon a leering corbel, which

seemed to scoff at priest and priest-craft with protruding tongue. The mighty stone roof soaring aloft—a ship's keel upturned—drew my eye eastward to the choir; there on the great east window, rose-shaped and many-coloured, the invading dusk gathered like water-drops upon the panes, and wove its dun mantle over them. The anthem now pealed along the roof, lapping capitals, corbels, and pillars in a tide of sound that swept unresisted through the wide spaces of the cathedral.

As the echoing song grew fainter, and ebbed away into the twilight shadows, my gaze returned to my immediate surroundings, and rested unconcernedly upon a man sitting a seat or two in front of me, beside one of the massive piers. He seemed to be in a most distressed and nervous condition, for he peered about him with an evident alarm, which was pitiful to witness. As he turned his face about I saw it was haggard with fear and sorrow, or remorse; his hair was matted, and beads of sweat were thick upon his brow.

It was as if he were terrified of impending danger. Yet what could he be afraid of in the great calm of the solemn cathedral? The benediction had been given, and the sparse congregation had now risen and was slowly

departing, yet he rose not, but seemed to be hiding from view as he crouched behind the form in front of him, and edged his way slowly within the shadow of the heavy pier to his left hand.

I sat on listening to the voluntary, and it held me by its strangeness. I knew that the Dean and Chapter's organist was away on holiday, and I wondered who the strange player might be who was setting forth his own soul in the notes of the pealing organ. He sang of fellowship, of comradeship in ancient days through stress of adventure and deadly combat; then with organ sobs that shook the heart, of death and the infinite loneliness of death, and of the inappeasable sorrow of the survivor lamenting his Jonathan. A pause of black silence. Then brokenly a little sough of life began to re-arise—a growth of hope—the fierce determination of revenge—quickening with flame—breaking into triumph.

And now as the lights were being turned out, and gloom came rushing in upon the empty spaces of the cathedral I saw the unhappy figure shift indecisively as he rose from his seat in front of me, glance hurriedly about as if for a way of escape, then moving unsteadily round the pier, to my surprise he shuffled off in the

direction of the organ. The music seemed to fascinate him, to paralyse his will, even as the sphex paralyses its victim with its sting.

The organist was now engaged upon the coda of his fugue ; the former motifs were rehearsed —love, sorrow, and revenge. Triumph resounded from the loft when I heard above the quickening notes a sudden patter of heels across the nave ; then a pitiful drumming of fists upon the barred door that led into the east corner of the cloisters. Knowing that escape that way was now impossible for the distracted man, and feeling pity for him, I crossed the nave and followed after him in the gloom. As I drew near I heard him flee again—down the south aisle to the other door of the cloisters. Here once more he shook unavailingly upon the latch, and drummed pitifully with his fists. There was a scrabbling with nails on the oaken door—then a cry of anguish smote on my ear. An awful terror evidently had him in grip.

He rushed wildly on again—on—on to the only remaining door of escape into the northern close. Suddenly the music stopped on a throb of joy. The shock caused me to halt. As I started again to walk towards the door I heard no longer the miserable patter of feet in front of me. I was just about to reach out a hand

to feel for the latch in the darkness when I stumbled over an obstacle on the pavement. I knelt down and felt about with my hands: I found a man's body lying inert at my feet.

God in Heaven! The darkness seemed to buffet me upon the ears. I heard a vague cry escape my lips, for the fugitive's hand had dropped from mine with a thud upon the stone. *The man was dead.*

‘MEENISTER’ MACHIAVELLI

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The soul of the Minister of Bleakhope was disquieted within him, for he had just been ‘ up the water ’ and seen the new stained-glass windows which had recently been put in and dedicated to Saint Cuthbert in the English church ‘ beside the Knowe.’

The Reverend Alexander Macgregor was tall and spare, oval-faced, eyed like a hawk, yet with a humorous twinkle behind his keen glances that were equally alert whether for the rising of a ‘ troot ’ or a sinner.

A bequest from a wealthy parishioner, who had died, as the result of a motor-car accident, had enabled his ‘ brother ’—the Episcopalian ‘ priest ’—to decorate his church with three single lights, illustrative of Saint Cuthbert’s life, and the Minister grieved as he thought of his own little grey kirk on the bare hill which badly wanted a ‘ bit colour ’ in its wee apsidal east window.

He regarded his frayed sleeves and his wrinkled black trousers unhopefully.

If he were to save every penny till the end of his days he could never achieve his desire. He had no wealthy parishioner whom he might persuade into buying a motor-car after seeing that 'the Kirk' had been duly remembered in his will. His flock consisted chiefly of small farmers and herd laddies, and unless one of them emigrated and made a fortune in Canada he saw no prospect of achievement in the parish itself.

As he walked up the road towards the manse on this particular October evening after his return from the Knowe he came nigh to breaking the tenth Commandment into pieces, for the three light windows seemed to flaunt themselves before his eyes in the gathering mist, and to ask tauntingly, 'What wull ye gie for us? What wull ye gie for us?'

As he plodded onward he was suddenly hailed by a voice from behind. Turning about, he recognised one of his flock—a small fellside farmer —who, coming up with him, informed him that an old acquaintance was staying at the little inn close by who had been inquiring about him.

'Wha is 't?' inquired the Minister.

'Ye 'll mind Tam Elliot,' replied the elder, 'him that was nevvy to auld Sandy o' the Ratten Raa farm that died and left him part money. Aff he went when he got the siller, and a bit later

an auld great-aunt left him a bit mair, sae he took a muckle big farm doon sooth, and noo he 's at the inn cracking crouse aboot his pedigree beasts and sheep, and swankin' awa as to what he 's done syne he left these parts, just as if we didna ken the sort o' man he was, and aye will be. Howsoever, he 's askin' after ye, and maybe ye 'd like a crack wi' him.'

The Minister was on his way home, but he liked his 'crack' as well as another, so he turned eastwards to the little wayside hostelry some quarter of a mile back to forgather with Elliot, who used to attend the kirk 'whiles' in company with his deceased uncle. The 'Sign of the Wool Pack' was a very quiet country inn; in the little 'snug' there would not be above half a dozen customers—the landlord, probably, presiding over them—so the Minister thought no harm in joining them for a glass, a pipe, and a 'crack.'

'Hoo 's aal wi' ye?' he inquired, as he entered the door of the 'snug,' and, having nodded to the company, held out his hand to Tam Elliot. 'We hae heard that ye are increasing your flocks like Abraham, doon sooth i' the land o' Canaan!'

'You are welcome, Minister,' cried Tam in reply, as he rose up and took him by the hand; '"wag a paw," as we used to say, and take something for a sore throat. Yes,' he continued, as

he sat himself down again and took a pull at his own long glass, 'I 'm building up a pedigree stock at my new place—gave £500 for a bull t' other day, and that 's a fact.'

'Dod, man!' said the Minister, bethinking him of the stained-glass window, 'why, that 's a small fortune.'

''Tis that,' replied Tam complacently, stretching a leg to the hearth, 'but pedigree blood 's worth the money.' He caressed a little imperial he had grown since he left the north, stretched out his other leg to the fire, and with a smile of satisfaction that seemed to ooze from his vintage cheeks, continued to talk of his own pedigree.

'Yes, blood 's the thing,' he said, 'for beasts and humans alike. Why, take my family—every one knows the clan of Elliot 's been on the Border for centuries, and one of my forebears was married on a Stuart lass, so likely enough I may have a bit royal blood i' my veins, even though it comes from the wrong side o' the blanket.'

Here an ancient, bearded shepherd—an elder of the kirk—with a tongue of caustic, Ringan by name, who was sitting behind the Minister, winked derisively at the company and muttered *sotto voce*, 'He 's forgot aal the little yins. I mind fine his granddam—the merry-begot of a

pitman's lass doon the water.' The Minister himself could not resist a smile at this, and the visitor added somewhat hastily, 'Yet I say wi' Robbie Burns—"*a man's a man for a' that.*" Have another touch o' this mountain dew,' he cried magnanimously to the scornful herd.

'Na, na, I 'm awa,' replied the ancient herd, rising as he spoke; 'it 's gettin' late, an' I dinna want to run the risk o' meetin' wi' "Parcy" on my way hame.' [1]

'Parcy!' exclaimed the visitor, raising himself in surprise from his arm-chair. 'Parcy, the ghost o' the murdered mosstrooper, d' ye mean, that the old wives talked of? D' ye mean to tell me ye still believe in ghosts up here?'

'Why not?' said the Minister. ''Tis good Christian doctrine to believe in departed spirits.'

'We don't believe in 'em in the towns,' retorted Elliot scornfully, 'so why should we in the country?'

'Will ye put your faith, or lack o't, tae the proof?' here inquired the caustic ancient herd. 'I 'se haud ye a wager ye winna walk doon the burn the morrow nicht at the deid hour, past the stane where "Parcy" was slain, and up on

[1] 'Parcy Reed,' the hero of the well-known ballad, was foully slain in Bakinghope above Catcleugh Lough, but his wraith is said to haunt the Rede and to be visible about Rochester.

beyond the kirkyaird, and on tae the manse. Maybe it 's a mile, an' to-morrow 's the nicht o' Hallow E'en when the deid walk. Here 's my shilling against whatever ye like to lay doon,' and as the ancient spoke he drew a long, thin leathern purse from his trouser pocket, plucked forth a shilling, and set it down with a bang on the table.

'And there 's my sovereign alongside it,' cried the visitor vaingloriously.

'Aweel,' the ancient continued, 'the Meenister can be the stake-holder, an' the landlord can set ye awa as the clock strikes twalve the morrow nicht. If ye win through to the manse your lane ye 'll hae won my shillin' ; if no', the Meenister will hae a sovereign i' the ladle next Sawbath.'

The landlord assented, the others all approved the suggestion, the Minister placed the stakes carefully into his waistcoat pocket, and the aged shepherd departed, chuckling to himself over his wager.

The Minister continued to converse about ghosts for a minute or more, then he too rose, saying that 'the wife' would be getting nervous if she 'wanted' him much longer.

As soon as he was out upon the road he sped on after the retreating footsteps of the shepherd,

and he hailed him through the gloom. As he came up with him he said quietly, 'Come awa to the manse and we 'll hae a bit crack.'

. . . . . .

Hallow E'en drew on stormy and dark, and Elliot at the inn began to regret that he had ever accepted the wager, though for very shame he could not now withdraw from his forbidding task. At a quarter to twelve then precisely, having fortified himself with a final dram and lighted a cigar, he set forth upon his mission. He knew the path quite well, and could make no pretence at missing his way, but when he had crossed the burn by the shaking little wire suspension bridge sudden fear assailed him. There was a gusty wind sweeping drumly clouds athwart the sky—faintly illuminated by the dying moon; now a few stars appeared momentarily, then a swathe of darkness enveloped all. The old kirkyard, with its tottering headstones grouped around the black kirk, had an eldritch look in the murky night, and Elliot's heart sank into his boots as he drew nigh.

The clouds had lifted as he walked swiftly but unsteadily onward. What was that? He heard something move, and looked about him fearfully. Suddenly from beside the little kirkyard gate a monstrous form rose up—soot-black, horned, and

threatening. It advanced upon him, tossing its horrid horns, but without speaking. *Could it be 'Auld Clootie' himself?*

Elliot's knees became as water; he staggered on, but at that very moment a terrible bray resounded from the hollow on his left, and Elliot, overcome with terror, fell to the earth. 'Minister Macgregor,' he yelled; 'O Minister, come help me! All the devils i' Hell are loosed about me.' The horned figure drew closer, brandishing his horns, and Elliot believing his last hour was come wailed forth his confession of sin.

'I hae done wrang,' he moaned aloud; 'I promised Jeannie to mak her an honest woman, but I haena done it. But I will, I swear it, by Heaven above. Minister Macgregor,' he yelled again, 'come, help me, or I 'll gang clean daft.' Shaking like an aspen leaf he lay upon the ground and covered his eyes with his hands, whilst he endeavoured to say a prayer.

Then he felt something touch him on the shoulder, and he broke into an agonised yell.

'Whisht, then, whisht!' said a kindly voice in his ear. A friendly hand gripped him below the oxter, and, peering up, he discerned the Minister.

'Eh, Minister,' cried Elliot in a paroxysm of joy, 'ye hae saved me—saved me,' then he burst into tears.

'Come awa, come awa,' said the Reverend Alexander Macgregor gently, 'come awa up wi' me to the manse.'

Clinging to his benefactor, Elliot rose to his feet and stumbled forward as swiftly as his shaking limbs permitted.

'Whaur is he?' he inquired tremulously, keeking about fearfully.

'Wha d'ye mean?' replied the Minister. 'Is 't "Parcy" ye hae seen?'

'Waur nor that; waur nor that,' replied the other. 'I believe 'twas *him*.'

'Anither fifty yards an' we 'll be hame,' said the Minister. 'See, there 's the licht i' the windie showing fine.'

As soon as they were within doors the Minister placed his trembling companion in the old leathern chair in his little sanctum, made up the fire, and poured him out a glass of whisky with hot water from the kettle that was opportunely ready on the hob.

'And now, Minister,' said the rescued one, after imbibing the goodly contents of his glass, 'what can I do for ye by way o' recompense for saving me the night?'

'Did I hear ye confessin' that ye had wranged a lass—by name Jeannie?' asked the minister, seriously, by way of answer.

'Ay, ye did that,' replied the penitent fervently, 'and I swore to right her. I 'll mak her my wife at aince; I swear it again—before ye.'

'I 'll haud ye to it, mind,' said the Minister gravely; then he inquired thoughtfully, 'What wull ye do by way o' further recompense for being saved the nicht?' He paused. 'Weel,' he continued, 'there 's some that had sinned like ye i' the auld times that desired to prove their repentance and their gratitude to Heaven for timeous rescue by some outward an' visible symbol, sic, for example, as building a kirk or foundin' an orphanage.'

'Eh, but, Minister,' ejaculated the penitent, turning white again, 'yon 's a work for kings and suchlike, no' for a poor farmer like me.'

'A puir farmer,' commented his mentor, 'is no' ane that gives £500 for a pedigree bull.' There was silence for a while. The penitent groaned within himself as he regarded the implacable face in front of him. Then he said suddenly, 'No a *kirk*, Minister,' and further ventured wheedlingly, ''tis impossible, but somethin' *for* the kirk—a new pulpit, for instance, or a bit organ, or some heating for the winter.' The Minister shook his head.

'The kirk disna care aboot organs, and the folk

hereawa are hardy and winna want ony heatin',' he replied slowly; then with the twinkle in his eye he explained further, 'No, that is for *pleesure purposes.*' He reflected a moment or two profoundly, then with a happy inspiration suggested an alternative. 'A stained-glass windie micht be a guid an' righteous gift, I 'm thinkin'.'

'That 's mair like it,' responded the penitent, almost with joy, finishing off his glass and holding it out suggestively for replenishment.

'Hoo muckle would it come to, think ye—£100 belike?'

The Minister replenished his guest's glass hospitably before replying.

'We 'd best mak it guineas,' he said thoughtfully.

'Right!' cried the other, his spirits visibly rising. 'I 've got a cheque-book on me, an' I 'll write it out for ye this instant moment.'

The Minister took the cheque silently, dried it carefully on his blotting-pad, then tucked it safely away in his Bible.

'An' noo,' he said to his penitent, 'noo I 'll set ye awa for the inn.'

'Ye 'll never be for turning me out into the darkness again?' wailed Elliot, his face paling perceptibly.

'I 'll gang wi' ye,' replied the Minister. 'I 'll

guide ye ; and wi' this,' he took up his heavy 'crook,' 'I 'll fettle "Auld Hornie." '

'I don't care about the wager,' continued the other, desirous of putting off the evil moment ; 'here 's the sovereign—for yourself or the old shepherd.'

Serious as before, the Minister took the sovereign and laid it on the Bible as he said :

'If ye dinna gang back to the inn the landlord an' his lassies will be up a' nicht seekin' ye, an' ye 'll be the talk o' the hail countryside.'

His visitor sighed heavily and looked wistfully at the whisky bottle, but the Minister was adamant. 'No' anither sup till the windie 's in,' he thought to himself.

'Well, Minister,' said his guest with resignation, as he rose slowly up from his chair, 'I 'll go back, but keep a close tongue, ye ken.'

'I 'm used to daein' that,' replied the other, as he ushered his guest out into the darkness, and led him back to the 'Wool Pack' without mishap.

On his return the Minister paused by the kirk yett, and thus soliloquised :

'I never cared muckle for that camsterie goat o' Ringan's, but he wis gey useful the nicht there 's no denyin', whilst as for auld cuddy, dod ! but he was in fell voice, an' cam in punctual as the precentor.'

The Reverend Alexander Macgregor thrust out an arm on high, turned about on heel and toe, as though to secret piping. Then he resumed his way to the manse, pondering now what should be the subject of the stained-glass window. Suddenly he stood stock still. He had it! 'It wull represent Palm Sunday—the entry of our Lord intil the Holy Ceety—*ridin' in on an ass.*'

ELDER 'MACHIAVELLI-ER'

ELDER 'MACHIAVELLI-ER'

I

On the evening after the stained-glass 'windie' had been set up in the new kirk and dedicated to the memory of Saint Cuthbert, the Reverend Alexander Macgregor and his elder, Ringan Telfer, the ancient 'herd,' sat together in the manse's little 'sanctum' or library, enjoying a 'crack,' a glass of whisky, and a pipe of tobacco.

'It 's a gey an' useful thing a ghaist,' said Ringan meditatively. 'It fleys folk fine an' stirs up their conscience graund. I aince thocht I caught a keek o' "Parcy" mysel', but I wasna muckle gliffed, for though I ken fine I 'm a sinner, I 've naethin' particular on my conscience.

'Mind ye, I dinna ken whether 'twas a wraith I saw or no—for I 'd been first footin', ye ken, an' maybe I had a wee drappie i' my e'e.'

'Gey an' likely,' assented the Minister, nodding his head sympathetically, and drawing deep upon his pipe.

'Onnyway, naethin' came o't,' continued Ringan, imbibing thoughtfully from his glass,

'but what I'm thinkin' the noo is that aiblins anither ghaist-gliff micht do a body I ken o' a guid turn.'

'There's many a body that micht be the better of a bit "gliff," but it disna always last, and it's a daungerous game to play at. But wha is the body?' inquired the Minister.

'It's a lang story,' replied the other, as he extracted a document from his pocket, 'but gey easy to understand. Weel, this document is a bit codicil to the will of a far-off cousin o' mine, but it wasna signed, as ye'll note, and i' the eye o' the law, as they call it, o' nae value. Noo the testator, Mistress Wallace, was a widow wi' a bit heritable property the whilk she'd but a life interest in, but she had a bit siller i' the bank, an' 'twas this she was leavin' awa different frae her will by this bit codicil.

'The siller was twa hundred pounds, an' it was lyin' at the bank, and the bank manager got it for various advice—ceevility an' attention paid to Mistress Wallace.

'Weel, there was anither puir widdie—a far-off cousin o' hers, that had a bairn born till her after her man died, and the puir widdie juist askit Mistress Wallace to be its godmither.

'Noo Mistress Wallace had nae bairns o' her ain, ye ken, an' it pleasured her fine to be a god-

mither to the fatherless bairn, but bein' verra frail i' body, she didna get the codicil signed an' witnessed before her "stroke."

'Weel, the doctor, he kenned aal about the hail matter, an' he gied the puir widdie the bit paper, since he was managin' her bit affairs. He thocht aiblins if the bank manager saw it he micht "pairt"—but deevil a bodle wull he hand ower, though the doctor saw him himsel'.'

The Minister nodded his apprehension, then taking the pipe out of his mouth, inquired, 'Wha was the puir widdie woman?'

'Ye'll ken my sister?' replied Ringan, gazing fixedly at the fire, 'Effie that was marrit on puir Jock Ord—a fine laddie he was—verra knowledgeable wi' sheep, wha perished in a snowstorm, mindin' his hirsel.

'She was left gey ill aff, an' noo wi' a bairn to provide for, hard pit till 't. Twa hundred punds wull provide for his upbringin', an' aiblins turn him into a meenister at the finish.'

'Ay,' replied the Minister, 'I mind Effie well, puir decent body, for didna I marry them? An' I heard tell o' her man's death, but I hadna seen nither since they went herdin' ower the Carter Bar. But whaur does the "ghaist" come intil the story?' inquired the speaker in conclusion.

Ringan continued to contemplate the fire with fixed attention, then slowly delivered himself as follows :

'I 'm hearin' that the Burnside Field Club wull be comin' up the water to hold their meetin' here shortly, an' to view the Roman Camp. I mind they were here ten years before, an' this year the president is the bank manager doon at the auld toon, wha has gruppit the siller I 've tell't ye aboot. Weel, ye 'll ken him, an' aiblins,' here the speaker took up the bellows and thoughtfully assisted the fire's respiration, 'aiblins it wud be a ceevil matter to offer to gie him a night's lodgin', for it 's a gey lang way up frae the auld toon, an' the manager 's gettin' gey white aboot the pow.'

Here the speaker laid down the bellows, then took up his glass thoughtfully, drained it off slowly, and resumed his contemplation of the fire.

The Minister also refreshed himself, then, keenly watching his companion from the tail of his eye, admitted an acquaintanceship with the bank manager.

'Ay, I ken him. He 's a verra decent body —a bit near maybe, an' terribly superfeecial i' antiquarian knowledge. I mind I had a bit differ wi' him the time he was last up at the Camp.

'But supposin' I was inclined to be ceevil till him—what then ?'

'Then aiblins,' replied the elder, stooping and knocking the ashes from his pipe against the fender, 'there micht be a bit gliff, an' this bit paper micht come in gey useful by way o' stirrin' up his conscience the whilk, I 'm thinkin', has been growin' stiff i' his auld age. If it disna there 's nae harm dune.'

The Minister thrust out his legs, and gazed up at the ceiling.

'Was it Dr. Thomson that tended Effie, an' that saw the manager ?'

'Ay, 'twas him,' replied his companion.

There was a pause of silence after this response, the elder gazing abstractedly into the fire, the Minister surveying his ceiling, yet all the while out of the tail of his eye keeping watch on his elder.

Ultra sardonic he was, reflected the watcher affectionately, intolerant, *plus Calviniste que Calvin même*—sceptical of the world, with uptwisted eyebrows that seemed to signify a perpetual interrogation, yet faithful unto death to his duty and his own ideals. He minded well assisting to dig Ringan out of a snowdrift wherein he was seated, calmly tending a ewe and her two tiny lambs.

'Aweel,' said the Minister, breaking the silence, 'I micht—be offerin' hospitality to Macmanus, the banker; 'twould be the ceevil thing to do, but if he comes he 's my guest, ye ken—I maunna hae ony "frightfulness"; an' the cuddy wull be locked up.'

'Ay,' responded the other, 'an' sae wull the goat be.'

'I ken naethin' aboot that,' retorted the other, bringing his gaze down from the ceiling to rest upon the swag-bellied green bottle on the table beside him.

'It 's gettin' on intil the "wee sma' hours ayont the twal,"' he added; 'ye mun hae a "deoch-an-doruis" afore startin' "aff."'

'Deed, an' I wull,' replied Ringan, as he rose up and held out his glass, whilst wrapping his plaid about his shoulders.

II

Fergus Macmanus, bank manager, amateur antiquary, and President of the Burnside Field Club, accepted the invitation from the Reverend Alexander Macgregor, and returned with him from the Roman Camp to the manse for the night after a successful meeting, whereat he had given an address on Castrametation and the

Roman Wall, which had abundantly satisfied himself, if not his host.

Macmanus was a short, thick-set, well-preserved man of some seventy years of age, with a complexion reminiscent of Harvest Festival. His Pauline motto of 'All things to all men' was a little impeded by an assurance of infallibility which he founded upon his 'common-sense view of things.' Hence after supper he proceeded to demonstrate to his host that all the theorists were wrong; that he had walked along the line of the wall and satisfied himself that wall and vallum were not contemporaneous, and that if Hadrian had made any use of the vallum—an early dyke or *limes*—it was merely for the screening of his troops whilst the wall was building.

'Common sense,' retorted the Minister, 'willna tak ye verra far. Common sense assures me the world is flat, an' stands stock still in the centre o' things.'

'Common sense,' echoed his companion; 'man alive! why it includes the use of all the rational faculties. What I mean is that folk get wedded to a theory and disregard the practical side o' things. Noo the Romans were first and foremost a practical people, as a'body kens. They made sure o' their conquest, an' then built their

wall, sae that the popular theory that the vallum was a protection against the south is a' stuff an' nonsense.'

'Isna the result,' queried the Minister, 'that ye haud ane theory, ither folks anither?'

'If a thorough excavation were carried out many secrets micht be discovered, but noo folks prefer to travel an' dig i' the remotest pairts o' the earth, an' no' at home.'

'Aweel,' the Minister continued, with a sudden deft twist to the conversation, 'it 's no excavation o' the earth that 's interestin' me the noo—it 's *the excavation o' the mind.* I have been readin' o' what a clever doctor chield has accomplished i' Edinbro' by the pooer o' mind upon mind——'

'Ye mean Christian Science—Faith-Healing?' queried his companion scornfully.

'Na, na,' returned the Minister, 'he ca's it Psycho-therapeutics—an' has worked miracles by it. For an instance, he actually operated wi' the knife on a puir body withoot any chloroform, ether, or anæsthetic whatever—an' the patient ne'er had a wink o' pain under it. His consciousness was under control, ye ken, directed clean awa from thocht o' pain——'

'I 'd like to see the man that could mak me believe he 'd gien me security for his overdraft when he hadna,' interrupted his companion satirically.

'I think I hae heard o' the thing haein' been accomplished, natheless,' returned the Minister with a twinkle in his eye.

'Man!' acknowledged the banker with a smile, 'but ye 're gleg.'

The two men surveyed each other silently, like fencers awaiting feint or lunge, when suddenly a peal of thunder echoed on the air and shook the windows of the sanctum.

'A thunderstorm,' said the banker, 'i' the distance. Well, there 's ane thing I 'd be glad to hear o' frae your new doctor, an' that is no' to be gliffed by thunner an' lightin'. I was verra nigh struck by a flash when I was a bairn oot fishin' for troots—an' I canna get the better o't.'

''Tis a lang way off,' replied the Minister, rising and looking out o' window; 'weel, it 's bedtime, I 'm thinkin'. Ye mun juist have a night-cap before retiring.'

Nothing loath, his guest fortified himself handsomely, and was escorted to his bedroom by his host.

Entering his own room, which was opposite the other, the Minister proceeded to undress, leaving the door ajar advisedly, in the event of any strategy of Ringan's contriving.

He lay awake some while in watchful expec-

tation, but as the thunderstorm had passed over and no other sound was audible, he shortly fell sound asleep.

Suddenly he was roused by the most extraordinary noise. The manse seemed to be shaken to its foundation.

He started up in bed. Could a flash of lightning have hit the chimney ?

Then he saw a light without on the landing, heard footsteps, and a voice calling him by name.

'Minister Macgregor,' it called. 'The house has been struck wi' lightnin', I 'm certain.'

The Minister hurried out on to the landing, and seeing his guest, by the light of the candle which he held in his shaking hand, to be much perturbed, endeavoured to comfort him.

'It was a fearfu' noise yon ; it wakened me up oot o' the sleep o' the just,' he said. 'I thocht the chimney mun have been stricken, but if sae, stanes wud hae come through the roof. Maist likely the auld ash-tree by the door has been stricken. Hark ! ' he added, 'I think the storm 's past, for it 's rainin' hard enoo.'

Somewhat reassured, his guest was induced to return to bed, and after the Minister left him he heard the door bolted behind him.

The Minister went back to his own bed, but this time he refused to lie down, for he felt

assured that Ringan was up to some fresh cantrip or other, and he wished to forestall him.

The rain shortly ceased, and a faint moonlight showed itself through the window. Almost at the same time the Minister was aware of stealthy soft footings on the stairs without. Noiselessly he approached his open door, and there he saw by the dim skylight a tall figure moving on stockinged feet at the stair-head. Was it a burglar ? he thought fearfully. 'No, it was Ringan. But what on earth was he carrying ?

Before he could interfere the tall figure set a dark object rolling down the stairs with infernal reverberation, then sat himself down on what seemed a tea-tray, and shot clattering into the gloomy deep.

The Minister turned and leaped into his bed, annoyed, yet shaken with laughter.

Another moment and he heard the door opposite unbolted, and a perturbed but angry voice rose outside his door :

'What the devil are ye up to ? Are ye playing a trick on me, Minister ? What was that fearfu' noise ? '

'I 'm playin' nae tricks on ye,' replied the Minister, as he opened the door and stood face to face with his guest, whose face was plainly

agitated by fear and anger. 'It 's either the storm, or aiblins a ghaist, or else some one 's playin' tricks on baith o' us.'

'Did ye no place this bit paper i' my room ?' inquired his guest wrathfully, holding up a document with his hand accusingly.

'What bit paper is 't ?' inquired the Minister. 'I hae pit nae bit paper i' your room.'

'Did Dr. Thomson o' the auld toon no' send ye this bit waste-paper—codicil he called it, or come to see ye aboot it ?'

'No, he didna,' replied the Minister, 'neither he nor any ither doctor has been i' my manse yet, an' I hope never wull.'

'On your hon——' began the other. Then catching his host's gleaming eye, said brokenly, 'It 's the—— Well—it 's the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to me i' my life. The ghastly noise—then to find this bit paper lyin' i' my room.'

'What is the paper ?' inquired the Minister. 'Can ye no hae brocht it wi' ye yoursel' ?'

Macmanus looked about him stricken and unnerved, the anger had died down in his face, and he seemed to be seeking consolation.

'I 'll tell ye the hail matter,' he decided impulsively, 'and what 's mair, I 'll abide by your advice.'

Thereon very briefly he set forth the tale of the codicil, justified himself on all legal grounds, and awaited the Minister's decision.

'Aweel, Macmanus,' replied the Minister slowly but decisively, 'as ye ask my opeenion, aal I can say is that if I was i' your shoes I 'd juist forego my legal rights an' let the puir woman hae the twa hundred punds.'

'I believe you 're richt,' replied the other; 'but if that ghastly noise happens again I 'll come and spend the rest o' the night i' your bedchamber.'

'Come your ways in noo,' responded his host, 'and I 'll get ye a drop whisky.'

'Aweel,' murmured the listener with pricked ears, who sat beside gong and tea-tray at the stair-foot, *'I 'm thinkin' if the Meenister 's Macchiavelli, the elder 's Machiavelli-er.'*

REPENTANCE TOWER

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Scene I. Temptation

Late one spring evening not long after the disaster of Solway Moss, Sir Robert Maxwell was walking to and fro within the Tower of Lochmaben—a heavy frown upon his brow—cogitating his reply to a letter from my Lord Arran—now governor of Scotland under the regency of the widowed Queen, Mary of Lorraine.

Amongst other matters touched upon Arran made mention of his purpose to find the right suitor for the hand of Agnes Herries—daughter and heiress of the Lord Herries of Hoddam Castle. A hint was delicately conveyed that possibly Maxwell himself might be eligible—if he gave up his ' assurance with England.'

Now Sir Robert's late father—the Lord Maxwell—had been made prisoner at Solway Moss, but had been set free on ' taking assurance ' with England and giving twelve hostages of his own name to the opposite warden—Lord Wharton at Carlisle.

In addition there was a suggestive allusion to

the Scots Wardenry of the Western march, which was vacant at the moment.

The offer was most tempting, but—*there were the twelve Maxwell hostages, his cousins, in Wharton's hands.*

Sir Robert grew wroth as he read and re-read the letter. '*Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing* ? ' he questioned angrily, as he sat down to indite a peremptory refusal.

He found his task very difficult, for he had little skill in writing. Shortly, he determined to send over to Dumfries first thing in the morning for the notary public to come and write the letter for him, and be a witness to his signature.

This he did, but the messenger brought word back that the notary was ill with the spotted fever and could not come.

Sir Robert's anger increased, for the temptation beckoned insistently. He had already had thoughts of the fair and well-dowered Agnes, but he knew 'twas hopeless unless he was reconciled to Arran.

He determined to ride out and rid himself of black care by a gallop. Mounting, he let the horse choose his ain gait, and shortly found himself in the airt of Hoddam, whence he rode up to the grassy fells above Solway. Then he let his

horse out on a gallop, and away he sped like a curlew—sweeping over the short grass, and drinking in the breeze like wine.

Maxwell rode till his horse was white with sweat, and the rubies in his nostrils red as fire.

Then he turned and came back at a slow trot to the point of starting. Pausing here, Maxwell gazed down on the one hand to the rich fields and well-timbered lands of Hoddam; on the other hand across Solway to where below the deep-piled, purple masses of Helvellyn and Skiddaw lay ' merry Carlisle '—the abode of my Lord Wharton.

Maxwell shook his fist across Solway, as though in defiance. Then he turned about and rode slowly home.

Scene II. The Raid

As soon as he was back again at Lochmaben he dispatched a special messenger to Arran in Edinburgh with the brief assurance that he himself would follow on the morrow and explain in person the difficulty of accepting the Governor's proposals.

On the evening of the day that Sir Robert Maxwell arrived in Edinburgh a ball was held in Holyrood—the first ball since Solway Moss had overwhelmed Scotland with gloom. The

Queen-Dowager was to be present, and Arran insisted on Maxwell's attendance, though against his will. A gay and brilliant assembly filled the great galleries of Holyrood that night.

After a minuet had been paced to the gentle music of the lute and clavichord, a schottische succeeded to the martial skirl of the pipes.

For this dance Arran had craftily arranged that Maxwell should have as partner the fair Agnes Herries, and as he watched them his brow relaxed its tension. His policy was to strengthen and consolidate Scotland, and to this end he would break Maxwell's assurance with England. 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' he muttered to himself as he watched the couple dancing with animation, 'are gey guid baits.' As the company departed in the early dawn Arran took the opportunity of walking back with Maxwell to his lodging. 'Ye partnered ilk ither fine,' said the Governor; 'time and step suited ye bonny. Weel,' he added slowly, 'ye hae to decide. Wull ye tak her?' Maxwell hesitated a moment, then impulsively, 'I will. Here 's my hand on 't.'

'Dune!' cried the Governor triumphantly. Then he added by way of an evasion from any difficulty with Wharton. 'I 'm thinking ye

micht emulate Douglas in his raid on the eastern march :

> "*And he has burn'd the dales of Tyne,*
> *And part of Bambroughshire ;*
> *And three good towers on Reidswire fells,*
> *He left them all on fire.*"

That is, if ye hae any fash wi' Wharton,' said Arran in conclusion. 'Juist pit the fear o' auld Scotland intil him, for I 'll uphaud ye.'

No sooner had Maxwell returned home than he found a menacing letter from Wharton, who had evidently heard of the reconciliation. Maxwell's dark face glowed hotly as he made a vow to terrify Wharton into inaction. He would instantly give him a 'handsel' of harrying to stay his proud stomach. So he caused warn the waters far and wide. Nith he summoned, and Annan, and then with his whole 'name' rode through the debatable land, and crossing the Eden by the ford above Rockliff proceeded to harry and burn through the English march. He drave his foray throughout the day ; horses and nowt, sheep, goats, and swine he collected, and made the 'red cock crow' on many a peel and bastlehouse.

Then as evening drew on and his messengers announced the approach of Wharton's men-at-arms he withdrew with his spoil, repulsed with slaughter his opponent's forces, and safely

guarded his spoil, till all the 'gear' was across the Eden water.

Then Maxwell himself and his bailiff—Sandie Irvine—rode down to Solway where his lugger was awaiting by his orders the chance of their return by water.

Maxwell himself was 'forefaughten,' his horse was foundered; he sank gratefully into the stern of the boat, and Sandie took the tiller.

Scene III. The Storm on Solway

The lugger shot ahead for Scotland, the swift wind upon her beam. Suddenly its strength increased, and a storm swept down upon Solway. Clouds gathered above, and on the incoming 'bore' Maxwell saw with dismay the 'white horses of Solway' shaking their manes.

Darkness lowered about them; then a jagged flash of lightning rent the murky air, and Sandie as he wrestled with the tiller saw a face white as foam and 'unco ghash' beside him.

'Hae ye onything on your conscience, Laird?' cried Sandie in his ear, 'ony bit adultery or murder? If ye hae, mak a vow instantly to St. Nicholas, or we 're lost.'

Maxwell made no reply, but groaned as he looked wildly through the storm.

Twelve forms—well kent to him—did he not

see them pointing their accusing fingers against him? There was Ian—there Alastair, next Hamilton—he could look no further. *God in Heaven! Wharton had hung his pledges.*

Maxwell sank backwards, his hands to his eyes.

'Mak the vow, Laird,' yelled Sandie again in his ear, desperately.

'I 'll mak a vow to Saint Nicholas,' murmured the other brokenly, 'to build a tower to his honour, and put a light into it nightly for all poor sailors on Solway.'

Heartened by this, Sandie thrust all his strength upon the tiller and kept the lugger straight 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis.

But 'the white horses' were now upon them, their streaming manes enveloping the gunwale, and Maxwell gave himself up for lost. The lugger shivered, then grated violently. 'What 's yon?' he cried in terror.

'Yon 's the first stone o' Repentance Tower,' [1] cried Sandie triumphantly, as he drave the lugger high upon the beach.

[1] Tradition commonly holds that the builder of the tower had thrown his captives overboard to lighten the boat, when returning from a raid into England; but if the writer remembers aright, Dr. Nielson in one of his erudite articles, seemed able to prove that Sir Robert Maxwell—who married the Herries heiress and became Lord Herries—was the builder. In this case the above tale gives the truer version of the tower's origin.

THE LORD WARDEN'S TOMB

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My companion had surprised me by a sudden change of demeanour, for which I could not account, and I was watching him out of the tail of my eye from behind a pillar in the nave of the church which we were exploring. We had just been viewing the recumbent figure of a famous Lord Warden of the western English march, that lay on a raised tomb in the north transept, and after I had blazoned the coat of arms and admired the dignity of the carving, I passed on into the nave, but my companion had not followed me.

I noted that he was extraordinarily interested in this figure of Lord Wharton, and I watched him, as I have said, with attention.

Then, driven seemingly by sudden impulse, he lifted his right hand and dealt the stone figure a swift buffet with his fist. At once he glanced round hurriedly—ashamed, evidently, of his action—and rejoined me in the nave without comment, trusting, doubtless, that I had not observed him.

I was infinitely astonished, for Maxwell, my companion on our bicycling and walking tour, was a quiet, somewhat dour but devout Scot, a history scholar of Balliol College, and usually most reticent of emotion. I talked of Border ballads and Lord Wardens of the marches, and endeavoured to draw him on the subject, but he made no response.

Then I sang softly—

'As I went down the water side
None but my foe to be my guide.'

Hereat his eyes flashed, and he responded with extended fist:

'I lighted down, my sword did draw—
I hackit him in pieces sma'.'

Then turning swiftly upon me he said sternly:

'You mustn't quote the Border Ballads to me; I have them in my blood.'

He looked so strange that at once I changed the conversation and suggested that we should ascend Wild Boar's Fell that afternoon, and return for supper at the inn where we proposed stopping the night.

He assented, and we had a fine climb and a glorious view over the West Borderland; we could see Skiddaw and Helvellyn to the north-west, and even thought we saw Criffel looming

in the haze beyond Solway ; to the east the great hills beside Crossfell lifted their great rampire and gave a sense of security to the green vale below.

Reinvigorated by our walk we returned in good heart to the inn.

After supper I thought a pipe and Stevenson's essay on 'A Walking Tour' were appropriate to my mood, but Maxwell said he was for a stroll in the moonlight, and went out.

As he had not returned by eleven I grew a little anxious, also a trifle annoyed at the thought that perhaps I ought to put on my boots again and go in search of him.

At 11.15 I determined to sally forth, but when I was on the street and could see nobody about I was perplexed as to where to look for him.

I turned to the church, and without definite aim went through the gate and walked around the church through the numerous headstones.

By the side of the north transept, wherein was the Wharton recumbent figure, I noticed a new-made grave, and casually looking over it saw a dark figure lying therein. The grave was half in the shadow of the church, half lit by the moon, so that I could not see very distinctly, but as I bent over it I thought I recognised—with a

sudden start of horror—the knickerbockers of my friend Maxwell.

I looked about in hope of seeing some one, but all was silent; not a sound stirred in the village.

I must make certain, I felt, for I could not leave the man there, whoever it might be, so gingerly enough I let myself down into the further end of the grave, and, taking a step forward, bent over the body.

Yes, it was Maxwell; he was lying in a huddled lump with his head bent forward on his breast. I felt for his pulse, and found it beating regularly. Thank heaven, he was not dead! He must have fallen in by misadventure in the darkness before the moon rose, I conjectured.

I determined to run back to the inn for the 'boots,' since with another man's help I could lift my friend out and carry him back, and get the doctor to attend him.

'Boots' was just going to bed, and while he was searching for a rope and a lantern I ran for the doctor, and thence back to the graveyard.

'Boots' was there awaiting me, and between us we raised Maxwell's limp body and then carried him slowly to the inn.

As far as we could see he had sustained a severe concussion, but I noticed he had a big

bruise on his forehead as well as a swelling on the back of his head. We had laid him on the sofa in the parlour, and had just completed our investigation when the doctor arrived. I shook hands and explained how I had found my friend in the open grave by the north transept so unexpectedly.

'He hadn't had—well, let us say, too much supper?' asked the physician, after he had felt the pulse and examined the limbs to see if anything was broken.

'No,' I replied. 'We had supper together; he had a lemon squash and a cup of coffee only to drink.'

'He 's been in for a fight then,' said the doctor. 'Got one on the brow, then falling into the grave has bruised the back of the head. He 's suffering from concussion, but nothing more, so far as I can see. Was he a quarrelsome fellow?' he inquired. 'Strange place in any event to come to blows in—and with whom? for we 're a peaceable folk here save perhaps at the annual horse fair when gipsies and others congregate in numbers, and whisky bottles are everywhere.'

I assured him that Maxwell was a quiet Oxford scholar, and incapable of brawling.

The doctor drew a bottle of strong smelling

salts from his pocket and applied them to Maxwell's nostrils.

'He 's coming round,' he said; 'we 'll just give him some sal volatile, and then to bed and a long rest. In a day or two he should be all right again.'

Maxwell now opened his eyes, looked about him dizzily, then said faintly, 'Where am I?' Then still faintly, so low that only I caught the words, '*I could swear it was Wharton himself.*'

Thereon we took him upstairs, undressed him and put him to bed, and after he had had his dose of sal volatile the doctor departed, assuring me that my friend was 'all right,' but that he would look in again about midday.

I saw him off at the front door, then I turned to the 'Boots,' and said in his ear, 'Look here, I 'm going out to see if I can't find out who the fellow was who tackled my friend. If I want to be let in before daybreak I 'll come and tap on your window in the yard.'

I slid a *pourboire* into his hand and went off softly across the street to the church once more, for I felt almost certain that the fellow—whoever he was—would come back some time or another to see how his victim had fared, since conceivably the blow might have proved mortal. Once in the churchyard I made my way on tip-

toe to the graveside. There I waited in the re-entering angle of the transept, where the shadow of the church was darkest, in the hope of Maxwell's assailant soon returning to the scene of the encounter. I did not venture to light my pipe, fearing the smell of tobacco might discover me.

I waited with infinite patience till the moon lost her radiance and a pale light glimmered through the eastern trees. Nothing had stirred, no sound had I caught save that of an owl in the distance.

I returned to the inn, knocked up 'Boots,' went silently to bed, and slept late.

As soon as I was up I went to see how Maxwell fared, and found him sitting up and drinking a cup of tea.

He looked a little pale, but otherwise was not much worse for his misadventure.

'Now,' I said, after congratulating him on his recovery, 'if it doesn't excite you too much tell me exactly what occurred in the churchyard last night, for 'tis an absolute mystery to me, besides having given me an awful "gliff," old fellow, for I have been wondering what might have happened if I hadn't by the merest chance discovered you in your premature grave.'

'I should probably have got an infernal chill,

old chap, had it not been for your kindly foresight,' he replied with a smile; then with a change of tone he went on, 'But it was the most extraordinary adventure conceivable—so extraordinary that you 'll scarcely credit me in relating it.

'I felt curiously attracted by the old church and the tomb within, so I went across after leaving you and wandered about the churchyard. Close beside the corner of the north transept was the empty grave, as you know, and beside it a quaint old headstone with an interesting coat-of-arms upon it. I knelt down and tried to decipher the blazon in the moonlight.

'Suddenly I felt as if some one were near me —some one with an ill intent, and, turning, saw stepping out of the shadow a figure with its face outlined against the moon, the exact image of the Lord Warden on the tomb in the transept. I felt the same access of rage I had experienced in the church sweep over me. I clenched my fists unconsciously. "You 're one of the false Maxwells?" he said threateningly. "And you 're a damned murderer," I retorted, and let out at him with my fists. At that moment I felt a sharp, stinging blow on my temple, and, reeling backward, tripped and fell—in a night of stars as it were—all of a huddle into the empty grave.'

Maxwell stopped, looked me directly in the face. 'That 's all I remember—and that 's an exact description of my strange adventure.'

Whilst I was recovering from my astonishment at his weird story, the doctor was announced, and came forward to shake hands with his patient.

'Tell the doctor,' said Maxwell to me, 'exactly what I have told you, and let us hear what he has to say.'

I obeyed, and when I had concluded I inquired if he felt able to put any faith in the relation.

'Doctors are often a sceptical folk,' he replied with a smile, 'but if they are wise they try to account for things. Once out of curiosity I stayed a night in a "haunted house," as it was called, and I confess I did not like the experience. I had that curious feeling as of a hostile presence which your friend evidently had both in the church and in the churchyard. I saw nothing, but I had strange impressions borne in on me, and I heard noises I could not account for.'

'Have you ever heard of any one having encountered the form or wraith of this Lord Warden of old ?' I inquired.

'I don't think any one in the village would wander in the churchyard after dark,' he replied,

smiling. Then he rose up to go, saying he had another appointment, but promised to call again in the afternoon with a sleeping draught, and hoped his patient would be quite well in the morning.

I accompanied him to the inn door, and went down the street with him.

'Tell me,' I said, 'exactly what you do think, for if I mistake not you were purposely reticent with my friend just now.'

'I was,' he said, after a pause, 'because I had reasons. Promise not to mention to your friend either now or at any time later——' I gave the required promise, and waited eagerly for his response.

'Well,' he said slowly, 'I once got a "gliff" myself in exactly the same place as I made a short cut through the churchyard one autumn evening. I was not thinking of the dead Warden or the tomb in the transept, and yet 'twas none other that I saw.'

Then he added gravely, 'These things are not good for the nerves. Wherefore I would advise you to take your friend off as soon as possible, and don't let him visit the churchyard again.'

CASTLE ICHABOD

CASTLE ICHABOD

'When you saw the dog, my dear,' said my uncle, the Rector, to his wife, 'almost exactly, if I remember right, a year ago this month of November, what sort of size and colour was it, again? I remember it growled terribly on the top of the wall by the mausoleum, and I thought it must have been a retriever, from your description of it, but it ought really as a wraith to have been a collie,' and here my uncle slightly contracted his left eye in my direction.

'I think it must have been a retriever, John,' replied my aunt gravely, yet I thought a waft from her eye stole towards me as she spoke, 'for "Geordie" swears it was a tarrible great savage durg; but it may be, of course, that he had forgotten himself and your exhortations, at the King's Head last night, and mistaken a collie for a retriever.' I found it difficult not to smile, for, if my uncle had been 'pulling my aunt's leg' she was certainly twitching his cassock. This was a 'parlour game' at the Rectory, as I discovered later, and one in which my aunt always came off the winner.

My uncle now addressed himself to me. 'You must know, Charles,' said he, 'that the northern part of the Castle Park, between the burn and the ring wall, is supposed to be haunted by the wraiths of a shepherd and his collie dog. He was taking a short cut home from our village to the big moor farm beyond the common, and was probably suffering from the old disease of the north; he tried to cross the swollen burn by the stepping-stones, it seems, fell in, and was drowned. The faithful collie had tried to save him, for he was found with him, his teeth fast in his master's plaid.'

'I love that collie,' said my aunt; 'he ought to have had a headstone with "Faithful unto Death" engraved on it.'

'So he should have had, my dear,' my uncle assented, 'had we been here at the time. Well, Charles, the point is that several people have thought——' Here my aunt moved a little impatiently in her chair. 'Have been quite sure,' corrected my uncle, 'that they have seen the dog or its wraith, but no one has yet seen the shepherd, I believe. Your aunt last autumn saw the dog on the top of the wall that surrounds the mausoleum, jumping up and down and growling dreadfully, and last night our stableman—"Geordie"—a disabled pitman,

was chivvied by him across the park from close beside the mausoleum. What can you make of that ? ' questioned my uncle, the humorous look again in his eye.

' Did Geordie run away ? ' I inquired magisterially.

' He ran,' replied my uncle, smiling, ' as he expressed it himself, "like a whippet or a hunted hare." '

' Did you run, Aunt Mary ? ' I inquired next.

' I daren't, Charlie, to tell you the truth. If I had begun to run I should have screamed, so I just walked on as fast as ever I could.'

' Then it didn't follow you ? ' I inquired.

' No,' said my aunt, shaking her head ; ' it seemed to me like one of those savage, tied-up mongrels that guard the carts of carriers in the town on market days.'

' The curious thing,' interrupted my uncle, who was a keen antiquary, ' is that the dog should haunt the mausoleum, since it contains not his master, but "Hell-fire Dick," the last of the Norman Fitzalans—and so named not only because he belonged to the famous club, but also, as I gather from tradition, because of his language and complexion.

' Had he been alive no shepherd had dared

trespass in his park, and no dog would have come out alive. So it is curious they should forgather after death.'

My aunt here interposed.

'Are you not afraid for your uncle's orthodoxy?' she asked of me, 'when he shows himself so sceptical?'

My uncle, discovering that he had put himself at a disadvantage, now suggested that I should —as a lawyer—investigate the matter and give my opinion upon it.

'Willingly,' I replied, laughing. 'The chief witness, I take it, will be your henchman, the redoubtable "Geordie," aunt being prosecutor, the wraith the defendant, and you, uncle, the sceptical public.'

This being arranged, the subject was dropped, and my uncle gave me further information about the Fitzalans.

'Undoubtedly they were Normans,' said he, 'but descent has been so frequently in the female line that when my Lord Richard—"Hell-fire Dick"—died, he had perhaps no more Norman blood in him than you have. There was this one virtue about him, that he loved the old abode and possessions of his ancestors passionately, and when he died he left directions that he should be buried in the mausoleum on the knoll

in the park whence the sea stands out clearly behind the castle.

He had daughters—wild and high-spirited like their father—who divided up the property between them, and the present owner of the Castle—the representative of the eldest daughter—cares only for his rents and royalties, would sell if he could, and comes here about twice a year for what partridge and pheasant shooting there may be. The coal pits are extending their shafts and workings northward, his park will soon be undermined, and the "amenities"—to use the auctioneers' phrase—will soon no longer exist. I think we may truthfully call the great pile of building *Castle Ichabod, for its glory has certainly departed.*'

My uncle thus concluded his tale, then knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and conducted me to my bedroom.

The next morning after breakfast I went in search of 'Geordie,' my chief witness, concerning whom my uncle had already given me a little information.

He had when working as a hewer down the pit been disabled by a fall of stone; then as he had been a 'handy man' and used to both horses and flowers the Rector had taken him into his service as groom-gardener. 'Crammed with

northern self-sufficiency and a sort of scornful incivility, he has a keen sense of humour and a heart of gold,' said my uncle, as he forewarned me as to the character of my witness.

Thus fortified, I went in search of 'Geordie,' and found him busy tying up chrysanthemums.

Pretending a deep interest in them and a profound admiration of his skill, I soon found I had established friendly relations. Then I offered him a cigarette, and plunged boldly into my examination.

'Tell me,' I said, 'about your adventure with the dog or its ghost in the park two nights ago. My aunt has told me something of her own experience a year ago, and advised me to compare her account with yours, for I am much interested in these occurrences.'

'Why,' replied he, nothing loth to talk about himself, 'it happened this fashion. Aa wes comin' back through the park cannily enough when close beside the mussulyum oot spangs at us a great ugly brute of a durg wivoot a sound to his pads. Aa 'd heard nowt, but there he was glarin' at us, an' showin' his great ugly fangs. "By gox, Geordie," I says to maaself, "it 's a mad durg ye have to fettle." Sae I lets oot wiv a kick that would have shifted a bullock, but aal that happened was that he seemed to catch haud

o' my trousers, for I felt them rip. Gox! I thinks, 'tis an evil sperrit, sae I set awa like a hare—game leg an' aal—tearin' towards the park wall like a whippit, followed by the evil sperrit that made no sound wiv his pads, but was growlin' terrible aal the time.'

'Then it wasn't a *real* dog?' I interrupted here.

'*Wasn't a real durg*?' replied Geordie indignantly, his eyebrows puckering and his jowl coming forward aggressively.

'It made no noise with its feet, and you called it a spirit,' I explained hastily.

'Aa 's feared o' nowt,' said Geordie, 'that 's livin', but when it comes to evil sperrits 'tis the Priest should tackle them. Aa winnot.'

'So it was an evil spirit in the form of a dog,' I suggested; 'but what was the precise form —mastiff, retriever, or collie perhaps, for the Rector says there is a tale of a ghost of a drowned collie that haunts the Park?'

'Collie be damned!' cried he decisively. 'An' as for what specie o' durg it was hoo can Aa tell hoo many species there may be in Hell?'

'You had me there,' I acknowledged, smiling. 'Well, tell me how you escaped from the brute.'

'He chivvied us aboot halfway te the wall, an'

then I think he gied it up; leastways when Aa gied a keek ower my shoulder as Aa drew near it he wasn't there.'

'You didn't hear the dog dashing on you or galloping after you, and yet you heard it growling, and felt it take a piece out of your trousers. It seems half real, half Hell-hound!' I commented.

'It's easy talkin',' replied Geordie contemptuously, 'but if he had had a haud o' yor breeks ye'd have knawn he was *damned* real, Aa's warrant ye,' and he spat on the ground with emphasis.

'My aunt saw the hound a year ago,' I continued, 'but it didn't chase her; it only growled and frightened her.'

'Mevvies it kenned she was the Priest's wife,' suggested my companion. Then with a grin, 'Noo, as thoo's his nephew thoo gan and see if it will chivvy thoo, and, if it does, Aa'l bet thoo thoo'll run from it faster than thoo's ever run i' your life afore.'

I turned away with a laugh, saying I was going to look about for the dog's tracks.

'The beggar had ne tracks, Aa warrant thoo,' shouted my informant after me, but he was wrong, for I soon found tracks in the park here and there in the soft grass, and an impress of

paws which evidently must have been bandaged —that is, there was a round slot only, no separate pads were showing. *The Hell-hound was evidently club-footed.* As I looked at the imprint a little closer I grew certain that the hound's paws had been bound round with some soft material—linen, calico, or washleather, for one of the coverings had come unloosed and I saw a distinct mark of claws.

I investigated the mausoleum next, and found that there was a wall some four feet six inches high round about it for the evident purpose of protection against cattle. Between this and the circular tomb-containing tower were some yew trees which had thriven well, and now extended their long fingers above and beyond the encircling wall.

The yew branches were so thick and the dews had been so heavy that certainty was out of the question, but I thought I had discovered this at least, that the hound had been lying beneath the bushes, and had given 'Geordie' his hunt from the mausoleum exactly as he had asserted.

I returned to the Rectory, my mind made up. I would borrow a revolver from my uncle, and watch beside the mausoleum all that night.

Fortified by tea, encouraged by my aunt, and chaffed by my uncle, I set off for my sentry post

carrying an electric torch, some sticks of chocolate, and a revolver. I approached the mausoleum very warily ; a soft west wind was blowing, the night was quiet with alternate swathes of darkness and light as billowy clouds took the moon by storm and passed beyond her. I stayed in the shadow of the trees, beside the knoll, and spied out the landscape, and listened for any tell-tale sound. Beyond the jet-black bastions of Castle Ichabod I could see the white turmoil of the waking sea half a mile to the eastward ; I could hear her ancient threnody, but saw no sign of life within the park.

Waiting for the next spell of darkness I walked swiftly up to the protecting wall of the mausoleum, climbed over, and with the torch's aid found a yew branch on which I could sit and observe—whenever it was moonlight—the little dell that ran down to the burn wherein the shepherd and dog had been drowned.

Silence reigned supreme. I could just hear the gentle brushings of the yew branches as they rose and fell upon the wind—the ghostly sighing of a ghostly spirit that had once belonged, perhaps, to the former owner of the Castle.

I was fairly comfortable with my back against the trunk of the yew, and ate chocolate instead of smoking ; hours passed, and I had fits of

drowsiness, and began to think I was wasting my time.

Then on a sudden I woke with a start ; some nerve in my subconsciousness had warned me in time ; I was certain some one or something was near that was uncanny.

The moonlight flooded the little dell, I saw a black shadow advancing swiftly on all fours, not unlike a big baboon. What in Heaven's name was it ?

A touch of ice slid down my spine—the unknown with its terrors besieged my brain—the apparition was too big for a dog. I gazed, rooted to my perch, unable to move a hand or foot.

The creature drew swiftly closer, then on the sudden rose up ; I saw the glint of the moonlight touch on a gun barrel, and discovered that the bearer was a man.

I breathed more freely, but—what was he doing with the gun ? Then I caught sight of a dog padding swiftly after the newcomer, who was now close beside the mausoleum, and stood erect beside the wall two yards away from me. I did not stir, but watched him in a fascinated attention. Just as the press of cloud again obscured the moon I saw him take a bag from his back out of which pheasants' tails were dis-

tinctly protruding. I almost laughed aloud, for I recognised that it was only a poacher I had to deal with. In one hand I held my torch, in the other my revolver.

'Have you had good sport?' I asked, as I covered him with both my weapons simultaneously. He jumped back in alarm, then, 'Who the devil are you?' he inquired hoarsely, and in another second recovering himself, cried to the dog, '*Sick him, Tyke.*'

'Call off your damned dog,' I retorted, pulling up my feet, 'or I shoot.'

He hesitated a moment, pulling his gun round.

'Quick,' I shouted.

'Down, Tyke,' he said sulkily to his dog, that was already growling and jumping at my trousers. 'What d' ye want, damn ye?' he inquired surlily.

'I wanted to find out about the dog that frightened my aunt up at the Rectory last year and the gardener two nights ago,' I replied, feeling I had the upper hand in the encounter. 'There was a tale of a ghost in the park, and I thought I would investigate it.' The moon had emerged again, and I could see that my poacher was a strong, burly fellow, with a rough, resolute face, who was surveying me as thoroughly as I surveyed him.

'Would you like a brace of pheasants?' he inquired abruptly.

'No, thanks,' I said; 'I 'm only here for a day or two.'

'Well,' he continued with a touch of defiance, 'if every yen had their right I 'd mevvies be shuttin' pheasants all day long like aad "Hell-Fire Dick" i' the monument here, for he was a tarrible favouryte wi' the women, ye must ken. Why, my grandfether was the very spit image o' the aad Lord, for I 've seen his picture up at the Castle. Ay, an' my name 's Allan as well.'

The man interested me considerably, for he was a splendid figure—compact, alert, with hair cropped like a *poilu*, vivid with life as a sporting terrier—so I inquired what he did for a living when he wasn't covert shooting.

'I work doon the pit,' he replied, 'an' earns a good wage, but whiles I tires ov it an' longs for a walk up the hedgerows, to hear the partridge call and the pheasant shoutin' as he gans up to roost, an' to say to myself, "Aha, my fine fellow, but thoo 'll be i' my bag to-morrow night, an' in my kite the night after that."' He paused a moment, then asked suspiciously, 'Thoo 'll not blab—thoo 'll not tell the police?'

'No,' I replied readily, 'that 's no concern of mine, but I shall have to tell my aunt at the

Rectory, for you gave her with your dog a great fright that night she crossed the park a year ago.

'If it had been aad "Oleomargarine," commented my companion, 'it wud ha' done him good, for he 's sairly wantin' a bit exercise.'

Smothering a smile at his irreverent description of my uncle, I asked my poacher a final question.

'Have you ever seen the ghost of the man or the collie dog they talk about here in the park?'

'Not I,' said he, fondling the ears of his savage mongrel retriever, 'I reckon they 're gliffed o' my aad Tyke.'

Note.—The individuals described above, and the episode are imaginary, but a ghost is said to haunt the hall, in the form of a lady with a child in her arms, who watches from one of the high windows in 'lofty Seaton Delaval,' for the return of a Delaval lover.

It has been suggested that the apparition is due to an optical illusion of light upon the window panes.

THE MUNIMENT ROOM

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My uncle had succeeded late in life to the family estate in the north of England, which was situated on the wild moorland of north-west Yorkshire.

With him the entail would end, and though it was known that the estate had been much impoverished and was heavily mortgaged, still the succession was not a thing 'to be sneezed at.' So my mother, his sister, herself a practical Yorkshire woman, phrased it, and consequently I was bid to accept with gratitude an invitation to visit my uncle in the home of his fathers.

Thither, therefore, I went, yet reluctantly, for my uncle was reputed somewhat eccentric, and a great antiquary, and as he had been early reconciled to Rome and ordained a priest, whereas I came of a sound Protestant stock, I feared we might not find each other's company entirely sympathetic. 'I shall only find in him,' I thought, 'a "snuffy priest," and he in me only an Oxford cub.'

A long drive over the moorland in a pelting storm of sleet and rain was not encouraging, nor

was the companionship of the old, deaf Scots groom, who drove me, exhilarating, for he persisted, as the ancient deaf not uncommonly do, in regarding a stranger as a personal grievance gratuitously thrust upon him.

Thus if I blamed the weather he transferred the fault upon myself for having chosen to come upon such a stormy day; and when I inquired after my uncle's health he replied that he was 'well enough so long as folk didn't come hindering him from his studies.'

To this I replied humbly that I had heard he was writing a book upon his family, which was one of the most ancient in the county, and that it was a pity he should be the last of so old and formerly so famous a stock.

'Ay,' retorted my driver, with a glance of scorn out of the tail of his eye, as he flicked upon his white steed, 'ay, there 'll maybe be a sair down-come when he 's depairted.'

After this shaft I sank into silence, and was relieved when I saw the grey, buttressed gables of Startington Hall appear below us grouped amid its trees.

'It certainly looks like a haunted house,' I remarked aloud, though I was merely speaking to myself, 'even though the tradition has no foundation of fact.'

'How do ye ken it 's haunted?' retorted my companion, whose hearing seemed to vary with his mood. 'And even if 'tis, there 's naething can steer the maister, for tak awa Papistry, he has a hairt o' gold—the bairns aboot here juist love him.'

'So you 're not a Papist?' I inquired, smiling.

'No' me,' responded he grimly. 'I come o' the reet auld Presbyterian stock, and I keep off the maister some o' thae hairpies that are aye after him and his gear.'

He pulled up as he spoke at the porch of the Hall, and as I descended I noted a stooping figure clad in a black soutane coming round the corner of the house evidently to greet me.

As I shook hands with him I could see in a glance that though he might be a recluse and an antiquary he had a lively and gentle heart; for if his face was yellow and his pupils sere there was a wonderfully shy and sympathetic mobility about his lips and face.

'You have had a long, wet drive, I fear,' he said, 'and these wild Yorkshire moorlands are often inhospitable to strangers, yet in time one gets to love them for this, their very bold and uncompromising character. Also, they make one rejoice the more in a warm fireside.'

So speaking he led the way through a rounded

hall, very poorly furnished, but hung with family portraits interspersed with heads of deer, and many masks of foxes, badgers, and hares.

Turning to the left he opened a door into a small library, which was lined with books from skirting-board to cornice; a ripe fire glowed upon the hearth, and two easy full-bottomed leathern chairs stood on either side.

'The rougher the weather without,' said my uncle genially, 'the warmer the welcome within, and here one may warm both body and soul,' he pointed to the fire and the well-filled book-shelves.

'Most of them are my own treasures,' he added, 'for the Startington family was given to keep up cellar and stable, rather than the library, as probably you know. Most of my time now, however,' he said in conclusion, 'is spent in the muniment room upstairs, so that you may count this room as your own, and may smoke as much as you please. Since you are an Oxford man, and all Oxford men smoke, you are bound, syllogistically, to be a smoker. For myself, he added, his hand upon the door-handle, 'I—like most priests—do not smoke, yet tobacco is not in the index, and we usually take a little snuff occasionally,' and he tapped upon a small box hidden within his waistband.

Therewith he was gone, and left me to my own devices till dinner-time, or supper rather, for he did not dress.

The next few days passed very enjoyably for me, since the weather was fine, and after studying in my Aristotle all morning, I took long walks over the breezy moorland, and then in the evening after supper made myself very much at home amid my uncle's books and the burnt sacrifice of tobacco. I was not, however, very long in the house before I found that my uncle was uncommonly preoccupied; something seemed to be weighing upon his mind, for though he unbent at supper-time, and talked by starts excellently over the port wine at dessert, he frequently fell into an abstraction from which only with a mighty effort could he pluck himself and resume his speech.

As I knew him to be engaged upon his family history I thought that his gentle mind must be exercised upon some uncomfortable episode in the life story of an ancestor, and I hit upon the notion that a certain Sir Humphrey Startington —a notable merchant adventurer, who was said to have largely increased the family estate by his traffic in slaves in the seventeenth century—was the family skeleton that was haunting him. I thought perhaps that my uncle's conscience was

whispering in his ear that he should make restitution, and as I knew that he was most eager to find funds to rebuild and redecorate the chapel—now much dilapidated—I assumed that a battle was being waged within his soul between these two opposing claims.

Having arrived at this solution I led up to the subject of family histories in general one evening over the supper-table when he was more than usually inclined to talk and linger over our dessert.

'Families, I suppose, like nations, wax and wane,' I said, 'they become atrophied, if not extinct.' The port was magnificent—of the year '64—and I felt oracular. 'Hence the use of bastards. Robert the Devil from the top of his tower falls in love with the laundrywoman bleaching linen on the green, and in natural course William the Conqueror sees the light of day.'

My uncle interrupted my eloquence.

'Far more often than people think the fall of a family, ay, or even of a nation, is due to some crime or other which—unrepented and unpurged—has festered in the body and brought corruption with it.

'I have deeply studied this profound problem, and I might tell you tales of how son has

never succeeded father, how gradually a house has sunk into physical decay, and ended in abortion and an idiot.'

Falling into dejection he paused a moment, then with great emotion he repeated the magnificent lines of Hector prophesying the fall of Priam, and his house, and his great town of Troy. His voice trembled and shook sadly as he concluded, 'My house too has fallen and nears its end, and I alone am left to tell the tale—the tale of a most foul—as I am convinced—and unnatural murder.'

With this he clasped his hands together and looked darkly into the future; then as he rose to bid me farewell and turned towards the door, I heard him murmur to himself: '*Illa culpa, illa culpa, illa maxima culpa.*'

The door closed; I was left to my pipe and my reverie. 'It must have been the Buccaneer who "wrought this deed of shame,"' I reflected, but then I understood that he had been 'reconciled' to Rome before he died, had given gifts to the Church, built the chapel here, and so 'made a good end.' On the other hand I remembered that he had died childless.

The past was dead and gone, however, and did not much interest me, but my uncle's emotion and distress touched me to the quick,

and I determined to avoid the subject henceforth in our conversation.

I went to bed early that night, for I had been a longer walk than usual that afternoon, but whether it was that I was overtired, or could not rid my mind of my uncle's suffering I know not. The one thing certain was that after a slight doze I became extraordinarily wide-awake.

I was convinced that I heard footsteps somewhere or other in the house, and as I listened with the greatest intentness I distinctly caught the sound of some one treading upon the staircase that led into the hall.

It must be either my uncle—walking perhaps in his sleep—or else the ghost. I sat up in bed to listen the better, and without a doubt caught the sound of a footfall treading on the stone floor, apparently down in the hall below. Curiosity prevailed over alarm; I got up, put on a dressing-gown and socks, and proceeded cautiously without along the corridor.

The footsteps had come to a halt seemingly, for now I heard nothing; and then on a sudden by the light of the waning moon that showed in a faint milk-white aureole through the high window emblazoned with the bugles and caltrops of the Startingtons, that lit the hall

below, I saw a dim figure coming up the stairway towards me upon soundless feet; I drew back in utmost astonishment, and shrank away beside a massive oak cupboard on the landing.

The figure mounted the steps slowly, and as though in pain, passed gently by me with just such a movement of the air as a moth might make in its flight, and with a tiny sound as of a sigh turned to the left and retreated along the passage.

' 'Tis a lady ! ' I murmured to myself, overcome with astonishment.

Almost at once I heard a firm tread of feet upon the stairs below, and there mounting quickly another figure now showed at the head of the stairs, and I recognised in the half light that it was my uncle.

He did not pause, but turned at once to the left, and incontinently followed after the fragile figure of the lady, who had disappeared from view into the misty depth of the corridor.

I stood dumbfounded. Here was a double mystery which I felt bound, though a little shaken in my nerves, to unravel.

A-tiptoe I followed after my uncle along the dark passage, feeling my way lest I should knock against the pictures or the various bronze casts that stood on pedestals beside the wall.

The passage turned shortly again to the left and led, as I knew, past my uncle's bedroom to the muniment room situate at the end of the wing.

When I turned the corner there was just sufficient moonlight from the south window to show me the dim figure of my uncle standing within the muniment room, apparently feeling with his hands upon the wall.

As I stood irresolute, but keenly watchful, I saw the sudden purple flame of a match leap up in the darkling room. My uncle had lit a match, and with trembling, excited fingers was applying the flame to a candle that stood on the table.

He held the candle up towards the wall, peering intently upon it, and as I drew nearer on tiptoe I could hear him exclaiming in disjointed utterance.

'She vanished here. Just here. At last, then, I have discovered her grave. Yet the cruelty of it! for I know she was innocent.'

He drew something from his pocket and marked upon the wall therewith; then tapped with his knuckles, and, finding it to resound hollow, cried joyfully, 'Ay, it is as I suspected, quite resonant. Yes! she shall have a Christian burial.' He drew his hand across his forehead,

signed with the Cross, louted low before an ikon of the Madonna, and I heard him say fervently :

'Ago tibi gratias, Immaculata.'

Seemingly satisfied, he turned again and narrowly scrutinised the wall once more, then slowly, and as though very tired, withdrew from the room and came back along the passage, and passed within his own chamber.

As he came on I stepped velvet-footed backwards, waited a few minutes at the corner to see if he would come out once more, but as he almost immediately extinguished the light I concluded that his quest was completed for the night, and made my way back to my bedroom.

In the morning I was surprised to find my uncle already in the parlour where usually I breakfasted by myself, for he was used to take his *café au lait* in his own room.

Bidding him good morning I had scarcely taken my seat when he produced a miniature from his pocket, and earnestly gazing upon me inquired what I thought of the character of the individual depicted in it.

I looked upon the medallion with great intentness, for I felt convinced the mystery of the night was connected inseparably with it.

What I saw was a portrait—artistically executed in pastel—of a delicate lady in eighteenth-

century costume, with a strangely pathetic expression in her dark brown eyes as of one perpetually striving to understand and to be understood by others. Her mouth also showed the same fragile tenderness of feeling, and altogether she seemed intended to be—if not herself a musician or a poetess—at least the wife of a musician or poet or sculptor.

'Not a strong character,' I replied musingly, 'but a most sweet and delicate lady—one who should pass her time in playing upon the clavichord or the viol d'amore. In sympathy of temperament I think she would be more Italian than English.'

'You are right,' said my companion eagerly, 'she was Italian on her mother's side. But what of her moral character?—that is what I want to know from you—what think you of her constancy?'

I looked again into the deep brown eyes and pondered before I replied. 'I think,' I said slowly, 'I think that where she had once loved she would love ever.'

My uncle's intensity became instantly relaxed, and a joyous look overspread his face.

'I am sure of it,' he said with conviction, 'but I rejoice, nephew, that your sound judgment bears out my intuition; but though you make

me happy the thought of the outrageous cruelty of her death makes me miserable, for there is but one poor thing we now can do for her, that is, to find her bones, and lay them to rest in the graveyard.

'As for the jealous and inhuman pride of the husband that could thus immure in the walls of his house the tender, loving, fragile bride I can find no adequate words.

'I cannot rest till I know this for a certainty, or till I have given the poor bones their proper service and burial. I have sent for the village mason—a discreet man enough—and should you care to assist me in my task, nephew, I shall be greatly indebted to you.'

I very readily volunteered my services, for I had been profoundly interested in the cause of my uncle's abstraction from the first, and the mysterious apparition had enhanced my curiosity.

So the three of us set to work with hammers and chisels, and in the course of a few hours' work we had proved to my uncle's satisfaction that his intuition had been correct in that we found the remains of a human body interred within the hollow of the walls; *yet 'twas not the corpse of a woman, as he had surmised, but that of a young man.*

IN THE CLIFF LAND OF THE DANE

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A LETTER TO THE REVEREND LAURENCE STERNE AT COXWOLD FROM JOHN HALL STEVENSON AT SKELTON CASTLE, AS SET DOWN BY HIS NEPHEW FREDDY HALL.

The truth is, reverend sir, that being eventually designed for the Bar, I had taken up this quest with an additional vigour, for here was a mystery wherein my Lord Chief-Justice himself would have had a difficulty in seeing the proper clue on 't.

For some months previous to my sojourn at Skelton Castle there had been mysterious midnight thefts of sheep, heifers, and suchlike cattle on the hills about here, Redcar, and Danby-way, and even on occasion a murder added, as in the case of poor Jack Moscrop, the shepherd, who was found in the early morning with his head cut in twain, as though by some mighty cleaver, stark dead and cold on the low-lying ground beyond Kirkleatham.

Much disquietude had been caused thereby amongst the farmer folk, and the whole country-

side was agape with excitement and conjecture, but nothing had been discovered as to the malefactor, though many tales were told, more especially by the womenfolk, who put down all mishaps to the same unknown agent.

Some said 'twas a black man who had escaped off a foreign ship that had been stranded by Teesmouth, but in that case one would imagine that such an one would have eaten his victim raw, whereas the sheep and heifers that were killed had always been 'gralloched,' as the Scotch term it, that is, had been cut open with a knife and disembowelled, and the carcases removed.

Some again avowed 'twas an agent of the Prince of Darkness, for there were hoofmarks of an unshod horse discovered on one or two occasions leading up and away from the scene of the slaughter, and blood drops alongside, as though the booty had been slung from the horse's quarters, and there dripped down as he sped along.

Now as you may imagine, I too had battered my brain with various conjectures, but without practical result till one night after hunting all day, and having lamed my mare badly with an overreach, I was returning slowly homeward by a short cut across Eston Nab, so as to strike the Guisboro' Road, and thence straight to Skelton.

'Twas a stormy November night, time about nine o'clock, for I had stayed supper with a friendly yeoman, one Petch, of a noted family hereabout, and was trudging a-foot, so as to ease the mare, along the desolate hill-top, where in a kind of basin there lies a lonely pool of water, set round in the farther side by a few draggled, wind-torn firs.

There was a swamped moon overhead, shining now and again as wreckage shows amongst billows, the gleam but momentary, so that when I caught sight of a kneeling figure across t' other side of the mere I could scarce distinguish anything at all, whether 'twere a boggart, as they say here, or some solitary shepherd seeking his sheep.

However, at that moment there was a break overhead, and the moon, rheumy-eyed, shook her head clear of cloud, whereby I saw plain enough 'twas a tall, burly man kneeling beside some object or other, and a mighty big horse standing a bit to the rearward of him.

I drew nigher without being perceived, and the light still holding, saw that 'twas a young stirk or heifer the man was disembowelling.

'Ha, ha!' shouts I, without a further thought than that here was the midnight miscreant and cattle-stealer, and that I had caught him red-handed.

With that he lifts his head and gazes across the pool at me fixedly for an instant of time, then with a whistle to his horse, leaps to his feet, vaults to the saddle, and swings away at a hand gallop round the mere's edge, the moonlight flashing back from some big axe he was carrying in his right hand.

'Tally ho!' shouted I, commencing to run after him, bethinking me he was for escaping, but no sooner had he rounded the edge some hundred and fifty yards away than I saw 'twas he who was chasing me.

Another look at him tearing towards me was sufficient to change my resolution, and hot foot I tore round to t' other end, trusting to win to the wood's edge before he could catch me up.

I heard the hard breathing of the horse close behind me, the crunch of his hoofs coming quicker and quicker; one fleeting glimpse I threw backward, and saw a bright axe gleam above me, then my foot catching in a tussock, I sank headlong, the horse's hoofs striking me as I fell.

I must suppose—for at that moment the moon was swallowed again by a swirl of cloud—that in the changing light he had missed his blow, and finding myself unhurt, I was able to gain my feet, make a double and gain the wall's edge

by the plantation before he had caught me up once more. Just as I vaulted over a crash of stones sounded, some loose ones at top grazing my foot as I touched the ground on the far side.

The wood, however, was pitch black, thick with unpruned trees; I bent double and dived deeper into its gloomy belly.

'Safe now,' thinks I, as utterly outdone I sank on a noiseless bed of pine-needles; and by the Lord Harry 'twas none too soon, for if it hadn't been for the kindly moon dipping I 'd have been in two pieces by now. 'To Jupiter Optimus Maximus I owe an altar,' says I, in my first recovered breath, and, 'curse that infernal reiver,' says I in my second, 'but I 'll be up ends with him yet.'

No sound came from without; all was still, save for the soughing in the pines overhead.

A quarter of an hour passed perhaps, and I determined to creep to the wall and see if my assailant were anywhere visible.

The wind had freshened; the clouds were unravelling to its touch, and I could see clearly enough now across the desolate hill-top. Nothing living showed save my mare, who was cropping the coarse grass tufts just where I had left her.

Surmounting the wall, I approached the spot

where I had seen the reiver first. There lay red remnants that clearly told a tale. The carcase, however, had been 'lifted,' and I could trace the direction in which my raider had gone by the drops of blood that lay here and there by the side of the horse's track.

As the ground in places was soft with peat or bog, by a careful examination of the hoof marks of his horse, I was able to ascertain the direction in which he had gone, which seemed to be nearly due north-east, or at least east by north. The marks proved another thing, moreover, and that is, that here was the same miscreant who had killed the shepherd and carried off the cattle elsewhere, for 'twas an unshod horse that had galloped over Eston Nab top that night.

'Twas sore-footed that I gained home at last, but all the way I discussed a many plans for the discovery and punishment of my moss-trooper.

'Tis an unpleasant remembrance to have fled; next time we met I swore to be in a better preparation for the encounter.

Next morning I started to explore, for I knew something of the direction. I knew also that my man was a tall, well-built, burly fellow with a big ruddy beard, and the horse a fine seventeen hands roan that would be known far and wide in the district.

Determining to stay out till I had discovered somewhat, I rode down to the low-lying ground between Boulby and Redcar, as being the likeliest region to get news of horse or man and, sure enough, at the second time of inquiry, I was informed at a farmhouse that some six months ago Farmer Allison, away over by Stokesly, had lost a fine, big, upstanding roan stallion, of which he had been inordinately proud.

Of the man, though, I could glean nothing, till finally, a good housewife, overhearing her man and myself conversing, cried out, 'Eh! but by my surely, there 's that Red Tom o' the "Fisherman's Rest," nigh to Saltburn, that 's new come there, who features him you speak of; but he 's nowt but a "fondy," oaf-rocked, they say he is; why, Moll who hawks t' fish about says his wife beats him an' maks him wash up t' dishes—the man being a soart o' cholterhead by all accounts.'

However, 'fondy' or no, I was sworn to go and see for myself, though the thought that 'twas perhaps a disguise the reiver had worn gave me discomfort, and made my quest seem foolish enough.

As I drew close to the little tavern above the cliff, I could hear a dispute going on inside; then a crash as of some crockery falling,

and shortly a big, burly man with an auburn beard came tumbling forth in an awkward haste, pursued by the high tone of a woman's voice within.

Shaking his sleeve free of some water-drops, he sat down on a low rock near hand, and fell knitting at a stocking he proceeded to draw from his jacket.

''Tis surely the man,' says I to myself, for in height, build, and colour of hair, he seemed the fellow of the midnight raider, but yet it seemed impossible; there might be a brother, however.

I rode up to him, and asked if I could bait my horse and seek refreshment within.

'Ay, sir, surely ye can; if ye 'll dismount I 'll tak your horse, sir, an' give him a feed o' corn,' and shambling away he touched a greasy lock at me as he led my horse to the stable behind.

I turned to the inn, and encountered mine hostess, fuming within the bar.

'Please draw me a pot of ale, ma'am,' says I, 'while my horse gets a feed. Your good man, I suppose 'tis, who took him away outside?'

'Ay, he 's mine, so says t' Church an' t' law, Aah b'lieve, but 'od rabbit him, Aah says, who knaws the clumsiness o' the creature. Just fit for nowt else but cuttin' up t' bait for t' harrin' fishin'.'

'Been here long?' says I further, carelessly.

'Six months mair or less,' says she with a snap, eyeing me suspiciously.

'Well, here 's for luck and a smarter man at the next time of asking,' and with that I tossed down the ale, paid the reckoning, and strode out to the stable, for nothing further was to be got out of the vinegar lips of Mrs. Boniface.

I looked narrowly round the low-roofed and ill-lit stable, but no sign of a big roan horse anywhere did I see, only a jack-spavined cob, such as a fishwife might hawk her fish about with.

'Ever seen or heard tell of that big roan of Farmer Allison's, strayed, stolen, or lost, about six months since?' so I accosted Boniface anew, on finding him rubbing down my horse's hocks with a bit of straw.

'Noah, sir, not Aah; Aah nevver seen 'im, sir. What soart o' a mak o' horse was 'e, sir?'

I looked him full in the face as question and answer passed, and not a shred of intelligence could I detect in his opaque, fish-like eyes.

'Oaf-rocked,' truly enough; he seemed as incapable of dissimulation as a stalled ox, and with a heavy feeling of disappointment I inquired what was to pay, and rode away down the slope.

'Curious,' I mused, 'how imagination plays one tricks at times! Once get the idea of a red

beard into your mind, and Barbarossa is as often met with as the robin redbreast.'

Then all in a moment my eye caught in the spongy bottom a thin mark cut clearly crescent-wise upon the turf. There was something strangely familiar about the horseshoe curve. Then I remembered the unshod roan of the night before.

'Twas the same impress, for in neither case was there any trace of the iron rim. 'Where the horse is the rider will not be far away,' thinks I, and hope kindled afresh in my heart, as I rode slowly on, resolving various conjectures.

I determined finally to go call upon the farmer at Kirkleatham, whose heifer it was, as I had learnt, that had been killed and carried off the night before.

He was said to be tightfisted, so probably would be in a mood for revenge, and ready enough to join in any scheme for discovery of the reiver.

As luck had it, Farmer Johnson was within doors, and in a fine taking about the loss of his beast: he was ready to swear an oath that he wouldn't rest till he had caught the malefactor, and agreed upon the instant to watch out every night in the week with me round about 'The

Fisherman's Rest' on chance of coming across the suspect either going or returning.

'Ay, Aah 'll gan mahself, an' Aah 'll tak feyther's owd gun wi' me there, for Ah 'll stan' none o' his reiver tricks, an' Tom and Jack, they 'll come along too, an' 'od burn him, but we 'll nab him betwixt us, the impudent scoundrel, if it 's a leevin' man he is.'

By eight o'clock we four had ensconced ourselves in hiding-places on all sides of the little inn, having tethered our horses within a small but thick-grown covert above the rise that led to the inn door. Here I stationed myself and for better vision climbed a tree wherefrom I commanded the whole situation. The others hid themselves as they found shelter convenient, one below the cliff's edge some two hundred yards to the east, another amongst broken boulders to the southward, while Farmer Johnson crouched behind the wall that girt the road leading past the ale-house from the north.

'Twas weary work watching, more by token that that night nothing appeared save a thirsty fisherman or two, and a stray, shuffle-footed vagrant or the like.

Next night the same, and I for one was growing somewhat cold, but Farmer Johnson, bull-like in his obstinacy, swore he wouldn't shave

his chin till he had 'caught summat,' so off we started on the third night to our rendezvous.

'The third time brings luck,' thought I, as I squatted down in the fork of the same old twisted elm; 'and 'tis something stormy this evening, which might suit our reiver's tastes.'

It would then be about eight of the clock, as I may suppose, the wind from the seaward, the clouds lowering, fringed with a moonlight border like broidery on a cloak, and that raw, cold touch in the air that chills worse than the hardest winter's frost.

The night grew stormier; vapour lifted upward, and assumed strange and threatening shape. The cloud forms might be the giants rising up out of Jotunheim, and advancing to attack Odin and the Aesir—the evil wolf Fenrir in the van—his bristles silvered by the moon.

An hour passed, and I began to wish I had never undertaken the quest, or mentioned the matter to Farmer Johnson, when I heard, as if some way off, not exactly a neigh, but a sort of defiant snorting, such as a stallion breathes forth when he wishes to be free. Then a sound as of a heavy stone falling succeeded, mingled with a scraping and a trampling noise.

Craning my neck forward, I saw under a broadened fringe of moonlight the roan horse

with the ruddy-bearded reiver beside him. They had evidently crept through some secret passage that issued into the bottom below me.

I was just upon the point of raising the hue and cry on him when an action of his took me by surprise.

Holding up his battle-axe—for such was his weapon—he raised it aloft, then thrust its handle deep into the soft moss of the hollow. Next, he threw the horse's reins over the head of it, and sinking down upon his knees, appeared to be pouring forth a prayer to Heaven, expressed in old Danish, which I have set down in English as nearly as I can:

'Vafoder, the swiftness of Sleipnir
Breathe Thou into my roan.
Let him fly like Thy ravens
Black Munin and Hugi.
May my axe be as Thor's,
When he wieldeth Miolnir.
Winged Thor's mighty weapon.
The pride of Valhalla.
This grant me, O Odin,
Grim, Ygg and All Father.'

He then drew forth from his breast a small phial, and having set up a square stone beside him poured forth into the cup or hollow at the top, liquid of a dark colour, which I imagined must be either blood or wine. This done, he

seemed to fall to prayer afresh, but in so low a tone that I could not catch the words of his utterance with any distinctness.

Then he leapt to his feet, lifted the axe, tossed it into the air, caught it as it fell, and had vaulted upon the stallion's back before I had even recovered from my first astonishment.

'Tally-ho!' shouts I, 'yonder he goes; forrard Mr. Johnson! forrard Tom and Jack!' and, scrambling down my tree, I made for my horse.

The next thing I heard was a 'pang,' evidently the discharge of Farmer Johnson's musket, and thereat a weird, smothered, savage note of pain and rage broke out upon the night.

Seizing my horse I mounted, and out of the covert across a gap in the wall. Dimly I could see a centaur-like figure plunging and snorting upon the short turf by the cliff's edge, then three figures running from the north, south, and east towards it.

The roan horse plunged and reared like one demented; the rider sitting the while firm and supple as an Indian; then, seizing on a sudden the bit 'twixt his teeth, off set the stallion at a tearing gallop southward.

Away I followed hotly, the others giving chase and halloaing in the background.

Dyke after dyke we flew headlong in the grey-white mist—the space still even betwixt us—then, at a sudden high dry-stone wall, which loomed up as a wave of darkness seaward, my horse jumped short, and down we fell together, on the turf beyond.

As I lay there for a moment or two, I was certain I heard a heavy rumbling of rock or stone by the cliff edge hard by, followed by a deep plunge far below into the sea.

I rose to my feet and looked around me. There was no sign of horse or rider; both had disappeared.

The cliff here made a sudden bend inland, so that I could even catch the come and go of the waves in the far void below, and I felt 'twas lucky for me that I had been riding the nethermost line of the twain of us.

Cautiously approaching the edge, I noticed it had been just broken away under the tramplings of a horse, and as I peeped over I caught sight of an indistinct figure lying on a broad slab of rock below that jutted out some way from the cliff.

Feeling carefully around for support of root or stone, I made my way down, and discovered, as I had already conjectured, 'twas the reiver that lay there.

He was lying motionless, spread on his back, and was murmuring to himself as I drew close.

I knelt beside him to lift him up, and could catch, as I tried to raise him, what he was saying.

'Whisht ye, then, whisht, Effie, Aah never meant to break t' dish, Aah tell thee. Leave us aloan, then, lass, doan't plague t' life oot of a man. Ay, Aah 'll fetch t' coo in i' guid time, there 's no call t' bang us that gait.'

Then he babbled indistinctly; his lips grew whiter and ceased from moving; and when the others had come up I think he was already dead.

As I rode off for the physician in Redcar, I minded me I had once read in a book, Reverend Sir, that this same Cleveland was once 'the Cliff-land of the Danes,' and that the older name of Roseberry Topping—the famous hill of these parts—was Othenesberg, or Odin's Hill, together with much else of an antiquarian interest and varied conjecture, which I must even leave to wiser heads than mine to determine the true issues of, as well as their bearing upon the events just narrated, but this I may say, that here is the same 'crazy tale' my cousin mentioned to you, set down in all true verisimilitude by, reverend sir, your very faithful and humble servant to command,

Freddy Hall.

THE DOPPEL-GANGER

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So this was the old home—the cradle of his race !

Percy Osbaldistone of Osbaldistone Tower gazed curiously about him in what had formerly been the library, and espied a capacious Queen Anne chair by the fireside which looked inviting.

Having ensconced himself therein he put up his feet against the mantelpiece, lit a long cigar, and drew in the smoke slowly and meditatively.

The old housekeeper and her pretty niece had given him a good supper, and he himself, foreseeing empty cellars, had brought with him an ample freight, so now at the long last he had arrived in harbour.

After all his vicissitudes and being for years the black sheep of the ancient family, that he should come into possession of Osbaldistone Tower and Manor touched his vein of humour.

He laughed grimly, rubbed one hand upon the other, and looked contemptuously up at the portrait of an ancestor who seemed to be scowl-

ing at the last representative of his race. It was true that there was not much of the old family estate left, and what was left was mortgaged, but still it was good for a few thousands, and the family lawyer had to find them or go. The heir of the Osbaldistones continued his reflections. He didn't 'give a damn' for his ancestors, for what had they done save bring him into the world—a doubtful blessing?

'*Après moi le Déluge*,' murmured he to himself with a cynical smile, as he ensconced himself deeper in the recesses of his armchair and drank deep from the glass by his side. His hand shook badly, and he spilled some drops of whisky and soda upon his trousers.

'Damn!' cried he in annoyance. Then to himself *sotto voce*, 'Now that I've got back to this old quiet place I'll soon have my rotten nerves right again.'

Looking up after wiping his trousers he suddenly perceived to his great astonishment, for he had heard no sound of entrance, a fellow seated in the chair opposite which nestled under the Spanish leather screen that kept off the draught from the door behind.

'Who the devil are you?' inquired the Lord of the Manor angrily, 'and what d'ye want?'

'I am an Osbaldistone like yourself,' replied the stranger suavely; 'we are the last of the ancient house that bears upon its chevron the spear and spurs (mullets), so when I heard of your good fortune I thought it but polite to call and gratulate you on your succession.'

Percy Osbaldistone looked across upon his unwelcome visitor with narrowed eyes. The room was dark in its old oak panelling; there was but the one lamp on the table behind him, and it was by the light of the fire that he had to scrutinise the newcomer. So far as he could see the fellow was not unlike himself: he seemed to have the high-ridged nose of the family, which had become almost a birthmark in course of years. Yet the sardonic hardness of chin and jaw was very different to his own flabbiness; and as he watched his opposite Osbaldistone felt hatred surge up within his soul.

He had heard of men having their 'double.' Perhaps this was his own. He shivered at the thought.

Then he recollected that a branch of the family had long years ago migrated to Virginia. Possibly the fellow was one of their descendants.

'Are you from America?' he inquired. Then he went on in haste, not waiting for reply, 'For myself, I 've only just arrived here. The

only servants are an ancient housekeeper and her little niece, and I can't do with visitors—you 'll understand me. Take a whisky and soda and then go,' and the speaker ended with a snarl and suggestive stretch of leg and boot.

'You are not very hospitable,' replied his opposite, suavely as before, 'but it matters little, nor do I require a whisky and soda. I simply called in for a "crack," as you say up here, and to congratulate you on succeeding.'

'A crack!' echoed his host surlily. 'What about?'

'Oh, about our family and yourself,' returned the other caressingly. 'I am something of a genealogist, love family histories and dote on skeletons in the cupboard. As a matter of fact, ours is a singularly dull chronicle: except that the head of the family was an unsuccessful rebel in the "15," we never travelled beyond our Anglo-Saxon fatherdom—deep drinking, gambling, hard riding—and the *droit de Seigneur*'—here the speaker paused a moment—'this little niece, for example?' he hinted delicately.

'How the devil has the fellow guessed that?' thought Osbaldistone, white with anger and touched by secret fear.

'Get out!' he cried hoarsely, and felt if his revolver lay handy in his pocket, ready for use if needful.

His guest, however, took no notice of the command. Indeed, he went on more coolly than before. 'I mention it,' said he, 'because there was an ugly story about in British East Africa when you were farming out in the wilds beyond Simba, of the rape of a native girl, who was eventually turned out of doors at night and never reached her home again. Hyæna or lion? Which d' ye think?'

Osbaldistone's hand dropped feebly back from his revolver. His face was ashen-coloured. Good God! Who was this visitor? The episode of this black girl was the one thing he had never been able to forget. Shrinking back into his chair, he gazed as a rabbit may gaze upon the approaching python.

'Damn the fellow!' He plucked forth his revolver with quivering fingers, levelled it at his guest, and pulled upon the trigger. The bullet sang across the room, passed through armchair and screen into the wainscot beyond.

The smoke cleared; Osbaldistone could still see the unmoved and mocking eye of his enemy that filled him with a nameless horror. He

lifted his pistol to take a better aim, then—on a strange misgiving—turned the barrel round upon himself. 'You fool!' muttered the strange visitor sardonically, and as he spake he vanished as silently as he had come.

IN MY LADY'S BEDCHAMBER

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'Well,' said Harry laughingly, as he showed me the family portraits, and more especially the ladies, on the wall of the panelled dining-room, 'which of them would you choose if you were, like Henry VIII., on the look-out for a fresh wife ?'

'This one, I think,' I replied, as I gazed at a charming fragile beauty in a big bonnet, beneath which shy eyes looked bewitchingly; 'surely she was a Frenchwoman and painted by Fragonard ?'

'Aha !' cried he, 'you are a bold man, for there are tales told of her—strange tales of feminine and deadly jealousy for all her soft demureness. She was French, as you say, and a devoted wife, I believe, but probably her *mari* was not as faithful as he should have been. She is said to haunt the house, but I haven't come across her yet myself. You are to sleep in her bed-chamber,' he added with a smile, 'so perhaps you may be favoured with the sight of your charmer.'

I pressed naturally for further information, but he put me off by saying it was too long a

story, and that he had many other things to show me on this my first evening in the manor house.

I had only just arrived by motor. We had dined, and my friend was showing me round his possessions with all the pride of new and sudden inheritance. Harry had always been lucky; he had a talent for 'dropping in' for things unexpectedly. Thus at Eton, though really only thirteenth man, he had played against Harrow; and now owing to unexpected deaths he had become the possessor of a charming seventeenth-century manor house on the northern Border—a house that, lying in a deep crook of the Tweed and hidden by trees, had marvellously escaped the hand and torch of the raider.

He had succeeded to his great-uncle—an antiquary and recluse—a disappointed bachelor, and latterly, 'twas said, somewhat of a miser, which was fortunate for my friend, who had very little of his own.

Harry was soon to be married, and I was to be best man. He had come down to interview the agent and see what alterations and new furniture would be required, and had insisted on my joining him for a few days' fishing in the Tweed, while he was being inducted by agent and bailiff into his estate and introduced to the

tenantry. After surveying his ancestors' portraits we adjourned to the hall, which was furnished with battle-axes, Jethart spears, baskethilted swords, maces, salmon leisters, masks of otters and foumarts, foxes and badgers, and all the various trophies of Border sport and warfare of old time. This was the oldest part of the house, and proved by its stone-vaulted roof that it had belonged to the old peel tower on to which the manor had been engrafted; a fire of pine logs flamed in an open fireplace, gleaming and glancing on the copper drums that held relays of firewood on either hand.

Skins of red deer and the tufted pelts of kyloe cattle lay on the stone floor: there were massive black oak coffers and a great wardrobe like some huge safe for coats behind us, but two broad ancient leathern armchairs stood by the hearth invitingly, suggestive of unperturbed eighteenth-century ease, wherein we at once settled ourselves.

It was perhaps the absence of feminine taste and adornment that made the house seem older than it really was; apart from the charming portraits of the ladies in the dining-room the house resembled rather a Border strength than a Jacobean manor house.

However, the atmosphere was rendered all

the more romantic thereby, and I lay back in my chair making believe to myself that I was staying with a Lord Warden of the Marches in the days of the ancient feud between England and Scotland.

We smoked and talked, however, not of the far, but of the immediate, past, of Eton and Oxford, and of mutual friends till twelve o'clock struck on the brazen rim of a Cromwellian clock, and we agreed that it was bedtime.

I had clean forgotten all about the reputed ghost till my host said ' good-night ' at the door of my bedroom and bade me call him if I got a ' gliff ' in the night from the apparition of ' Silkie ' —so he informed me the lady was called locally. ' You 've got your retriever with you,' he said, ' so no doubt you will feel protected.'

' Brenda,' I replied, ' is Scotch by birth, so possibly she may be superstitious. The event will determine. So long,' I said, as Harry went off to the room of his late bachelor great-uncle.

Though very sleepy after a long motor ride I could not ' turn in ' till I had explored my bedroom, which was indeed a fascinating and enchanting chamber. It seemed to be a coign plucked out of an old French château, and inset here like a rare plant in an old stone wall. The panelling was of Italian intarsia work inlaid with

a renaissance design portraying the tale of Cupid and Psyche ; on the final panel Jupiter was handing the cup of ambrosia to Psyche with the words, '*Sume, Psyche, et immortalis esto, nec unquam digridietur a tuo nexu Cupido, sed istae vobis erunt perpetuae nuptiae*' ; the floor was formed of parquetry, and the rugs above were of fine Persian workmanship. The curtains of the window were of purple silk, embroidered, I imagined, by the fair Frenchwoman herself, and the great four-poster bed was of fine walnut with deep mouldings, and adorned with the fleur-de-lys of France. The whole room seemed to be redolent of the grace of a charming *grande dame* of old France. I made up the fire with fresh pine logs upon the tiled hearth, settled Brenda upon a rug by the side of it, undressed and went to bed, enchanted by my surroundings, and very much inclined to envy my friend his good fortune.

I fell asleep at once, for the bed was luxuriously comfortable, and I was extraordinarily sleepy.

How long I slept I did not know, but when I awoke I had an immediate and most lively intimation that some one was in the room. I drew myself noiselessly upward, and at once my eyes rested upon a dainty figure sitting in the

chair by the dying fire, evidently engaged upon some absorbing occupation. It was a woman clad in a sprigged silk gown, the image of my lady of the dining-room portrait. What was she doing? Seemingly pounding some substance in a small mortar. As I gazed astounded a slight knock sounded on the door. My Lady seemed extraordinarily perturbed; she started violently, seemed to shake something white from the mortar as she gathered it hastily to her, moved swiftly with the slightest rustle as of a scurrying mouse and vanished through the door that led into the dressing-room.

I waited a few minutes to see if she would return, or perhaps some one else enter by the other door, but no sound greeted my ear, and my eyes could discover nothing unusual about the room.

I rose, and, moving on tiptoe, opened both doors, and with the light of an electric torch I always carried with me, investigated the corridor and dressing-room, but could make no discovery of any kind, nor perceive where my fair visitant had vanished.

When I returned to my room I found Brenda had been disturbed by my perambulation, for she was up and moving about restlessly. Giving her a pat I bade her lie down again, and went

back to bed determined to stay awake for the chance of my Lady reappearing.

A few minutes after this Brenda seemed to be taken with a fit, for she got up suddenly, made a bolt, as it were, for the door, shook with some convulsive movements of her jaw, gave a horrible sort of strangled sob, and fell with a heavy thud on the floor.

I leapt out of bed, got some water in a basin and knelt down beside her, but she was already stiff, her teeth were clenched, and she showed a horribly distorted mask.

A horrid suspicion awoke in my mind. I searched with my torch on the floor where my Lady had dropped the powder, and I could plainly see the wet edge of Brenda's tongue and the smudge of the white powder which she had licked up.

I went back to where Brenda lay stiff and stark, and felt with a trembling hand for her heart.

It beat no more; my Brenda was dead—poisoned by the beautiful Lady.

THE WARLOCK OF GLORORUM

THE WARLOCK OF GLORORUM

' BUT are you sure your father wouldn't object ? ' I asked of my companion—a most bright and amusing Eton boy—to whom I was playing bear leader. ' Not a bit,' replied he ; ' my father is a naturalist and Darwinian ; not a sceptic, but *Agnosticus suavis* or *Verecundus, ordo compositae*, you know. " Hunt the ghost by all means," said he, when I suggested a ghost " worry," and then as he does sometimes over coffee and a cigarette after dinner he talked with a real keen interest on the whole subject. He talked so long that old Mac (the butler) got quite shirty, and finally—after putting his head round the door two or three times—came in like the Lord Mayor and bore off the whisky decanter to the smoking-room. Now, the pater said that the love of the marvellous was native to mankind, and Tertullian had acquired a false credit for his motto, *Credo quia impossible*, since that was the natural failing of the untrained intellect, and, scientifically speaking, he ought to have been shot sitting.

'Then he went on to tell a jolly story which some great educationalist had told him of the little girl playing in the garden, who saw Fifine, the poodle, unexpectedly appear, and at once rushed in crying to her mother, "Mummy, mummy, there 's a bear in the garden!" Her mother, being a wholly unimaginative creature, promptly put Maggie into the corner, and told her to beg God's pardon for having told a lie. Presently Maggie comes out of her corner radiant, "It 's all right, mummy," she cried, "God tells me He has often mistaken Fifine for a bear Himself." No doubt, as he said, Maggie had had a momentary fright, and for half a second had thought of a bear, but she knew, too, that if she stayed to investigate she would find out it was Fifine, so preferring the luxury of the marvellous, she fled crying in to her mother. Sometimes, of course, he added, the ghost is the resultant of some horrible cruelty or murder, mankind, from various motives, refusing to let the memory of the crime die out, but more usually the ghost is born of the early mythopœic imagination of man that cherishes the marvellous. One never hears of a new ghost nowadays. Science, no doubt, is an iconoclast in the matter.'

'Well,' said I, 'how do you propose to proceed? I have gathered that there was once a

warlock or wizard here in the sixteenth century—one of your forebears—who bore a most unhallowed reputation. Is he your ghost, or is the ghost the result of his "goings on"?'

'Both,' replied Dick, smiling. 'At least there are a number of tales about him and his misdeeds; one version has it that he built himself a secret chamber wherein he conferred with the "Auld Enemy" in person, and no one has yet discovered his "dug-out." Here's a quaint woodcut of the old warlock,' he continued, taking down as he spoke a foxed print from the wall and holding it out for my inspection.

'Ain't he a fearsome figure? Looks as if his liver were cayenne pepper. Astrologer, botanist, poisoner, he is said to have been, and I don't wonder.'

The ancient warlock possessed indeed a most mischancy visage: hard, curious, inhuman eyes he had, thin, sunken cheeks, and a black straggling moustache, the whole surmounted by a great bald dome of brow. 'By Alchemist out of Misanthropos,' I suggested, after a lengthy scrutiny, 'and perhaps Misogynist as well.' My companion laughed appreciatively. 'That's about it,' he said; 'yet there *is* a tale of a fisherman's daughter, the belle of the village below.

'Well,' he continued with animation, 'our

job is now to discover his secret chamber. 'Tis as good as a treasure hunt with the supernatural thrown in. By the way,' he went on, 'it 's the first time I 've ever been in Glororum Castle, as it is called, for the old place has only just come back to us, that is, to my father as representative of the senior branch of the Macellars, by the death of a cousin who died S.P. What nerves they had, these old chieftains! Fancy, like the Maclean, setting out your wife—even if a trifle *passée*—on the Skerry to drown before your dining-room window, or, like the Macleod, lowering her into the dungeon beneath the drawing-room that you might the better enjoy the charms of Amaryllis—your gardener's daughter—above. Well, it 's too late this afternoon to begin our "worry," but to-morrow morning we must start by flagging all the windows with towels, as the inquisitive lady is said to have done at Glamis Castle.'

I willingly agreed to his proposal, which jumped well enough with my own humour, and then as Dick went off to unpack I determined to go without and view the castle from every side.

Dusk was now closing in on the dark and frowning tower that was perched like an osprey upon the basalt cliffs that overlooked the sea. The building was really rather a peel tower than

a castle, for it was of no great extent, consisting merely of the tall, gaunt tower with a wing added on to its western side. Situated on the edge of the bare sea, like a lighthouse abandoned, scarred by the fierce nor'-easters, with the mutter of the waves about it below and the scream of sea-fowl above, one could scarce imagine a more desolate or forbidding human abode than fitly-named 'Glower-o'er-'em' Tower.

The neck of land by which it was approached from the west had been protected by a wall, within which a garden had sheltered, wherein the warlock had grown his herbs and poisons, but all was now ruinous and weed-grown, and gave only an added touch to the general forlornness. The place had been let as a shooting-box in recent years, but neither landlord nor tenant had thought it worth while to spend any money on reparation or embellishment. 'Twas indeed a fitting retreat for a warlock or wizard, I thought, as with a final regard I turned to go within doors.

Just at that moment I caught a glimpse of a fisher lass with a pannier rounding the corner. She looked back, and I saw a roguish Romney eye lighting a charming profile. 'Too pretty,' I thought, remembering Dick, as she tripped onward into the shadow of the Tower.

The sea was moaning under a heavy cloud-

wrack; away to the west above the Lammermoors the sunset flared like a bale-fire, scattering sparks on the windows of the Tower. 'Twas cheerier within than without, for the walls were thick and kept the wind at bay, the wood fires were lively with hissing logs, and scarce heeded a chance buffet from the down draught lying in ambush within the open chimney-stack. We slept in the wing without any dread of the warlock, for it had been added on to the tower long after his time, and save for the sound of the sea far below, resembling the dim 'mutter of the Mass,' or the spell of a necromancer, I heard nothing throughout the night.

Next morning after breakfast was over Dick produced a pile of towels, which we divided up between us for our voyage of discovery. 'After all,' I said, 'we shan't want many, for bows and arrows in the far past, and later, the window tax, kept the number of openings down.'

We ascended by the ancient stone newel stair that circled up from the old iron 'yett' of the entry to the battlements above, and laid a towel below the sash of every window. In the topmost storey in some servants' rooms that had been long disused we discovered certain windows with broken cords that entirely refused to open.

Dick's way here was of the 'Jethart' kind.

He simply knocked a pane out with the poker, and thrust the towel through.

When we had finished we descended in haste and perambulated the tower without, counting up our tale of towels in some excitement.

'As many windows, so many towels,' I said with disappointment, as I checked them off carefully.

'Damn!' said Dick meditatively. Then after a moment or two's thought, 'The old boy's cell must have been on the roof; he was sure to have been an astrologer. Let 's go up again and start afresh.' So saying he led the way up to the parapet of the battlements, and there we surveyed the roof. The main part of the roof consisted of a gable covered with heavy stone tiles, but the further part that lay between the north-east and north-west bartizans was flat and covered with lead, and at the verge of this were iron steps that led down to the roof of the new wing below. This latter we did not concern ourselves with, as we knew it dated since the wizard's day, but carefully examined the stone tiles and the further leads without, however, any discovery resulting.

We were just about to give up our quest when Dick's quick eyes noticed a chink in the lead that formed the channel or gutter for the

rain water leading either way to the gargoyles beneath the bartizans outside.

'Look here!' he cried. 'See the dim light showing! I swear it's a glimmer of glass. Evidently this particular lead was meant to be drawn aside and admit the light.' I hastened to the side and peered with him into the dirt-laden crack.

Opening my pen-knife I scraped away the dirt and soon verified his conjecture that there was glass below. 'You're right!' I cried in my excitement. 'It is glass. Now let's search and see if we can find anything like a hinge, or at least some indication that the lead could be withdrawn at will.' We sought all along by the containing wall and found that the lead did not end in a flat sheet, as is usual, against the wall, but was turned over, and evidently continued below.

'It looks very much as if it was meant to roll up and be turned over like a blind on a roller below,' I said to my companion.

'I'm sure of it,' Dick replied with conviction. 'I'll tell you what we must do. We'll pull up the lead, make sure of the extent of the glass, then go below and search for the wizard's cell from the exact indication we shall then have of its whereabouts.'

'Right!' said I, 'that 's the method.'

We set to work, and soon had doubled back a strip of lead a foot broad from the centre till the glass ended by the bartizan on either side. We could not pull the lead right back because of the iron steps, which had evidently been inserted when the new wing was built, and now interfered with our further action.

The glass was set in heavy leaded panes, which were so engrained with the grime of centuries that we could discern nothing through them.

'We must search for the wizard's cell from below,' I said. 'If we cannot discover it there we must return and break in from above.'

'Yes,' agreed Dick, 'it would be a pity to smash the roof in if we can find an entry below without causing damage.'

The orientation was now easy, and as we studied the position from the parapet we could select the towelled window below which fitted best with the position of the glass roof.

The curious thing was that the window was not situated in the centre, but at the side of the torn up lead.

'We 'll find out the reason below,' I said, as we descended in great excitement, hastening on our quest.

The room we made for was one of the disused

chambers on the top storey, which we had remarked for its narrowness when we broke the window and thrust a towel through.

'There must be a secret passage,' cried Dick, as he flashed his torch upon the walls ; 'we 're not below the glass ; we 're to the right hand of it. Wherefore search the left wall.'

Dick's inference seemed excellent, and full of eagerness I tapped with my knife, he with his poker, all along the western wall.

'There 's a hollow here,' cried Dick, overjoyed, as his poker rang with a strange lightness. 'Let 's hunt for an opening or crack, or some betraying sign.'

'Here ! Look here !' he shouted. 'I believe this stone pulls out.'

Hastening to his side and applying my knife to the thin ragged crevice he had discovered, I found the stone was loose. I worked feverishly while Dick held the torch. 'Now it 's coming !' I cried, and even as I spoke it fell forward and crashed on to the floor. To us scrutinising the aperture, there seemed evidently a spring or catch concealed behind it.

Thrusting in my arm I pressed it home. A creak sounded ; there was a rusty wheeze, and a portion of the wall seemed to shake and move slowly inwards.

'We 've got it!' yelled Dick, as he pressed his shoulder against the receding portion, 'it 's a wooden door covered over with thin slabs of stone.'

'Forrard!' cried Dick. 'Forrard on!' and as he shouted he pressed forward down a narrow, dusty aperture towards a chamber beyond where a dim light showed through the begrimed roof above.

I pressed on hotly at his heels through the six feet of passage. We were now within the threshold of the secret cell. But what was that horrible thing beneath the dim sky-light? Dick's electric torch was failing, and we could not see distinctly, and a very oppression of fear seized upon us both. What was the gruesome object in front that resembled a dead octopus with decayed black arms?

There was a sickly taint in the air, and as I stood there fascinated by fear Dick took a step forward and threw the faint light of his torch upon the atrocious figure.

Surely it was a gorilla grasping its victim, and bending it in to itself as in some horrid act of rape!

Dick advanced yet another foot. Then I perceived that it was worse even than I suspected, for I now distinguished a giant species

of *Nepenthes* (*Nepenthes Ferocissimus*) most monstrously developed, clutching in its long arms and horrid ascidiums the remains of a human victim—apparently a woman—for a gleam of yellow satin showed beneath the black embrace. Good God! I thought of the 'fisherman's daughter' with a shudder.

I heard the torch drop. Then came a rustling shiver. The monstrous growth had sunk to the floor under pressure of the fresh air!

I thought I had fainted, but the next moment I felt Dick's hand shaking upon my sleeve, and heard a voice quaver in my ear:

'*Let's get out of this! It's altogether too damned beastly.*'

'MUCKLE-MOUTHED MEG'

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'Hang him, Provost!'[1] cried the Town Clerk; 'he was caught red-handed; i' the verra manner, makin' awa aff wi' a quey o' your ain frae oor Common.'

'Fear God, Provost,' exhorted the Burgh Chamberlain, astonished at the Provost's hesitancy, 'but ne'er a North Tyne Robson.'

'Ay,' rang out a dozen voices from the crowd assembled in front of the Provost's house in Hawick, 'mak him "kiss the woodie"; let the prood Northumbrian thief cool his heels i' the wind!'

'Up wi' him!' cried Madge wi' the Fiery Face, who had just been loosed from the 'jougs,' wherein she had been confined for 'kenspeckle incontinence.' 'Up wi' the clarty callant! Let him swing like a corby craa i' a taty patch!'

But the canny wife of the Provost, douce man, plucked him by the sleeve. 'Dod! man,' she whispered him in the ear, 'he 's a braw chield for a' that. Bethink you o' oor "Muckle-

[1] Provost is really an anacronism, Hawick having been content with Bailies till the nineteenth century.

mouthed Meg," that ne'er a Tery [1] will wed wi' withoot a handsome tocher! Aweel, let him wed wi' her the noo "ower the tangs" an' ride awa wi' her on his saddle-bow. 'Twere pity to hang sic a handsome chield as he is an' no mak use o' him as a son-in-law, even if he be ane o' the "auld enemy."'

The Provost looked anew upon the careless, intrepid young Northumbrian, who seemed not to care a bodle for his imminent fate. He regarded his proposed son-in-law approvingly, for he was the pure type of North Tyne Borderer —of medium stature, but finely formed, with tanned complexion, tawny moustache and ruddy hair, keen blue eye and oval face—most pleasant to look upon. 'Aweel,' concluded the Provost, 'we wull gie him the chance.'

'Look ye,' he addressed himself to the captive, 'the guidwife is verra tender hairted: she disna care to see ye trail i' the wind, but will offer ye Meg, oor daughter, instead o' the halter ye hae truly earned. Ye can tak Meg—an' your life as her tocher.'

Robson's proud determination to accept his fate and suffer silently as became a hardy Northumbrian wavered a little.

[1] Tery, an inhabitant of Hawick, derived from their slogan 'Teribus and Tery Odin.'

He was but twenty-five years of age, and life was very sweet to him. He thought of the merry moonlight, of the joys of riding, and the fierce excitements of the foray with passionate desire. The old song of the Borderers was ringing in his ears :

> 'Sweet is the sound o' the driven steers
> And sweet the gleam o' the moonlit spears,
> When the red cock crows o'er byre and store
> And the Borderer rides on his foraying splore.'

He looked from the tail of his eye upon 'Meg wi' the muckle mouth.' No beauty certainly, but 'twas fighting he craved, not women. Yet she was not ill-natured, he surmised—the 'muckle mouth' signified good temper ; 'twas far better than a 'muckle tongue'—she would do at a pinch as his housekeeper.

Meg meanwhile on her part was also eyeing him askance. He was a handsome gallant surely ! Her heart longed for the canty fellow. Yet if he showed the least sign of disdain he should go hang for her.

Robson now looked directly upon her. 'Well, Meg,' he decided swiftly, 'I 'll take ye' ; then he added in a flash of understanding, 'if ye 'll take me.' His tact triumphed. With a ready smile that stretched almost from ear to ear Meg surrendered herself joyfully.

'Ay, my lad, I 'll tak ye,' she replied on the instant.

The crowd now broke into a boisterous 'hooray,' as keen for the wedding as a moment before they had been eident for the funeral. 'Bring oot the tangs!' they vociferated loudly. A pair of tongs were at once produced, and under the direction of the blacksmith the captive and the woman held hands, and took each other for man and wife.

The 'handfasting' thus concluded, 'Ye hae forgot the bride ale!' cried many voices. 'We mun drink their health, Provost, ye ken. Bring oot the ale, canny man!' 'Ay, or clairt,' suggested a thin-faced scrivener. 'A mutchkin o' usquebaugh for ilka man,' shouted a burly flesher, ''tis mair heartenin'.'

The Provost turned a little pale at their unforeseen demand: he almost regretted his consent to the wedding. Then he recollected that there was a firkin of home-brewed in the cellar that a recent thunderstorm had turned sour, and his brow grew clear. 'Bring oot the pickle firkin,' he bade his man, 'an' serve it around.'

So with a taste of sour ale in their mouths man and wife rode forth from Hawick the airt of Peel Fell.

Robson's good mare—her head turned homeward—went forward at a good trot an drecked little of her double burden.

'What ails ye?' inquired Robson shortly, feeling that his bride was shaking in curious fashion behind him on her pillion.

'I was juist laughin',' responded Meg, 'at oor venture, for here we are newly marrit an' I dinna even ken your name richtly; ye are a Robson, I ken, an' "Wudspurs" is your toname, but whatten 's your hame name?'

'My father and mother aye called me Si,' responded Robson. 'Ye can call me that, an' ye like.'

Meg kept silence a while, then she said coaxingly, 'Si is a pretty name eneuch; 'tis short an' sweet; gie me a kiss, Si,' she wheedled, with a gentle clasp about his waist.

'I 'll kiss ye when we win home,' replied her husband cautiously.

'But just ae kiss—to gang on wi',' coaxed Meg further.

Si turned half about and smacked his wife upon her rosy cheek, which seemingly he found satisfactory.

'Plenty more for ye when we sit i' the ingle neuk together the night,' he said.

Meg, enchanted at this prospect, said no more,

but looked about her as they rode up the Slitrig water.

They could see the twisted horn of Pencrist and the round Maiden Paps on their right hand, and on their left bare Carlin Tooth on the outermost edge of Carter Bar; they were soon out upon the bare moorlands that stretch away to the water of Tyne on the one side and to the waters of Liddle on the other.

As they slowly ascended by the skirts of Peel Fell Meg broke the silence again.

'Ye arena marrit a'ready?' she inquired, as a sudden suspicion assailed her.

'No fears,' retorted Si with conviction.

'Weel, ye are the noo,' said Meg to herself, slightly increasing her hold on her man.

'Then wha is 't that fends for ye?' she asked further.

'I hae an old wife—the shepherd's—that bides with me,' replied Si.

'She 'll no' fend for ye the way I can,' returned Meg, 'for I can bake an' mak ye sowans, scones, brose, kail o' all kinds, an' parritch.'

'I 'd be fain o' some here and now,' replied Si,[1]

[1] Hawick hospitality and 'Hawick gills' are proverbial: any one who has been fortunate, like the author, in having been a guest at the Common Riding will have realised this.

'for ye are not very hospitable in Hawick. A sup sour ale 's all I 've had since I took the fell yestreen.'

'Puir laddie!' said Meg sympathetically. 'There was sic an unco carfuffle that I had clean forgot the vivers.' Then, preparing to descend from the pillion, she proposed that they should get down and walk so as to ease the mare up the fell.

Si, highly approving her thoughtfulness, jumped down and led the mare with bridle drawn over her head through the flows and mosses above the Deadwater of Tyne.

'Ye can almost see my bit biggin',' said Si, as he halted and pointed eastward of Larriston Fell to a patch of black peat and heather high on the rolling moorland.

''Tis gey ootbye,' said Meg; 'clean aff the map a'thegither.'

'It 's caad whiles outside i' the wunter,' admitted Si, 'yet i' the but wi' aad Maud the collie an' her litter, Dand the shepherd, an' Sall his wife about the blazing peats on the hearth ye 'll be warmer an' cosier than the Queen of Scotland.'

'There wull be a muckle ghaists aboot?' inquired Meg, as she gazed anxiously upon the wild expanse of moor, grasslands, and bog that

stretched away, boundless as the sea, to an infinite horizon.

'There 's nowt but the "wee grey man" o' the moor,' replied Si unconcernedly; 'there 's no harm in him; he will whiles even help up a "cassen" yowe (ewe). Not but what there 's the "Bargeist"—he 's mestitched, yet red thread i' your mutch and a branch o' the rowan tree will keep him awa nicelies. And Dand kens fine how to fettle him whether by day or night—

> "Rowan tree and red thread gar the witches come ill speed."

'Mount again now, my lass,' he added, 'for we ha' crossed the water o' North Tyne, and will win home to the "Bower" cheeks by the gloaming.'

As the good mare pressed on unweariedly bridegroom and bride rode up to the 'yett' of 'the Bower' in the late twilight. On hearing the mare's shoes ring on the cobbles beside the gate the old shepherd, who had evidently been waiting, expectant of his master's return, came hirpling out in haste. Then seeing the strange figure seated behind his master he stood stock still in astonishment.

'Whatten 's this gear ye ha' lifted the noo?'

he finally inquired, when he had found his voice.

''Tis a wife I ha' lifted from Hawick town,' cried Si gaily, as he leapt from his mare, overjoyed to be at home again.

''Twould be i' the dark then ?' suggested Dand, his eye fascinated by the 'muckle mouth,' 'or belike in an ower great haste ye lifted the first "yowe" (ewe) ye cam' across ?'

''Twas in broad daylight,' retorted Si, catching him a friendly buffet on the shoulder. 'Ye would ne'er ha' seen your master again had it no' been for Meg,' and as he helped her down he briefly narrated his adventure.

'Aweel,' commented Dand to himself, shaking his head the while, as he led the mare to the byre, 'I 'm nane so sure but I would ha' juist pit up wi' the hangin'.' Then he added aloud, 'The wife will be sair vext when she sees the Scots heifer ye ha' ridden back wi'.'

Meg's good-nature, however, her willingness to help, and her skill in cooking soon triumphed over Sall's ill-humour, and peace reigned within the 'but' as supper was being made ready that evening.

Afterwards within the 'ben,' sitting cheek by jowl upon a rough bench beside the peats the Northumbrian bridegroom, and the Scots bride

found much to content them, either with the other, whilst Maud the collie, who had stolen in with them, looked with resentment in her soft brown liquid eyes upon the strange woman who had so unexpectedly taken her place with the master, and might have been seen to frown when Si redeemed his promise of 'plenty mair' to 'Meg' on their ride home to 'the Bower.'

'The Bower,' as Si had christened his dwelling — originally a shepherd's sheiling — had recently been enlarged by the addition of the 'ben' and a room above the 'but,' so that the building had the look of a lop-sided, rough peel tower.

With help of his brothers down the water and a mason from Falstone Si had run a dry-stone dyke—strengthened with fir tree trunks—round about for the protection of his sheep and nowt in the event of a foray, and was as pleased with 'the Bower' as Lord William Howard with Naworth. 'Twas a quaint name enough, for 'the Bower' stood on the true march line of the naked Border, and in the very haunt and playground of the winds. Not only was it obnoxious to the winds, but equally exposed to raiding from Scotland, as also to the 'broken men' of 'the Waste,' for it stood erect above the Lewis Burn where it flows forth from Hells-

bottom on the edge of Coplestone, where the Liddesdale fells join hands with those of Cumbrian Bewcastle.

Yet Si had prospered, for his 'grayne' befriended him, and as for the fierce reivers from Liddesdale, why, he would ride with them so long as they ran their forays into Cumberland or Scotland and not within North Tyne.

And now the 'Hunters' Moon' was up, waxing nightly, and proclaiming to all about the Borderland that the customary truce of summer was over, and the time of the crowing of the 'Red Cock' was at hand.

Danger, however, came not from Scotland in the first instance, but from England, as it happened.

The tale of Si's marriage had soon got wind upon the Border, and proved occasion for many a jest and gibe far and wide, and when it came to the ears of the Land Sergeant of Gilsland he scented opportunity of revenge for a 'lick' on the head he had received in a fray with the Robsons when they drove a foray into South Tyne a few months bygone.

''Tis matter of march treason,' he said, when he heard of Si's means of escape from the Hawick halter. 'Whether he be married or no signifieth not, for all intercommuning with the

Scots is clean against Border law. 'Tis a matter for the Lord Warden's court, and a hanging matter at that. Ay, "Merry Carlisle" will fit him fine.'

Thus devising his revenge he determined to act at once. Taking two of his men with him he rode up by the edge of 'the Waste' towards Coplestone Fell, with intent to capture Si, or, should he evade capture, to leave a citation at 'the Bower' for his appearance at the next meeting of the Lord Wardens on account of notorious breakage of the Border law.

But Si had already been made aware of his enemy's intention, and had instructed Meg how to act in such an emergency, for it might well be that trouble would come when he was out looking after a 'hogging' he had of 'blackfaces' that were pasturing above the Forks, where the Lewis Burn and Oakenshaw Burn mate. The season of the foray had opened and flocks must be guarded by day and night. One afternoon when Si had ridden down to the Forks to relieve Dand, Meg stood by the 'yett,' expectant of the old shepherd's return, and watchful of enemies. As she turned her gaze southward she was suddenly aware of three figures clearly tricked out against the grey sky above the further fell: their silhouettes showed like midges dapped

against the window by a boy, and Meg could see that the centaurs were coming forward on a fair round trot in Indian file. She could not distinguish at the distance horse from rider, but she could note the pose of the horse's head, and the movement against the sky-line. 'Three-quarters of an hour,' commented the gazer. 'Good going on the fell top, evil wi' peat hags, flows, an' gairs below.'

She looked eastward, and there saw to her infinite relief old Dand coming slowly up the track on the ancient pony. Then, after having gone within to make certain preparations, she set out on a brisk step to meet Dand. Dand had quickened his pace when he too saw the three black silhouettes above, and met his mistress within two yards of the dry-stone walling.

A very animated conversation took place between the two, and by the time they reached the door cheeks of 'the Bower' they seemed to have settled their scheme of strategy satisfactorily, for either turned away from other with a wink o' the eye.

The strange riders had dismounted and walked their horses through the peat hags and mosses, but now were up again, and pressing on to the 'yett.' The foremost rider—the Land Sergeant—knocked heavily on the door with the

butt of his lance and demanded to see ‘ Robson o’ the Bower i’ the name o’ my Lord Warden.’

‘ He ’s no’ within,’ cried Meg in return. ‘ Whatten want ye at him ? ’

Then she slowly slid back the bar, and, opening the door partly, stood in the space thus afforded, her hands upon her hip bones.

‘ So you ’re the Scots lass he brought back with him from Hawick,’ said the Land Sergeant, after a cool survey of Meg’s features. ‘ Doubtless there was great provocation,’ he added with a grin, ‘ but he broke the Border laws, my lass, and must answer for ’t. Intercommuning with the Scots is absolutely forbidden, and is punishable with death. So, my lass, I advise ye to slip away home as fast as Robson’s mare or shanks’s nag will carry ye. Meantime I must search the house for your man, and if I cannot find him I ’ll leave a citation for the Lord Wardens’ meeting with ye for Robson.’

‘ When Si,’ retorted Meg very deliberately, ‘ intercommunes wi’ me, as ye ca’ it,’ here the ‘ muckle-mouth ’ expanded east and west, ‘ he intercommunes wi’ me i’ Scotland, an’ there ye haena ony power ower him or me. The Bower is biggit on the verra march line,’ she explained, ‘ an’ the ben is ower on the Scots side whaur we intercommune,’ and Meg, with her arms akimbo

and her mouth on the grin, contemplated her enemy in scornful triumph.

'Here! take ye this citation,' cried the Land Sergeant in his wrath, for he heard an echo of Meg's laughter proceed from his men behind him, handing the parchment slip to her as he spoke.

Meg, however, instead of taking it, shouted a loud and mysterious summons to assistance. 'Oot an' at 'im; oot an' at 'im, Bargeist! Hoop, holla, Bargeist!' then slammed to the door.

A few seconds only elapsed when there came round the corner a strange mischancy creature, with loose hide and hanging horns, long tail and clattering hoofs. Scrambling very swiftly forward it shook its shaggy head in an angry roar, and edged its horns sharply against the Land Sergeant's nearest man.

'Come awa, Sergeant; come awa,' cried the fellow in terror. ''Tis the Bargeist, the Bargeist! Ye can fight against thae devils if ye like, but I 'll no',' and therewith clapping in his spurs he turned his horse's head and fled down the path without ever a glance behind him.

His fellow—a trifle braver—stood his ground a few seconds longer, but when his horse caught sight of the fearsome threatening horns beneath

his belly he shied violently, then bolted after his companion.

At this moment out came Meg with a glowing poker.

'This wull shift ye, if the Bargeist disna,' she cried, as she lunged at the Land Sergeant's mare and caught her fair upon the near buttock.

With a muffled skreigh the mare leapt forward, seized the bit 'twixt her teeth, and *ventre à terre* pursued the others in spite of her rider's remonstrances.

Some half a mile away the three men succeeded in pulling up their horses, and debated with some heat what had best be done. The Land Sergeant was for going back to the Bower to search for Robson, but his two men were for going home with all speed. As they were hotly debating this the Land Sergeant descried a solitary horseman coming up the track from the eastward, and a sudden light gleamed in his eye.

'Hi!' he cried sharply. 'Here 's "Wudspurs" for a ducat! Take cover, and, when I whistle, on to him like a brock!'

'Twas Si himself that was riding gaily up the water, for he had disposed of his 'hogging' to a grazier from Hexham at a good price, and was now bethinking him whence he had best

re-stock his farm—whether from Cumberland or Scotland.

He was just fixing upon Cumberland when a sharp whistle smote on his ear, and three figures rising forth of some brackens were instantly upon him. The foremost figure was afoot, with dag in his hand ready presented; the other two were mounting their horses, their lances in their hands. Si's mind cleared in a flash. Shouting aloud, 'Dand! to me! Help!' he charged the footman fiercely. 'Pouff!' said the dag feebly, and a bullet grazed the horse's withers. The horse, rearing up, struck out and caught the fellow on the forehead with his iron-shod hoof, driving him to earth, where Si pierced him through with his lance. The other two men now circled warily round him—the one barring escape eastward, the other keeping him from his home. Either was 'waiting on' like a hawk before a favouring chance. But now two further figures appeared upon the scene. Dand with a whinger and Meg with her glowing brand came speeding to their master's rescue. The Land Sergeant and his man bore down upon Si with lances levelled in haste, hoping to dispatch him out of hand.

Si wheeled and turned his horse so swiftly that he surprised his nearest foe, and 'instantly

stooped' upon him. He caught him, turned half about, and ran him through the hip, and dragged him from his saddle. But his lance's head was twisted, he could not free it, and the Land Sergeant bore down on him with gleaming spear. Just as Si thought he was transfixed something interposed, a sigh or groan was heard; then Si was on the ground, kneeling beside his wife whose life-blood a spear head was drinking.

'Oh, Meg,' he cried; 'my Meg! Twice ye ha' saved my life, and now I canna save yours,' and he supported his wife in his arms with infinite tenderness. Meg lay quietly against his bosom, her eyes fixed upon his, then she murmured softly with 'ane little laughter,' 'Kiss me good-bye, Si, an'—on the "muckle moo."' Even as their lips met a mist stole gently over Meg's eyes, and she saw Si no more.

THE PRIOR OF TYNEMOUTH

THE PRIOR OF TYNEMOUTH

Prior Olaf stood on the central merlon of the gate tower that protected the little cell of Tynemouth from assault on the landward side, and gazed intently over the sea below him to the eastward haze wherein he feared to descry the red-brown sails of the serpent ships.

He was himself by birth a Dane: had even in his ardent youth been a follower of the Raven sign and the banner of the Landwaster, but having been wounded and left behind in a raid into England had been nursed by monks, and eventually had taken the robe and cowl.

The wind had been continuously for a week in the eastern airt, and a raid from his heathen fellow-countrymen seemed inevitable, since Providence appeared to be tempting them with opportunity.

The good Prior could discern nothing alarming, yet he had a foreboding that even now the heathen were approaching on the favouring wind, and would thunder on the gate that very day.

Descending, he proceeded slowly to the chapel

built by Oswald—saint and king—in honour of the mother of our Lord, and there before the shrine of Saint Oswyn prostrated himself in prayer. Long and earnestly he prayed, for it seemed to the Prior that the test of his acceptance was to be found in the continued absence of the Danes. The sin that he had committed in his youth had, he trusted, been washed away by his fastings and mortifications. In that event surely his prayers to the Virgin, Saint Cuthbert, and Saint Oswyn, would prevail, and the Danes would come not with fire and sword against his beloved cell.

The Prior's heart glowed in hope renewed.

'*Sursum corda*,' he murmured, then recommenced his litany.

'*De Saevitia Teutonorum qui veniunt in pandis myoparonibus, libera nos, Domine!*'

Scarce had he finished, when a startled brother approached rapidly a-tiptoe and touched the Prior gently on the shoulder.

'They come, Holy Prior! They come! the cruel heathen can be seen swiftly approaching in their long ships.'

Prior Olaf turned ashen pale. He could not prevent a groan escaping him, for now he knew that his penances had not yet proved effectual.

'*Mea culpa, mea culpa*,' he murmured wearily,

then as he rose up with pale cheek a gleam of fire lit in his eye, for he would die rather than permit Saint Oswyn's shrine to be pillaged by the heathen. He called for the sub-Prior and entrusted the defence to him.

The cell was splendidly situated, being protected on the three sides—east, north, and west—by moat, steep cliffs, and the immediate sea.

To the south or land side a strong wall with gate tower, furnished with parapet and brettices for casting down of stones and melted lead, stood sentinel and protector.

The sub-Prior—the light of battle in his eye—gave orders to his affrighted flock, and bade the *Conversi* (lay brethren) heat the lead and carry up big stones to the brettices, where he himself took command. Thereupon he looked down upon the serpent ships sailing into the mouth of the Tyne, and on the sands below discharging their freight of long-haired men with bucklers, swords, and torches in their hands.

In a plump they swarmed up the cliffs and advanced—led by a young chief known to his followers as Eric the Red—to the monastery gate.

There Eric demanded instant admittance for his men, the surrender of all treasure, sacred and profane, as well as of food and stores.

This the sub-Prior proudly refusing in honour of the Virgin, Saint Cuthbert, and Saint Oswyn, a flight of arrows hissed over the parapet, torches were lit and flung against the gate; the fight became general.

The sub-Prior had prepared a quantity of heavy stones upon the brettices which he designed to use in the last resort, and now when the gate was beginning to burn he bade his men be ready with their levers.

'*Down with the gate!*' cried Red Eric triumphantly. 'Down with it! See, it burns!' and as he shouted he led his followers on with a rush. Like a swarm of bees they clustered about their leader, and clambered up on each other's shoulders. Fire was afoot below; battle-axes crashed above.

'Now!' cried the sub-Prior, as he thrust his lever home, and each man upon the brettices echoed 'Now,' and thrust the lever home at the word.

The stones crashed down; the heaviest of all caught Eric himself and drove him to the ground, where he lay unconscious, his ribs driven deep into his lungs.

'Open the gate and drag their leader in!' cried the sub-Prior triumphantly from above to his servants below.

Obeying, they rushed forth upon the astounded Danes, seized the dying chief, and bore him swiftly within the gate tower.

The attackers, disconcerted by this sudden sortie, and disheartened by the loss of their chief, withdrew from the wall, and shortly desisted from their assault, for the English saints, they muttered to themselves, were this day evidently fighting on behalf of their priests ; 'twere wiser to meddle no further with them this day.

Dispersing, therefore, they ravaged the hamlet of Shields and forayed the country for cattle, then before the sun's setting embarked upon their long ships, and sailed southward along the coast.

Meantime the sub-Prior in the moment of his triumph had looked exultingly upon his enemy, then more compassionately as became a Christian monk, and drew near as if to ease his suffering.

But the young Dane was already dead.

As he bent over the corpse the Prior himself approached, for he trusted to learn that in answer to his renewed prayers the Danes had been driven off.

'We ha' prevailed,' cried the sub-Prior triumphantly ; 'see, their leader, whom they called "Eric the Red," will trouble us no more. *Laus Deo et omnibus Sanctis !*'

'Eric !' echoed the Prior, as he stooped

towards the young Dane lying dead below him. 'Eric!' Then as he gazed he reeled backward, and only escaped falling by reaching forth his hand to the wall.

Leaning back in the shadow of the gate-house he pressed his hand to his heart and shrouded his face from oversight within his cowl.

Then slowly recovering self-possession he gave orders that the young man should be buried without the cemetery garth, and walked with unsteady footstep towards the chapel.

'Our saintly Prior,' said Brother Boniface, with awe, as he watched his Superior's tall, bowed figure enter within the chapel, 'even in his moment of triumph thinks of Heaven. He has gone to render thanks for the death of this savage, red-haired Dane.'

Songs of thanksgiving were uplifted that night at Compline in the choir. 'Te Deum' was especially chanted with inspired ardour in honour of victory.

'Look!' whispered the simple-hearted, tawny-faced, tousled-haired Brother Boniface to his neighbour, a sharp-eyed Anglian Brother, the artist and illuminator of the little community, 'Look upon the ascetic, saintly face of our beloved Prior! what joy must be his in that his prayers prevailed this day!'

'Thou jolter-head!' muttered the Anglian to himself; then with a jog to Boniface's ribs, 'Didst not mark the exact resemblance'—here he delineated a contour with swift movement of finger—''twixt Red Eric and our Prior?' Then to himself again he muttered, 'I doubt he is not long for this world, since I met his wraith as I entered into the choir.'

But Boniface heeded not his words: his eyes were still fixed upon his beloved Prior, who moved not, though the rest of the monks having sung the '*Deo Patri sit gloria*' were leaving the choir.

Boniface moved a-tiptoe and touched his Superior reverently on the shoulder. 'Beloved Prior,' he said, 'thou art outworn with the care of thy community. Arise and seek repose.'

He touched the Prior's hand, then started back, for it was quite cold; the Prior had already sought and gained eternal repose.

THE HAUNTED ALE-HOUSE

THE HAUNTED ALE-HOUSE

'*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,*' so Donald Macgregor muttered to himself as he strode cautiously down the water of Coquet, halting at the many crooks of that wayward water to spy out the land as he went forward.

He had already good suspicions of where his quarry was harboured, for he had seen and interviewed drovers who had returned from the great Stagshawbank Fair, and had gleaned certain information of his foster-brother Alastair.

But more than this he had to direct his feet; there was in his ears the echo of Alastair's pibroch—the *piobaireachd*—which he was to hear whenever the Laird would be in trouble or wanting him.

Onward the *piobaireachd* led him—down the water of amber-coloured Coquet—and now round the last crook he had just turned he saw a building of dark grey stone upon the edge of the haugh below him.

He halted at once, retraced his steps, and hid himself in the bracken, for he knew from the descriptions given him that the Slyme ale-house lay there below him—the last place on the English border at which Alastair had been seen or heard of. The Slyme ale-house had an ill repute, and was said to be haunted moreover; none would lie there the night who had anything to lose—'twas the haunt of kites and 'corbie craws.' As he watched and waited there stole down from the fells above him 'on-come' of mist or 'haar' from the eastward, which soon drew a plaid of hodden grey above the shoulder of Shillmoor. On the lower level a ray of white light still showed like the gleam of a malevolent eye behind a mask.

Meantime a cold mist came stealing up the valley. The eerie lonely aspect of all about him made Donald shiver and earnestly debate his intention.

Spying about, he saw an outcrop of rock some two hundred yards further along the fell side. Thither he crawled like a rogue collie, and watched therefrom, keen-eyed as a kestrel, the ale-house below.

He had some strips of meat with him and oatmeal in a bag, and with this he satisfied his hunger as he lay at watch. All the while

the *piobaireachd* was still sounding in his ears.

Through the mist he could see two cows 'coming home' on the haugh below slowly and sedately to their milking.

Now three figures emerged from the inn; a tall, thin man came first—a collie at his heels—that was at once sent off to round up a hirsel of ewes on the hill.

A woman followed, calling 'guss-guss' to the pig routing on the bank; finally a third figure—short, misshapen—a hunchback, as the watcher noted, who called 'coop-coop' to a rough pony cropping grass in the intake beyond the inn.

Shortly this gear was rounded up and driven into the walled enclosure—a half pound attached to the western end of the buildings.

The three figures followed their stock within, and the watcher surmising that all were housed for the night cautiously made his way down the slope, but on a sudden all three reappeared, and the watcher dropped like a shot rabbit straight into a bed of thistles and nettles, fearful of discovery.

It seemed that they were about to secure themselves and their flocks against evil by way of charm and spell, for round about the ale-

house they bent their steps—the way of the sun—brandishing rowan boughs and chanting a fragment of ancient rhyme :

> *'By the rowan's power—*
> *By the thorn's might*
> *Safe i' the bower*
> *Be all our insight!'*

Having perambulated round their buildings and wall three successive times they disappeared within, and the watcher heard to his gratification the sound of bolt and bar being pushed home.

The solitary watcher smiled to himself—the secret smile of the Highlander who has grasped the situation and knows how to make profit thereof unknown to others.

The tall, thin man was the innkeeper—evidently a timorous fellow ; the hunchback was his 'man'—malevolent probably, the doer of the other's dark behests ; whilst the woman was presumably his wife, the cook and housekeeper of the alehouse.

Well, while they slept he would investigate and complete his plans for the early morn at the time when all three would reappear and drive forth their flocks again.

There was a small haystack at the west end of the inn, which Donald marked out as his resting-place for the night. Thither he made his

cautious way—the *piobaireachd* sounding ever more clearly in his ears.

When he reached the haystack the melody seemed to be intensified; then suddenly he heard it no more.

Ha! a flash of inspiration shook him. This must be the very spot where Alastair was done to death—perhaps even buried here. He looked about him and noted that the wind was freshening and the mist was scurrying in dense clouds above as if it might lift, and then the moon might light him to further discovery.

Thus reflecting he sat down behind the stack, and waited patiently for the moon to rise and shine above the mist.

An hour passed, then a faint glimmer showed in the east above Shillmoor's edge.

He stood up and peeped round the stack; he could distinguish the rounded moon—nearly at the full—beating with white wings like an owl through the tangled mist.

In another quarter of an hour he could see sufficiently well to commence investigation. He noted as he searched the ground about him that quite recently the earth had been disturbed just beyond the verge of the haystack. A space had evidently been roughly dug over—a space that seemed the size of a grave.

Hereupon he sought for some instrument wherewith to make further investigation, and by good luck soon hit upon an old, broken-shafted spade that lay in a small potato croft adjoining. With this he set to work to howk the turf away, and found it light to work, for it had been loosely shovelled in, and came away with ease. Working incessantly, at four feet below the excavated turf, he saw an object lying loose, which he seized in excited, trembling hands, and surveyed in the moonlight. Ay, it was Alastair's bonnet, for there was the black-cock's tail feathers which Alastair had always proudly worn in right of his birth. Stained with blood—the bonnet itself cloven in twain with a blow from hatchet or axe. 'My bonny Alastair!' he groaned aloud. 'Dear laddie! But, by Gott—ye 'll be avenged fine the morn's morning!' Reverently he went on with his howking, and soon Alastair's pale face showed in the moonlight, stained with soil, and bloody under the gash above his forehead.

Donald kneeled down in the grave and kissed like a lover his foster-brother on the brow.

Then pondering awhile he muttered brokenly, 'I 'll hap ye in again, Alastair, beloved; when I 've a sign to bury wi' ye that will prove to ye my troth.'

So saying he sat down beside the grave and cleaned Alastair's bonnet, then placed it on his own head in token of his vow, and waited for the dawn and his revenge.

He did not sleep, but thought again of the past: how he had had the care of the young fatherless Laird, had learned him to stalk the red deer and draw salmon from the river; how Alastair had even outstripped his teacher, and how each after Culloden's fight had saved the other's life. Then, finally, how he had counselled Alastair to turn drover with him till the 'Redcoats' should depart, as the best method to avoid capture, and how constantly Alastair's high spirits led them into danger. And now it was all over—all over save the final duty to his brother. As he thus meditated long and deeply the hours went swiftly by, and it was with a sudden shock that he heard the bolts and bars being withdrawn on the further side of the inn. Instantly he sprang to his feet, prepared for action. He left his sword ready in the scabbard, and his dag primed for use. Then he stole round the corner, and there saw the tall man and the hunchback before him.

''Tis his wraith!' cried the tall man, noticing the bonnet, and swung back in his terror, as he tried to cross himself by way of charm.

'I tell't ye,' quoth the hunchback unperturbed, 'that we should ha' driven a stake through his inside to prevent him from walkin' this gate.'

'Whisht ye, haud your damned whisht!' cried the other in a fury, his knees shaking in terror. Then turning servilely towards Donald, whom he now perceived to be a stranger, 'Ye are welcome, sir, to any ale or Rhenish my poor inn affords, for ye will be a Highland grazier —yen of our best customers,' he ended in an attempt at a bow.

'Draw and defend your nainsel',' was Donald's reply.

The tall man laid his hand to his whinger at his side, and shouted to his 'man,' 'Draw, Jarret, and knife this murdering Scots villain.'

The hunchback, nothing loath, produced an evil-looking jockteleg, and hastened to his master's assistance.

'Knife him i' the back,' cried the former, 'whiles I haud him i' play i' front.'

The hunchback was so furious in his attack, which he pressed right home within Donald's guard, that Donald was unable to ward off the tall man in front of him.

Then just as the innkeeper had Donald at his mercy, and was in the very act of striking home,

his arm was suddenly paralysed, a spasm of terror shook him through and through, his eyes glazed over. '*There 's twa o' them*,' he muttered, and instead of striking he shrank his hand back as if to ward off a new assailant, and Donald had a momentary vision of his brother by his side. The innkeeper made a pass, then his whinger dropped; he turned to flee, tripped and fell upon his face, and lay motionless—his whinger by his side. At this the hunchback broke into rage, 'Ye 're no worth fightin' for,' he cried in his fury, gave a kick at his fallen master, and fled to the inn door.

Donald fired his dag at his retreating foe, winged him in the shoulder, and hastened his retreat, but failed to bring him down. The door was slammed to, the bolt was shot. The hunchback had gained his city of refuge.

All was quiet; Donald was victorious; he looked upon the fallen innkeeper, turned him over, and saw that his eyes were fixed in death.

'Ye hae helped fine to your ain vengeance, Alastair,' he said quietly, as he picked up the fallen whinger. 'Ye niver failed me yet; and I haena failed ye.'

Then Donald carried the whinger with him and went back to the graveside, still open to the sky.

'I ha' paid the debt, Alastair,' said Donald, taking off his bonnet and laying the whinger in the grave as proof of his fealty, 'and it is farewell, my brother.'

Kneeling down he reverently happed him in afresh, then rising with a heart contented, whistled triumphant as a pibroch, and took the airt of Scotland by way of Cocklawfoot, murmuring to himself, '*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*'

THE CRY OF THE PEACOCK

THE CRY OF THE PEACOCK

'DAMN the dice!' cried the elder of the two players, in a spasm of rage; 'damn my ill-luck—damn everything!' and as he shouted his imprecations he regarded his opponent askance, as if including him in his malediction.

''Twas a thousand to one against you throwing two sixes,' he cried. Then he flung his marker on the floor, pushed back his chair, and rising, walked moodily to the chimney-piece and gazed despairingly into the fire, for his estate had vanished—his last two farms had been lost to the 'double six.' Not only had he lost his estate, but he was hopelessly indebted to his companion for many an I.O.U. and bill beyond his mortgage. He might be made bankrupt at any moment.

The other kept silence a few moments before he said anything. A gleam of triumph and delight had shown for a second in his eye, but outwardly he was as cool as ever.

''Tis a strange thing,' he said soothingly; 'I too have had my turn of ill-luck before this.

I remember well one evening at Oxford years ago when I played high stakes with Lord Cantrip and others at "The House." Hadn't a stiver left one night, but I pawned my grandfather's Louis XIV. watch for the next evening's play. Luck turned, and I had my revenge. Had it not been for that last heirloom I should have enlisted, and probably have met my fate at Badajoz.'

The speaker was a powerfully built man of thirty-five years of age; he was broad rather than tall, underbred, coarse in complexion, and his jaw, well developed, seemed to indicate will power.

His companion was forty years of age, had a high, well-bred carriage, and a sensitive face that showed charm rather than strength.

He made no reply to the other's sympathy or suggestion, but continued to gaze moodily into the dying log fire on the hearth, and on the smoke-begrimed Sussex 'back' which exhibited the 'Flight into Egypt.'

He groaned within himself; he too would have to make his 'flight into Egypt.' There was nothing left in the dear old beloved manor-house that would furnish sufficient capital for another gamble.

'The last family heirloom,' he said finally,

'departed in my father's time. The manor goes in mine.'

There was a space of silence. Then the elder threw out a fresh suggestion.

'There 's maybe something ye 've left out of your calculation,' he said suggestively, 'something that some might put as high as the estate itself.'

'What d' ye mean ?' inquired the other, turning about so as fully to see the other's face.

'Well, as 'twixt friends and neighbours I 'll speak out fairly,' responded the man at the green table, 'and as I 'm your guest you 'll understand I 'm perfectly straight in my proposition. The long and short o't then is that I 'm settled in this new place of mine next yours ; that it is time for me to "range myself," and that if you 'll give me your daughter's hand—give me leave, that is, to propose for her hand in marriage, and she does me the honour of accepting—well then, I 'll settle your manor, or what 's left of it, on her and her heirs for ever. Make a dower-house of it, in fact. And more than this, I 'll burn all your I.O.U.'s in addition. You 'll be a free man once again.'

His host started violently, gave a sudden haughty and contemptuous look at the speaker,

made as if he would speak, then turned swiftly back to the fire again.

He had a fierce desire to kick this vile new-comer — this Mosenthal, 'the foreigner,' or 'ootner'—the son of a rich Jewish Manchester tradesman—out of the house, but the fellow was his guest, and he checked himself. Above all, he dreaded public bankruptcy; he, the last male descendant of the proud race of Heronsbeck.

'Think it over,' said the other quietly. 'I think 'tis a fair offer—free to take or free to drop.'

Still his host made no reply. The other after a little pause proceeded with his tempting proposals. He had reached out his hand for the dice-box on the table; he took it up and rattled the dice in the box as if to throw on to the table.

'Come,' he cried vivaciously. 'Have a throw! Let luck decide. I 'll back your throw against mine. A hundred pounds to a penny.'

He rattled the dice noisily, and cast them on the table, still holding the box tight over the ivory cubes.

The tempter prevailed; he had re-aroused the gambling fever in his host, who now advanced to the table and looked irresolutely on the upturned box.

'Done!' he cried suddenly. The other's

fist lifted up; the cubes nestled close together showing dots two and one.

'Luck 's turned,' said his guest philosophically, as he laid down the notes.

The other flung the dice swiftly on to the green board; the cubes rolled apart, then as they settled they showed six and five.

A spark of momentary fire flickered in the gambler's eye; he picked up the notes; then the frown came back to his brow; he shivered, looked at the clock, then, 'It 's damned late,' he said, 'and if you don't want any more to drink we 'd better go to bed.'

So saying Heronsbeck of Heronsbeck lit a candle for his guest, showed him to his chamber, then went gloomily to his own.

There was no sleep, however, for him that night, for he dreaded the morning and the astounded look of his darling Lily—his only child—when he had to tell her of Mosenthal's proposal.

'Of course she won't do it—she couldn't. There 'll be no harm done, for she 'd as soon accept a Hottentot as a rich Jew.' So her father reflected aloud.

But she wouldn't like it. He hated to think of her expression when he conveyed Mosenthal's offer to her.

The Jew's notes positively burned in his

fingers as he had laid them down on his dressing-table; the fellow's offer was extraordinarily tempting. Ah, welladay! This was the end, then, of Heronsbeck Hall, which he prized above every earthly possession after his daughter. His father had lost the half of it over cards; now he himself had thrown away the rest in like manner. There was the grouse moor; he counted up the 'amenities' as he lay in bed, even as a lover enumerates the charms of his mistress.

The wine-dark moorland—how he loved it! And the great days in autumn after grouse and blackcock. Then the fishing in the beck for trout as a boy, and the call of the sounding 'forces.' Then the huntings afoot on the high fells, and the reckless gallops on the haughs below. No wonder he loved it, for he and his forefathers were part and parcel of the land. They had been there and owned it since the days of the Testa de Nevil. He was 'hefted' to it, as the farmers said of their stock.

Well, all was now over. The 'lament' must sound over Heronsbeck. Mosenthal must take the estate; he himself would take Lily abroad and live forgotten, for he had rejected Mosenthal's proposal now, absolutely.

Just at this decisive moment he distinctly

heard the cry of a peacock sound—weird and discordant—without.

'The peacock's cry!' It was as the wail of the banshee in his ear.

Peacocks had long since disappeared from the Hall, yet their fateful cry, which had sounded through the night of the strange death of his ancestor who first brought them there, had been wonderfully allied with the fortunes of his house.

He accepted the omen.

Rising up with the first gleam of dawn, he went out into the park.

He determined to appraise and make an inventory of all that remained on the place that he could call his own still and sell. There was some timber left. Then all the stock on the home farm would be disposed of. As he endeavoured to 'tot' this up he noticed a figure swinging along across the park at a great pace. Was a stranger already fearless about trespass?

Turning away from the approaching intruder, he commenced his calculation afresh. Suddenly a voice hailed him joyfully.

'Back again! Back again, Pater, at long last! Yes, the rolling stone has gathered some moss after all—honourably, if luckily, come by. So here I am, Pater, like the Prodigal—to crave forgiveness, and—to repay you my debts.'

Heronsbeck turned and stared upon the speaker. 'Joe!' he cried faintly, but with Joe, his only son, he had quarrelled. Joe had vanished on the Klondyke in a blizzard. This must be his ghost.

'Come, Dad!' called the beloved figure in front of him beseechingly.

'My boy, my boy!' cried his father, pressing his son to his bosom. 'Thank God for ye, my boy, my boy! But how can it be that you're alive?' he asked apprehensively, as though fearing his son might vanish again from his eyes.

'A good Samaritan—this time disguised as a Jesuit Father, rescued me. Then I saved a pal myself eventually, who died of fever and left me all his pile.'

'Yet I heard the peacock cry this morning,' muttered Heronsbeck to himself, still apprehensive of misfortune.

'And did you also, Pater, hear the peacock shouting?' asked his son in astonishment.

'Why, as I came over the fell by the Hanging Stone at break o' day—just above the young larch plantation where we had the record woodcock shoot—I heard his rasping cry.

'"Hallo!" I called back to him. "Hallo, old bugler! You 've got it all wrong this time. 'Tis not 'The Last Post,' but 'Réveillé' that you must sound over Heronsbeck Hall this day."'

KITTY'S BOWER

KITTY'S BOWER

When Eric Chesters of Chesters Castle married Miss Brocklebridge—the bold and handsome heiress of Sir William, ironmaster, baronet, and expectant baron, all the world and his wife clapped hands and cried 'an ideal arrangement,' and foretold long years of success and happiness for the happy pair.

At the club after the wedding the 'best man,' however, set forth a different view of the matter.

'Of course on paper it 's ideal,' he said; 'Sir William is of the order of Melchisedec—having neither father nor mother, while Eric's pedigree is the joy of the Heralds' College. Edith's money will pay off the mortgages on Chesters Castle, no doubt, but, as Stevenson shrewdly said, "*The Bohemian must not marry the Puritan.*" Now Eric is not naturally a marrying man; he yielded to his aged mother's solicitations and the well-developed charms and black eyes of his wife. She sighs for a career, and thinks Chesters Castle a fine foundation for it, but her crest is a ladder; Eric's is a pierrot. In short, she is an

Alpine climber, and Eric a charming Prince Florizel of Bohemia. I give them a year in which to find each other out—*après cela le déluge.*'

The 'best man' proved right in his casting of their horoscope, for a prolonged honeymoon spent in going round the world revealed a rift in the lute which a season in town developed into an undoubted crack.

Thus, when Mrs. Chesters pressed on her husband the desirability of entering Parliament, he protested that he had only seven skins; and when she wished to pay a round of visits to distinguished people he maintained that they ought to reside at Chesters Castle for a while.

She yielded, but her husband's castle completed her disillusion. She had thought of it as a social *point d'appui*—she found it in her own words 'a gloomy shooting barrack.'

But her husband loved it, and rejoiced in the opportunity of renewing his youth with the salmon-fishing, the grouse and blackcock driving, and the great days of hunting on the wide moorlands of the Border, over which his ancestors in bygone centuries had ridden day and night on raid and foray. Mrs. Chesters could ride, had enjoyed the social advantages of the

Quorn and Pytchley, but she hated what she called disdainfully, 'bogtrotting with Picts and Scots.'

She had not yet become indifferent to her husband, but she was terribly disappointed with his total lack of ambition.

Now that the salmon-fishing was over and the covers shot, she pined for town, but her husband begged for a few more weeks of hunting first.

What joy could he find in the long days out on the barren fells? She realised that he had become indifferent to her, though his charm of manner to herself was externally the same.

She grew suspicious, if not jealous. Then one day an anonymous letter came to her—signed 'Your Well-Wisher,' which corroborated her own uneasy thoughts—suggesting coarsely that her husband was chasing a *vixen*—not a fox.

No name was actually mentioned, but Mrs. Chesters realised at once who 'the woman' was.

She remembered noticing a young girl at an early meet held at the castle, who had attracted her attention by her air of breeding, beauty, and faultless seat on her mare. She had learnt that the girl was the daughter of an old yeoman farmer who lived on his farm, quaintly called

'The Bower,' far outbye on the moorland beside the Blackburn Lynn.

She had mentioned the matter to her husband, and asked him where the girl had acquired her good looks and her breeding. He had replied —and she thought now—with a slight uneasiness of manner, that Miss Todd came of a 'grayne' that had lived on the Border before ever the Normans came into the land, that by intermarrying with a few other ancient yeomen families a distinct and natural aristocratic type had resulted. 'Clean living, fresh air, and as much hunting as possible,' have all assisted. Nature also has assimilated the lines of her children's faces to the classical lines wind-chiselled of her great fells. Their oval faces, blue eyes, fair hair, and clean-chiselled features are her endowment.

'The Todds,' he had concluded with a laugh, 'have a tradition that they descend from Eylaf —one of the bodyguard of St. Cuthbert and his coffin—who, in a time of famine stole a cheese, and was for a time turned into a tod. The tod, or fox, is their totem, and him they diligently pursue.'

All that he had said then came back now with special meaning. Mrs. Chesters pondered deeply as to how she had best act in this con-

juncture, and had not yet determined, when on the next afternoon she overheard a scrap of conversation as she was passing beside the stables.

She heard the head groom call to the stable lad to saddle a second horse and ride out to meet the Master on his way home from hunting that afternoon.

'Which way will I take?' asked the lad in reply.

'The Master rode the airt o' Ladiesdale,' the head groom had replied, for he was somewhat of a wag. *Ladiesdale* for Liddesdale! Mrs. Chesters fled; her cheek was burning, but her mind was made up.

She got out maps and discovered where 'The Bower'—ominous name—lay, and what tracks led thereto. Thither she would ride on the next hunting day and confront the girl, settle the matter with her husband, and put an end to his shameful intrigue at once.

She had not very long to wait, for in the week after the Meet was advertised at the Craig, which was, she knew, some few miles west of The Bower, overlooking the Black Burn.

Early in the afternoon she rode out 'to meet her husband,' as she told the groom, when she mounted, but in reality to catch him, if she

could, with the girl on his way back with her to her home.

She mounted up the fell to the southward on whose crest the track showed like a wisp of hay left by the reaper. Gaining the top she paused and looked athwart the mighty view outstretched before her. To her husband she knew it was as Swinburne's 'great glad land that knows not bourne nor bound,' but to herself it was a desert.

Below her the barren moorlands spread away—'harvestless as ocean'—till they met the white-lands of the further fells, where wandering sheep sought their living. On the sky's verge ran the line of Rome's great barrier of wall. This seemed to increase the sense of infinity already given by the landscape, for the mighty wall was now but a wreck upon Time's shore.

In the mid way 'twixt moor and whiteland lay The Bower. Mrs. Chesters rode on down towards the farmhouse, where it stood eminent upon a knoll beyond the burn, covered with ivy, and sheltered by ash trees from the blasts of the west wind.

She had marked a clump of rowans and geans a hundred yards or so from the burn where she determined to stop her horse and reconnoitre before going up to the farm itself.

Concealing herself as best she could within the small copse she noticed that the track descended to where usually a ford was discoverable. She could note horses' hoofs on the bank top, but the cart road to the farm ran on the farther side of the burn, winding in and out of the rolling pasture. To the right hand fifty yards away, a light wooden bridge with hand-rail leapt from rock to rock above the foaming water.

Boiling amidst the rocky chasm it poured an amber flood across the ford below.

A bold rider might have perhaps leaped his horse across; that might possibly have been safer than to walk a horse through where a stumble might mean doom to both.

No, Mrs. Chesters decided; if she went up to the farm she would have to dismount and walk across the little bridge. As she reflected thus the farm door opened, and a young girl came out and gazed steadily to the west as though expecting some visitor. Then she moved onward, and came slowly down towards the ford.

Mrs. Chesters crouched lower upon her horse's shoulder, waited till the maiden had reached the water's edge, then turned her horse and trotted swiftly down to battle with her rival across the water.

'And so it 's you who dare to set your cap at my husband, Mr. Chesters of Castle Chesters, is it? And you 're waiting at the ford for his returning, like a sweet, innocent, rustic maiden?'

Kitty's cheek had blanched a little when she saw who the rider was, but her voice was unshaken as she replied quietly, 'I ne'er set my cap at him, not I. The Todds hae lived and owned land here years before ever a Chesters came to Chesters Castle.'

Mrs. Chesters had scrutinised with harsh eyes every detail of her rival's face and figure. Those delicate lines of hip and waist were surely no longer as fine as before. She felt her worst fears were realised. Losing her temper she said roughly:

'You little fool! Don't you know you 're making a scandal of yourself up and down the whole countryside? Have you no sense of shame?'

'I can fend for myself,' said Kitty quietly, though a touch of colour had showed on her cheeks.

'There 's but one way for you to avoid further trouble for every one and eventual ruin for yourself, and that is, to promise me never to see my husband again.'

'I 'll mak nae such promise,' retorted the

other hotly. 'Maybe,' she added quietly, '*it's your ain blame that ye canna keep your man at hame.*'

Mrs. Chesters flamed. She was furious with rage. She struck out with the thong of her hunting crop at her rival across the burn, but she was a yard or more short of the hateful, delicate form confronting her so steadily.

'Why don't ye ride through the ford?' asked Kitty unabashed, and even smiling. She knew that her rival was afraid and despised her, while Mrs. Chesters knew that Kitty knew, and hated her all the more therefore. She would have cheerfully given a thousand pounds for one clean cut with the whip across that oval cheek.

As Mrs. Chesters was trying to choke her wrath down and regain her speech, she saw Kitty's eye turn westward with a swift look of delight.

Mrs. Chesters followed the line; she saw a black dot riding down the 'Slack' of the fell, and guessed instantly it was her husband returning to The Bower after hunting.

In an instant she had made up her mind. Evidently the girl was expecting him to come by the ford. Well, she, Mrs. Chesters would ride out to meet him and intercept him before ever he won thither to his paramour.

She turned the horse's head with never a word and rode quickly up the burn, keeping out of sight as far as possible. A few hundred yards on there was an outcrop of rock with alder and scrub oak intermingling. The track seemed to run through it, by the edge of the Blackburn Lynn. Pressing onward, Mrs. Chesters determined to ensconce herself there behind the rocks, or in the trees, and surprise her husband as he rode through. On he came, gaily whistling, happy as a thrush in spring rejoicing in his mate; on he came, his horse trotting swiftly, scenting a 'feed' at The Bower's stable.

'So I've caught you, Eric!' cried his wife, as she thrust her horse across his path from behind an adjacent rock.

Eric's mare shied violently, missed her footing on the narrow rocky path, staggered, then rearing upward on a vain spring forward fell backward over like some huge stone into the black belly of the lynn.

Mrs. Chesters followed with her eyes—she felt herself turned to marble; then she was conscious that a horse had reappeared in the black eddies below, but no rider was on its back. Was this some horrid nightmare she could not awake from?

Then she saw the girl on the opposite bank

who cried accusingly, 'What hae ye done wi' him, ye wicked woman ? '

Mrs. Chesters was now released from her spell.

'His horse shied,' she called across the waters, 'and fell into the lynn with him. You search that side and I this.' So saying she got down from her horse, tied the bridle to a tree, and sought as best she could for any trace of her husband's body on her side of the black cauldron of waters.

'Ye hae been his deid,' Kitty had shouted above the tumult of the lynn. Not another word did the rival mourners address to each other.

Kitty had helped to lead the fallen horse out of the channel on her side of the burn, then smitten with a sudden thought she jumped into the saddle and rode off down the water thinking the corpse must have been carried down steam by the heavy current.

Mrs. Chesters vainly wandered up and down the rocky edges of the lynn, peered into the black, circling cauldron in the centre, but seeing nothing emerge she made her way to the farm, promised a great reward to any one who could bring her news of her husband's body being found, then rode wearily home across the weary moors.

That night Kitty lay sleepless on her bed

caught in a storm of sobbing; she recalled all the sweet details of her love episode, all the charms of her lover—which were now buried for ever in the black lynn. Then she sang to herself softly,

> 'Nae living man I'll love again,
> Now that my lovely knight is slain.
> With ae lock of his gowden hair
> I'll bind my heart for evermair.'

She had scarcely finished her lament when she saw a faint light show beside her window. Formless and nebulous at first it seemed to be growing quickly into particular shape and cognisance. Kitty had watched the strange light, paralysed with terror, then, with a sudden inspiration:

'Eric!' cried she, starting up on her bed, 'Eric! Is it thou? I knew thou wouldest return to me.'

The apparition answered only by beckoning with a forefinger.

'Lead me to him,' she cried, as she rose and hastily flung on her clothes.

The wraith led onward; Kitty let herself out of the window, and thence to the ground by help of the ivy roots.

The night was still and thronged with stars, that seemed to watch her tenderly and to be cognisant of her love. 'He is alive, he is alive,'

she cried to them, as she followed hot foot after the wraith that led to the rocky lynn.

Onward with steady foot and without a trace of fear she followed—in through a tangle of alder, thence through a cleft in a big rock, and there below her, stretched on a ledge from which the ebbing waters had just receded, lay her 'Man.'

'My man!' she murmured with a little cry between a laugh and a sob, 'my man is alive.'

'Eric,' and she bent down over him, lifted the wet hair from his brow and kissed him on the forehead.

'Kitty,' he replied faintly, trying to lift his head to hers, 'I knew thou wouldst find me, beloved; my soul went forth to seek thee.

'I was badly stunned,' he went on presently, 'but it is nothing serious. The flood lifted me upon this ledge, and so saved me.

'Well, there is but one thing now to do, my love. I am dead to my wife, and she is dead to me. Let the dead bury their dead,' he added with a smile.

'Now go fetch me dry clothes. I will change, and then we will ride away to Heathdown junction, and thence away to a new life in a new land.'

Kitty drew in her breath. 'But are ye able? Are ye strong enough, Eric? Art sure thou canst give up all for a life with me?'

'Faith of a Borderer!' he answered gaily, as he kissed her hand. 'Now go and do as I bid. There's no time to be lost. See! I grow stronger every minute,' and he rose up on his knee and crawled forth from his refuge assisted by Kitty. Then she went swiftly back to the farm and brought with her dry clothes and a plaid, a second time she returned for meat and drink for her lover, and the third and last time for his horse, which she had already stabled in the byre.

'And now,' said Eric in her ear, as he lifted her into the saddle, 'we'll ride westward where we'll buy another "Bower" in another land.'

Through the early mist that morning an old shepherd was making his way home from a late mart, when he encountered what he swore was 'the wraith o' a great muckle moss-trooper wi' his marrow ahint him ridin' the ae black horse.'

Arrived at home, he roused his wife, and imparted his information.

'Whisht, man, haud your whisht,' retorted she. 'Noo get intil your ain bed. Ye aye see *double* after a mart day.'

THE TALE OF THE THREE ANTIQUARIES

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THOMAS TURNBULL stood beside his spade and gazed rapturously at a small portable Roman altar which he had just unearthed. Owing to a fortunate legacy he had recently been enabled to retire from his business as a ship's broker, and had bought a farm not far from the line of the Roman Wall in mid Northumberland.

He prided himself on being a practical man in all he undertook—'Plain Tom Turnbull' he styled himself, and in the pursuit of antiquities, which was now his hobby, he sneered at all theorists, and relied upon the spade. '*Magister Palae*' was his motto, and now he had justified his belief in his farm's occupying the site of an early out-lying Roman camp.

Squat in build, sanguine in complexion, and auburn-haired, he stood 'four-square to all the winds'; his bold, prominent eyes recalled the muzzle of an ancient blunderbuss ready to loose off at a moment's notice.

Now the Society of Antiquaries of Oldcastle, of which he was a member, were making a pil-

grimage along the Wall on the next day, and he had offered to provide tea for their refreshment at the conclusion of their excursion.

Thus his 'find' was twice fortunate. He would now be enabled to confound Telfer, one of the most learned of the Society's members, by the evidence of his spade work. Telfer was an antiquary of the 'well-documented' kind, an attorney by profession, thin and anæmic—'a parchment browser,' Turnbull called him, as one founding himself upon references in all discussions on antiquity. He had been indeed very sceptical of the existence of Turnbull's 'early, out-lying camp' and had annoyed 'Plain Tom' by his doubts.

Turnbull laid aside his spade, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and took up his altar again reverently. Then he drew from his pocket a small flask, poured a few drops into the tiny *focus* on the top as a libation to Bacchus, and himself toasted 'the spade.' Carefully handling his precious possession he returned home with it in his arms and placed it on the drawing-room mantelpiece, to the dismay of his wife, who misdoubted the religion of the Romans. 'That's a settler for Telfer,' he said triumphantly; 'he'll be up to-morrow, and he'll have to swallow it.'

'Swallow it! Swallow it!' echoed his wife. 'My dear, what do you mean?'

'He 'll have to swallow it first, then he can have his tea on the top of it,' replied her husband with a grin. 'But do you give a look to it before he goes, for he 'd pinch it if he got the chance.'

'You don't mean to say that he would actually steal it?' queried his wife, aghast.

'Wouldn't he, though? He 'd lift anything that was not too heavy or too hot,' retorted her husband.

The next day proved to be a lovely autumn morning, and the prospect along the Wall perfect for the antiquary, who could see it crawling like some great serpent on its belly, with many an undulation from east to west, over many a mile beneath the racing clouds and sunshine.

Turnbull walked down to meet the party of excursionists beside a newly excavated mile-castle where they were to eat their sandwiches and discuss their theories. After that he was to conduct them to his house 'The Crag,' and show them his altar and give them refreshment.

Turnbull took the very earliest opportunity of informing them of his 'find,' and while his friends congratulated him Mr. Telfer opined that its discovery proved nothing as to a camp,

for a portable altar might easily be discovered anywhere along the Wall, and there was no record of any camp at that particular spot. 'The spade will show,' cried 'Plain Tom,' triumphantly. 'It 's just my first-fruits. Wait a few weeks and my spade will prove it.' Almost at once the party moved onwards, for they had an early train to catch, and as soon as they reached the house tea was set before them, and their host handed round the altar for inspection. 'Pity there 's no record on it to show to what God it was dedicated,' said one, 'and by whom.'

'It probably belonged to some pioneers along the Wall who built themselves a temporary camp whilst prospecting,' said Turnbull.

Telfer, on the other hand, was of opinion that the altar was not of the local freestone, had probably been brought from a neighbouring camp, and eventually thrown away when the Picts and Scots overran the Wall.

'If you 'll show me the place where you found it,' he added, 'I can prove to you, I think, that the surrounding stone is different.'

'My pioneers probably imported it,' said the other boldly, 'but the kind of stone is neither here nor there. However, I 'll gladly show you the identical spot where I howked it out.'

While the rest of the party made their way

down the valley towards the railway station, 'Plain Tom' went off with his sceptic to the place of excavation.

'There,' said he, pointing to the spot, 'that's where it came from,' and as he spoke he turned over with his spade some débris that had fallen into the hole. His companion took up a fragment of stone, examined it, shook his head, then proceeded to 'howk' out with his stick a stone of some size lying half-bedded in the earth at the bottom of the hole. He levered it away, and it rolled over on its side; something glittered beneath. 'Ha! an aureus!' cried the attorney, and dashed upon it.

'I told you so, I told you so,' shouted his host in triumphant joy. 'This proves it!'

His joy was perhaps excessive; it seemed to eclipse at least his surprise, but his companion paid no attention to him in his own excitement.

'Ha! an aureus of Hadrian—and in excellent preservation,' rejoined the other, after a careful examination. 'What an uncommonly lucky find!' and without more ado he slid it into the palm of his left hand.

'A find!' echoed 'Plain Tom,' choking upon astonishment and rage. 'Here, hand it over—I'm owner here,' for his own particular pet coin was disappearing from his ken.

'Even if you were the Lord of the Manor you could not make your claim good,' replied the attorney coolly. 'He who finds, keeps. Treasure trove to be claimed must be hidden—*lucri aut metus causâ*. This aureus was evidently lost or cast away in flight. The finder retains it.'

'Cast away in flight' sounded ludicrously enough in the other's ears, but he was incapable of speech. Indeed, 'Plain Tom' with difficulty controlled the fires that were scorching him within. His hands trembled convulsively on the handle of the spade; his enemy had turned about and taken a step down the hillside as if to follow his companions. Now beckoned Opportunity. 'Plain Tom' grasped his spade more tightly, lifted it in air, and brought it down with a thud on the top of his enemy's cloth cap. The attorney's knees gave way instantly; he sank in a heap, then slowly rolled forward and onward down the slope. The aureus had dropped from his limp hand. 'Plain Tom' was on to it like a knife—the song of Deborah and Barak on his lips. Then he paused and looked upon the motionless figure of the man below now lying half hidden amongst some bracken. What was to be done? A shudder of dismay crept up the observer's spine. Could he be dead? No, no, he was only stunned.

Well, 'Plain Tom' swiftly determined on his line of action. There was a shepherd's cottage only a quarter of a mile away where he might get help to lift and carry the fallen man; he would leave him there for the night after explaining that he had found him lying unconscious from a faint in the bracken. That done, he would himself go for the local doctor and explain how he had found the attorney's body. Then he examined the spade carefully. There was no sign of blood upon it, fortunately. He had caught his enemy squarely with the flat of it; all was well, for none had seen him—not even his victim—lift it and strike.

The shepherd was at home, and at once accompanied him to the spot. 'He 's deid,' said the herd, lifting up a limp arm. 'I 'm doubtin' he 's got awa.'

'Nonsense,' said his companion with affected assurance. 'He 'd a weak heart, I know, and the long walk has been over much for him. His pulse is all right,' he added, pretending to feel upon the wrist. 'Now we 'll carry him to your house, and I 'll fetch the doctor. He 'll be all right in an hour or two, I 'll bet a guinea.'

The attorney was of slim build, and the two men carried him easily to the cottage. Leaving him there Turnbull strode off for the doctor,

whom he found at home. Explaining how he had found the body, he helped the doctor saddle his pony and bade him ride with all speed, requesting him to bring him word to 'The Crag' when he had recalled his patient to consciousness.

Then 'Plain Tom' set off for his home, whistling to himself to keep up his spirits, and ever and anon glancing at his recovered aureus with joy. 'Magister Palae,' he muttered to himself, 'tis a fine weapon!'

The doctor did not arrive at The Crag till some two hours later, and when he did he showed a long face. After he had seated himself in Turnbull's little sanctum, sacred to his antiquities, he delivered himself slowly of his professional opinion. 'He 's bad,' he said mournfully, 'verra bad,' for the doctor was Scotch; 'he 's had an unco shock'—he glanced keenly at his companion as he spoke—'and a verra bad fall. His hairt is gey weak—and he says—if he disna recover he 'll haunt ye—for what ye 've done.'

'For what I 've done!' cried 'Plain Tom,' aghast. 'The poor man's brain 's affected. What on earth can he mean?'

'And he said also that if the worst should happen,' continued the other with unmoved visage, 'that he would bequeath me the aureus.

He 's a warrum-hearted body, an' he kens that I 'm a bit of an antiquary mysel'.'

'*His* aureus!' exclaimed 'Plain Tom' with re-aroused indignation, and forgetful of secrecy, 'why, the damned fellow—no, I don't mean that—I mean he 's delirious; but he 'll be all right again soon, doctor?' he appealed earnestly.

'I 'm nane so sure of that,' replied the other, shaking his head. 'I thought as I came alang I had a sort of a feeling as of a wraith nigh about me—a lang, eldritch sort o' a form i' the mist.'

His host shuddered, looked through the window apprehensively in the gloaming, saw some vague, misty wraith approaching. Then he felt for the aureus in his waistcoat pocket.

'Oot wi' it,' the doctor demanded, and 'oot' it came after a struggle. The doctor rose and held out his hand. 'Aweel,' he said, 'it 's safe wi' me. I 'll awa noo—back to my patient, for I 'll no' can leave him just yet.'

Then the door closed silently behind him. '*Vicisti, O Caledonia,*' groaned 'Plain Tom,' and as he spoke he rose up in search of the whisky bottle and consolation.

APUD CORSTOPITUM

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(*per lineam murus.*)

L. Sentius Castus—at one time an officer in the 'Domestici,' or Emperor's Guards—had volunteered for active service, and was now a 'Vexillarius,' or Standard Bearer to the first squadron of horse attached to the Sixth Legion—'the Victorious and Faithful,' that had come over to Britain with the Emperor Hadrian. He was sitting one August afternoon by the fountain in the Forum of Corstopitum, engaged upon improving a system of fire signals for use on the great wall, which Hadrian was building from the Tyne estuary to the Solway Firth.

As he reflected he glanced occasionally up at the tall figure of a youthful Briton beside him—a noble of the tribe of the Brigantes—whom the soldiers had nicknamed 'Rufus' on account of his auburn hair.

These two had become such close friends that the prefect of the camp had likened them to Nisus and Euryalus, for they were inseparable. '*His amor unus erat pariterque in bella ruebant.*'

'Rufus' was employed as an 'explorator'—a pioneer, or scout, along the wall, as he had an exact knowledge of the country, but he was at the moment engaged upon a piece of sculpture—having a natural gift for the chisel—and was putting a final touch to the figure of a lion standing above a dead stag.

He stooped and drew a stopper of clay from the lion's mouth, and at once a stream of water broke through and flashed into the trough.

'*Euge! Macte virtute, puer!*' cried Castus in delight; ''tis a superb fountain head! And the carving is wondrous, for though thou hast seen the stag thou hast not the lion; yet there he stands full of pride and challenge on his kill, just as I have seen him in the Circus Maximus in Rome.

'By the way,' he continued, 'I have ordered Scaevola, the camp's head mason, to cut that altar which we promised to set up to Sylvanus when we brought down the famous Grindon stag—that great hart o' grease—which every officer in Corstopitum had hunted in vain.'

As he spoke he rose up and laid his tablet and style aside.

'How jealous they all were,' he continued. 'How the Prefect doubted its weight and sneered at its tynes and the bay and tray!'

'I think,' replied his friend with a laugh, 'that he would willingly himself have set up an altar to every god from Jupiter Optimus Maximus to our local Mogon, had he had the luck to grass him.'

'The Forum would have been lined with them,' assented his friend, smiling also. 'Well, this is the inscription I gave to Scaevola to cut on the one altar we promised—he was cheap at one.

Silvano invicto sacrum
L. Sentius Castus signifer Leg VI.
Et Tetricus explorator murus
Ob cervum eximiae formae captum
Quem multi antecessores eorum
Praedari non potuerunt.

That is work for a mason, not for an artist like yourself, who have embellished Cæsar's town in Ultima Thule with a masterpiece.

Mark this day with white chalk, for thou shalt behold Cæsar himself, since he hath just ridden in from Pons Aelii, and will shortly inspect his new town of Corstopitum. Think on the immensa Romanae Pacis Majestas when thou seest him here!'

'I wish greatly to see him,' replied the young Briton, 'yet I dread the eagle eye of our Imperator.'

'Nay,' said his friend, 'he will never affright thee, for though he is the ruler of the broad universe he hath a human heart that takes interest in all things under the sky, being soldier, traveller, administrator, builder, student, and poet at once.'

There came a sudden shrilling of the tuba at this moment.

'See!' cried the Vexillarius. 'There he goeth into the Praetorium.'

The twain stood watchful as sentinels, and very shortly they saw Caesar proceeding to the steps leading into the Forum, accompanied by the Comes Brittanorum and the Clarissimus and the Consularis, attended by his guard, on whose shields were blazoned as insignia the forts upon the mighty wall.

Caesar was clad, they noted, not in the long robe of Imperator, but in the shorter tunic of the Consul, with heavy purple border.

The two young men stood stiff at the salute as Hadrian drew near. Then the Emperor, recognising his former guardsman, spoke to him kindly by name.

'Ha! Castus. Thou lookest right well. Art better employed here than in trailing thy toga and neighing after the beautiful ladies in Rome? Thou hast found soldiering on the confines of our Empire to thy liking?'

'Yes, indeed, sire,' replied the standard-bearer, ''tis the sole profession for a man.'

Hadrian looked upon the erect figure, keen eye, and sun-tanned face of the speaker with evident approval. Then as he was about to pass onward his eye was struck by the newly carved fountain-head.

'Who hath carved this fountain?' he inquired. 'I did not know we had an artist in the camp.'

''Twould scarce disgrace the garden of the Palatine,' replied Castus, overjoyed at the opportunity of praising his comrade in Caesar's presence; ''tis the handicraft of my friend here—a pioneer upon thy wall—one who though born a Briton is now more Roman than myself, and hath expended all his skill upon the carving in the hope of pleasing the eye of Caesar.'

Hadrian, ever a patron of the arts, glanced quickly at the reddening cheeks of the young Briton, then stepped forward to the fountain-head, and scrutinised it with close attention. 'He hath the true eye of the artist, this friend of thine,' he said, with evident appreciation, 'for the stag is admirably depicted—the tongue hanging loose from the mouth as I have noted myself when a beast is slain, and as for the lion, though he can scarce ever have seen a lion in

Britain, I suppose, 'tis admirable in its decorative effect.' He turned to the blushing artist and thanked him graciously for his accomplishment, adding that he would send him a bronze ewer from his own table as a trifling recompense.

So saying he passed on, and the two comrades looked at each other joyously.

'Now!' cried the Roman standard-bearer, 'thou hast seen, and been addressed by, the Ruler of the world.

'Art thou not proud this day? Art not at least an inch taller? Is Caesar not like to one of the immortal gods, thinkest thou?'

'He is, indeed,' replied the young Briton. 'I knew not such majesty and kindness could dwell together in mortal man. To die for him would be no virtue but a pleasure. I have never seen so noble a face; strength therein is sustained by intelligence as columns uphold a mighty roof. His mouth speaks even when he utters no words. He unites in himself the charm of a woman to the power and dignity of a man.'

'Thou hast spoken it,' replied his companion; 'thou hast hit off his strange and unique qualities. I had not thought of it before like that, but thy observation, as Caesar himself said, is excellent, and thy description is true. The

one thing I like not,' he added, ' is the beard he hath grown ; that is a new thing in a Roman Emperor and, as I judge it, somewhat barbaric.'

The next day Hadrian set forth again to ride *per lineam murus* across moor and fell to Luguvallum and the western sea.

Castus and Rufus accompanied him as guides, and the Prefect with his guard escorted the Emperor to the wall that was being swiftly built on the brow of the hill above Corstopitum.

There Castus pointed out to Hadrian the track of Dere Street—the road of Agricola—that seemed to flutter like some white butterfly up the distant and opposite fell-side crowned by the Wannys' heights—birthplace of the river Wansbeck.

' That track, sire, leads to Habitancum, Bremenium, Ad Fines, and Trimontium beside Tweed,' said Castus. ' I would it might be prolonged to Mons Grampius, and even to the Cimmerian sea, where I would set up the *Arae finium Imperii Romani* on the very edge o' the world.'

Hadrian smiled at his officer's enthusiasm, then he said gravely : ' The Empire's weight is heavy enough already — Atlas himself could scarce sustain it. Buttresses are needed, and my wall and camps will furnish them on this

furthest frontier. Beyond is but a waste given over to wolves, wild boars, and painted savages. But what a prospect is here! 'Tis like the sea stretching away for ever in harvestless waves.'

On and westward they rode and along the windy crest of the fell, then dipped down to the north Tyne river and the camp of Chesters set thereby, thence through the limestone crags to Boreovicus on the moorland—established on the edge of the basaltic outcrop that frowns upon Bromlea Lough.

This great camp was already finished and garrisoned by Tungrian auxiliaries; the great wall that was to link together the various camps, trailed its length like a serpent till it mounted to Winshields height. Across the valley rose the purple fells of South Tyne, and in the distant haze Skiddaw's crest soared like an eagle.

On Winshields height Caesar was met by the Prefect of Luguvallum and his guard, and here Castus and Rufus bade him farewell, and turned back towards Corstopitum.

As they rode eastward, and had gained the edge of a fir wood beyond Boreovicus, a very beautiful girl stepped suddenly forward, and laid a hand on the rein of Rufus's pony.

She is of an extraordinary beauty, thought Castus, as he noted the wealth of hair, blue eyes,

clear skin, and finely chiselled features. Evidently of noble birth, for she wore a linen shirt under her robe of fur, and carried a gold chain about her neck. There was a look of arrogance about her—a disdain, as it were, that set off her beauty like a jewel, and as she conversed with Rufus she seemed, so Castus thought, to be eyeing himself not without interest.

'What dost thou think of me, O Roman?' she seemed to ask through her disdainful eyes. 'Am I not more beautiful than all the women of Rome? Wouldst like to possess me? I care for none that proves not himself to be a conqueror.'

Castus moved his pony slowly onward, then pausing for his comrade looked back upon this proud girl of the wood who had aroused sensations he thought he had left behind him in Rome.

As she bade good-bye to Rufus she turned away, but her last glance was not upon Rufus but upon Castus, as the latter delighted to note.

'Who is this moorland beauty?' he inquired of his comrade, as the two rode on again together.

'She is a cousin of mine,' Rufus replied carelessly. 'My mother and her father and mother desire us to wed, but there is no hurry for that.

I long for more hunting with thee, O Castus, and to be the complete soldier before I give myself to marriage.'

'How is she named?' inquired his friend further, unable to subdue his interest.

'Penchrysa,' said Rufus, 'but for short I call her Pen.'

'Penchrysa,' repeated Castus to himself; ''tis a fit and most romantic name.' Then aloud he asked, 'Did she look upon Caesar as he passed by this morning?'

'Yes,' replied Rufus, 'she heard he was to pass along the wall, and she saw him from the shelter of the wood.'

'Does she then love Rome like yourself?' pursued Castus.

His companion hesitated a moment before he replied. 'She hath a proud soul in her. She loves courage and prowess above all else, and so will, I believe, love Rome even as I, at the last. The great wall,' continued the young Briton, 'will prove to her Rome's might, and Corstopitum with its stored granaries and streets of shops will show her its civilisation. I have bid her come in to-morrow with her small brother when the market is open and the country folk bring in their mead and honey and fowls, and any grouse and salmon they may have netted.'

'Good,' replied Castus, 'we will show her the sights of Rome's newest achievement.'

Then fearing he might be playing false with his friend he thrust away all idea of this disdainful beauty of the moors from him and commenced to explain to his comrade his simplification of the then method of sending five signals from turret to turret, from mile castle to mile castle along the length of the wall, so as to ensure greater accuracy.

Yet ever the challenge of the arrogant moorland princess assailed his heart.

Proud as a stag she had stood regarding him; as graceful in all her limbs—her breast curved like a breaking wave. She was infinitely more fascinating than Lalage of Corinth, who had lately devastated the youths of Rome. Her clear oval face, the bluebells of her eyes, her auburn hair haunted him.

'*Iam matura viro plenis jam nubilis annis.*'

He began to weave sophistries whereby he proved to his own satisfaction that Rufus cared not for his cousin, that she disdained him, and consequently was fair game for himself. By midday on the morrow the forum of Corstopitum was crowded; there was a throng of British country-folk come in to sell, and of

Roman auxiliaries from diverse camps come in to purchase.

Castus and Rufus were acting as interpreters between buyers and sellers when they saw their invited guest approaching in company with a handsome boy of some fifteen years, whose hand she held in hers.

'Welcome!' cried Rufus. 'Now what will you like best to see first? The pottery shop with its wares—Samian and Castor and rustic, or the great corn granaries, or the metal-worker's booth where you can buy a fibula for yourself, or a boss for your horse's bridle?'

His cousin hesitating, Castus suggested the metal-worker's booth as being closest, and thither they repaired.

Rufus explained with evident delight the use of the various articles set forth, and Castus, discerning that the fair visitor had a little Latin, joined in the conversation.

'Here is a fibula,' he said, 'skilfully ornamented with the head of Minerva. Take it,' he said, as he gracefully presented it to her, 'as a memento of Rome's most northern town.'

Quietly she accepted the gift with a word of thanks, then added, 'but not from Rome,' with an enigmatic smile that strangely attracted the

Roman soldier. '*Not from Rome!*' repeated Castus to himself, with throbbing heart, 'then *from me* she must mean,' he conjectured, and the passion in his breast flamed hotter than before.

He watched her closely as they fared through the town, and though she was quick to perceive, she did not seem surprised at the novelties she saw, whereby Castus found himself more attracted by her than ever. Barbarian she might be held in Rome, but there was a beauty, pride, and strength in her he had never met with on the Via Sacra.

When the time came for her to depart Castus eagerly suggested that she should come again two days later when games for all comers were to be held in the town.

'Yes,' added Rufus, 'you must come. The games will be superb.' Then with a laugh, 'Castus and I are to box.'

Penchrysa's eye quickened; she shot one glance at Castus, then promising to return she waved a hand and departed, leading her small brother with the other. Castus waited long to see if she would not look back over her shoulder, but no, she went steadily forward, and this only whetted his appetite the more.

The afternoon set apart for the games was

fair and gay with a west wind that speeded like a greyhound over the wide fells.

The little arena—dug out in the hollow below the camp—was surrounded by a vast throng of eager spectators drawn from along the wall and the moor beyond.

There was a holiday in camp; the rumour of a fighting with cocks had brought in the Britons; some Spaniards had come over from Chesters, sundry Gauls from Vindolana, and there were the Tungrian auxiliaries from Boreovicus itself.

So it was amid a motley throng of spectators that Castus and Rufus stood up to box together with the *caestus* that afternoon, and a murmur of admiration rose up from the spectators as the two handsome, graceful young men stepped lightly into the grassy arena. Their right arms and fists were bound about with thongs of bull's hide; the balls of lead and iron usually attached thereto in the case of professional *pugils* were absent, as the encounter was a friendly one, and meant to amuse and instruct the soldiers. So, stripped for the match and smiling upon each other, they took their places in the green arena, and, facing north and south so as to avoid the sun, saluted the Prefect, after the manner of gladiators, and at once began preluding to the attack.

Rufus had been carefully instructed by Castus for some little time past, and was now almost as skilful as his instructor. In strength probably the Roman was the superior, but the Briton was somewhat more alert and active on his feet.

The first round was devoted to a display of their art; the second grew somewhat more intent in purpose, the applause of the spectators stimulating the two boxers to put forth their whole strength.

Castus had seen Penchrysa sitting in the amphitheatre to his right hand, and had at once realised that she was really interested in the fight and was applauding himself, not her cousin.

Inspired by this to renewed effort he deceived his friend by a clever feint, then getting in a fine clean hit with his left on the forehead, followed it up with a right-hander on the jaw. Rufus staggered backward, swayed wildly on his feet, then fell unconscious to the ground.

Applause broke out over the whole amphitheatre, and Castus was proudly conscious that the white hands of Penchrysa were clapping him vigorously, even as he ran forward to raise his friend's head and assist him to his feet as he recovered from his faint.

After this some cock-fighting followed, and many of the spectators left or changed their

seats. Castus marked Penchrysa rise and walk away with her brother, and he followed them amid the crowd.

'I am victorious,' he said, as he came up with them, 'but the victory is yours, for had you not applauded I had not won.'

Penchrysa looked upon him with a glowing eye that seemed to Castus to have lost its first hostility, as she said simply she was pleased that he had been victorious.

She said she must go, and bending down her head, added in a low, hurried voice, '*If thou wishest further converse with me meet me as the moon rises by the limestone crags above Chesters to-morrow night.*' She laid her finger on her lip, and moved away with her supple grace through the straggling crowd.

Castus, enraptured by the thought that he had captured this proud beauty, could scarce contain himself for joy. He had no difficulty in keeping his assignation, for he had a good pretext in an old promise to advise with the Commander of the Chesters Camp. Thus he rode out joyously next afternoon from Corstopitum, and as dusk drew on and the time for the moon's rising came near, he dismounted below the limestone crags and led his horse slowly up to the highest point of the limestone outcrop where a monolith stood

dark and threatening. Tethering his horse to a tree near by he advanced towards it, and the moon—now risen—faintly touched it with light. Two figures moved from it as he came up. The first was Penchrysa, the second an old, grey-bearded man.

'Welcome, O Roman!' said she gravely, then with more emotion, 'thy looks and actions tell me thou lovest me. If so I have a proposal to make to thee; and as I know your tongue but ill this old man, my friend, who has served with your armies, will set it before thee, for I have no skill in the Roman language.'

Castus, carried away by his passion, seized her hand and kissed it, and was about to put his arms about her, but she put up her hand and bade him wait for her proposal from the interpreter's lips.

'Thou art strong, O Roman,' said the old man earnestly, 'brave, and canst command men, for my Princess has watched thee narrowly. She is of royal birth, and royal amongst womankind. None surpasses her. She will give thee herself if thou wilt command our hosts. The Caledonii will avenge Mons Grampius and rise with the British race, fling off the hated yoke of Rome, and make this island free as it was of old. There are ten thousand within call of us now!' He

whistled thrice like a golden plover, and on all sides dark forms showed themselves in response to his call. 'The rule of Rome approacheth its doom. This wall proves their weakness. The Emperor is in the western land and can be dispatched with ease. We want a leader, and our Princess chooseth thee. Take her and be Emperor of Britain.'

As he spake thus, Penchrysa leaned forward and whispered in the ear of the astounded Roman, 'Come, and we will rule together!' Her lovely face showing lovelier in the soft moonlight, her breath honey-sweet upon his cheek, the vision of rule together had almost intoxicated him. But then the shame of betrayal rose in him like a flood. Lust dropped from him as a garment. In one second he had drawn his sword and stabbed his temptress to the heart. 'So perish!' he cried aloud, 'all enemies of Rome!'

. . . . . .

He bounded to his horse, leapt on its back, and at breakneck speed they hurtled down the fell. He was wounded by darts in shoulder and right arm, and his horse's loins were gashed by a spear, yet the camp at Chesters was but two miles away, and, setting his teeth together, he gave his horse the rein and leaned forward on its neck to take his weight off the loins.

The yells of the pursuers became fainter as he sped onward. Soon he saw the dark outline of the camp on the haugh below, and in a few minutes arrived at the western port.

'Who are ye ?' inquired the sentry of the port.

'Castus, Vexillarius of the first squadron, Sixth Legion,' he shouted hoarsely, 'the Britons have risen !'

The stone gate jarred on its hinge ; Castus, thrusting through, dismounted and wiped the foam from his gallant steed.

'What a fool I have been !' he murmured. 'Never again will I traffic with a woman. *Vale, O Femina—in eternum vale!* Henceforth I dedicate my life to Rome—

> "*Romae matri meae—*
> *Orbis Imperatrici.*"'

And, ratifying his vow by the head of Caesar, he fell to the ground, unconscious through loss of blood.

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And Christe receive thy saule...

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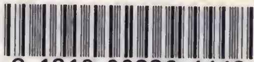

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