

Henry Fitzowen, a Gothic Tale

By Dr Nathan Drake

But when he reach'd his castle gate
His gate was hung with black.
Percy's Relives, Vol. iii.

I

In the north of England towards the commencement of the reign of Edward the Fourth, lived Henry Fitzowen. He had lost his parents early in life, and had been educated with an only sister under the care of his guardian. Henry was the heir of considerable property which had been under his sole management for near four years, having arrived at that period of life when the character of the man fully unfolds itself, when at five and twenty he had gratified the wishes, and fulfilled 'the predictions of his friends. Possessed of an active and liberal mind, of a tender and grateful heart, he was equally an object of love and esteem to his companions and his tenants; and combined, likewise, the energies of youth, its rigour and vivacity with, what were rare attainments in that age of anarchy and ignorance, the elegant accomplishments of the scholar and the poet. In his person he was rather athletic, yet was it gracefully formed, and had much of that chivalric air so highly prized at that time when warfare and civil discord still raged throughout the island. When rushing to the field no hero in the army of the youthful Edward burnt with superior ardour, or managed his horse and arms with equal ease and spirit; when seated mid the circle of his peaceful friends none could rival his powers of intellect and sweetness of manner, the courtesy of his demeanour to the men, the gallantry of his attentions to the fair.

With his sister, who superintended the economy of his household and a few friends he spent the major part of the year at his paternal castle in Yorkshire, a piece of fine old gothic architecture, and seated in the bosom of a romantic glen. Here, in his great hall, hung round with the arms and trophies of his ancestors, and presiding at his ancient, oaken and hospitable table, he delighted to accumulate his neighbours, and view the smile of satisfaction and pleasure play mid the charms of innocence and beauty, or gladden the features of industrious dependence. Here, also, on a visit to his sister and usually accompanied by her mother, would frequently appear Adeline De Montfort. Adeline was the only daughter of an officer of great worth and bravery, and who fell contending for the Yorkists at the dreadful battle of Towton. Dying, however, in embarrassed circumstances, his widow was unable to support the establishment they had hitherto maintained, and therefore took a small but elegant house on the skirts of the forest adjoining to the Fitzowen estate. A short time sufficed to produce an intimacy between the two families, and from similarity of disposition and pursuits, Adeline and Clara Fitzowen soon became almost inseparable companions. The Daughter of Montfort was in her twentieth year, and had been gifted by nature with more than common charms, her person was elegantly formed, her eyes blue as the sky of summer, her hair of a nut-brown, and her cheeks

The roses white and red resembled well
Whereon the roary may-dew sprinkled lies,
When the fair Morn first blusheth from her cell,

And breatheth balm from opened Paradise.¹

The most unaffected modesty too, and a disposition peculiarly sweet, united to the graces of a mind polished by unusual taste, rendered her personal beauties doubly interesting, and there were few of the opposite sex who, having once witnessed her attractions, did not sigh to appropriate them. That Henry, therefore, who had such frequent opportunities of conversing with this amiable girl, should admire and love her, was an event to be expected; indeed such was his affection for her that deprived of his beloved Adeline, existence would have lost all its allurements.

To love thus ardent and sincere, and professed by a youth of the most winning manners and superior accomplishments, no woman could long be insensible, and in the bosom of Adeline glowed the sweet emotions of reciprocal passion. Amid the wild and picturesque beauties of Ruydvellin, where the vast solitude and repose of nature, or the luxuriant and softened features of the secluded landscape awoke the mind to awful or to tender feelings, the sensations of mutual attachment were for some time cherished undisturbed, and an union that would, probably, fix for life the felicity of the lovers, had been projected and determined upon, when an incident accompanied with circumstances of the most singular kind threw a bar in the way of its completion.

At the distance of about twelve miles from the castle of Ruydvellin, resided Walleran Earl of Meulant, a nobleman of Norman descent, and of great hauteur and family pride. He had reached the age of forty, was unmarried, and though, from motives of ostentation, supporting a considerable and even splendid establishment, his disposition was gloomy and unsocial. In his person he was gigantic and disproportioned, and his features betrayed a stern and unrelenting severity, whilst from his eyes usually darted so wild and malignant an expression that the object on which they fell involuntarily shrank from their notice. His habits of life too were such as to excite much wonder and very horrid reports; he constantly inhabited one turret of his extensive castle, where, all night long, for many years, the glare of torches had been visible, yet his servants declared that, notwithstanding this perpetual illumination, his agitation and terror were, frequently, as the twilight closed, so dreadful, that they fled his presence, and often at midnight from his chamber, in which he always locked himself up and forbade interruption, half stifled groans, and wailing sounds were heard as from a person under torture. At stated periods he visited a forest of very antique oak which stood about a mile from the castle such was the massy size of these trees that they were generally esteemed coeval with the druidic times, and the gloom of their foliage was so dense and impenetrable, that the country people feared to approach the wood, and believed it to be haunted by preternatural Beings; for often at the dead noon of night shrill and demoniacal shrieks, and appearances of the most ghastly and tremendous kind bad terrified the belated traveller, and once, it is said, when one of the servants of Walleran, from motives of curiosity, had traced the footsteps of his master to this enchanted forest, he dared to enter its infernal shade, and since that hour no eye has witnessed his return.

Though Walleran was thus an object of dread and awful surmise to all around him, yet, from being possessed of very large property, and having numerous relations whose interest it was to pay him every respect, his castle was occasionally filled with the first ranks of society, who were banqueted in a sumptuous manner, and amused with the most splendid diversions of the age, such as tournaments, mysteries, the chace, &c. On these occasions the neighbouring families were invited to the castle, and Henry Fitzowen with his Sister and Adeline usually graced the

¹ Fairfax's Tasso.

festival. Henry was one of the most expert and elegant tilers in the school of chivalry, and when Adeline's Champion and, according to etiquette, by her conducted into the lists, he performed prodigies of valour, and unhorsed almost every opponent. Adeline had then to bestow the envied prize on the object of her affections, and in these moments, her features were lighted up with peculiar animation, and her form displayed the most fascinating allurements. None beheld her without emotion, but in the breast of Walleran burnt the most intense desire, and accustomed to overcome every opposition in his amours by open force, or insidious stratagem, he had long determined, and without the smallest scruple or compunction, to get possession of the person of Adeline, for in her heart, such was the brutality of his appetite, he had neither wish nor hope to find a place. Indeed, he was well acquainted with the connection, and had heard of the approaching union, between her and Henry, and the latter, on this account, became an object of the most malignant hatred. Frequently had he meditated on the means of conveying her from her own villa, or the castle of Ruydvellin, and one attempt through the medium of his servants the vigilance of Henry had already rendered abortive, who suspected, though he could not prove, for the villains were disguised, the machinations of his infamous and too potent neighbour.

Apprehensive, at length, he should for ever lose her, if the nuptials, the day for which was fixed, should take place, the Earl became resolved, whilst Adeline was now at Ruydvellin, to seize the earliest opportunity, and to employ all the resources of his art in effecting his diabolical purposes. It was not long ere the opportunity he had so anxiously awaited was given, for, in about a week after, Henry with a large party of his friends, the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, met together for the stag-hunt, and were, as usual, joined by Walleran. The morning chace afforded the finest diversion, but was very long, and carried them to such a distance from home that they agreed to dine in the forest upon the provisions which they had providently brought with them, and endeavour to start fresh game after their meal. Walleran, it was observed, had retired before dinner, but as this was no extraordinary occurrence, little attention was paid to it, and a stag being shortly after roused, the chace was resumed with fresh vigour and alacrity. Nothing could exceed the spirit and swiftness of the animal, and Henry, who was generally foremost on these occasions, so far outstript his companions, that, having pushed into an intricate part of the forest with a view to reach the stag in a more direct line, and being led farther into its recesses than he was aware, at length neither the sound of hounds, horses, nor men any longer reached his ear, and perceiving his path more difficult as he proceeded, he paused, and listened with deep attention, but nothing save the sighing of the evening breeze, as it rustled through the branches of the oak, was heard. The sun was now approaching the horizon, and had shot his fiery beams into the forest, when Henry, reflecting on the distance he was, probably from home, and on the impending gloom of night, immediately determined to retrace his steps, and regain, if possible, the open country. With this intention, therefore, he turned his steed, and carefully pursuing the path he came, at length reached the plain, when, to his great surprise, he once more beheld, and in a direction directly contrary to what he could have expected, or thought possible, the very stag he had been chacing so long in vain. He appeared lightly bounding at a distance, and as the sun shone upon his dappled sides made a pleasing and conspicuous figure. Neither dogs, nor horses, nor a single human being were in view, and Fitzowen, more from curiosity than any other motive, put spurs to his horse, and pursued him. The animal seemed perfectly at his case, and went on gently, as if holding his chacer in contempt, when, crossing the dale, he turned into a narrow road with Henry almost at his heels, who followed him in this manner, between three and four miles through a series of winding and intricate lanes, and, had just reached him, as he conceived, when he suddenly struck to the left,

and the lane closing, a vast and apparently interminable heath rushed upon his view, but to his utter astonishment, for no shelter, or cover of any kind was present for concealment, not the least vestige of the animal he had so closely pursued could now be seen. All was nearly silent and sunk in repose; twilight had spread her grey tint over the plain, and scarce a breath of air moved the thistle down. Some clouds, however, gathered dark in the west, and were tinged with a dusky red, whilst a few large drops of rain were, now and then, heard, as they fell sullen and heavy on the heath, or shook the withered broom.

Unable to ascertain the distance from Ruydvellin, and unacquainted with the features of the country, Henry now rode impatiently forward, in hopes of discovering some road or track which might lead him to a cottage, and give him a chance for enquiry. The strangeness of the preceding incident too had occasioned some uneasiness in his bosom, and he more than once adverted to the arts and the designs of Walleran; the night also was approaching, and threatened to be stormy, and he dwelt upon the anxiety of his female friends. Whilst thus meditating, he had reached a spot where several rugged paths seemed to stretch across the heath, and one appearing more beaten than the rest, he was about to enter upon it, when he thought he beheld, at a distance, a human figure, as of a man wrapped in dark garments, and walking swiftly on. Highly pleased with the circumstance, and anticipating ample information, he immediately quitted the track, and pushed after him. As he drew near the figure, which appeared to dilate into more than common proportion, had the garb and aspect of a monk, and glided on with such rapidity that Henry found it necessary to quicken his pace, when the plain gradually contracting, and some trees shooting up in the horizon, afforded him hopes of its termination. He now called loudly to the monk, requesting him to stop, but no answer was returned, and his form, dimly seen through the increasing gloom, still glided noiseless along the heath, till having reached its verge, where rose the skirts of a pine forest, he, for several minutes, hurried along its border, and then suddenly disappeared. Henry was, by this time, convinced that the Being he had so long endeavoured to overtake, was nothing human, and resolved, if possible, to return to the track he had so rashly quitted, was wheeling round, when a light not far distant glimmered among some trees, and though nearly in the same direction the delusive monk had taken, yet once more animated with the hopes of obtaining a guide, he again ventured to trust his senses, and made immediately for the spot whence the rays appeared to stream.

The light, as he advanced, glowed steady and brilliant, but required more time and effort to attain than he expected, for having left the common, he was now amid cultivated land, which consequently opposed many an obstacle to his progress. At length, however, he approached within a few hundred yards of it, still flattering himself it issued from some neighbouring hamlet, when, rising slowly from the ground, it began to expand and yield a very vivid light, then diffusing itself, and melting into air, it gradually assumed a paler tint, and disappeared.

The night now became extremely dark, the thunder growled at a distance, and the rain fell heavy, whilst Henry shocked at the delusions he had been subjected to, and tormented with apprehension for the safety of his beloved Adeline, wandered from field to field, his imagination busy in suggesting the most dreadful events, and filled with horror and resentment as he called to mind the wild and lawless character of Walleran, to whose infernal machinations he could not avoid attributing the singular incidents which had lately befallen him.

Whilst thus situated, and in little hope of receiving either information or shelter until break of day, his attention was aroused by the barking of dogs, and making up to the sound with as much precision as the storm would permit, to his great joy he discovered a farm house whose inhabitants welcomed him with the utmost promptitude and kindness. Here he learnt that he was

better than twenty miles from Ruydvellin, and that it wanted scarce an hour of midnight, but that the principal road, and which would soon lead him into that which went direct for his castle, ran within two miles of their cottage. Highly delighted with this last piece of intelligence, and extremely anxious to hasten forward, he engaged one of the farmer's sons to conduct him to the road, and then partaking of some refreshment, and heartily regaling his steed, he made many acknowledgements to his host for his well-timed hospitality and departed.

The rain beat furiously on our travellers, and the lightning played strongly in the horizon, whilst the thunder continually muttering, and pealing louder as they advanced, gave token of a dreadful tempest. The road, however, was now before them, and the young farmer parting on his return, Henry rapidly pursued his journey, and within two hours, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, reached the border of his own domain. With a boding mind and palpitating heart he passed the well-known grounds, every now and then vividly illuminated by the glare of intense lightning, whilst the thunder rolled awfully along the vault of heaven, or burst over head in loud and repeated claps. He had now approached within view of his castle, whose numerous towers and turrets, as the lightning flashed, were distinctly seen, and made a beautiful appearance; but in the pitchy darkness which immediately succeeded, no lights could be distinguished in any part of its vast extent, a circumstance which occasioned him much surprise, and added not a little to his apprehensions. These, however, were increased to a painful degree when, on his arrival at the fosse, no wardens were perceived on the walls, nor was any porter at the barbican,² which being open, he hurried over the draw-bridge, and was about to strike upon the great gate, when, starting back with horror, he observed, as the lightning glared, that it was hung with black. This, in the periods of chivalry, being a signal of misfortune,³ was sufficient to strike terror into the stoutest chief, when returning to his castle he beheld the portentous monument of disaster, and Henry,

² As this and several other words descriptive of gothic architecture, will occur in the course of the narrative, and which to some of my readers may prove unintelligible, or obscure, the following brief, but accurate account of the common structure of a gothic castle, in which these terms are explained, cannot fail of being acceptable. The whole site of the castle was surrounded by a deep and broad ditch, sometimes filled with water, and sometimes dry, called the *fosse*. Before the great gate was an outwork, called a *barbican*, or *antemural*, which was a strong and high wall, with turrets upon it, designed for the defence of the gate and draw-bridge. On the inside of the ditch stood the wall of the castle, about eight or ten feet thick, and between twenty and thirty feet high, with a parapet, and a kind of embrasures, called *crennels*, in the top. On this wall at proper distances square towers of two or three stories high were built, which served for lodging some of the principal officers of the proprietor of the castle, and for other purposes; and on the inside were erected lodgings for the common servants or retainers, granaries, store-houses, and other necessary offices. On the top of this wall, and on the flat roofs of these buildings, stood the defenders of the castle, when it was besieged, and from thence discharged arrows, darts, and stones, on the besiegers. The great gate of the castle stood in the course of this wall, and was strongly fortified with a tower on each side, and rooms over the passage, which was closed with thick folding doors of oak, often plated with iron, and with an iron *portcullis* or grate let down from above. Within this outward wall was a large open space or court, called, in the largest and most perfect castles, the *outer bayle* or *ballium*, in which stood commonly a church or chapel. On the inside of this outer bayle was another ditch, wall, gate, and towers, inclosing the inner bayle or court, within which the chief tower or *keep* was built. This was a very large square fabric, four or five stories high, having small windows in prodigious thick walls, which rendered the apartments within it dark and gloomy. This great tower was the palace of the prince, prelate, or baron, to whom the castle belonged, and the residence of the constable or governor. Under ground were dismal dark vaults, for the confinement of prisoners, which made it sometimes be called the *dungeon*. In this building also was the great hall, in which the owner displayed his hospitality, by entertaining his numerous friends and followers.— Henry's History of England, vol. vi. 8vo, edit.

³ It was formerly the custom on any unfortunate accident, or event, to hang the castle gates with black; and it was usual for the traveller, on observing this sign of misfortune, to enquire into its nature and cause. The motto of this paper, is taken from a ballad in the Reliques of Ancient English Poetry which discovers a very intimate acquaintance with the usages and rites of chivalry.

whose fears had been long alive, now felt that all his hopes were blasted, for that some dreadful event had taken place he well knew, and the uncertainty of the moment giving full scope to the powers of imagination, it came forward wrapt in the most tremendous colouring.

When the agitation of his frame, however, had somewhat subsided he again drew near, and, lifting the massy knocker, was going to strike when the gate yielded to the impulse, being left a little open, a circumstance which its sable covering, and the momentary light of heaven, had not before given him an opportunity of perceiving. He now, therefore, entered the outer ballium and was slowly and cautiously proceeding when a deep groan, as from one in acute pain, struck his ear, and the lightning, at that instant, glancing across him, he beheld the ground moistened with blood, and two of his servants stretched dead at his feet. A sight so shocking, fixed him for some moments to the spot, but the groan being repeated, he started, and advanced to the place whence it issued, when a voice, whose tones he well recollected as those of an old and faithful domestic, in tremulous accents implored his mercy. Henry, to the infinite joy of the poor man, immediately discovered himself, and impatient to learn the cause of events so horrible, urged him to an explanation. Faint, however, with the loss of blood, racked with pain, and overwhelmed with the most tumultuous sensations on recognizing his beloved masters he was unable to articulate a word, but grasping Henry's hand, as he stooped to assist him, he pressed it with convulsive energy, and, uttering a deep sigh, reclined upon his master, and expired.

The most acute anguish now seized the unhappy Henry, who called down the bitterest imprecations on the author of his misfortunes; but conscious that all now depended upon his personal activity, and tortured with anxiety for those he held most dear, he once more endeavoured to proceed, for the darkness was so profound, that, except when the lightning streamed, not a single object could be discerned. From his knowledge of the place, however, he contrived to pass into the inner ballium, and then soon reaching the keep, entered his great hall, which he found compleatly deserted, not a single being returning his repeated calls; yet at intervals, he thought he could distinguish low groans, which seemed to issue from a considerable distance. Crossing the hall he now ascended the winding staircase, and, having attained the gallery, perceived a light which glimmered through the crevice at the bottom of a door, and making the castle again re-echo with the names of Adeline and Clara, was at last answered by the shrill tones of the women, who, with rapture almost too great for utterance, had now, for the first time, recollected his voice. Rushing to the door, therefore, he made every exertion to open it, but the lock being strong and massy, it resisted, for some time, his utmost efforts, though assisted by those within. At length, however, it did yield, and, the next moment, Clara Fitzowen was in his arms; but in vain did he look round for Adeline, and dreading even the result of enquiry, sank into a chair silent and racked with anxiety and disappointment; a few minutes, however, gave him the information he apprehended, for her mother, in an agony of distress, which drew tears from all present, soon accounted for the loss of her beloved child.

It appeared from her relation that about the dusk of the evening, a party of armed men, their features concealed in masks, had surprised the castle, a circumstance of easy occurrence when no hostile attempt was suspected, and entering the great hall, where the females were then assembled, seized upon Adeline, and were forcing her away, when some of the servants interfered, and a severe struggle took place, but which, as the ruffians were prepared for oppositions soon terminated in their favour. They then bound the men they had subdued, and threw them into the dungeon of the keep, and compelling the women, and their servants, to go up stairs, locked them in an inner room, though with a light, and carried off Adeline in triumph.

This event, though it had frequently occurred to the mind of Henry since his approach to the castle, yet now that it was fully ascertained, occasioned him as much distress as if it had not been for a moment apprehended. As soon, however, as the violence of his emotion had, in some degree, abated, he accused Walleran as the author of the atrocious deed, and proposed an immediate expedition to, and attack upon his castle; then presently recollecting the dreadful scenes he had witnessed at the great gate, he requested an explanation of his sister, but Clara being totally ignorant of the circumstances he alluded to, he lighted a torch, and descended to release his servants from their dungeon, which he effected through the medium of a private passage, the principal entrance being left too well secured for his efforts to overcome. He found several of them wounded, but so rejoiced at seeing their master again that for some minutes they completely forgot their situation and sufferings. Many, however, were still absent, and he learnt that whilst those who had been confined were still contending with the villains, a party of their fellow servants had gone round to secure the great gate, but of their fate they knew nothing. Henry now requesting those who were able, to follow him, procured some more torches, and issued forth to search the outer ballium. Here weltering in their blood were found slain the two men whom he had seen by the glare of the lightning, and, a little further, his old steward who had expired in his arms. Close by the gate, also, wounded, and on the ground, they discovered the porter and his assistant; these, on receiving some refreshment, and due attention to their injuries, speedily revived, and had soon strength enough to inform Henry, that when the struggle commenced in the great hall, they had flown to the support of their friends, but perceiving it would be vain to continue the contest without better arms, they, with three or four others, separated to procure them, and to secure the great gate and barbican, which, in their hurry and alarm, they had left open and unguarded. Hither, however, they had not arrived many moments before the ruffians, having subdued opposition in the hall, approached with the unhappy Adeline, whose prayers and entreaties were in vain addressed to beings who knew no touch of pity. A severe engagement now took place, but the numbers proving very unequal, and themselves and their companions shortly either wounded or slain, the villains with their helpless charge passed on, nor could it be ascertained in what direction they travelled. The porter, however, it seems, had sufficient strength remaining to crawl to the lodge, where seizing the black mantle, the omen of disaster, he had just power to suspend it on the gate, and then dropt exhausted by its side. This he did with a view to alarm any passenger, or pilgrim who might in the morning be journeying that way, and induce him to inquiry, and the offer of assistance.

The thunder had, by this time, passed off; twilight began to dawn, and Henry, notwithstanding the fatigues of the preceding day determined to push forward immediately to the castle of Walleran, in hopes of taking him by surprise. Accordingly, arming those of his servants who had not been injured in the previous contest, and entrusting the wounded to the care of the women, he clothed himself in mail, and mounting a fresh steed, reached the magnificent halls of Walleran in little more than an hour. Here, however, to his great disappointment, he learnt, that Walleran had not returned from the chace, but that about two hours after noon, a man, who to them was a stranger, and mounted on a horse bathed in foam, had arrived to say, that the Earl would not revisit his castle for some weeks, but refused to give them any information with regard to his present place of residence.

Henry oppressed in body and mind, now slowly returned to Ruydvellin pondering on the plan he should pursue; and on his arrival at the castle, hastened to consult his sister, and the mother of his Adeline.

II

—What is this
So wither'd and so wild in its attire;
That looks not like an inhabitant o' the earth,
And yet is on 't ?—Shakespeare

Though no present intelligence could be obtained relative to the abode of Walleran, yet as it was most probable that where he was, there Addine would be found, Henry determined, with the concurrence of his family, to spare no effort in detecting his residence. After a few hours rest, therefore, he armed himself completely, and bidding adieu to his disconsolate friend, to whom, assuming a chearful tone, he promised the speedy restoration of Adeline, he mounted his favorite roan, and issued from the great gate while the sun, now verging toward noon, smote full upon his plumed casque.

Not willing, however, to alarm the neighbouring country, where his person and accoutrements would be known wherever he should stop for enquiry, and secrecy being likewise necessary toward the completion of his views, he carefully concealed his features beneath his visor, assumed unusual arms, took a different device, and no retinue whatever, resolved, should he find Walleran surrounded by his myrmidons to hasten back to Ruydvellin, and collecting his faithful followers, return and attack him in full force, placing no confidence in his honour, should a single combat ensue, when thus supported by banditti. That no time might be lost in the pursuit, he dismissed two of his confidential servants on different routes, and under similar precautions.

These measures being taken, Henry carried his researches through the neighbouring seats, and made every enquiry that could lead to detection, but in vain; striking further into the country, therefore, he unexpectedly came into very wild scenery, and it was with difficulty he could procure the most homely provision in a tract so thinly inhabited, and where a shepherd's hut, or the cottage of a peasant proved his only places of rest. Some weeks had thus passed, when toward the sunset of a very fine day, after having traversed a lone and unfrequented part, he arrived at the edge of a thick and dark forest; the sky became suddenly overcast, and it began to rain; the thunder rolled at a distance, and sheets of livid lightning flashed across the heath. Overcome with fatigue and hunger, he rode impatiently along the border of the forest, in hopes of discovering an entrance, but none was to be found. At length, just as he was about to dismount with an intention of breaking the fence, he discerned, as he thought, something moving upon the heath, and, upon advancing towards it, it proved to be an old woman gathering peat, and who, overtaken by the storm, was hurrying home as fast as her infirm limbs could carry her. The sight of a human creature filled the heart of Fitzowen with joy, and, hastily riding up, he enquired how far he had deviated from the right road, and where he could procure a night's lodging. The old woman flow slowly lifting up her palsied head, discovered a set of features which could scarcely be called human, her eyes were red, piercing and distorted, and rolling horribly, glanced upon every object but the person by whom she was addressed and, at intervals, they emitted a fiery disagreeable light; her hair, of a dirty grey, hung matted in large masses upon her shoulders, and a few thin portions rushed abrupt and horizontally from the upper part of her forehead, which was much wrinkled, and of a parchment hue; her cheeks were hollow, withered, and red with a quantity of acrid rheum, her nose was large, prominent, and sharp, her lips thin, skinny and livid, her few teeth black, and her chin long and peaked, with a number of bushy hairs depending from its extremity; her nails also were acute, crooked, and bent over her fingers, and her garments, ragged and fluttering in the wind, displayed every possible variety of colour. Henry was a little

daunted, but the old woman having mentioned a dwelling at some distance, and offering to lead the way, the pleasure received from this piece of intelligence effaced the former impression, and, alighting from his horse, he laid hold of the bridle, and they slowly moved over the heath.

The storm had now ceased, and the moon rising gave presage of a fine night, just as this singular conductor, taking a sudden turn, plunged into the wood by a path narrow, and almost choaked up with a quantity of briar amid thorn. The trees were thick, and save a few glimpses of the moon, which, now and then, poured light on the uncouth features of his companion, all was dark and dismal; the heart of Fitzowen misgave him, neither spoke, and he pursued his guide merely by the noise she made in hurrying through the bushes, which was done with a celerity totally inconsistent with her former decrepitude. At length the path grew wider, and a faint blue light, which came from a building at some distance, glimmered before them; they now left the wood, and issued upon a rocky and uneven piece of ground, whilst the moon struggling through a cloud, cast a doubtful and uncertain light, and the old woman, with a leer which made the very hair of Fitzowen stand on end, told him that the dwelling was at hand. It was so, for a gothic castle, placed on a considerable elevation, now came in view; it was a large massy structure, much decayed. and some parts of it in a totally ruinous condition; a portion, however, of the keep, or great tower, was still entire, as was also the entrance to the court or enclosure, preserved probably by the ivy, whose fibres crept round with solicitous care. Large fragments of the ruin were scattered about, covered with moss and half sunk in the ground, and a number of old elm trees, through whose foliage the wind sighed with a sullen and melancholy sound, dropped a deep and settled gloom, that scarce permitted the moon to stream by fits upon the building. Fitzowen drew near, ardent curiosity mingled with awe dilated his bosom, and he inwardly congratulated himself upon so singular an adventure, when turning round to question his companion, a glimpse of the moon poured full upon his eye so horrid a contexture of feature, so wild and preternatural a combination, that, smote with terror and unable to move, a cold sweat trickled from every pore, and immediately this infernal Being seizing him by the arm, and hurrying him over the draw-bridge to the great entrance of the keep, the portcullis fell with a tremendous sound, and the astonished- youth, starting as it were from a trance, drew his sword in act to destroy his treacherous guide, when instantly a horrible and infernal laugh burst from her, and in a moment the whole castle was in an uproar, peal after peal issuing from every quarter, till at length growing faint they died away, and a dead silence ensued.

Fitzowen, who, during this strange tumult, had collected all his scattered powers, now looked round him with determined resolution; his terrible companion had disappeared, and the moon shining full upon the portcullis convinced him that any escape that way was impracticable; the wind sighed through the elms, and the scared owl, uttering his discordant note, broke from his nest, and, sweeping through the vale beneath, sought for more secure repose. Having reasoned himself, therefore, into a state of cool fortitude, and bent up every power to the appalling enterprise, our Adventurer entered the great tower, from a loop hole near the summit of which a dim twinkling light could be just discerned. He extended his sword before him, for it was dark, and proceeded carefully to search around, in hopes, either of discovering some aperture which might lead to the vestibule, or staircase,—or of wreaking his vengeance on the wretch who had thus decoyed him. All was still as death, but as he strode over the floor, a dull, hollow sound issued from beneath, and tendered him apprehensive of falling through into some dismal vault, from which he might never be able to extricate himself. In this situation, dreading the effect of each light footstep, a sound, as of many people whispering, struck his ear; he bent forward, listening with eager attention, and as it seemed to proceed from a little distance only before him,

he determined to follow it; he did so, and instantly fell through the mouldering pavement, whilst at the same time peals of horrid laughter again burst, with reiterated clamour, from every chamber of the castle.

Fitzowen rose with considerable difficulty, and much stunned with the fall, although, fortunately, the spot he had dropped upon was covered with a quantity of damp and soft earth, which gave way to his weight. He now found himself in a large vault, arched in the gothic manner, and supported by eight massy pillars, down whose sides the damp moisture ran in cold and heavy drops, the moon shining with great lustre through three iron grated windows, which, although rusty with age, were strong enough to resist his utmost efforts, and having in vain tried to force them, he now looked around for his sword, which, during the fall, had started from his grasp, and in searching the ground with his fingers, he laid hold of, and drew forth, the fresh bones of an enormous skeleton; he started back with horror; a cold wind brushed violently along the surface of the vault, and a ponderous iron door, slowly grating on its hinges, opened at one corner, and disclosed to his wondering eye a broken stair-case, down whose steps a blue and faint light flashed by fits, like the lightning of a summer's eve.

Appalled by these dreadful prodigies, Fitzowen felt, in spite of all his resolution, a cold and death-like chill pervade his frame, and kneeling down, he prayed fervently to that power without whose mandate no being is let loose upon another, and feeling himself more calm and resolved, he again began to search for his sword, when a moon-beam, falling on the blade, at once restored it to its owner.

Having thus resumed his wonted fortitude and resolution, he held a parley with himself, and perceiving no way by which he could escape, boldly resolved to brave all the terrors of the staircase, and, once more recommending himself to his maker, began to ascend. The light still flashed, enabling him to climb those parts which were broken or decayed. He had proceeded in this manner a considerable way, mounting, as he supposed, to the summit of the keep, when suddenly a shrill and agonising shriek issued from the upper part of it, and something rudely brushing down grasped him with tremendous strength; in a moment he became motionless and cold as ice, and felt himself hurried back by some irresistible Being; but, just as he had reached the vault, a spectre of so dreadful a shape stalked by within it, that, straining every muscle, he sprang from the deadly grasp: the iron door rushed in thunder upon its hinges, and a deep hollow groan resounded from beneath. No sooner had the door closed, than yelling screams, and sounds which almost suspended the very pulse of life, issued from the vault, as if a troop of hellish furies, with their chains untied, were dashing them in frenzy, and howling to the uproar. Henry stood fixed in horror, a deadly fear ran through every vein, and the throbbing of his heart oppressed him. The tumult, however, at length subsiding, he recovered some portion of strength, and immediately making use of it to convey himself as far as possible from the iron door, presently reached his former elevation on the stair-case, which, after ascending a few more steps, terminated in a winding gallery.

The light, which had hitherto flashed incessantly, now disappeared, and he was left in almost total darkness, except when, now and then, the moon threw a few cool rays through some shattered loophole heightening the horror of the scene. He felt reluctant to proceed, and looked back with apprehension lest some yelling fiend should again plunge him into the vault. A mournful wind howled through the apartments of the castle, and listening, he thought he heard the iron door grate upon its hinges; he started with terror, the sweat stood in big drops upon his forehead, and he rushed forward with desperate despair, till having turned a corner of the gallery, a taper, burning with a faint light, gleamed through a narrow dark passage; approaching the spot

whence it streamed, he perceived it arose from an extensive room, the folding doors of which were wide open: he entered; a small taper in a massy silver candlestick stood upon a table in the middle of the room, but gave so inconsiderable an illumination, that one end was wrapped in palpable darkness, and the other scarcely broken in upon by a dim light that glimmered through a large ramified window covered with thick ivy. An arm chair, shattered and damp with age, was placed near the table, and the remains of a recent fire were still visible in the grate. The wainscot of black oak, had formerly been hung with tapestry, and several portions still clung to those parts which were near the fire; they possessed some vivacity of tint, and with much gilding yet apparent on the chimney piece, and several mouldering reliques of costly frames and paintings, gave indisputable evidence of the ancient grandeur of the place. Henry closed the folding doors, and, taking the taper, was about to survey the room, when a half-stifled groan from the dark end of it smote cold upon his heart, at the same time the sound as of something falling with a dead weight, echoed through the room, and a bell tolled deep and hollow from the tower above. He replaced the taper, the flame of which was agitated; now quivering, sunk, now streaming, flamed aloft, and as the last pale portion died away, the scarce distinguished form of some terrific Being floated slowly by, and again another dreadful groan ran deepning through the gloom, and the bell swung solemn from the keep. Henry stood for some time incapable of motion; at length summoning all his fortitude, he advanced with his sword extended to the darkest part of the room: instantly burst forth in fierce irradiations a blue sulphureous splendour, and the mangled body of a man distorted with the agony of death, his every fibre racked with convulsion, his beard and hair stiff and matted with blood, his mouth open, and his eyes protruding from their sockets, rushed upon his maddening senses; he started, uttering a wild shriek, and hurrying he knew not whither burst through the folding doors.

Darkness again spread her sable pall over the unfortunate Fitzowen, and he trode along the narrow passage with a feeble and a faltering step. His intellect shook, and overwhelmed by the late appalling objects, had not yet recovered any degree of recollection, and he wandered, as in a dream, a confused train of horrible ideas passing unconnected through his mind; at length, however, memory resumed her function, resumed it but to daunt him with harrowing suggestions; the direful horrors of the room behind, and of the vault below, were still present to his eyes, and, as a man whom hellish fiends had frightened, he stood trembling, pale and staring wild. All was now once more silent and dark, and he determined to wait in this spot the dawn of day, but a few minutes had scarce elapsed, when the iron door screaming on its hinges, bellowed through the murmuring ruin. Henry nearly fainted at the sound, which, pausing for some time, again swelled upon the wind, and at last died away in shrill melancholy shrieks; again all was silent, and again the same fearful noise struck terror to his soul. Whilst his mind was thus agitated with horror and apprehension, a feeble light streaming from behind accompanied with a soft, quick and hollow tread, convinced him that something was pursuing, and struck with wildering fear, he rushed unconscious down the steps; the vault received him, and its portals swinging to their close, sounded as the sentence of death. A dun foetid vapour filled the place, in the centre of which arose a faint and bickering flame. Fitzowen approached, and beheld a corse suspended over it by the neck, whilst the flame flashing through the vault, gleamed on a throng of hideous and ghastly features that came forward through the smoke. With the desperate valour of a man who sees destruction before him, he ran furiously forward; an universal shriek burst forth, and the fire rising with tenfold brilliance, placed full in view the dreadful form of his infernal guide, dilated into horror itself; her face was pale as death, her eyes were wide open,

dead and fixed, a horrible grin sate upon her features, her lips black and tumid were drawn back, disclosing a set of large blue teeth, and her hair, standing stiffly erect, was of a withered red.

Fitzowen felt his blood freeze within him; his limbs became enervated, and at this moment when resistance on his part appeared almost impossible, a door bursting open at the extremity of the vault, in rushed the form of Walleran, who wielding a battle axe, aimed a blow at Henry that, situated as he then was, and rendered torpid through the influence of preternatural agency, he conceived would be effectual for his destruction. In this, however, he was, fatally for himself, mistaken, for no sooner was he perceived than the effect of the enchantment ceased; indignation swelling at the heart of Henry, impelled the lingering fluid, his cheek flushed with the crimson tide, his limbs recovered their elasticity and tone, and avoiding with active rigour the death that was intended him, he sheathed his falchion in the breast of his opponent, who, having wasted his impetuous strength upon the air, had thus exposed himself to instant ruin.

III

—Fairy elves
Whose midnight revels by a forest side,
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course, they on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds. Milton.

Walleran dropt lifeless on the ground, and the dreadful appearances in the vault, the fire and all its apparatus, immediately vanished, whilst loud howlings and lamentations were heard at a distance in the air. A profound silence, however, now ensued throughout the castle, and Henry by the light of the moon, as it streamed through the grated window, beheld at his feet the bleeding corpse of his antagonist. Starting from the contemplation of his fallen enemy, he resolved to explore the ruins in search of Adeline, of whose concealment, in some part of the building, he entertained not the smallest doubt, and, apprehensive now of little opposition, he once more attempted those stairs in ascending which he had formerly encountered so many terrors. He reached the gallery without any interruption, and passing through the folding doors into the apartment already described, discovered at one end, and on the very spot where he had beheld the tremendous vision of the agonising wretch, a narrow, winding and arched passage, and which taking a circular direction probably passed into the opposite portion of the great tower. Here he entered, but had not proceeded far before the sound as of soft and very distant music reached his ear, and shortly afterward was distinctly heard the murmur of falling water. Sounds such as these, and in such a place, greatly surprised him, and hastening forward to ascertain from what quarter they originated, he found himself suddenly immersed in a very cold and damp vapour, whose density was such that for a short time it totally suffocated the smallest ray of light; in a few minutes, however, it began, in some measure, to clear away accompanied with a whispering noise, whilst vast eddies and gusts of thin vapour passed him with a whirling motion. He now perceived himself in a kind of large cavern whose sides were of unhewn stone, and from the roof were pendent numbers of beautiful stalactites, from whose points fell, at intervals, with a tinkling sound, large drops of water, whilst the dying notes of distant harps, the gurgling of obstructed currents, and the sighings of the restless vapour, formed a harmony so singular, yet so soothing, that when united to the surrounding chill and torpid atmosphere,

seemed calculated to inspire the most profound repose. Fitzowen now advanced a little further into the cavity, and, through the chasms of the ever fluctuating mist, discerned, hanging from the centre of the roof; a vast globe, which emitted rays of the palest hue, and which in passing through the turbid vapour shed a kind of twilight.

Whilst pondering on the purport of this very peculiar scene, he felt a heaviness, and a tendency to sleep creep upon him, accompanied with an indistinctness and confusion of intellect; at this instant, however, a mass of vapour rushing by him, the light gleamed more steadily, and he beheld in an excavation of the adjacent wall, and recumbent on a couch, what he conceived to be a human body. Curiosity was now so powerfully excited, as completely to expell the approaching torpor, and drawing nearer the object of his attention, he could hear the deep breathings of a person in profound sleep; the next moment he could perceive the garments of female attire, and in the succeeding instant hung with rapture and astonishment over the well-known features of his beloved Adeline. The globe shed a silvery and preternatural whiteness over her form, and the rose had left her cheek; she lay with her head reclined upon her hand, and the utmost tranquillity sate upon her countenance, though, now and then, a deep-drawn sigh would indicate the tissue of idea.

Henry stood, for some moments, rivetted to the spot, then, starting from his reverie, he wound his arms about her beauteous frame, and impressed upon her lips a glowing kiss—she awoke, and instantly a tremendous tempest burst upon them, loud thunder shook the earth, and a whirlwind, rushing through the pile, tore it from its foundations.

The lovers recovering from a trance which the conflict of the elements had occasioned, found themselves seated on some mossy turf, and around them the soft, the sweet and tranquil scenery of a summer's moon-light night. Enraptured with this sudden and unexpected change, they rose gently off the ground; over their heads towered a large and majestic oak, at whose foot they believed some kind and corn. passionate being had placed them. Delight and gratitude dilated their hearts, and advancing from beneath the tree whose gigantic branches spread a large extent of shade, a vale, beautiful and romantic, through which ran a clear and deep stream, came full in view; they walked to the edge of the water, the moon shone with mellow lustre on its surface, and its banks, fringed with shrubs, breathed a perfume more delicate than the odours of the east. On one aide, the ground covered with a vivid, soft and downy verdure, stretched for a considerable extent to the borders of a large forest, which, sweeping round, finally closed up the valley; on the other, it was broken into abrupt and rocky masses swarded with moss, and front whose clefts grew thick and spreading trees, the roots of which, washed by many a fall of water, hung bare and matted from their craggy beds.

Henry and his Adeline forgot in this delicious vale all their former sufferings, and giving up their minds to the pleasing influence of curiosity and wonder, they determined to explore the place by tracing the windings of the stream. Scarcely had they entered upon this plan, when music of the most ravishing sweetness filled the air, sometimes it seemed to float along the valley, sometimes it stole along the surface of the water, now it died away among the woods, and now, with deep and mellow symphony, it swelled upon the gale. Fixed in astonishment, they scarce ventured to breathe, every sense, save that of hearing, seemed absorbed, and when the last faint warblings melted on the air, they started from the spot, solicitous to know from what being those more than human strains had parted; but nothing appeared in view; the moon, full and unclouded, shone with unusual lustre, and filled with hope, they again pursued the windings of the water, which, conducting to the narrowest part of the valley, continued their course through the wood. This they entered by a path smooth, but narrow and perplexed, where, although its

branches were so numerous that no preference could be given, or any direct route long persisted in, yet every turn presented something to amuse, something to sharpen the edge of research. The beauty of the trees through whose interstices the moon gleamed in the most picturesque manner, the glimpses of the water, and the notes of the nightingale, who now began to fill the valley with her song, were more than sufficient to take off the sense of fatigue, and they wandered on, still eager to explore, still ardent for further discovery.

The wood now became more thick and obscure, and at length almost dark, when the path, taking suddenly an oblique direction, they found themselves on the edge of a circular lawn, whose tint and softness were beyond compare, and which seemed to have been lightly brushed by fairy feet. A number of fine old trees, around whose boles crept the ivy and the woodbine, rose at irregular distances, here they mingled into groves, and there, separate and emulous of each other, vied in spiral elegance, or magnitude of form. The water, which had been for some time concealed, now murmured through a thousand beds, and visiting each little flower, added vigour to its vegetation, and poignancy to its fragrance. Along the edges of the wood, and beneath the shadows of the trees, an innumerable host of glow-worms lighted their innocuous fires, lustrous as the gems of Golconda, and desirous yet longer to enjoy the scene, they went forward with light footsteps on the lawn; all was calm, and, except the breeze of night, that sighed soft and sweetly through the world of leaves, a perfect silence prevailed. Not many minutes, however, had elapsed, before the same enchanting music, to which they had listened with so much rapture in the vale, again arrested their attention, and presently they discovered on the border of the lawn, just rising above the wood, and floating on the bosom of the air, a being of the most delicate form; from his shoulders streamed a tunic of the tenderest blue, his wings and feet were clothed in downy silver, and in his grasp he had a wand white as the mountain snow. He rose swiftly in the air, his brilliance became excessive from the lunar rays, his song echoed through the vault of night, but having quickly diminished to the size and appearance of the evening star, it died away, and the next moment he was lost in ether. The lovers still fixed their view on that part of the heavens where the vision had disappeared, and shortly had the pleasure of again seeing the star-like radiance, which in an instant unfolded itself into the full and fine dimensions of the beautiful being, who, having collected dew from the cold vales of Saturn, now descended rapidly towards the earth, and waving his wand as he passed athwart the woods, a number of like form and garb flew round him, and all alighting on the lawn, separated at equal distances on its circumference, and then shaking their wings, which spread a perfume through the air, burst into one general song.

Henry and Adeline who, apprehensive of being discovered, had retreated within the shadow of some mossy oaks, now waited with eager expectation the event of so singular a scene. In a few moments a bevy of elegant nymphs dancing two by two, issued from the wood on the right, and an equal number of warlike knights, accompanied by a band of minstrels, from that on the left. The knights were clothed in green; on their bosoms shone a plate of burnished steel, and in their hands they grasped a golden targe, and lance of beamy lustre. The nymphs, whose form and symmetry were beyond the youthful poet's dream, were dressed in robes of white, their zones were azure dropt with diamonds, and their light brown hair decked with roses, hung in ample ringlets. So quick, so light, and airy was their motion, that the turf, the flowers shrunk not beneath the gentle pressure, and each smiling on her favourite knight, he flung his brilliant arms aside and mingled in the dance.

Whilst they thus flew in rapid measures over the lawn, the lovers, forgetting their situation, and impatient to salute the assembly, involuntarily stepped forward, and instantaneously a shrill and

hollow gust of wind murmured through the woods, the moon dipt into a cloud, and the knights, the nymphs, and aerial spirits vanished from the view, leaving the astonished pair to repent at leisure their precipitate intrusion; scarce, however, had they time to determine what plan they should pursue, when a gleam of light flashed suddenly along the horizon, and the beauteous being whom they first beheld in the air, stood before them; he waved his snow-white wand, and pointing to the wood, which now appeared sparkling with a thousand fires, moved gently on. Henry and his amiable companion felt an irresistible impulse which compelled them to follow, and having penetrated the wood, they perceived many bright rays of light, which darting like the beams of the sun through every part of it, most beautifully illumined the shafts of the trees. As they advanced forward, the radiance became more intense, and converged towards a centre, and the fairy being turning quickly round, commanded them to kneel down, and having squeezed the juice of an herb into their eyes, bade them now proceed, but that no mortal eye, unless its powers of vision were adapted to the scene, could endure the glory that would shortly burst upon them. Scarcely had he uttered these words when they entered an amphitheatre; in its centre was a throne of ivory inlaid with sapphires, on which sat a female form of exquisite beauty, a plain coronet of gold obliquely crossed her flowing hair, and her robe of white satin hung negligent in ample folds. Around her stood five and twenty nymphs clothed in white and gold, and holding lighted tapers; beyond these were fifty of the aerial beings, their wings of downy silver stretched for flight, and each a burning taper in his hand; and lastly, on the circumference of the amphitheatre shone one hundred knights in mail of tempered steel, in one hand they shook aloft a targe of massy diamond, and in the other flashed a taper. So excessive was the reflection, that the targes had the lustre of an hundred suns, and, when shaken, sent forth streams of vivid lightning: from the gold, the silver, and the sapphires rushed a flood of tinted light, that mingling threw upon the eye a series of revolving hues.

Henry and Adeline, impressed with awe, with wonder and delight, fell prostrate on the ground, whilst the fairy spirit advancing, knelt and presented to the queen a crystal vase. She rose, she waved her hand, and smiling, bade them to approach. "Gentle strangers," she exclaimed, "let not fear appal your hearts, for to them whom courage, truth, and piety have distinguished, our friendship and our love are given. Spirits of the blest we are, our sweet employment to befriend the wretched and the weary, to lull the torture of anguish, and the horror of despair. Ah! never shall the tear of innocence, or the plaint of sorrow, the pang of injured merit, or the sigh of hopeless love, implore our aid in vain. Upon the moon-beam do we float, and light as air, pervade the habitations of men, and hearken, O favoured mortals! I tell you spirits pure from vice, are present to your inmost thoughts; when terror, and when madness, when spectres and when death surrounded you, our influence put to flight the ministers of darkness; we placed you in the moon-light vale, and now upon your heads we pour the planetary dew: go, happy pair! from Hecates's dread agents we have freed you, from wildering fear and gloomy superstition."—

She ended, and the lovers, impatient to express their gratitude, were about to speak, when suddenly the light turned pale, and died away, the spirits fled, and music, soft and sweet, was heard remotely in the air. They started, and, in place of the refulgent scene of magic, beheld a public road, Fitzowen's horse cropping the grass which grew upon its edge, and a village at a little distance, on whose spire the rising sun had shed his earliest beams.