

Rob Dodds

By James Hogg

It was on the 13th of February 1823, on a cold stormy day, the snow lying from one to ten feet deep on the hills, and nearly as hard as ice, when an extensive store-farmer in the outer limits of the county of Peebles went up to one of his led farms to see how his old shepherd was coming on with his flocks. A partial thaw had blackened some scraps on the brows of the mountains here and there, and over these the half-starving flocks were scattered, picking up a scanty sustenance, while all the hollow parts, and whole sides of mountains that lay sheltered from the winds on the preceding week when the great drifts blew, were heaped and over-heaped with immense loads of snow, so that ever hill appeared to the farmer to have changed its form. There was a thick white haze on the sky, corresponding exactly with the wan frigid colour of the high mountains, so that in casting one's eye up to the heights, it was not apparent where the limits of the earth ended, and the heavens began. There was no horizon no blink of the sun looking through the pale and impervious mist of heaven; but there, in that elevated and sequestered *hope*, the old shepherd and his flock seemed to be left out of nature and all its sympathies, and embosomed in one interminable chamber of waste desolation—So his master thought; and any stranger beholding the scene, would have been still more deeply impressed that the case was so in reality.

But the old shepherd thought and felt otherwise. He saw God in the clouds, and watched his arm in the direction of the storm. He perceived, or thought he perceived, one man's flocks suffering on account of their owner's transgression; and though he bewailed the hardships to which the poor harmless creatures were reduced, he yet acknowledged in his heart the justness of the punishment. "These temporal scourges are laid upon sinners in mercy," said he, "and it will be well for them if they get so away. It will learn them in future how to drink and carouse, and speak profane things of the name of Him in whose hand are the issues of life, and to regard his servants as the dogs of their flock."

Again, he beheld from his heights, when the days were clear, the flocks of others more favourably situated, which he attributed as a reward for their acts of charity and benevolence; for this old man believed that all temporal benefits were sent to men as a reward for good works; and all temporal deprivations as a scourge for evil ones, and that their effects in spiritual improvement or degradation were rare and particular.

"I hae been a herd in this *hope*, callant and man, for these fifty years now, Janet," said he to his old wife, "an' I think I never saw the face o' the country look waur."

"Hout, goodman, it is but a cludd o' the despondency o' auld age come ower your een, for I hae seen waur storms than this, or else my sight deceives me. This time seven and twenty years, when you and I were married, there was a deeper and a harder snaw baith than this. There was mony a burn dammed up wi' dead hogs that year. And what say ye to this time nine years, goodman?"

"Ay, ay, Janet, these were hard times when they were present. But I think there's something in our corrupt nature that gars us aye trow the present burden is the heaviest. However, it is either my strength failing, that I canna won sae weel through the snaw, or I never saw it lying sae deep before. I canna steer the poor creatures frae ae knowehead to another, without rowing them ower the body. And sometimes when they wad spraughle away, then I stick firm an' fast mysel', an' the mair I fight to get out, I gang aye the deeper. This same day, nae farther gane, at ae step up in

the gait cleugh, I slumpit in to the neck. Peace be wi' us, quo' I to mysel', where am I now? If my auld wife wad but look up the hill, she wad see nae mair o' her poor man but the bannet. Ah! Janet, Janet, I'm rather feared that our Maker has a craw to pook wi' us even now!"

"I hope no, Andrew; we're in good hands; and if he should e'en see meet to pook a craw wi' us, he'll maybe fling us baith the bouk an' the feathers at the end. Ye shoudna repine, goodman. Ye're something ill for thraving your mou' at Providence now and then."

"Na, na, Janet, far be't frae me to grumble at Providence. I ken ower weel that the warst we get is far aboon our demerits. But it's no for the season that I'm sae feared; that's ruled by ane that canna err; only, I dread that there's something rotten in the government or the religion of the country, that lays it under his curse. There's my fear, Janet. The scourge of a land often fa's on its meanest creatures first, and advances by degrees to gie the boonmost orders o' society warning and time to repent. There, for instance, in the saxteen and seventeen, the scourge fell on our flocks and our hirds. Then, in aughteen and nineteen, it fell on the weavers, they're the neist class, ye ken; then our merchants, they're the neist again; and last o' a' it has fallen on the farmers and the shepherds, they're the first and maist sterling class o' a country. Na, ye needna smudge and laugh at me now, Janet; for it's true. They are the boonmost, and hae aye been the boonmost sin' the days o' Abel, an that's nae date o' yesterday. An' ye'll observe, Janet, that whenever they began to fa' iow, they gat aye another lift to keep up their respect. But I see our downfa' coming on us wi' rapid strides.—There's a heartlessness and apathy croppen in among the sheep farmers, that shews their warldly hopes to be nearly extinct. The maist o' them seem no to care a bodle whether their sheep die or live. There's our master, for instance, when times were gaun weel, I hae seen him up ilka third day at the farthest in the time of a storm, to see how the sheep were doing; an' this winter I hae never seen his face sin' it came on. He seems to hae forgotten that there are sic creatures existing in this wilderness as the sheep and me. His presence be about us, gin there be nae the very man come bye the window!"

Janet sprung to her feet, swept the hearth, set a chair on the cleanest side, and wiped it with her check apron, all ere one could well look about him.

"Come away, master; come in by to the fire here; lang-lookit-for comes at length."

"How are you, Janet? still living, I see. It is a pity that you had not popped off before this great storm came on.

"Dear, what for, master?"

"Because Andrew would have been a great deal the better of a young soncy quean to have slept with him in such terrible weather. And then if you should take it into your head to coup the creels just now, you know it would be out of the power of man to get you to a Christian burial. We would be obliged to huddle you up in the nook of the kail-yard."

"Ah, master, what's that you're saying to my auld wife? Aye the auld man yet, I hear! A great deal o' the leaven o' corrupt nature aye sproutin' out now and then. I wonder you're no fear'd to speak in that regardless manner in these judgment-looking times!"

"And you are still the old man too, Andrew; a great deal of cant and hypocrisy sprouting out at times. But tell me, you old sinner, how has your Maker been serving you this storm? I have been right terrified about your sheep; for I know you will have been very impertinent with him of evenings."

"Hear to that now! There's no hope, I see! I thought to find you humbled wi' a' thir trials and warldly losses, but I see the heart is hardened like Pharaoh's, and you will not let the multitude o' your sins go. As to the storm, I can tell you my sheep are just at ane mae wi't. I am waur than

ony o' my neighbours, as I lie higher on the hills; but I may hae been as it chanced for you, for ye hae never lookit near me mair than you had had no concern in the creatures."

"Indeed, Andrew, it is because neither you nor the creatures are much worth looking after now-a-days. If it hadna been the fear I was in for some mishap coming over the stock, on account of these hypocritical prayers of yours, I would not have come to look after you so soon.

"Ah, there's nae mense to be-had o' you! It's a good thing I ken the heart's better than the tongue, or ane wad hae little face to pray either for you, or aught that belongs t'ye. But I hope ye hae been nae the waur o' auld Andrew's prayers as yet. An some didna pray for ye, it wad maybe be the waur for ye. I prayed for ye when ye couldna pray for yoursel', an' had hopes when I turned auld and doited, that you might say a kind word for me. But I'm fear'd that warld's wealth and warld's pleasures hae been leading you ower lang in their train, and that ye hae been trusting to that which will soon take wings and flee away.

"If you mean riches, Andrew, or warld's walth, as you call it, you never said a truer word in your life; for the little that my forbears and I have made, under the influence of these long prayers of yours, is actually melting away from among my hands faster than ever the snaw did from the dike."

"It is perfectly true, what you're saying, master. I ken the extent o' your bits o' sales weel enough, an' I ken your rents; an' weel I ken you're t'elling me nae lee. An' it's e'en a hard case. But I'll tell you what I would do. I would throw their tacks in their teeth, an' let them mak' aught o' them they likit."

"Why, that would be ruin at once, Andrew, with a vengeance. Don't you see that stocks of sheep are fallen so low, that if they were put to sale, they would not pay more than the rents, and some few arrears that every one of us have got into; and thus by throwing up our farms, we would throw ourselves out beggars. We are all willing to put off the evil day as long as we can, and rather trust to long prayers for a while."

"Ah! you're there again, are you? Canna let alane profanity! It's hard to gar a wicked cout leave off funking. But I can tell you, master mine—An you farmers had made your hay when the sun shone, ye might a' hae suttin independent o' your screwin' lairds, wha are maistly sair out at elbows; an' ye ken, sir, a hungry louse bites wicked sair. But this is but ajustjoodgment come on you for your behaviour. Ye had the gaun days o' prosperity for twenty years! But instead o' laying by a little for a sair leg, or making provisions for an evil day, ye gaed on like madmen. Ye biggit houses, and ye plantit vineyards, an' threw away money as ye had been sawing sklate-stanes. Ye drank wine, an' ye drank punch; and ye roared and ye sang, and spake unseemly things. An' did ye never think there was an ear that heard, an' an ee that saw a' thae things? An' did ye never think that they wad be revisited on your heads some day when ye couldna play paw to help yoursels? If ye didna think sae then, ye'll think sac soon. An' ye'll maybe see the day when the like o' auld Andrew, wi' his darned hose, an' his cloutit shoon; his braid bannet, instead of a baiver; his drink out o' the clear spring, instead o' the punch bowl; an' his good steeve aitmeal parritch and his horn spoon, instead o' the drap suds o' tea, that costs sac muckle I say, that sic a man wi' a' thae, an' his worthless prayers to boot, will maybe keep the crown o' the causev langer than some that carried their heads higher."

"Hout He, Andrew!" quoth old Janet; "Gudeness be my help, an' I dinna think shame o' you! Our master may wed think ye'll be impudent wi' your Maker, for troth you're very impudent wi' himsel; dinna ye see that ye hae made the douse sonsy lad that he disna ken where to look?"

"Ay, Janet, your husband may wed crack. He kens he has feathered his nest off my father and me. He is independent, let the world wag as it will."

“It’s a’ fairly come by, master, an’ the maist part o’t came through your am hands. But my bairns are a’ doing for themsels, in the same way that I did; an’ if twa or three hunder pounds can beet a mister for you in a strait, ye san na want it, come of a’ what will.”

“It is wed said o’ you, Andrew, and I am obliged to you. There is no class of men in this kingdom so independent as you shepherds. You have your sheep, your cow, your meal and potatoes; a regular income of from sixteen to thirty pounds yearly, without a farthing of expenditure, except for shoes; for your clothes are all made at home. If you would even wish to spend it, you cannot get an opportunity, and every one of you is rich, who has not lost money by lending it. It is therefore my humble opinion, that all the farms over this country will soon change occupants; and that the shepherds must ultimately become the store-farmers.”

“I hope in God I’ll never live to see that, master, for the sake of them that I and mine hae won our bread frae, as wed as some others that I hae a great respect for. But that’s no the thing that hasna happened afore this day. It is little mair than 140 years, sin’ a’ the land i’ this country changed masters already; sin’ every farmer in it was reduced, and the farms were a’ ta’en by common people and strangers at half naething. The Welches came here then out of a place they ca’ Wales, in England; the Andersons came frae a place they ca Kamsagh, some gate i’ the north; an’ your am set came first to this country then frae some bit lairdship near Glasgow. There were a set o’ M’Gregors and M’Dougals, said to have been great thieves, came into Yarrow then, and changed their names to Scotts; but they didna thrive; for they warna likit, and the hinderend o’ them were in the Catslackburn. They ca’d them aye the Pinolys, frae the place they came fra; but I dinna ken where it was. The Ballantynes came frae Gallowa; and for as flourishin’ fo’ks as they are now, the first o’ them came out at the Birkhull-path, riding on a heltered poney, wi’ a goat-skin aneath him for a saddle. The Cunninghams, likewise, began to spread their wings at the same time; they came a’ frae a little fat curate that came out o’ Glencairn to Etterick. But that’s nae disparagement to ony o’ thae families; for an there be merit at a’ inherent in man as to warldly things, it is certainly in raising himsel frae naething to respect. There is nae very ancient name amang a our farmers now, but the Tweedies an’ the Murrays; I mean that anciently belonged to this district. The Tweedies are very auld, and took the name frae the water. They were lairds o’ Drumelzier hunders o’ years afore the Hays got it, and hae some o’ the best blood o’ the land in their veins; and sac also were the Murrays; but the maist part o’ the rest are upstarts and come-o’-wills. Now ye see, for as far outbye as I live, I can tell ye some things that ye dinna hear amang your drunken cronies.”

“It is when you begin to these old traditions that I like to listen to you, Andrew. Can you tell me what was the cause of such a complete overthrow of the farmers of that age?”

“O I canna tell, sir—I canna tell. Some overturn o’ affairs, like the present, I fancy. The farmers had outhir lost a’ their sheep, or a’ their siller, as they are like to do now; but I canna tell how it was; for the general change had ta’en place, for the maist part, afore the Revolution. My am grandfather, who was the son of a great farmer, hired himsel for a shepherd at that time to young Tam Linton, and mony ane was wad for the downcome. But, speaking o’ that, of a’ the downcomes that ever a country kenn’d in a farming name, there has never been ought like that o’ the Lintons. When my grandfather was a young man, and ane o’ their herds, they had a’- the principal store-farms o’ Etterick Forest, and a part in this shire. They had, when the great Mr Boston came to Etterick, the farms o’ Blackhouse, Dryhope, Henderland, Chapelhope, Scabcleugh, Shorthope, Midgehope, Meggatknowes, Buccleuch, and Gilmainscleugh, that I ken of, and likely as mony mae; and now there’s no a man o’ the name n a the bounds aboon the rank of a cow-herd. Thomas Linton rode to kirk an’ market, wi’ a liveryman at his back; but

where is a' that pride now? A' buried in the mools wi' the bearers o't! an' the last representative o' that great overgrown family, that laid house to house, an' field to field, is now sair gane on a wee, wee farm o' the Duke o' Buccleuch's. The ancient curse had lighted on these men, if ever it lighted on men in this world. And yet they were reckoned good men, and kind men in their day; for the good Mr Boston wrote an epitaph on Thomas, in metre, when he died; an' though I have read it a hunder times in St Mary's kirkyard, where it is to be seen to this day, I canna say it ower. But it says that he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and that the Lord would requite him in a day to come, or something to that purpose. Now that said a great deal for him, master, although Providence has seen meet to strip his race o' a' their worldly possessions. But take an auld fool's advice, and never lay ye farm to farm, even though a fair opportunity should offer; for, as sure as He lives who pronounced that curse, it will take effect. I'm an auld man, an' I hae seen mony dash made that way, but I never saw ane them come to good! There was first Murray of Glenvath; why, it was untelling what land that man possessed. Now his family has not a furr in the twa counties. Then there was his neighbour Simpson of Posso: I hae seen the day that Simpson had two-and-twenty farms, the best o' the twa counties, an' a' stockit wi' good sheep. Now there's no a drap o' his blood has a furr in the twa counties. Then there was Grieve of Willenslee; ane wad hae thought that body was gaun to take the hale kingdom. He was said to hae had ten thousand sheep, a' on good farms, at ae time. Where are they a' now? Neither him nor his hae a furr in the twa counties. Let me tell ye, master—for ye're but a young man, an' I wad aye fain have ye to see things in a right light—that ye may blame the wars; ye may blame the government; an' ye may blame the parliamenters; but there's a hand that rules higher than a these; an' gin ye dinna look to that, ye'll never look to the right source either o' your prosperity or adversity. An' I sairly doubt that the pride o' the farmers was raised to ower great a pitch, that Providence has been brewing a day of humiliation for them, and that there will be a change o' hands aince mair, as there was about this time hunder an' forty years."

"Then I suppose you shepherds expect to have century about with us, or so? Well, I don't see anything very unfair in it."

"Ay, but I fear we will be as far aneath the right medium for a while, as ye are startit aboon it. We'll make a fine hand doing the honours o' the grand mansion-houses that ye hae biggit for us; the cavalry exercises; the guns an' the pointers; the wine an' the punch drinking; an' the singing o' the deboshed sangs. But we'll just come to the right set again in a generation or twa, and then as soon as we get ower hee, we'll get a downcome in our turn.—But, master, I say, how will you grand gentlemen take wi' a shepherd's life? How will ye like to be turned into reeky holes like this, where ye can hardly see your fingers afore ye, an' be reduced to the parritch and the horn-spoon?"

"I cannot tell, Andrew. I suppose it will have some advantages. It will teach us to say long prayers to put off the time; and if we should have the misfortune afterwards to pass into the bad place that you shepherds are all so terrified about, why, we will scarcely know any difference. I account that a great advantage in dwelling in such a place as this. We'll scarcely know the one place from the other."

"Ay, but O what a surprise ye will get when ye step out o' ane o' your grand palaces into hell! An' gin ye dinna repent in time, ye'll maybe get a little experiment o' that sort. Ye think ye hae said a very witty thing there; but a' profane wit's sinfu', an' whatever is sinfu' is shamefu'; and therefore it never suits to be said either afore God or man. Ye are just a good standin' sample o' the young tenantry o' Scotland at this time. Ye're ower genteel to be devout, an' ye look ower high, and depend ower muckle on the arm o' flesh, to regard the rod and Him that hath appointed

it. But it will fa' wi' the mair weight o' that! A blow that is seen coming may be wardit off; but if ane's sae proud as no to regard it, 'tis the less scaith that he be knockit down."

"I see not how any man can ward off this blow, Andrew. It has gathered its overwhelming force in springs over which we have no control, and is of that nature that no industry of man can aught avail. It is merely as a drop in the bucket; and I greatly fear that this grievous storm is come to lay the axe to the root of the tree."

"I'm glad to hear, however, that ye hae some scripture phrases at your tongue roots. I never heard you use ane in a serious mood before; an' I hope there will be a reformation yet. If adversity will hae that effect, I shall submit to my share o' the loss that the storm should lie still for a while, and cut off a wheen o' the creatures that ye aince made eedals o', and now dow hardly bide to see. But that's the gate wi' a' things that ane sets up for warldly worship in place o' the true object; they turn a' out curses and objects o' shame and disgrace. As for warding off the blow, master, I see no resource but throwing up the farms ilk ane, and trying to save a remnant out o' the fire. The lairds want naething better than for ye to nfl in arrears; then they will get a' your stocks for neist to naething, and have the land stockit themsels as they had langs-ne; and you will be their keepers, or vassals, the same as we are to you at present. As to hinging on at the present rents, it is madness the very extremity of madness. I hae been a herd here for fifty years, an' I ken as weel what the ground will pay at every price of sheep as you do, and I daresay a great deal better. When I came here first, your father paid less than the third of the rent that you are bound to pa~'; sheep of every description were dearer, lambs, ewes, and wedders; and I ken weel he was making no money of it, honest man, but merely working his way, with some years a little over, and some naething. And how is it possible that you can pay three times the rent at the same prices o' sheep? I say the very presumption of the thing is sheer madness. And it is not only this farm, but you may take it as an average of all the farms in the country, that be/ore the French war began, the sheep were dearer than they are now—the farms were not above one-third of the rents at an average, and the farmers were not making any money. They have lost their summer day during the French war, which will never return to them; and the only resource they have, that I can see, is to abandon their farms in time, and try to save a remnant. Things will come to their true level presently, but not afore the auld stock o' farmers are crushed past rising again. An' then I little wat what's to come o' ye; for an we herds get the land, we winna employ you as our shepherds, that you may depend on."

"Well, Andrew, these are curious facts that you tell me of the land having all changed occupiers about a certain period. I wish you could have stated the causes with certainty. Was not there a great loss on this farm once, when it was said the burn was so dammed up with dead carcasses that it changed its course?"

"Ay, but that's quite a late story. It happened in my own day, and I believe mostly through mischance. That was the year Rob Dodds was lost in the Carny Cleuch. I remember of it, but cannot tell what year it was, for I was but a little bilsh o' a callant then."

"Who was Rob Dodds? I never heard of the incident before."

"Ay, but your father remembered weel o't; for he sent a' his men monv a day to look for the corpse. but a' to nae purpose. I'll never forget it; for it made an impression on me sae deep that I coudna get rest i' my bed for months and days. He was a young handsome bonny lad, an honest man's only son, and was herd wi' Tam Linton in the Birkhill. The Lintons were sair come down then; for this Tam was a herd, and had Rab hired as his assistant. Weel, it sae happen'd that Tam's wife had occasion to cross the wild heights atween the Birkhill and Tweedsmuin, to see her mother, or sister, on some express; and Tam sent the young man wi' her to see her owen the

Donald's Cleuch edge. It was in the middle o' winter, and, if I mind right, this time sixty years. The morning was calm, frosty, and threatening snaw, but the ground clear of it at the time they set out. Rob had orders to set his mistress to the height, and return home; but by the time they had got to the height, the snaw had come on, so the good lad went all the way through Guemshope with her, and in sight of the water o' Frood. He crossed all the wildest o' the heights on his return in safety; and on the middle-end, west of Loch-Skene, he met with Robin Laidlaw, that went to the Highlands and grew a great farmer after that. Robin was gathering the Balmoody ewes; and as they were neighbours, and both herding to ae master, Laidlaw testified some anxiety that the young man might not find his way hame, for the blast had then come on very severe. Dodds leugh at him, an' said, 'he was nae main feared for finding the gate hame, than he was for finding the gate to his mouth when he was hungry.' 'Weel weel,' quo' Robin, 'keep the band o' the hill a' the way, for I hae seen as clever a fellow warred on sic a day; an be sure to hund the ewes out o the Brand Law scores as ye gang by.' 'Tammy charged me to bring a backfu' o' peats wi' me,' said he, 'but I think I'll no gang near the peat stack the day.' 'Na,' quo' Robin, 'I think ye'll no be sae mad.' 'But, O man,' quo' the lad, 'hae ye ony bit bread about your pouches, for I'm unco hungry. The wife was in sic a hurry that I had to come away without getting ony breakfast, an' I had sae far to gang wi' her, that I'm grown unco toom i' the inside.' 'The fiend ae inch I hae, Robie, my man, or ye should hae had it,' quo' Laidlaw. 'But an that be the case, gang straight hame, and never heed the ewes, come o' them what will.' 'O there's nae fear!' said he, 'I'll turn the ewes, and be hame in good time too.' And with that he left Laidlaw, and went down the Middle-Craig-end, jumping and playing in a frolicsome way ower his stick. He had a large lang-nebbit staff in his hand, which Laidlaw took particular notice of, thinking it would be a good help for the young man in the rough way he had to gang.

"There was never another word about the matter till that day eight days. The storm having increased to a terrible drift, the snaw had grown very deep, and the herds, wha lived about three miles sindry, hadna met for a' that time. But that day Tam Linton an Robin Laidlaw met at the Tail Burn; an' after cracking a lang time thegither, Tam says to the tither, just as it war by chance, 'Saw ye naething o' our young dinnagood this day eight days, Robin? He gaed awa that morning to set our goodwife owen the height, an' has never main lookit near me, the careless rascal!'

" 'Tam Linton, what's that you're saying? what's that I hear ye saying, Tam Linton?' quo' Robin, wha was dung clean stupid wi' horror. 'Hae ye never seen Rob Dodds sin' that morning he gaed away wi' your wife?'

" 'Na, never,' quo' the tither.

" 'Why then, sir, let me tell ye, that you'll never see him again in this world alive,' quo' Robin, 'for he left me on the Middle-end on his way hame that day at eleven o'clock, just as the day was coming to the warst.—But, Tam Linton, what was't ye war saying? Ye're telling me a great lee, man.—Do ye say that ye haena seen Rob Dodds sin' that day?'

" 'Haena I tauld ye that I hae never seen his face sinsyne!' quo Tammie.

" 'Sae I hear ye saying,' quo' Robin again. 'But ye're tellin' me a downright made lee. The thing's no possible; for ye hae the very staff i' your hand that he had in his, when he left me in the drift that day.'

" 'I ken naething about sticks or staves, Robin Laidlaw,' says Tam, lookin' rather like ane caught in an ill turn. 'The staff wasna likely to come hame without the owner; and I can only say, I hae seen nae main o' Rob Dodds sin' that morning; an' I had thoughts that, as the day grew

sae ill, he had hadden fornit a' the length wi' our wife, and was biding wi' her fo'ks a' this time to bring her hame again when the storm had settled.'

" 'Na na, Tammie, ye needna get into ony o' thae lang-windit stories wi' me,' quo' Robin. 'For I tell ye that's the staff that Rob Dodds had in his hand when I last saw him; sae ye have either seen him dead or living I'll gie my oath to that.'

" 'Ye had better take care what ye say, Robin Laidlaw,' says Tam, vera fiercely, 'or I'll maybe make ye blithe to eat in your words again.'

" 'What I hae said, I'll stand to, Tammy Linton,' says Robin. 'An' main than that,' says he, 'if that good young man has come to an untimely end, I'll see his blood requited at your hand.'

"Then there was word sent away to the Hopehouse to his parents, and ye may wed ken, master, what heavy news it was to them, for Rob was their only son; they had gien him a good education, an' muckle muckle they thought o' him; but naething wad serve him but he wad be a shepherd. His father came wi' the maist part o' Ettenick parish at his back; and mony sharp and threatening words there past atween him and Tam; but what could they make o't? The lad was lost, and nae law, nor nae revenge could restore him again; sae they had naething for't, but to spread athwart a' the hills looking for the corpse. The hale country raise for ten miles round, on ane or twa good days that happened; but the snaw was still lying, an' a' their looking was in vain. Tam Linton wad look nane. He took the dorts, and never heeded the fo'k main than they hadna been there. A' that height atween Loch-Skene an' the Birkhill was just movin' wi' fo'k for the space o' three weeks, for the twa auld fo'k, the lad's parents, coudna get ony rest, an' fo'k sympathized unco sair wi' them. At length the snaw gaed maistly away, an' the weather turned fine, an' I gaed out ane o' the days wi' my father to look for the body. But, aih wow! I was a feared wight! whenever I saw a bit sod, or a knowe, or a grey stane. I stood still an' trembled for fear it was the dead man, and no ae step durst I steer farther, till my father gaed up to a' thae things. I gaed nae main back to look for the corpse; for I'm sure if we had found the body I wad hae gane out o' my judgment.

"At length every body tired o' looking, but the auld man himsel. He travelled day after day, ill weather and good weather, without intermission. They said it was the waesomest thing ever was seen, to see that good auld grey-headed man gaun sae lang by himsel', looking for the remains o' his only son. The maist part o' his friends advised him at length to gie up the search, as the finding o' the body seemed a thing a'thegither hopeless. But he declared he wad look for his son till the day o' his death; and if he could but find his bones, he would carry them away from the wild moors and lay them in the grave where he was to lie himsel'. Tam Linton was apprehended, and examined on oath afore the sheriff; but there was nae proof could be led against him, an' he wan off. He swore that, as far as he remembered, he got the staff standing at the mouth o' the peat stack; and that he conceived that either the lad or himsel' had left it there some day when bringing away a burden of peats. The shepherds' peats had not been led home that year, and the stack stood on a hill head, half a mile frae the house, and the herds were obliged to carry them home as they needed them.

"But there was a mystery hung over that lad's death that was never cleared up, nor ever will a' thegither. Every man was convinced, in his own mind, that Linton knew of the body a' the time; and also, that the young man had not come by his death fairly. It was proven that the lad's dog had come hame several times, and that Tam Linton had been seen kicking it frae about his house; and as the dog could be no where all that time, but waiting on the body, if that had not been concealed in some more than ordinary way, the dog would at least have been seen. At length, it was suggested to the old man, that there were always dead lights hovered over a corpse by night,

if the body was left exposed to the air; and it was a fact that two drowned men had been found in a field of whins, where the water had left the bodies, by means of the dead lights, a very little while before that. On the first calm night, therefore, the old desolate man went to the Merkside-edge, to the top of a high hill that overlooked all the ground where there was ony likelihood that the body would be lying. He watched there the lee-lang night, keeping his eye constantly roaming ower the broken waste over against him, but he never noticed the least glimmer of the dead lights. About midnight, however, he heard a dog barking; it likewise gae twa or three melancholy yowls, and then ceased. Robin Dodds was convinced it was his son's dog; but it was at such a distance, being about twa miles off, that he coudna be sure where it was, or which o' the hills on the opposite side it was on. The second night he kept watch on the Path Knows, a hill which he supposed the howling o' the dog came frae. But that hill being all surrounded to the west and north by tremendous ravines and cataracts, he heard nothing o' the dog. In the course of the night, however, he saw, or fancied he saw, a momentary glimmer o' light, in the depth of the great gulf immediately below where he sat; and that at three different times, always in the same place. He now became convinced that the remains o' his dear son were in the bottom of the linn, a place which he conceived inaccessible to man; it being so deep from the summit where he stood, that the roar o' the waterfall only reached his ears now and then wi' a loud whush! as if it had been a sound wandering across the hills by itself. But sae intent was Robin on this Willie-an-the-wisp light, that he took landmarks frae the ae summit to the other, to make sure o' the place; and as soon as daylight came, he set about finding a passage down to the bottom of the linn. He effected this by coming to the foot of the linn, and tracing its course backward, sometimes wading in water, and sometimes clambering over rocks, till at length, with a beating heart, he reached the very spot where he perceived the light; and in the grey o' the morning, he saw there was something lying there that differed in colour from the iron-hued stones, and rocks, of which the linn was composed. He was in great astonishment what this could be; for, as he came closer on it, he saw it had no likeness to the dead body o' a man, but rather appeared to be a heap o' bed-clothes. And what think you it turned out to be? For I see ye're glowing as your een were gaun to loup out. Just neither main nor less than a strong mineral well; or what the doctors ca' a callybit spring, a' broustered about wi' heaps o' soapy, limy kind o' stuff, that it seems had thrown out a sort o' fiery vapours i' the night-time.

“However, Robin being unable to do ony main in the way o' searching, had now nae hope left but in finding his dead son by some kind o' supernatural means. Sae he determined to watch a third night, and that at the very identical peat-stack where it had been said his son's staff was found. He did sad; an' about midnight, ere ever he wist, the dog set up a howl close beside him. He called on him by his name, and the dog came and fawned on his old acquaintance, and whimpered, and whinged, an' made sic a wark, as cou'd hardly hae been trowed. Robin keepit him in his bosom a' the night, and fed him wi' pieces o' bread, and said mony kind things to him; and then as soon as the sun rose, he let him gang; and the poor affectionate creature went straight to his dead master; who, after all, was lying in a little green spnithy hollow, not above a musket-shot from the peat-stack. This rendered the whole affair more mysterious than ever; for Robin Dodds himself, and above twenty men beside, could all have made oath that they had looked into that place again and again, and that so minutely, that a dead bird could not have been in it, that they would not have seen. However, there the body of the youth was gotten, after having been lost for the long space often weeks; and not in a state of great decay neither, for it rather appeared swollen, as if it had been lying among water.

“Conjecture was now driven to great extremities in accounting for all these circumstances. It was manifest to every one, that the body had not been all the time in that place. But then, where had it been? Or what could have been the reasons for concealing it? These were the puzzling considerations. There were a hunder different things suspectit; and mony o’ them, I dare say, a hunder miles frae the truth; but on the whole, Tammy was sam lookit down on, and almaist perfectly abhorred by the country; for it was weel kenn’d that he had been particularly churlish and severe on the young man at a times, and seemed to have a peculiar dislike to him. An it hadna been the wife, wha was a kind considerate sort o’ a body, if gi’en Tam his will, it was reckoned he wad hae hungered the lad to dead. After that, Tammy left the place, an’ gaed away, I watna where; and the country, I believe, came gayan near to the truth o’ the story at last. There was a girl in the Birkhill house at the time, whether a daughter o’ Tam’s, or no, I hae forgot, though I think otherwise. However, she durstna for her life tell a’ she kenn’d as lang as the investigation was gaun on; but it at last spunkit out that Rob Dodds had got hame safe eneugh; and that Tam got into a great rage at him, because he had not brought a burden o’ peats, there being none in the house. The youth excused himself on the score of fatigue and hunger; but Tammy swore at him, and said, ‘The de’il he in your teeth, gin they shall break bread, till ye gang back out to the hill-head and bring a burden o peats.’ Dodds refused; on which Tam struck him, and forced him away; and he went crying an’ greetin’ out at the door, but never came back. She also told, that after poor Rob was lost, Tam tried several times to get at his dog to fell it with a stick, but the creature was terrified for him, and made its escape. It was therefore thought, an there was little doubt, that Rob, through fatigue and hunger, and reckless of death at the way he had been guidit, went out to the hill, and died at the peat-stack, the mouth of which was a shelter from the drift-wind; and that his cruel master, conscious o’ the way he had used him, and dreading skaith, had trailed away the body, and sunk it in some pool in these unfathomable linns, or otherwise concealed it, wi’ the intention, that the world might never ken whether the lad was actually dead or had absconded. If it had not been for the dog, from which it appears he had been unable to conceal it, and the old man’s perseverance, to whose search there appeared to be no end, it is probable he would never have laid the body in a place where it could have been found, otherwise than by watching and following the dog. By that mode, the intentional concealment of the corpse would have been discovered, so that Tammy all that time could not be quite at his ease, and it was no wonder he attempted to fell the dog. But where the body could have been deposited, that the faithful animal was never discovered by the searachers, during the day, for the space often weeks, that baffled a’ the conjectures that ever could be tried.

“The two old people, the lad’s father and mother, never got over their great and cruel loss. They never held up their heads again, nor joined in society ony main, except in attending divine worship. It might be truly said o’ them, that they spent the few years that they survived their son in constant prayer and humiliation; but they soon died, short while after ane anither. As for Tam Linton, he left this part of the country; but it was said there was a curse hung over him an’ his a’ his life, an’ that he never did main weel. That was the year, master, on which our burn was dammed wi’ the dead sheep; and in fixing the date, you see, I hae been led into a lang story, and am just nae farther wi’ the main point than when I began.”

“I wish from my heart, Andrew, that you would try to fix a great many old dates in the same manner; for I confess I am more interested in your lang stories, than in either your lang prayers, or your lang sermons, about repentance and amendment. But pray, you were talking of the judgments that overtook Tam Linton—Was that the same Tam Linton that was precipitated from

the Brand Law by the break of a snaw wreath, and he and all his sheep jammed into the hideous gulf, called The Grey Mare's Tail?"

"The very same, sir; and that might he accountit ane o' the first judgments that befel him, for there were many of his a in sheep in the flock. Tam asserted all his life, that he went into the linn along with his hirsell, but no man ever believed him; for there was not one of the sheep came out alive, and how it was possible for the carl to have come safe out, naeboddy could see. It was, indeed, quite impossible; for it had been such a break of snaw as had scarcely ever been seen. The gulf was crammed sae fu', as that ane could hae gane owen it like a pendit bnigg; and no a single sheep could be gotten out, either dead or living. When the thaw came, the burn wrought a passage for itself below the snaw, but the arch stood till summer. I have heard my father oft describe the appearance of that vault as he saw it on his way from Moffat fair. Ane hadna gane far into it, he said, till it turned darkish, like an ill-hued twilight; an' sic a like arch o' carnage he never saw! There were limbs o' sheep hingin' in a' directions, the snaw was wedged sae firm. Some hale carcasses hung by the neck, some by a spauld; then there was a hale forest o' legs sticking out in ae place, an horns in another, terribly mangled an' broken; an' it was a'thegither sic a frightsome-looking place, that he was blithe to get out of again."

After looking at the sheep, tasting old Janet's best kebbuck, and oatmeal cakes, and preeing the whisky bottle, the young farmer again set out through the deep snaw, on his way home. But Andrew made him promise, that if the weather did not amend, he was to come back in a few days and see how the poor sheep were coming on; and, as an inducement, promised to tell him a great many old anecdotes of the shepherd's life.