

The Laird of Cassway

By James Hogg

There is an old story which I have often heard related, about a great laird of Cassway, in an outer corner of Dumfries-shire, of the name of Beattie, and his two sons; but whether it is a dream or an apparition, as it partakes of the nature of both, I cannot decide. This Beattie had occasion to be almost constantly in England, because, as my informant said, he took a great hand in government affairs, from which I deem that the tradition had its rise about the time of the civil wars; for about the close of that time, the Scotts took the advantage of the times to put the Beatties down, who, for some previous ages, had maintained the superiority of that district.

Be that as it may, the laird of Cassway's second son, Francis, fell desperately in love with a remarkably beautiful girl, the eldest daughter of Henry Scott of Drumfielding, a gentleman, but still only a retainer, and far beneath Beattie of Cassway, both in wealth and influence. Francis was a scholar newly returned from the university—was tall, handsome, of a pale complexion, and gentlemanly appearance, while Thomas, the eldest son, was fair, ruddy, and stout made, a perfect picture of health and good-humour, a sportsman, a warrior, and a jovial blade; one who would not suffer a fox to get rest in the whole moor district, nor a pretty girl to sleep quietly in her bed. He rode the best horse, kept the best hounds, played the best fiddle, danced the best country bumpkin, and took the best refreshment of mountain dew of any man between Erick brae and Teviot stone, and was altogether that sort of a young man, that whenever he cast his eyes on a pretty girl, either at chapel or weapon-shaw, she would hide her face, and giggle as if tickled by some unseen hand.

Now, though Thomas, or the Young Laird, as he was called, had only spoke once to Ellen Scott in his life, at which time he chucked her below the chin, and bid the deil take him if ever he saw as bonny a face in his whole born days; yet, for all that, Ellen loved him. It could not be said that she was in love with him, for a maiden's heart must be won before it is given absolutely away; but hers gave him the preference to any other young man. She loved to see him, to hear of him, and to laugh at him; and it was even observed by the domestics, that Tam Beattie o' the Cassway's name came oftener into her conversation than there was any occasion for.

Such was the state of affairs when Francis came home, and fell desperately in love with Ellen Scott; and his father being in England, and he under no restraint, he went forthwith and paid his addresses to her. She received him with a kindness and affability that pleased him to the heart; but he little wist that this was only a spontaneous and natural glow of kindness toward him because of his connexions, and rather because he was the young Laird of Cassway's only brother, than the poor but accomplished Francis Beattie, the scholar from Oxford.

He was, however, so much delighted with her, that he asked her father's permission to pay his addresses to her, and, in one word, court her for his wife. Her father, who was a prudent and sensible man, answered him in this wise—"That nothing would give him greater delight than to see his beloved Ellen joined with so accomplished and amiable a young gentleman in the bonds of holy wedlock, provided his father's assent was previously attained. But as he himself was subordinate to another house, not on the best terms with the house of Cassway, he would not take it on him to sanction any such connexion without old Squire Beattie's full consent. That, moreover, as he, Francis Beattie, was just setting out in life, as a lawyer, there was but too much reason to doubt that a matrimonial connexion with Ellen at that time, would be highly imprudent;

therefore it was not to be thought further of till the old Squire was consulted. In the meantime, he should always be welcome to his house, and to his daughter's company, as he had the same dependence on his honour and integrity, as if he had been a son of his own."

The young man thanked him affectionately, and could not help acquiescing in the truth of his remarks, promised not to mention matrimony further, till he had consulted his father, and added—"But indeed you must excuse me, if I avail myself of your permission to visit here often, as I am sensible it will be impossible for me to live for any space of time out of my dear Ellen's sight." He was again made welcome, and the two parted mutually pleased with each other.

Henry Scott of Drumfielding was a widower, with six daughters, over whom presided Mrs Jane Jerdan, their maternal aunt, a right old maid, with fashions and ideas even more antiquated than herself. No sooner had the young wooer taken his leave, than in she bounces to the room, the only sitting apartment in the house, and says, in a loud important whisper, "What's that young swankey of a lawyer wanting, that he's aye hankering sae muckle about our town? I'll tell you what, brother Harry, it strikes me that he wants to make a wheel-wright o' your daughter Nell. Now, gin he axes your consent to ony sickan thing, dinna ye grant it. That's a'. Take an auld fool's advice gin ye wad prosper. Fo'ks are a wise ahint the hand, and sae will ye be."

"Dear, Mrs Jane, what objections can you have to Mr Francis Beattie, the most accomplished young gentleman of the whole country?"

"'Completed gentleman! 'Completed kim-milk, float-whey, and jeelaberry! I'll tell you what, brother Harry, afore I were a landless lady, I wad rather be a tailor's layboard, and hae the red-het goose gàun bizzing up my rumple. What has he to maintain a lady spouse with? The wind o' his lungs, forsooth!—thinks to sell that for goud in goupings. Hech me! Crazy wad they be wha wad buy it; and they wha trust to crazy people for their living will live but crazily. Take an auld fool's advice gin ye wad prosper, else ye'll be wise ahint the hand. Have nae mair to do with him—Nell's bread for his betters, tell him that. Or, by my certy, gin I meet wi' him face to face, I'll tell him."

"It would be unfriendly in me to keep aught a secret from you, sister, considering the interest you have taken in my family. I have given him my consent to visit my daughter, but at the same time have restricted him from mentioning matrimony untill he have consulted his father."

"An' what is the visiting to gang for then? Sack possets and blawflummery? Blaw the soup, dawtie, that it dinna blister the sweet gab o' you! O, it is sac savoury and sweet, this courting and cooing between a pennyless maid and a briefless lawyer! Fiend hae me, gin I wadna rather ride the stang through the great burrough of Lochmaben, afore I were set down to woo, and hadna either marriage or some waur thing to converse about. Away wi' him! Our Nell's food for his betters. What wad you think an she could get the young laird his brother wi' a blink o' her ee?"

"Never speak to me of that, Mrs Jane. I wad rather see the poorest of his shepherd lads coming about my child than he;" and with these words Henry left the room.

Mrs Jane stood long, making faces, shaking her apron with both hands, nodding her head, and sometimes giving a stamp with her foot. "I have set my face against that connexion," said she; "our Nell's no made for a lady to a London lawyer. It wad set her rather better to be Lady of Cassway. The young laird for me! I'll hae the branks of love thrown over the heads o' the twasome, tie the tangs thegither, and then let them gallop like twa kippled grews. My brother Harry's a simple man; he disna ken the credit that he has by his daughters—thanks to some other body than he! Niece Nell has a shape, an ee, and a lady manner that wad killhab the best lord o' the kingdom, were he to come under their influence and my manoeuvres. She's a Jerdan a' through, and that I'll let them ken! Fo'ks are a' wise ahint the hand; credit only comes by catch

an' keep. Goodnight to a younger brothers, puffings o' love vows, and sabs o' wind! Gie me the good green hills, the gruff widders, and bob-tail'd ewes; and let the law and the gospel men sell the wind o' their lungs as dear as they can.

In a few days, Henry of Drumfielding was called out to attend his chief on some expedition; on which Mrs Jane, not caring to trust her message to any other person, went over to Cassway, and invited the young laird to see her niece, quite convinced that her charms and endowments would at once enslave the elder brother as they had done the younger. Tam Beattie was delighted at finding such a good back friend as Mrs Jane, for he had for a twelvemonth had designs upon Ellen Scott; he had scarcely considered of what nature, but was quite convinced of the necessity of some love affair between the beauty and himself, and it was only sheer want of leisure that had prevented him from putting it in execution. In the height of his romance, however, he, either through chance or design, asked Mrs Jane if the young lady was privy to this invitation.

"She privy to it!" exclaimed Mrs Jane, shaking her apron. "Ha, wed I wat, no! She wad soon hae flown in my face wi' her gibery and her jaukery, had I tauld her my errand; but the gowk kens what the tittling wants, although it is not aye crying, Give, give, like the horse loch-leech."

"Does the horse-leech really cry that, Mrs Jane? I should think, from a view of its mouth, that it could scarcely cry anything," said Tom.

"Are ye sic a reprobate as to deny the words o' the Scripture, sir? Hech, wae's me! what some folks hae to answer for! We're a' wise ahint the hand. But hark ye,—come ye ower in time, else I am feared she may be settled for ever out o' your reach. Now, I canna bide to think on that, for I have always thought you twa made for ane anither. Let me take a look o' you frae tap to tae—O yes made for ane anither, as led as ever the hart was made for the hind, or the sheath for the sword. Come ower in time, before billy Harry come hame again; and let your visit be in timeous hours, else I'll gie you the back of the door to keep. Wild reprobate, to deny that the horse loch-leech can speak! Ha—he he is the man for me. Down wi' a courting, and kissing, and sighing, and sabbing, without a motive! for they wha gang to seek an errand generally find one."

Thomas Beattie was true to his appointment, as may be supposed, and Mrs Jane having her niece rigged out in eminent style, he was perfectly charmed with her; and really it cannot be denied that Ellen was as much delighted with him. She was young, gay, and frolicsome, and Tom had no sooner met with her, even in her aunt's presence, than he began a-flattering her, and from that to toying and romping with her; so that Ellen never spent a more joyous and happy afternoon, or knew before what it was to be in a presence that delighted her. True, he never mentioned the word marriage, though Mrs Jane gave him plenty of opportunities, but Ellen liked his company a great deal the better. It had always proved a chilling, damping sort of term, that, to her; and in the buoyancy of youthful spirits, innocence, and gaiety, she liked better that it should be set aside for the present; and never two lovers came better on than Tom Beattie of Cassway and the beautiful Ellen of Drumfielding.

There were two beds in the room with running doors, all of which stood delightfully open, in order to show the beautiful coverlets within; and as Ellen had become very teasing, Mrs Jane ventured to remind the laird of the above circumstances, adding, that she deemed the wild gilly well deserved to feel the metal of a gentleman's beard, as none of her former lovers had been blessed with such a privilege. The laird took the hint, and tried, at a gentle wrestle, to place Ellen on the stock of one of the beds, but he could not, without being more rude, than, even in that rude age, good manners allowed; and in this gentle exercise were the two engaged, altogether by themselves, when the room-door opened, and in popped Francis Beattie! Ellen's face was flushed with laughter and animated exertion, and when she saw her devoted lover at her side, she

blushed still deeper, and her glee was damped in a moment. She looked rather like a condemned criminal, or at least a guilty creature, than what she really was, a being over whose mind the cloud of guilt had never cast its shadow.

Francis loved her above all things on earth or in heaven, and the moment he saw her standing abashed, and extricating herself gently from the hands of his brother, his spirit was moved to jealousy-to maddening and uncontrollable jealousy. His ears rang, his hair stood on end, and the contour of his face became like a bent bow. He walked up to his brother with his hand on his hilt, and almost inarticulately addressed him thus, while his teeth ground together like a horse-rattle:

“Pray, sir, may I ask you of your intentions, and of what you are seeking here?”

“I know not, Frank, what right you have to ask any such questions; but you will allow that I have a right to ask at you what the devil you are seeking here at present, seeing you come so very inopportunistly.”

“Do you know what you are doing, sir, what you have done, or what you have attempted? That maiden, sir, is my maiden—my beloved and betrothed maiden dearer to me than life and all its enjoyments; and ere you touch that dear maiden with a foul finger, sir, you shall sooner touch my heart’s blood! Dare you put it to the issue of the sword this moment?”

“Come now, dear Francis, don’t fall on to act the fool and the madman both at a time, for this maiden is not your maiden, nor ever will be either your maiden or your wife; and rather than bring such a dispute to the issue of the sword between two brothers who never had a quarrel in their lives, I propose that we bring it to a much more temperate and decisive issue here where we stand, by giving the maiden her choice. Stand you there at that corner of the room, I at this, and Ellen Scott in the middle; let us both ask her, and to whomsoever she comes, the prize be his. Why should we try to decide, by the loss of one of our lives, what we cannot decide, and what may be decided in a friendly and rational way in one minute?”

“It is easy for you, sir, to talk temperately and with indifference on such a trial, but not so with me. This young lady is dear to my heart.”

“Well, but so is she to mine.”

“I have asked her of her father as my wife, and have his consent. I have asked herself, and have not been denied; and here again if I do ask her, I ask her only as my wife.”

“Well, Frank, then you have the advantage of me, and it is but justice you should avail yourself of it. For I have *not* asked her father, nor do I intend it; and when I ask her here from you, I ask her only as my mistress.”

“And have you the arrogance to suppose that this peerless young maiden, this flower of the Border, would listen to a suit so degrading and ruinous?”

“No man can tell, Frank, to what a woman will listen, or to what she will not listen; all that I say is, that I am willing to take my chance and abide by the consequences. I was not aware of any engagement between you and her when I made the proposal; and though I find I am now placed at a manifest disadvantage, I am willing to abide by her fiat; for what do a man’s pretensions signify, without the countenance and assent of the object of his affection? Let us, therefore, appeal to the lady at once, whose claim is the best, and as your pretensions are the highest, do you ask her first.”

“My dearest Ellen,” said Francis, humbly and affectionately, “you know that my whole soul is devoted to your love, and that I aspire to it only in the most honourable way; confirm then my appeal by coming to my arms, and suffering me to embrace you as my own loved and betrothed dame, in the presence of this unlicensed and presumptuous libertine.”

Ellen stood dumb and motionless, looking stedfastly down at the hem of her green jerkin, which she was nibbling with both her hands. She dared not lift an eye to either of the brothers, though apparently conscious that she ought to have flown into the arms of Francis.

“Ellen, I need not tell you that I love you, for a woman knows that by instinct,” said Thomas. “Nor need I attempt to tell how dearly and how long I will love you, for in faith I cannot. My pretensions, it is true, are not of the most honourable description, as some men count honour; but in truth, I love you so well, that I doubt very much if I can live without you in one way or other. I know you love me better than perhaps you ought to do. Put reason to her cradle then, and suffer nature to have her own way, and I am sure of my Ellen for them all.”

Ellen looked up. There was a smile on her lovely face; an arch, mischievous, and happy smile, but it turned not on Thomas. Her face turned to the contrary side, but yet the beam of that smile fell not on Francis, who stood in a state of as terrible suspense between hope and fear, as a sinner at the gate of heaven, who has implored of St Peter to open the gate, and awaits a final answer. The die of his fate was soon cast, for Ellen Scott looking one way, yet moving another, straightway threw herself into Thomas Beattie’s arms, exclaiming, “Ah, Tom! Tom! I fear I am doing that which I shall rue, but I must trust to your generosity, for bad as you are, I like you the best.”

Thomas was deeply affected by this appeal of the young and splendid beauty to his generosity. He took her in his arms, and embraced and kissed her; but before he could say a word in return, the despair and rage of his brother breaking forth over every barrier of reason, interrupted him. “This is the trick of a coward, to screen himself from the chastisement he deserves,” cried Francis, shaking his sword at his brother. “A mean and infamous appeal to the agitated passions of an inexperienced and infatuated girl. But you escape me not thus! Follow me if you dare!” And he rushed from the house, shaking his naked sword at his brother.

Ellen trembled with agitation at the young man’s rage; and while Thomas still pressed her to his bosom, and assured her of his unalterable affection, in came Mrs Jane Jerdan, shaking her apron, and tucking it so as to make it twang like a bowstring.

“What’s a’ this, Squire Tummas? Are we to be babbled out o’ house an’ hadding by this rapacious young lawyer o’ yours? By the souls o’ the Jerdans, I’ll kick up sic a stoure about his lugs as shall blind the juridical een o’ him! It’s queer that men should study the law only to learn to break it. Sure am I mæ gentleman that hasna been bred a lawyer wad come into a neighbour’s house bullyragging that gate wi’ sword in hand, malice prepense in his eye, and venom on his tongue. Just as a lassie hadna her am freedom o’ choice, because a fool has been pleased to ask her! Haud the grip ye hae, Niece Nell, ye hae made a wise choice for aince. Tam’s the man for my money! Fo’ks are a’ wise ahint the hand, but real wisdom lies in taking time by the forelock. But, Squire Tam, the thing that I want to ken is this—Are you going to put up wi’ a’ that bullying and threatening? Or do ye propose to chastise the fool according to his folly?”

“In truth, Mrs Jane, I am very sorry for my brother’s behaviour, and could not with honour yield any more than I did to pacify him. But he must be humbled. It will not do to suffer him to carry matters with so high a hand.”

“Now, wad ye be but advised and leave him to me, I would play him sic a plisky as he shouldna forget till his dying day. By the souls o’ the Jerdans, I would! Now promise to me that ye winna fight him.”

“O promise, promise!” cried Ellen vehemently, “for the sake of heaven’s love, promise my aunt that.”

Thomas smiled and shook his head as much as if he had said, "you do not know what you are asking." Mrs Jane went on.

"Do it then—do it with a vengeance, and remember this, that wherever ye set the place o' combat, be it in hill or dale, deep linn or moss hagg, I shall have a thirdsman there to encourage thee on. I shall give you a meeting you little wot of."

Thomas Beattie took all this for words of course, as Mrs Jane was well known for a raving, ranting old maid, whose vehemence few regarded, but a great many respected her for the care she had taken of her sister's family, and a greater number still regarded her with terror, as a being possessed of superhuman powers; so after many expressions of the fondest love for Ellen, he took his leave, his mind being made up how it behoved him to deal with his brother.

I forgot to mention before, that old Beattie lived at Nether Cassway with his family; and his eldest son Thomas at Over Cassway, who, on his father entering into a second marriage, was put in possession of that castle, and these lands. Francis, of course, lived in his father's house when in Scotland, and it was thus that his brother knew nothing of his frequent visits to Ellen Scott.

Well, that night, as soon as Thomas went home, he dispatched a note to his brother to the following purport: That he was sorry for the rudeness and unreasonableness of his behaviour. But if, on coming to himself, he was willing to make an apology before his mistress, then he (Thomas) would gladly extend to him the right hand of love and brotherhood; but if he refused this, he would please to meet him on the crook of Glen-dearg next morning by the sun-rising. Francis returned for answer that he would meet him at the time and place appointed, and make his asseverations good to his heart. There was then no farther door of reconciliation left open, but Thomas still had hopes of managing him even on the combat field.

Francis slept little that night, being wholly set on revenge for the disgraceful way in which he had lost his beloved mistress; and a little after daybreak he arose, and putting himself in light armour, proceeded to the place of rendezvous. He had farther to go than his elder brother, and on coming in sight of the crook of Glen-dearg, he perceived the latter there before him. He was wrapt in his cavalier cloak, and walking up and down the crook with impassioned strides, on which Francis soliloquised as follows, as he hasted on:—"Ah ha! so Tom is here before me! This is what I did not expect, for I did not think the flagitious dog had so much spirit or courage in him as to meet me. I am glad he has! for how I long to chastise him, and draw some of the pampered blood from that vain and insolent heart, which has bereaved me of all I held dear on earth!"

In this way did he cherish his wrath till close at his brother's side, and then addressing him in the same insolent terms, he desired him to cease his cowardly cogitations and draw. His opponent instantly wheeled about, threw off his horseman's cloak, and presented his sword; and behold the young man's father stood before him armed and ready for action! The sword fell from Francis's hand, and he stood appalled as if he had been a statue, unable either to utter a word or move a muscle.

"Take up thy sword, caitiff, and let it work thy ruthless work of vengeance here. Is it not better that thou shouldst pierce this old heart, worn out with care and sorrow, and chilled by the ingratitude of my race, than that of thy gallant and generous brother, the representative of our house, and the chief of our name? Take up thy sword, I say, and if I do not chastise thee as thou deservest, may Heaven reft the sword of justice from the hand of the avenger!"

"The God of Heaven forbid that I should ever lift my sword against my honoured father!" said Francis.

“Thou darest not, thou traitor and coward!” returned the father.—“I throw back the disgraceful terms in thy teeth which thou used’st to thy brother. Thou earnest here boiling with rancour, to shed his blood, and when I appear in person for him, thou darest not accept the challenge.”

“You never did me wrong, my dear father; but my brother has wronged me in the tenderest part.”

“Thy brother never wronged thee intentionally, thou deceitful and sanguinary fratricide; and where no previous intention exists, there is no offence committed. It was thou alone who forced this quarrel upon him, and I have great reason to suspect that thou designed’st to cut him off, that the inheritance and the maid might both be thine own. But here I swear by the arm that made me, and the Redeemer that saved me, if thou wilt not go straight and kneel to thy brother for forgiveness, confessing thy injurious treatment, and swearing submission to thy natural chief, I will banish thee from my house and presence for ever, and load thee with a parent’s curse, which shall never be removed from thy soul till thou art crushed to the lowest hell.”

The young scholar, being utterly astounded at his father’s words, and at the awful and stern manner in which he addressed him, whom he had never before reprimanded, was wholly overcome. He kneeled to his parent, and implored his forgiveness, promising, with tears, to fulfil every injunction which it would please him to enjoin; and on this understanding, the two parted on amicable and gracious terms.

Francis went straight to the tower of Over Cassway, and inquired for his brother, resolved to fulfil his father’s stern injunctions to the very letter. He was informed his brother was in his chamber in bed, and indisposed. He asked the porter farther, if he had not been forth that day, and was answered, that he had gone forth early in the morning in armour, but had quickly returned, apparently in great agitation, and betaken himself to his bed. He then requested to be taken to his brother, to which the servant instantly assented, and led him up to the chamber, never suspecting that there could be any animosity between the two only brothers; but on John Burgess opening the door, and announcing THE TUTOR, Thomas, being in a nervish state, was a little alarmed. “Remain in the room there, Burgess,” said he. “What, brother Frank, are you seeking here at this hour, armed capapee? I hope you are not come to assassinate me in my bed?”

“God forbid, brother,” said the other; “here, John, take my sword down with you, I want some private conversation with Thomas.” John did so, and the following conversation ensued; for as soon as the door closed, Francis dropt on his knees, and said, “O, my dear brother, I have erred grievously, and am come to confess my crime, and implore your pardon.”

“We have both erred, Francis, in suffering any earthly concern to incite us against each other’s lives. We have both erred, but you have my forgiveness cheerfully; here is my hand on it, and grant me thine in return. Oh, Francis, I have got an admonition that never will be erased from my memory, this morning, and which has caused me to see my life in a new light. What or whom think you I met an hour ago on my way to the crook of Glen-dearg to encounter you?”

“Our father, perhaps.”

“You have seen him then?”

“Indeed I have, and he has given me such a reprimand for severity, as son never received from a parent.”

“Brother Frank, I must tell you, and when I do, you will not believe me—It *was not* our father whom we both saw this morning.”

“It was no other whom I saw. What do you mean? Do you suppose that I do not know my own father?”

“I tell you it was not, and could not be. I had an express from him yesterday. He is two hundred miles from this, and cannot be in Scotland sooner than three weeks hence.”

“You astonish me, Thomas. This is beyond human comprehension.”

“It is true—that I avouch, and the certainty of it has sickened me at heart. You must be aware that he came not home last night, and that his horse and retinue have not arrived.”

“He was not at home, it is true, nor have his horse and retinue arrived in Scotland. Still there is no denying that our father is here, and that, at least, it was he who spoke to and admonished me.”

“I tell you it is impossible. A spirit hath spoke to us in our father’s likeness, for he is not, and cannot be in Scotland at this time. My faculties are altogether confounded by the event, not being able to calculate on the qualities or condition of our monitor. An evil spirit t certainly could not be, for all its admonitions pointed to good. I sorely dread, Francis, that our father is no more—that there hath been another engagement, that he hath lost his life, and that his soul hath been lingering around his family before taking its final leave of this sphere. I believe that our father is dead; and for my part, I am so sick at heart, that my nerves are all in a flame. Pray, do you take horse and post off for Salop, from whence his commission to me yesterday was dated, and see what hath happened to our reverend father.”

“I cannot, for my life, give credit to this, brother, or that it was any other being who rebuked me, but my father himself. Pray allow me to tarry another day at least, before I set out on such a wild-goose chase. Perhaps our father may appear in the neighbourhood, and may be concealing himself for some secret purpose. Did you tell him of our quarrel ?“

“No. He never asked me concerning it, but charged me sharply with my intent on the first word, and adjured me by my regard for his blessing, and my hope in heaven, to desist from my purpose.

“Then he knew it all intuitively; for when I first went in view of the spot appointed for our meeting, I perceived him walking sharply to and fro, wrapped in his military cloak. He never so much as deigned to look at me, till I came close to his side, and thinking it was yourself, I fell to upbraiding him, and desired him to draw. He then threw off his cloak, drew his sword, and telling me he came in your place, dared me to the encounter. But he knew all the grounds of our quarrel minutely, and laid the blame on me. I own I am a little puzzled to reconcile circumstances, but am convinced my father is near at hand. I heard his words, saw his eyes flashing anger and indignation. Unfortunately I did not touch him, which would have put an end to all doubts; for he did not present the hand of reconciliation to me, as I expected he would have done, on my yielding implicitly to all his injunctions.”

The two brothers then parted, with protestations of mutual forbearance in all time coming, and with an understanding, as that was the morning of Saturday, that if their father, or some word of him, did not reach home before the next evening, the Tutor of Cassway, as Francis was denominated, I know not why, was to take horse for the county of Salop, early on Monday’s morning.

Thomas, being thus once more left to himself, could do nothing but toss and tumble in his bed, and reflect on the extraordinary occurrence of that morning; and, after many troubled cogitations, it at length occurred to his recollection what Mrs Jane Jerdan had said to him: “Do it then. Do it with a vengeance!—But remember this, that wherever ye set the place of combat, be it in hill or dale, deep linn, or moss hagg, I shall have a thirdsman there to encourage you on. I shall give you a meeting you little wot of.”

If he was confounded before, he was ten times more so at the remembrance of these words, of most ominous import.

At the time he totally disregarded them, taking them for mere rhodomontade; but now the idea to him was terrible, that his father's spirit, like the prophet's of old, should have been conjured up by witchcraft; and then again he bethought himself that no witch would have employed her power to prevent evil. In short, he knew not what to think, and so, taking the hammer from its rest, he gave three raps on the pipe drum, for there were no bells in the towers of those days, and up came old John Burgess, Thomas Beattie's henchman, hunts-man, and groom of the chambers, one who had been attached to the family for fifty years, and he says, in his slow West Border tongue, "How's ton now, callan'?—Is tou ony betterlins? There has been tway stags seen in the Bloodhope-Linns tis mworning already."

"Ay, and there has been something else seen, John, that lies nearer to my heart, to-day." John looked at his master with an inquisitive eye and quivering lip, but said nothing. The latter went on, "I am very unwell to-day, John, and cannot tell what is the matter with me. I think I am bewitched."

"It's very likely thou is, callan'. I pits nae doubt on't at a'."

"Is there anybody in this moor district whom you ever heard blamed for the horrible crime of witchcraft?"

"Ay, that there is; mair than ane or tway. There's our neighbour, LuckyJerdan, for instance, and her niece, Nell, the warst o' the pair, I doubt." John said this with a sly stupid leer, for he had admitted the old hen to an audience with his master the day before, and had eyed him afterwards bending his course towards Drumfielding.

"John, I am not disposed to jest at this time; for I am disturbed in mind, and very ill. Tell me, in reality, did you ever hear Mrs Jane Jerdan accused of being a witch?"

"Why, look thee, master, I dares nae say she's a wotch, for Lucky has mony good points in her character. But it is wed kened she has mair power nor her am, for she can stwop a' the plews in Eskdale wi' a wave o' her hand, and can raise the dead out o' their graves, just as a matter o' course."

"That, John, is an extraordinary power, indeed. But did you never hear of her sending any living men to their graves? For as that is rather the danger that hangs over me, I wish you would take a ride over and desire Mrs Jane to come and see me. Tell her I am ill, and request of her to come and see me."

"I shall do that, callan'. But are tou sure it is the auld wotch I'm to bring? For it strikes me the young and maybe has done the deed; an' if sac, she is the fittest to effect the cure. But I sall bring the auld and. Dinna flee intil a rage, for I sall bring the auld ane—though, gude forgi'e me, it is unco like bringing the houdy."

Away went John Burgess to Drumfielding, but Mrs Jane would not move at his entreaties. She sent word back to his master to "rise out o' his bed, for he wad be waur if onything ailed him; an' if he had ought to say to auld Jane Jerdan, she would be ready to hear it at hame, though he behoved to remember that it wasna ilka subject under the sun that she could thole to be questioned anent."

With this answer John was forced to return, and there being no accounts of old Beattie having been seen in Scotland, the young men remained over the Sabbath-day in the utmost consternation at the apparition of their father which they had seen, and the appalling rebuke they had received from it. The most incredulous mind could scarce doubt that they had had communion with a supernatural being; and not being able to draw any other conclusion themselves, they became persuaded that their father was dead; and accordingly both prepared for setting out early on Monday morning towards the county of Salop, from whence they had last heard of him.

But just as they were ready to set out, when their spurs were buckled on and their horses bridled, Andrew Johnston, their father's confidential servant, arrived from the place to which they were bound. He had rode night and day, never once stinting the light gallop, as he said, and had changed his horse seven times. He appeared as if his ideas were in a state of derangement and confusion; and when he saw his young masters standing together, and ready-mounted for a journey, he stared at them as if he scarcely believed his own senses. They of course asked immediately for the cause of his express, but his answers were equivocal, and he appeared not to be able to assign any motive. They asked him anent their father, and if anything extraordinary had happened to him. He would not say either that there had, or that there had not, but he inquired in his turn if nothing extraordinary had happened with them at home. They looked to one another, and returned him no answer; but at length the youngest said, "Why, Andrew, you profess to have ridden express for the distance of two hundred miles; now, you surely must have some guess for what purpose you have done this? Say, then, at once, what is the purport of your message? Is our father alive?"

"Ye—es, I think he is."

"You *think* he is. Are you uncertain, then?"

"I am certain he is not *dead*, at least was not when I left him.

But hum certainly there has a change taken place. Hark ye, masters——can a man be said to be in life when he is out of himself?"

"Why, thou provoking and ambiguous rascal, say at once the purport of thy message, and keep us not in this thrilling suspense. Is our father well?"

"No—not *quite* well. I am sorry to say, honest gentleman, that he is not. But the truth is, my masters, now that I see you well and hearty, and about to take a journey in company, I begin to suspect that I have been posted all this way on a fool's errand; and the devil another syllable will I speak on the subject, till I have had some refreshment, and if you still insist on hearing a ridiculous story, you shall hear it then."

"You shall as soon have my right hand!" exclaimed the passionate Francis, "as you shall either taste meat or drink in my father's hall, till you have said every word of his message to us.

"Why, hark you, Mr Tutor," said the important Andrew, "I think I can command as much as I please to eat and to drink in the Castle of Cassway, without your interference, or with it; and by the spirits of all the Johnstons of Annandale, I'll keep my word. I am neither my master's serf nor his hound, to cour beneath the menace of a boy; and if my message imports aught, which I aver not that it does, it bears nothing favourable to you in its substance, Mr Tutor; and, therefore, in one word, I begin no long stories, pining with fatigue, with hunger, and thirst." But Thomas, who knew his man better, had him instantly conveyed to a private apartment; and, after he had been amply supplied with the best that the larder and cellar could produce, Andrew Johnston began as follows:

"Why, faith, you see, my masters, it is not easy to say my errand to you, for in fact I have none. Therefore, all that I can do is to tell you a story, a most ridiculous one it is, as ever sent a poor fellow out on the gallop for the matter of two hundred miles or so. On the morning before last, right early, little Isaac, the page, comes to me, and he says,—'Johnston, thou must go and visit measter. He's bad.'

"'Bad!' says I. 'Whaten way is he bad?'

"'Why, by not being good,' says he. 'He's so far ill as he's not well, and desires to see you without one moment's delay. He's in fine taking, and that you'll find; but whatfor do I stand

here? Lword, I never got such a fright. Why, Johnston, does thou know that measter hath lwost himself?

“ ‘How lost himself? Rabbit,’ says I, ‘speak plain out, else I’ll have thee lug-hauled, thou dwarfl thou merlin! thou bratchet of an elfin;’ for my blood rose at the crimp, for fooling at any mishap of my master’s. But my choler only made him worse, for there is not a greater deil’s-buck in all the five dales.

“ ‘Why, man, it is true that I said,’ quoth he, laughing; ‘the old gurly squoir hath lwost himself; and it will be grand sport to see thee going calling him at all the stane-crosses in the kingdom, in this here way—Ho yes! and a two times ho yes! and a *three* times ho yes! Did onyhody no see the better half of my measter, laird of the twa Cassways, Bloodhopc, and Pantland, which was amissing overnight, and is supposed to have gone a-woolgathering? If anybody hath seen that better part of my measter, whilk contains as mooch wit as a man could drive on a hurlbarrow, let them restore it to me, Andrew Johnston, piper, trumpeter, whacker, and wheedler, to the same great noble squoir, and high shall be his reward. Ho yes!’

“ ‘The devil restore thee to thy rights!’ said I, knocking him down, and leaving him sprawling in the kennel, and then hasted to my master, whom I found, indeed, on the very north-west turret of derangement; feverish, restless, and raving, and yet with a fervency of demeanour that stunned and terrified mc. He seized my hand in both his, which were burning like fire, and gave me such a look of despair as I shall never forget. ‘Johnston, I am ill,’ said he, ‘grievously ill, and know not what is to become of me. Every nerve in my body is in a burning flame, and my soul is as it were torn to fritters with amazement. Johnston, as sure as you are in the body, something most deplorable hath happened to mc.’

“ ‘Yes, as sure as I am in the body there has, master,’ says I. ‘But I’ll have you bled and doctored in style; and you shall soon be as sound as a roach,’ says I, ‘for a gentleman must not lose heart altogether for a little fire-raising in his outworks, if it does not reach the citadel,’ says I to him. But he cut me short by shaking his head and flinging my hand from him.

“ ‘A truce with your talking,’ says he. ‘That which hath befallen me is as much above your comprehension as the sun is above the earth, and never will be comprehended by mortal man. But I must inform you of it, as I have no other means of gaining the intelligence that I yearn for, and which I am incapable of gaining personally. Johnston, there never was a mortal man suffered what I have suffered since midnight. I believe I have had doings with hell; for I have been disembodied and embodied again, and the intensity of my tortures has been as far above a parallel as my own comprehension. I was at home this morning at day-break.’

“ ‘At home at Cassway?’ says I. ‘I am sorry to hear you say so, master, because you know, or should know, that the thing is impossible, von being in the ancient town of Shrewsburv on the King’s business.

‘I was at home in very deed, Andrew,’ returned he; ‘but whether in the body, or out of the body. I cannot tell—the Lord only knoweth. But there I was in this guise, and with this heart and all its feelings within mc, where I saw scenes, heard words, and spoke others, which I will here relate to you. I had finished my dispatches last night by midnight, and was sitting musing on the hard fate and improvidence of my sovereign master, when, ere ever I was aware, a neighbour of ours, Mrs Jane Jerdan of Drumfielding, a mysterious character, with whom I have had some strange doings in my time, came suddenly into the chamber and stood before me. I accosted her with doubt and terror, asking what had brought her so far from home.’

“ ‘You are not so far from home as you imagine,’ said she; ‘and it is fortunate for some that it is so, for your two sons have quarrelled about the possession of my niece Ellen, and though the

eldest is blameless of the quarrel, yet has he been forced into it, and they are engaged to fight at day-break at the crook of Glen-dearg. There they will assuredly fall by each other's hands, if you interpose not; for there is no other authority now on earth that can prevent this woful calamity.'

" 'Alas! how can I interfere,' said I, 'at this distance? It is already within a few hours of the meeting, and before I get from among the windings of the Severn, their swords will be bathed in each other's blood. I must trust to the interference of Heaven.'

" 'Is your name and influence, then, to perish for ever?' said she. 'Is it so soon to follow your master's, the great Maxwell of the Dales, into utter oblivion? Why not rather rouse into requisition the energies of the spirits that watch over human destinies? At least step aside with me, that I may disclose the scene to your eyes. You know I can do it; and you may then act according to your natural impulse.'

" 'Such were the import of the words she spoke to me, if not the very words themselves. I understood them not at the time, nor do I yet. But when she had done speaking, she took me by the hand, and hurried me towards the door of the apartment, which she opened, and the first step we took over the threshold, we stepped into a void space, where I knew of none, and fell downward. I was going to call out, but felt my descent so rapid, that my voice was stifled, and I could not so much as draw my breath. I expected every moment to fall against something, and be dashed to pieces; and I shut my eyes, clenched my teeth, and held by the dame's hand with a frenzied grasp, in expectation of the catastrophe. But down we went—down and down, with a celerity which tongue cannot describe, without light, breath, or intervention of any sort. I now felt assured that we had both at once stepped from off the earth, and were hurled into the immeasurable void; and now that I really felt it had taken place, I wondered how it had not happened to many others beside ourselves. The airs of darkness sung in my ears with a booming din as I rolled down the steeps of everlasting night, an outcast from nature and all its harmonies, and a journeyer into the depths of hell.

" 'I still held my companion's hand, and felt the pressure of hers; and so long did this our alarming descent continue, that I at length caught myself breathing once more, but as quick as if I had been in the height of a fever. I then tried every effort to speak, but they were all unavailing; for I could not emit one sound, although my lips and tongue fathomed the words. Think, then, of my astonishment, when my companion sung out the following stanza with great glee:—

'Here we roll,
Body and soul,
Down to the deeps of the paynim's goal—
With speed and with spell,
With yo and with yell,
This is the way to the palace of hell—
Sing Yo! Ho!
Level and low,
Down to the Valley of Vision we go!'

" 'Ha, ha, ha! Tam Beattie,' added she, 'where is a' your courage now? Cannot ye lift up your voice and sing a stave wi' your auld crony? And cannot ye lift up your een, and see what region you are in now?'

" 'I did force open my eyelids, and beheld light, and apparently worlds, or huge lurid substances gliding by me with speed, beyond that of the lightning of heaven. I certainly

perceived light, though of a dim, uncertain nature; but so precipitate was my descent, I could not distinguish from whence it proceeded, or of what it consisted, whether of the vapours of elemental wastes, or the streamers of hell. So I again shut my eyes closer than ever, and waited the event in terror unutterable.

“ We at length came upon something which interrupted our further progress. I had no feeling as we fell against it, but merely as if we came in contact with some soft substance that impeded our descent; and immediately afterwards I perceived that our motion had ceased.

“ ‘What a terrible tumble we hae gotten, laird!’ said my companion. ‘But ye are now in the place where you should be, an’ deil speed the coward!’

“ So saying, she quitted my hand, and I felt as if she were wrested from me by a third object; but still I durst not open my eyes, being convinced that I was lying in the depths of hell, or some hideous place not to be dreamed of; so I lay still in despair, not even daring to address a prayer to my Maker. At length I lifted my eyes slowly and fearfully, but they had no power of distinguishing objects in the place where I now sojourned. All that I perceived was a vision of something in nature, with which I had in life been too well acquainted. It was a glimpse of green glens, long withdrawing ridges, and one high hill, with a cairn on its summit. I rubbed my eyes to divest them of the enchantment, but when I opened them again, the illusion was still brighter and more magnificent. Then springing to my feet, I perceived that I was lying in a little fairy ring, not one hundred yards from the door of my own hall!

“ I was, as you may well conceive, dazzled with admiration; still I felt that something was not right with me, and that I was struggling with an enchantment; but recollecting the hideous story told me by the beldame, of the deadly discord between my two sons, I hastened to watch their motions, for the morning was yet but dawning. In a few seconds after recovering my senses, I perceived my eldest son Thomas leave his tower armed, and pass on towards the place of appointment. I waylaid him, and remarked to him that he was very early astir, and I feared on no good intent. He made me no answer, but stood like one in a stupor, and gazed at me. ‘I know your purpose, son Thomas,’ said I; ‘so it is vain for you to equivocate. You have challenged your brother, and are going to meet him in deadly combat; but as you value your father’s blessing, and would deprecate his curse-as you value your hope in heaven, and would escape the punishment of hell-abandon the hideous and cursed intent, and be friends with your only brother.’

“ ‘On this, my dutiful son Thomas kneeled to me, and presented his sword, disclaiming, at the same time, all intentions of taking away his brother’s life, and all animosity for the vengeance sought against himself, and thanked me in a flood of tears for my interference. I then ordered him back to his couch, and taking his cloak and sword, hastened away to the crook of Glen-dearg, to wait the arrival of his brother.’”

Here Andrew Johnston’s narrative detailed the self-same circumstances recorded in a former part of this tale, as having passed between the father and his younger son, so that it is needless to recapitulate them; but beginning where that broke off, he added, in the words of the old laird, “ ‘As soon as my son Francis had left me, in order to be reconciled to his brother, I returned to the fairy knowe and ring where I first found myself seated at daybreak. I know not why I went there, for though I considered with myself, I could discover no motive that I had for doing so, but was led thither by a sort of impulse which I could not resist, and from the same feeling spread my son’s mantle on the spot, laid his sword down beside it, and laid me down to sleep. I remember nothing farther with any degree of accuracy, for I instantly fell into a chaos of suffering, confusion, and racking dismay, from which I was only of late released by awaking from a trance, on the very seat and in the same guise in which I was the evening before. I am certain I was at

home in body or in spirit—saw my sons spake these words to them, and heard theirs in return. How I returned I know even less than how I went, for in that instance it seemed to me as if the mysterious force that presses us to this sphere, and supports us on it, was in my case withdrawn or subverted, and that I merely fell from one part of the earth's surface and alighted on another. Now I am so ill that I cannot move from this couch; therefore, Andrew, do you mount and ride straight for home. Spare no horse flesh, by night or by day, to bring me word of my family, for I dread that some evil hath befallen them. If you find them in life, give them many charges from me of brotherly love and affection; if not what can I say, but in the words of the patriarch, If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.' ”

The two brothers, in utter amazement, went together to the green ring on the top of the knoll above the castle of Cassway, and there found the mantle lying spread, and the sword beside it. They then, without letting Johnston into the awful secret, mounted straight, and rode off with him to their father. They found him still in bed, and very ill; and though rejoiced at seeing them, they soon lost hope of his recovery, his spirits being broken and deranged in a wonderful manner. Their conversations together were of the most solemn nature, the visitation deigned to them having been above their capacity. On the third or fourth day, their father was removed by death from this terrestrial scene, and the minds of the young men were so much impressed by the whole of the circumstances, that it made a great alteration in their after life. Thomas, as solemnly charged by his father, married Ellen Scott, and Francis was well known afterward as the celebrated Dr Beattie of Amherst. Ellen was mother to twelve sons, and on the night that her seventh son was born, her aunt Jerdan was lost, and never more heard of, either living or dead.

This will be viewed as a most romantic and unnatural story, as without doubt it is; but I have the strongest reasons for believing that it is founded on a literal fact, of which all the three were sensibly and positively convinced. It was published in England in Dr Beattie's lifetime and by his acquiescence, and owing to the respectable source from whence it came, was never disputed in that day as having had its origin in truth. It was again republished, with some miserable alterations, in a London collection of 1770, by J. Smith, at No. 15, Paternoster-row; and though I have seen none of those, but relate the story wholly from tradition, yet the assurance attained from a friend of the existence of these, is a curious and corroborative circumstance, and proves that, if the story was not true, the parties believed it to have been so. It is certainly little accordant with any principle of nature or reason, but so also are many other well authenticated traditionary stories; therefore, the best way is to admit their veracity without saying why or wherefore.