

The Misdeeds of Marion Richart

By E. Lynn Linton

“Mareoune” Richart, *alias* Langland, dwelt on one of the wild Orkney islands, not far from where mad Elspeth Sandisome kept the whole country in fear lest she should do something terrible to herself or to others. Marion was invited to go the house, and try her skill at curling her, for she was known to be an awful witch, and able to do whatever she had a mind in the way of healing or killing. So she went, and set herself to her charm. She took some “remedie water”—which she made into “remedy water,” by carrying it in a round bowl to the byre where she cast into it something like “great salt,” taken from her purse, spitting thrice into the bowl, and blowing in her breath—and with this magic “remedie watter forspeking,” she bade Elspeth’s woman-servant wash her feet and hands, and she would be as well as ever she had been before. This was bad enough; but worse titan this, she came to Stronsey on a day, asking alms of “Andro Coupar, skipper of ane bark,” to whom said Andrew rudely, “Away witch, carling; devils ane farthing ye will fail!” whereupon went Marion away “verie offendit; and incontinentlie he going to sea, the bark being vnder saill, he ran wode, and wald half luppen ourboord; and his sone seing him gat him in his armes, and held him; quhairvpon the sicknes immediatlie left him, and his sone ran made; and Thomas Paiterson, seeing him tak his madnes, and the father to turn weil, ane dog being in the bark, took the dog and bladdit him vpon the twa schoulderis, and thaireftir flang the said dogg in the sea, quhairby those in the bark were saiffed.” So Marion Richart, *alias* Langland, learnt the hangman’s way to the grave in the year of grace 1629; and her corpse was burned, when the hangman’s rope had done its work.