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THE
LONG PACK,

OR

THE ROBBERS DISCOVERED:

A Scottish Story.

BY

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IN the year 1723, Colonel Ridley returned from India, with what, in those days, was accounted an immense fortune, and retired to a country seat on the banks of North Tynes in Northumberland. The house was rebuilt and furnished with every thing elegant and costly; and amongst others, a service of plate supposed to be worth £1000. He went to London annually with his family, during a few of the winter months, and at these times there were but few left at his country house. At the time we treat of, there were only three domestics remained there; a maid servant, whose name was Alice, kept the house, and there were besides, an old man and a boy, the one threshed the corn, and the other took care of some cattle, for the two ploughmen were boarded in houses of their own.

One afternoon as Alice was sitting spinning some yarn for a pair of stockings to herself, a pedlar entered the hall with a comical pack on his back. Alice had seen

as long a pack, and as broad a pack; but a pack equally long, broad, and thick, she declared she never saw. It was about the middle of winter, when the days were short, and the nights cold, long, and wearisome. The pedlar was a handsome, well dressed man, and very likely to be a very agreeable companion for such a maid as Alice, on such a night as that; yet Alice declared, that from the very first she did not like him greatly, and though he introduced himself with a little ribaldry, and a great deal of flattery interlarded, yet when he came to ask a night's lodging; he met with a peremptory refusal: he jested on the subject, said he believed she was in the right, for that it would scarcely be safe to trust him under the same roof with such a sweet and beautiful creature---Alice was an old maid, and any thing but beautiful---He then took her on his knee, caressed and kissed her, but all would not do. "No, she would not consent to his staying there." "But are you really going to put me away to night?" "Yes." "Indeed, my dear girl, you must not be so unreasonable; I am come straight from Newcastle, where I have been purchasing a fresh stock of goods, which are so heavy, that I cannot travel far with them, and as the people around are all of the poorer sort, I will rather make you a present of the finest shawl in my pack

before I go further." At the mentioning of the shawl, the picture of deliberation was pourtrayed in lively colours on Alice's face for a little; but her prudence overcame. "No, she was but a servant, and had orders to harbour no person about the house but such as came on business, nor these either unless she was well acquainted with them." "What the worse can you, or your master, or any one else be, of suffering me to tarry until the morning?" "I entreat you do not insist, for here you cannot be." "But indeed, I am not able to carry my goods further to-night." "Then you must leave them or get a horse to carry them away." "Of all the sweet inflexible beings that ever were made, you certainly are the chief. But I cannot blame you, your resolution is just and right. Well, well, since no better may be, I must leave them, and go search for lodgings myself somewhere else, for, fatigued as I am, it is as much as my life is worth to endeavour carrying them further." Alice was rather taken at her word: she wanted nothing to do with his goods: the man was displeased at her, and might accuse her of stealing some of them; but it was an alternative she had proposed, and against which she could start no plausible objection; so she consented, though with much reluctance.---"But the pack will be

better out of your way," said he, "and safer, if you will be so kind as lock it by in some room or closet." She then led him into a low parlour, where he placed it carefully on two chairs, and went away, wishing Alice a good night.

When old Alice and the pack were left together in the large house by themselves, she felt a kind of undefined terror come over her mind about it. "What can be in it?" said she to herself, "that makes it so heavy? surely when the man carried it this length he might have carried it farther too.---It is a confoundedly queer pack; I'll go and look at it once again, and see what I think is in it; and suppose I should handle it all round, I may then perhaps have a good guess what is in it."

Alice went cautiously and fearfully into the parlour and opened a wall-press---she wanted nothing in the press, indeed she never looked into it, for her eyes were fixed on the pack, and the longer she looked at it she liked it the worse; and as to handling it, she would not have touched it for all that it contained. She came again into the kitchen and conversed with herself. She thought of the man's earnestness to leave it---of its monstrous shape, and every circumstance connected with it: they were all mysterious, and she was convinced in her

own mind, that there was something un-
 nanny if not unearthly in the pack.

What surmises will not fear give rise to
 n the mind of a woman! She lighted a
 moulded candle, and went again into the
 parlour, closed the window shutters, and
 barred them; but before she came out, she
 set herself upright, held in her breath, and
 took another steady and scrutinizing look
 of the pack. God of mercy! She saw it
 moving, as visibly as she ever saw any
 thing in her life. Every hair on her head
 stood upright. Every inch of flesh on her
 body crept like a nest of pismires. She
 dashed into the kitchen as fast as she could,
 for her knees bent under the terror that had
 overwhelmed the heart of poor Alice. She
 snuffed out the candle, lighted it again, and
 not being able to find a candlestick, though
 a dozen stood on the shelf in the fore kitchen,
 she set it in a water-jug, and ran out to the
 barn for old Richard. "Oh, for mercy,
 Richard, make haste, and come into the
 house. Come away, Richard." "Why,
 what is the matter Alice? what is wrong?"
 "Oh, Richard! a pedlar came into the hall
 entreating for lodging. Well, I would
 not let him stay on any account, and behold,
 he is gone off and left his pack." "And
 what is the great matter in that?" said
 Richard. "I will wager a penny he will

look after it, before it shall look after him.”
 “But, oh Richard, I tremble to tell you. We are all gone for it is a living pack.”
 “A living pack!” said Richard, staring at Alice, and letting his chops fall down. Richard had just lifted his flail over his head to begin threshing a sheaf; but when he heard of a living pack, he dropped one end of the hand-staff to the flour, and leaning on the other, took such a look at Alice. He knew long before that Alice was beautiful; he knew that ten years before, but he never took such a look at her in his life.
 “A living pack!” said Richard. “Why the woman is mad without all doubt.” “Oh, Richard! come away. Heaven knows what is in it! but I saw it moving so plainly as I see you at present. Make haste, and come away Richard.” Richard did not stand to expostulate any longer, nor even to put on his coat, but followed Alice into the house, assuring her by the way, that it was nothing but a whim, and of a piece, with many of her phantasies. “But,” added he, “of all the foolish ideas that ever possessed your brain, this is the most unfeasible, unnatural, and impossible. How can a pack, made up of napkins, and muslins, and corduroy breeches perhaps, ever become alive? It is even worse than to suppose a horse’s hair will turn an eel.” So saying,

he lifted the candle out of the jug, and turning about, never stopped till he had laid his hand on the pack. He felt the deals that surrounded its edges to prevent the goods being ruffled and spoiled by carrying, the cords that bound it, and the canvass in which it was wrapped. "The pack was well enough, he found nought about it that other packs wanted. It was just like other packs made up of the same stuff. He saw nought that ailed it. And a good, large pack it was. It would coast the honest man £200, if not more. It would cost him £300 or £350 if the goods were fine. But he would make it all up again by cheating fools like Alice, with his gewgaws." Alice testified some little disappointment at seeing Richard unconvinced, even by ocular proof. She wished she had never seen him or it howsoever; for she was convinced there was something mysterious about it; that they were stolen goods or something that way; and she was terrified to stay in the house with it. But Richard assured her the pack was a right enough pack.

During this conversation, in comes Edward. He was a lad about sixteen years of age, son to a coal-driver on the border --- was possessed of a good deal of humour and ingenuity, but somewhat roguish, forward, and commonly very ragged in his

apparel. He was about this time wholly intent on shooting the crows and birds of various kinds, that alighted in whole flocks where he foddered the cattle. He had bought a huge old military gun, which he denominated Copenhagen, and was continually thundering away at them. He seldom killed any, if ever; but he once or twice knocked off a few feathers, and after much narrow inspection, discovered some drops of blood on the snow. He was at this very moment come in a great haste for Copenhagen, having seen a glorious chance of sparrows, and a robin-red-breast among them, feeding on the site of a corn rick, but hearing them talk of something mysterious, and a living pack, he pricked up his ears, and was all attention.---“Faith Alice,” said he, “if you will let me, I’ll shoot it.” “Hold your peace, you fool,” said Richard. Edward took the candle from Richard, who still held it in his hand, and, gliding down the passage, edged up the parlour door, and watched the pack attentively for about two minutes. He then came back with a spring and with looks very different from those which regulated his features as he went down. As sure as he had death to meet with he saw it stirring. “Hold your peace, you fool,” said Richard, Edward swore again that he saw it stirring; but whether

he really thought so, or only said so, is hard to determine. "Faith, Alice," said he again, "if you will let me, I'll shoot it." "I tell you to hold your peace, you fool," said Richard, "No," said Edward, "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety; and I will maintain this to be our safest plan. Our master's house is consigned to our care, and the wealth that it contains may tempt some people to use stratagems. Now, if we open up the man's pack, he may pursue us for damages to any amount, but if I shoot it, what amends can he get of me? If there is any thing that should not be there, Lord, how I will pepper it! And if it is lawful goods, he can only make me pay for the few that are damaged, which I will get at valuation; so, if none of you will acquiesce, I will take all the blame upon myself, and ware a shot upon it." Richard said whatever was the consequence he would be blameless. A half delirious smile rather distorted than beautified Alice's pretty face, but Edward took of for an assent to what he had been advancing, so, snatching up Copenhagen in one hand, and the candle in the other, he hasted down the passage, and without hesitating one moment, fired at the pack. Gracious Heaven! The blood gushed out upon the floor like a torrent, and a hideous roar, followed by the groans of death, issued

from the pack. Edward dropped Copenhagen upon the ground, and ran into the kitchen like one distracted. The kitchen was darkish, for he had left the candle in the parlour; so taking to the door without being able to utter a word, he ran to the hills like a wild roe, looking over each shoulder as fast as he could turn his head from the one side to the other. --- Alice followed as fast as she could; but lost half the way of Edward. She was all the way sighing and crying most pitifully. Old Richard stood for a short space rather in a state of petrefaction, but, at length, after some hasty ejaculations, he went into the parlour. The whole floor flowed with blood; the pack had thrown itself on the ground, but the groans and cries were ceased, and only a kind of guttural noise was heard from it. Knowing then that something must be done, he ran after his companions, and called on them to come back. Though Edward had escaped a good way, and was still persevering on, yet, as he never took long time to consider of the utility of any thing, but acted from immediate impulse, he turned and came as fast back as he had gone away. Alice also came homeward, but more slowly, and crying even more bitterly than before. Edward overtook her, and was holding on his course; but, as he passed, she

turned away her face, and called him a murderer. At the sound of this epithet, Edward made a dead pause, and looked at Alice with a face much longer than it used to be. He drew in his breath twice, as if going to speak, but he only swallowed a great mouthful of air, and held his peace.

They were soon all three in the parlour, and in no little terror and agitation of mind, unloosed the pack, the principal commodity of which was a stout young man, whom Edward had shot through the heart, and thus bereaved of existence in a few minutes. To paint the feelings, or even the appearance of young Edward, during this scene is impossible; he acted little, spoke less, and appeared in a hopeless stupor; the most of his employment consisted in gulping down mouthfuls of breath, wiping his eyes, and staring at his associates.

It is most generally believed, that when Edward fired at the pack, he had not the most distant idea of shooting a man; but seeing Alice so jealous of it, he thought the Colonel would approve of his intrepidity, and protect him from being wronged by the pedlar; and besides, he had never got a chance of a shot at such a large thing in his life, and was curious to see how many folds of the pedlar's fine haberdashery ware, Copenhagen would drive the drops through.

so that when the stream of blood burst from the pack, accompanied with the dying groans of a human being, Edward was certainly taken by surprise, and quite confounded; he indeed asserted, as long as he lived, that he saw something stirring in the pack, but his eagerness to shoot, and his terror on seeing what he had done, which was no more than what he might have expected, had he been certain he saw the pack moving, makes this asseveration very doubtful. They made all possible speed in extricating the corse, intending to call medical assistance, but it was too late; the vital spark was gone for ever. "Alas!" said old Richard, heaving a deep sigh, "poor man, 'tis all over with him! I wish he had lived a little longer to have repented of this, for he has surely died in a bad cause. Poor man! he was somebody's son, and no doubt dear to them, and nobody can tell how small a crime this hath, by a regular gradation, become the fruits of." Richard came twice across his eyes with the sleeve of his shirt, for he still wanted the coat; a thought of a tender nature shot through his heart. "Alas, if his parents are alive, how will their hearts bear this, poor creatures!" said Richard, weeping outright, "poor creatures! God pity them!"

The way that he was packed up was

artful and curious. His knees were brought up towards his breast, and his feet and legs stuffed in a wooden box; another wooden box, a size larger, and wanting the bottom, made up the vacancy betwixt his face and knees, and there being only one fold of canvass around this, he breathed with the greatest freedom; but it had undoubtedly been the heaving of his breast which had caused the movement noticed by the servants. His right arm was within the box, and to his hand was tied a cutlass, with which he could rip himself from his confinement at once. There were also four loaded pistols secreted with him, and a silver wind-call. On coming to the pistols and cutlass, "Villain," said old Richard, "see what he has here. But I should not call him villain," said he again, softening his tone, "for he is now gone to answer at that bar where no false witness, nor loquacious orator, can bias the justice of the sentence pronounced on him. He is now in the true world, and I am in the false one. We can judge only from appearances, but thanks to our kind Maker and Preserver, that he was discovered, else it is probable that none of us should have again seen the light of day." These moral reflections from the mouth of old Richard, by degrees raised the spirits of Edward: he was bewildered in uncertainty,

and had undoubtedly given himself up for lost: but he now began to discover that he had done a meritorious and manful action, and for the first time, since he had fired the fatal shot, ventured to speak, "Faith it was lucky that I shot then," said Edward; but neither of his companions answered either good or bad. Alice, though rather grown desperate, behaved and assisted at this bloody affair, better than might have been expected. Edward surveyed the pistols all round, two of which were of curious workmanship. "But what do you think he was going to do with all these?" said Edward. "I think you need not ask that," answered Richard. "Faith it was a mercy that I shot after all," said Edward, "for if we had loosed him out, we would have been all dead in a minute. I have given him a devil of a broadside, though. But look ye, Richard, Providence has directed me to the right spot, for I might as readily have lodged the contents of Copenhagen in one of these empty boxes." "It has been a deep laid scheme," said Richard, "to murder us, and rob our master's house; there must certainly be more concerned in it than these two."

Ideas beget ideas, often quite different, and then others again in unspeakable gradation, which run through and shift in the mind with as much velocity as the streamers

around the pole in a frosty night. On Richard's mentioning more concerned, Edward instantaneously thought of a gang of thieves by night.---How he would break the leg of one---shoot another through the head---and scatter them like chaff before the wind. He would rather shoot one robber on his feet or on horseback, than ten lying tied up in packs; and then what a glorious prey of pistols he would get from the dead rascals---how he would prime and load and fire away with perfect safety from within!---how Alice would scream, and Richard would pray, and all would go on with the noise and rapidity of a windmill, and he would acquire everlasting fame. So high was the young and ardent mind of Edward wrought up by this train of ideas, that he was striding up and down the floor, while his eyes gleamed as with a tint of madness. "Oh! if I had but plenty of guns, and nothing ado but to shoot, how I would pepper the dogs!" said he with great vehemence; to the no small astonishment of his two associates, who thought him gone mad. "What can the fool mean?" said old Richard, "What can he ail at the dogs?" "Ob, it is the robbers that I mean," said Edward. "What robbers, you young fool?" said Richard." "Why, do not you think that the pedlar will come back at the dead of the night, to

the assistance of his friend, and bring plenty of help with him too," said Edward. "There is not a doubt of it," said old Richard. "There is not a doubt of it," said Alice, and both stood up stiff with fear and astonishment. "Oh! merciful Heaven! what is to become of us," said Alice again, "What are we to do?" "Let us trust in the Lord," said old Richard. "I intend, in the first place, to trust in old Copenhagen," said Edward, putting down the frizzel, and making it spring up again with a long snap five or six times, "But, good Lord! what are we thinking about? I'll run and gather in all the guns in the country." The impulse of the moment was Edward's monitor. Off he ran like fire, and wanted a few of the Colonel's retainers, who he knew kept guns about them; these again warned others, and at eight o'clock, they had twenty-five men in the house, and sixteen loaded pieces, including Copenhagen, and the four pistols found on the deceased. These were distributed amongst the front windows in the upper stories, and the rest armed with pitchforks, old swords, and cudgels, kept watch below. Edward had taken care to place himself with a comrade, at a window immediately facing the approach to the house, and now, backed as he was by such a strong party, grew quite impatient for another

chance with his redoubted Copenhagen. All, however, remained quiet until an hour past midnight, when it entered into his teeming brain to blow the thief's silver wind-call; so, without warning any of the rest, he sets his head out at the window, and blew until all the hills and woods around yelled their echoes. This alarmed the guards, as not knowing the meaning of it; but how were they astonished at hearing it answered by another at no great distance. The state of anxiety into which this sudden and unforeseen circumstance threw our armed peasants, is more easily conceived than described. The fate of their master's great wealth, and even their own fates, was soon to be decided, and none but He who surveys and over-rules futurity could tell what was to be the issue. Every breast heaved quicker, every breath was cut short, every gun was cocked and pointed toward the court-gate, every orb of vision was strained to discover the approaching foe, by the dim light of the starry canopy, and every ear expanded to catch the distant sounds as they floated on the slow frosty breeze.

The suspence was not of long continuance. In less than five minutes the trampling of horses was heard, which increased as they approached to the noise of thunder, and in due course, a body of men on horseback,

according to the account given by the Colonel's people, exceeding their own number, came up at a brisk trot, and began to enter the court gate. Edward, unable to restrain himself any longer, fired Copenhagen in their faces: one of the foremost dropped, and his horse made a spring towards the hall door. This discharge was rather premature, as the wall still shielded a part of the gang from the windows. It was, however, the watchword to all the rest, and in the course of two seconds, the whole sixteen guns were discharged at them. Before the smoke dispersed they were all fled, no doubt greatly amazed at the reception which they met with. Edward and his comrades ran down stairs to see how matters stood, for it was their opinion that they had shot them every one, and that their horses had taken flight at the noise, and galloped off without them; but the club below warmly protested against their opening the door till day, so they were obliged to betake themselves again to their birth up stairs.

Though our peasants had gathered up a little courage and confidence in themselves, their situation was curious, and to them a dreadful one; they saw and heard a part of their fellow creatures moaning and expiring in agonies in the open air, which was intensely cold, yet durst not go to administer

the least relief, for fear of a surprise. An hour or two after this great brush, Edward and his messmate descended again, and begged hard for leave to go and reconnoitre for a few minutes, which after some disputes was granted. They found only four men fallen, who appeared to be all quite dead. One of them was lying within the porch. 'Faith,' said Edward, 'here's the chap that I shot.' The other three were without at a considerable distance from each other. They durst not follow their track farther, as the road entered betwixt groves of trees, but retreated into their posts without touching any thing.

About an hour before day, some of them were alarmed at hearing the sound of horses feet a second time, which, however, was only indistinct and heard at considerable intervals, and nothing of them ever appeared. Not long after this, Edward and his friend were almost frightened out of their wits, at seeing, as they thought, the dead man within the gate, endeavouring to get up and escape. They had seen him dead, lying surrounded by a deluge of congealed blood, and nothing but the ideas of ghosts and hobgoblins entering their brains, they were so indiscreet as never to think of firing, but ran and told the tale of horror to some of their neighbours. The sky was by this

time grown so dark, that nothing could be seen with precision, and that they all remained in anxious incertitude, until the opening day discovered to them, by degrees, that the corpses were removed, and nothing left but large sheets of frozen blood, and the morning's alarms by the ghost and the noise of horses, had been occasioned by some of the friends of the men that had fallen, conveying them away for fear of a discovery.

Next morning the news flew like fire, and the three servants were much incommoded by crowds of idle and officious people that gathered about the house, some inquiring after the smallest particulars, some begging to see the body that lay in the parlour, and others pleased themselves with poring over the sheets of crimson ice, and tracing the drops of blood on the road down the wood. The Colonel had no country factor, nor any particular friend in the neighbourhood, so the affair was not pursued with that speed which was requisite to the discovery of the accomplices, which if it had, would have been productive of some very unpleasant circumstances, by involving sundry respectable families, as it afterwards appeared but too evidently. Dr. Herbert, the physician, who attended the family occasionally, wrote to the Colonel, by post, concerning the affair,

but though he lost no time, it was the fifth day before he arrived. Then indeed advertisements were issued, and posted up in all public places, offering rewards for a discovery of any person killed or wounded of late. All the dead and sick within twenty miles were inspected by medical men, and a most extensive search made, but to no purpose. It was too late: all was secured. Some indeed were missing, but plausible pretences being made for their absence, nothing could be done. But certain it is, sundry of these were never seen any more in the country, though many of the neighbourhood declared they were such people as nobody could suspect.

The body of the unfortunate man, who was shot in the park, lay open for inspection a fortnight, but none would ever acknowledge so much as having seen him. The Colonel then caused him to be buried at Bellingham, but it was confidently reported, that his grave was opened and his corpse taken away. In short, not one engaged in this base and bold attempt was ever discovered. A constant watch was kept by night for some time. The Colonel rewarded the defenders of his house liberally. Old Richard remained in the family during the rest of his life and had a good salary for only saying prayers amongst the servants.

every night. Alice was married to a tobacco-
 conist at Hexam. Edward was made the
 Colonel's gamekeeper, and had a present of
 a fine gold-mounted gun given him. His
 master afterwards procured him a commis-
 sion in a regiment of foot, where he suffered
 many misfortunes and disappointments. He
 was shot through the shoulder at the battle
 of Fontenoy, but recovered, and retiring
 on half-pay, took a small farm on the Scottish
 side. His character was that of a brave,
 but rash officer; kind, generous, and open-
 hearted in all situations. I have often stood
 at his knee and listened with wonder and
 amasement to his stories of battles and seiges,
 but none of them ever pleased me better
 than that of the LONG PACK.

Alas! his fate is fast approaching to us
 all! he hath, many years ago, submitted to
 the conqueror of all mankind. His brave
 heart is now a clod of the valley, and his
 gray hairs recline in peace on that pillow
 from which his head shall be raised only
 when time shall be no more.

