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STORIES OF

THE TWO DROVERS,

AND

COUNTESS OF EXETER.



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THE TWO DRAGONS

AND

THE HISTORY OF THE



BY

JOHN B. ALLEN

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THE TWO DROVERS.

It was the day after the Doune Fair when my story commences. It had been a brisk market, several dealers had attended from the northern and midland counties in England, and the English money had flown so merrily about as to gladden the hearts of the Highland farmers. Many large droves were about to set off for England, under the protection of their owners, or of the topsmen whom they employed in the tedious, laborious, and responsible office of driving the cattle for many hundred miles, from the market where they had been purchased, to the fields or farm-yards where they were to be fattened for the shambles.

Of the number who left Doune in the morning, and with the purpose we have described, not a *Gluamie* of them all cocked his bonnet more briskly, or gartered his tartan hose under knee over a pair of more promising *spiogs* (legs), than did Robin Oig M'Combich, called familiarly Robin Oig, that is Young, or the lesser, Robin. Though small of stature, as the epithet Oig implies, and not very strongly limbed, he was as light and alert as one of the deer of his mountains. He had an elasticity of step, which, in the course of a long march, made many a stout fellow envy him; and the manner in which he busked his plaid, and adjusted his bonnet argued a consciousness that so smart a John Highlandman as himself would not pass unnoticed among the lowland lasses. The ruddy cheek, red lips, and white teeth, set off a countenance which had gained by exposure to the weather, a healthful and hardy rather than a rugged hue. If Robin Oig did not laugh, he even smiled frequently, as indeed is not the practice of his countrymen, his bright eyes usually gleamed

from under his bonnet with an expression of cheerfulness ready to be turned into mirth.

The departure of Robin Oig was an incident in the little town, in and near which he had many friends male and female. He was a topping person in his way, transacting considerable business on his own behalf, and was intrusted by the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that district.

Many were the words of gratulation and good luck which were bestowed on Robin Oig. The judges commended his drove, especially the best of them, which were Robin's own property. Some thrust out their snuff-mulls for the parting pinch—others tendered the *doch-an-dorrach*, or parting cup. All cried—"Good-luck travel out with you and come home with you.—Give you luck in the Saxon market—brave notes in the *leabhar-dhu*, (black pocket-book,) and plenty of English gold in the *sporrán* (pouch of goat-skin.)"

The bonny lasses made their adieus more modestly, and more than one, it was said, would have given her best brooch to be certain that it was upon her that his eye last rested as he turned towards his road.

Robin Oig had just given the preliminary "*Hoo-hoo!*" to urge forward the loiterers of the drove, when there was a cry behind him. "Stay, Robin—bide a blink. Here is Janet of Tomahourich—auld Janet, your father's sister." "Plague on her, for an auld Highland witch and spaewife," said a farmer from the Carse of Stirling; "she'll cast some of her cantrips on the cattle." "She canna do that," said another sapient of the same profession—"Robin Oig is no the lad to leave any of them, without tying Saint Mungo's knot on their tails, and that will put to her speed the best witch that ever flew over Dinayet upon a broomstick."

It may not be indifferent to the reader to know, that the Highland cattle are peculiarly liable to be *taken*, or infected, by spells and witchcraft, which judicious people guard against by knitting knots of peculiar con-

plexity on the the tuft of hair which terminates the animal's tail.

But the old woman who was the object of the farmer's suspicion seemed only busied about the drover, without paying any attention to the flock. Robin, on the contrary, appeared rather impatient of her presence. "What auld-world fancy," he said, "has brought you so early from the ingle-side this morning, Muhine? I am sure I bid you good even, and had your God-speed, last night." "And left me more siller than the useless old woman will use till you come back again, bird of my bosom," said the sibyl. "But it is little I would care for the food that nourishes me, or the fire that warms me, or for God's blessed sun itself, if aught but weal should happen to the grandson of my father. So let me walk the *deasil* round you, that you may go safe out into the far foreign land, and come safe home."

Robin Oig stopped, half embarrassed, half laughing, and signing to those around that he only complied with the old woman to soothe her humour. In the meantime, she traced around him, with wavering steps, the propitiation, which some have thought has been derived from the Druidical mythology. It consists, as is well known, in the person who makes the *deasil*, walking three times round the person who is the object of the ceremony, taking care to move according to the course of the sun. At once, however, she stopped short, and exclaimed, in a voice of alarm and horror, "Grandson of my father, there is blood on your hand!" "Hush, for God's sake, aunt," said Robin Oig; "you will bring more trouble on yourself with this *Talshataragh* (second sight) than you will be able to get out of for many a day." The old woman only repeated, with a ghastly look, "There is blood on your hand, and it is English blood. The blood of the Gael is richer and redder. Let us see—let us——" Ere Robin Oig could prevent her, which, indeed, could only have been by positive violence, so hasty and peremptory were her proceedings, she had drawn from his side the dirk which

lodged in the folds of his plaid, and held it up, exclaiming, although the weapon gleamed clear and bright in the sun, "Blood, blood—Saxon blood again! Robin Oig M'Combich, go not this day to England!" "Prutt, trutt," answered Robin Oig, "that will never do neither—it would be next thing to running the country. For shame, Muhme—give me the dirk. You cannot tell by the colour the difference betwixt the blood of a black bullock and a white one, and you speak of knowing Saxon from Gaelic blood. All men have their blood from Adam, Muhme. Give me my *shenedhu*, and let me go on my road. I should have been half way to Stirling brig by this time—Give me my dirk, and let me go." "Never will I give it to you," said the old woman—"Never will I quit my hold on your plaid, unless you promise me not to wear that unhappy weapon."

The women around him urged him also, saying few of his aunt's words fell to the ground; and as the Lowland farmers continued to look moodily on, the scene, Robin Oig determined to close it at any sacrifice.

"Well, then," said the young drover, giving the cabbard of the weapon to Hugh Morrison, "you Lowlanders care nothing for these freats. Keep my dirk for me. I cannot give it you, because it was my father's; but your drove follows ours, and I am content it should be in your keeping, not in mine.—Will this do, Muhme?" "It must," said the old woman—"that is, if the Lowlander is mad enough to carry the knife." The strong westlandman laughed aloud. "Goodwife," said he, "I am Hugh Morrison from Glenae, come of the Manly Morrisons of auld langsyne, that never took short weapon against a man in their lives. And neither needed they: They had their broadswords, and I have this bit supple (showing a formidable cudgel)—for dirking ower the board, I leave that to John Highlandman.—Ye needna snort, none of you Highlanders, and you in especial, Robin. I'll keep the bit knife, if you are feared for the auld

spawife's tale, and give it back to you whenever you want it."

Robin drove on his cattle, and waved farewell to all behind him. He was in the greater haste, because he expected to join at Falkirk a comrade and brother in profession, with whom he proposed to travel in company.

Robin Oig's chosen friend was a young Englishman, Harry Wakefield by name, well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. He was nearly six feet high, gallantly formed to keep the rounds at Smithfield, or maintain the ring at a wrestling match; and although he might have been overmatched, perhaps, among the regular professors of the Fancy, yet as a chance customer, he was able to give a bellyful to any amateur of the pugilistic art. Doncaster races saw him in his glory, betting his guinea, and generally successfully; nor was there a main fought in Yorkshire, the feeders being persons of celebrity, at which he was not to be seen, if business permitted. But though a *sprack* lad, and fond of pleasure and its haunts, Harry Wakefield was steady, and not the cautious Robin Oig M'Combich himself was more attentive to the main chance. His holidays were holidays indeed; but his days of work were dedicated to steady and persevering labour. In countenance and temper, Wakefield was the model of Old England's merry yeomen, whose clothyard shafts, in so many hundred battles, asserted her superiority over the nations, and whose good sabres, in our own time, are her cheapest and most assured defence. His mirth was readily excited; for, strong in limb and constitution, and fortunate in circumstances, he was disposed to be pleased with every thing about him; and such difficulties as he might occasionally encounter, were, to a man of his energy, rather matter of amusement than serious annoyance. With all the merits of a sanguine temper, our young English drover was not without his defects. He

irascible, and sometimes to the verge of being quarrelsome; and perhaps not the less inclined to bring his disputes to a pugilistic decision, because he found few antagonists able to stand up to him in the boxing ring.

The pair of friends had traversed with their usual cordiality the grassy wilds of Liddesdale, and crossed the opposite part of Cumberland, emphatically called The Waste. In these solitary regions, the cattle under the charge of our drovers subsisted themselves cheaply, by picking their food as they went along the drove-road, or sometimes by the tempting opportunity of a *start and overloup*, or invasion of the neighbouring pasture, where an occasion presented itself. But now the scene changed before them; they were descending towards a fertile and inclosed country, where no such liberties could be taken with impunity, or without a previous arrangement and bargain with the possessors of the ground. This was more especially the case, as a great northern fair was upon the eve of taking place, where both the Scotch and English drover expected to dispose of a part of their cattle, which it was desirable to produce in the market, rested and in good order. Fields were therefore difficult to be obtained, and only upon high terms. This necessity occasioned a temporary separation betwixt the two friends, who went to bargain, each as he could, for the separate accommodation of his herd. Unhappily it chanced that both of them, unknown to each other, thought of bargaining for the ground they wanted on the property of a country gentleman of some fortune, whose estate lay in the neighbourhood. The English drover applied to the bailiff on the property, who was known to him. It chanced that the Cumbrian Squire, who had entertained some suspicions of his manager's honesty was taking occasional measures to ascertain how far they were well founded, and had desired that any inquiries about his inclosures, with a view to occupy them for a temporary purpose, should be referred to himself. As, however, Mr Ireby

had gone the day before upon a journey of some miles' distance to the northward, the bailiff chose to consider the check upon his full powers as for the time removed, and concluded that he should best consult his master's interest, and perhaps his own, in making an agreement with Harry Wakefield. Meanwhile, ignorant of what his comrade was doing, Robin Oig, on his side, chanced to be overtaken by a well-looking smart little man upon a pony, most knowingly hogged and cropped, as was then the fashion, the rider wearing tight leather breeches, and long-necked bright spurs. This cavalier asked one or two pertinent questions about markets and the price of stock. So Donald, seeing him a well-judging civil gentleman, took the freedom to ask him whether he could let him know if there was any grass-land to be let in that neighbourhood, for the temporary accommodation of his drove. He could not have put the question to more willing ears. The gentleman of the buckskins was the proprietor, with whose bailiff Harry Wakefield had dealt, or was in the act of dealing. "Thou art in good luck, my canny Scot," said Mr Ireby, to have spoken to me, for I see thy cattle have done their day's work, and I have at my disposal the only field within three miles that is to be let in these parts." "The drove can pe gang two, three, four miles very pratty well indeed—" said the cautious Highlander; put what would his honour pe axing for the beasts pe the head, if she was to tak the park for twa or three days?" We wont differ, Sawney, if you let me have six stots for winterers, in the way of reason." "And which peasts would your honour pe for having?" "Why—let me see—the two black—the dun one—yon doddy, him with the twisted horn—the brocket—How much by the head?" Ah," said Robin, "your honour is a shudge—a real shudge—I couldna have set off the pest six peasts petter mysell, me that ken them as if they were my pairns, puir things." "Well, how much per head, Sawney," continued Mr Ireby. "It was high markets at Doune and Falkirk," answered Robin.

And thus the conversation proceeded until they had agreed on the *prix juste* for the bullocks, the Squire throwing in the temporary accommodation of the inclosure for the cattle into the boot, and Robin making, as he thought a very good bargain, providing the grass was but tolerable. The Squire walked his pony alongside of the drove, partly to show him the way, and see him put into possession of the field, and partly to learn the latest news of the northern markets.

They arrived at the field, and the pasture seemed excellent. But what was their surprise when they saw the bailiff quietly inducting the cattle of Harry Wakefield into the grassy Goshen which had just been assigned to those of Robin Oig M'Combich by the proprietor himself. Squire Ireby set spurs to his horse, dashed up to his servant, and learning what had passed between the parties, briefly informed the English drover that his bailiff had let the ground without his authority, and that he might seek grass for his cattle wherever he would, since he was to get none there. At the same time he rebuked his servant severely for having transgressed his commands, and ordered him instantly to assist in ejecting the hungry and weary cattle of Harry Wakefield, which were just beginning to enjoy a meal of unusual plenty, and to introduce those of his comrade, whom the English drover now began to consider as a rival.

The feelings which arose in Wakefield's mind would have induced him to resist Mr Ireby's decision; but every Englishman has a tolerably accurate sense of law and justice, and John Fleecebumpkin, the bailiff, having acknowledged that he had exceeded his commission, Wakefield saw nothing else for it than to collect his hungry and disappointed charge, and drive them on to seek quarters elsewhere. Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, "Take it all, man—take it all

—never make two bites of a cherry—thou canst talk over the gentry, and blear a plain man's eye—Out upon you, man—I would not kiss any man's dirty lachets for leave to bake in his oven."

Robin Oig, sorry but not surprised at his comrade's displeasure, hastened to entreat his friend to wait but an hour till he had gone to the Squire's house to receive payment for the cattle he had sold, and he would come back and help him to drive the cattle into some convenient place of rest, and explain to him the whole mistake they had both of them fallen into. But the Englishman continued indignant: "Thou hast been selling, hast thou? Ay, ay—thou is a cunning lad for kenning the hours of bargaining. Go to the devil with thyself, for I will ne'er see thy fause loon's visage again—thou should be ashamed to look me in the face." "I am ashamed to look no man in the face," said Robin Oig, something moved; "and, moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will bide at the Clachan down yonder." "Mayhap you had as well keep away," said his comrade; and turning his back on his former friend, he collected his unwilling associates, assisted by the bailiff, who took some real and some affected interest in seeing Wakefield accommodated.

After spending some time in negotiating with more than one of the neighbouring farmers, who could not, or would not afford the accommodation desired, Henry Wakefield at last, and in his necessity, accomplished his point by means of the landlord of the alehouse at which Robin Oig and he had agreed to pass the night, when they first separated from each other. Mine host was content to let him turn his cattle on a piece of barren moor, at a price little less than the bailiff had asked for the disputed inclosure; and the wretchedness of the pasture, as well as the price paid for it, were set down as exaggerations of the breach of faith and friendship of his Scottish crony. This turn of Wakefield's passions was encouraged by the bailiff, (who had his own reasons for being offended against poor Robin, as having

been the unwitting cause of his falling into disgrace with his master,) as well as by the innkeeper, and two or three chance guests, who soothed the drover in his resentment against his quondam associate,—some from the ancient grudge against the Scots, which, when it exists anywhere is to be found lurking in the border counties, and some from the general love of mischief, which characterises mankind in all ranks of life, to the honour of Adam's children be it spoken. Good John Barleycorn also, who always heightens and exaggerates the prevailing passions, be they angry or kindly, was not wanting in his offices on this occasion; and confusion to false friends and hard masters, was pledged in more than one tankard.

In the meanwhile Mr Ireby found some amusement in detaining the northern drover at his ancient hall. He caused a cold round of beef to be placed before the Scot in the butler's pantry, together with a foaming tankard of home-brewed, and took pleasure in seeing the hearty appetite with which these unwonted edibles were discussed by Robin Oig M'Combich. The Squire himself lighting his pipe, compounded between his patrician dignity and his love of agricultural gossip, by walking up and down while he conversed with his guest. "I passed another drove," said the Squire, "with one of your countrymen behind them—they were something less beasts than your drove, doddies most of them—a big man was with them—none of your kilts though, but a decent pair of breeches—D'ye know who he may be?" "Hout ay—that might, could, and would pe Hughie Morrison—I didna think he could hae been sae weel up. He has made a day on us; put his Argyleshires will have wearied shanks. How far was he behind?" "I think about six or seven miles," answered the Squire, "for I passed them at the Christenbury Cragg, and I overtook you at the Hollan Bush. If his beasts be leg-weary, he will be maybe selling bargains." "Na, na, Hughie Morrison is no the man for pargains—ye maun come to some Highland body like Robin Oig he

sell for the like of these—put I maun pe wishing you goot night, and twenty of them, let alane ane, and I maun down to the Clachan to see if the lad Henry Waakfelt is out of his humdudgeons yet,”

The party at the alehouse were still in full talk, and the treachery of Robin Oig still the theme of conversation, when the supposed culprit entered the apartment. His arrival, as usually happens in such a case, put an instant stop to the discussion of which he had furnished the subject, and he was received by the company assembled with that chilling silence, which, more than a thousand exclamations, tells an intruder that he is unwelcome. Surprised and offended, but not appalled by the reception which he experienced, Robin entered with an undaunted, and even a haughty air, attempted no greeting as he saw he was received with none, and placed himself by the side of the fire, a little apart from a table, at which Harry Wakefield, the bailiff, and two or three other persons, were seated. The ample Cumbrian kitchen would have afforded plenty of room even for a larger separation.

Robin, thus seated, proceeded to light his pipe, and call for a pint of twopenny. “We have no twopence ale,” answered Ralph Heskett the landlord; but as thou find’st thy own tobacco, it’s like thou may’st find thine own liquor too—it’s the wont of thy country, I wot.” “Shame, goodman,” said the landlady, a blithe bustling housewife, hastening herself to supply the guest with liquor—“Thou knowest well enow what the strange man wants, and it’s thy trade to be civil, man. Thou shouldst know, that if the Scot likes a small pot, he pays a sure penny.”

Without taking any notice of this nuptial dialogue, the Highlander took the flagon in his hand, and addressing the company generally, drank the interesting toast of “Good markets,” to the party assembled. “The better that the wind blew fewer dealers from the north,” said one of the farmers, “and fewer High-land runts to eat up the English meadows.” “Saul of

my pody, put you are wrang there my friend," answered Robin, with composure, "it is your fat Englishmen that eat up our Scots cattle, puir things." "I wish there was a summat to eat up their drovers," said another; "a plain Englishman canna make bread within a kenning of them." "Or an honest servant keep his master's favour, but they will come sliding in between him and the sunshine," said the bailiff. "If these pe jokes," said Robin Oig, with the same composure, "there is ower mony jokes upon one man." "It's no joke, but downright earnest," said the bailiff. "Hark ye, Mr Robin Ogg, or whatever is your name, it's right we should tell you that we are all of one opinion, and that is, that you, Mr Robin Ogg, have behaved to our friend Mr Harry Wakefield here, like a raff and a blackguard." "Nae doubt, nae doubt," answered Robin, with great composure; "and you are a set of very feeling judges, for whose prains or pehaviour I wad not gie a pinch of sneeshing. If Mr Harry Waakfelt kens where he is wranged, he kens where he may be righted." "He speaks truth," said Wakefield, who had listened to what passed, divided between the offence which he had taken at Robin's late behaviour, and the revival of his habitual habits of friendship.

He now rose, and went towards Robin, who got up from his seat as he approached, and held out his hand. "That's right, Harry—go it—serve him out," resounded on all sides—"tip him the nailer—show him the mill." "Hold your peace all of you, and be——," said Wakefield; and then addressing his comrade, he took him by the extended hand, with something alike of respect and defiance. "Robin," he said, "thou hast used me ill enough this day; but if you mean like a frank fellow, to shake hands, and take a tussel for love on the sod, why I'll forgie the man, and we shall be better friends than ever." "And would it not pe petter to be cood friends without more of the matter?" said Robin; "we will be much petter friendships with our panes hale than broken."

Harry Wakefield dropped the hand of his friend; or rather threw it from him. "I did not think I had been keeping company for three years with a coward." "Coward belongs to none of my name," said Robin, whose eyes began to kindle, but keeping the command of his temper. "It was no coward's legs or hands, Harry Waakfelt, that drew you out of the fords of Frew, when you was drifting ower the plack rock, and every eel in the river expected his share of you." "And that is true enough, too," said the Englishman, struck by the appeal. "Adzooks!" exclaimed the bailiff—"sure Harry Wakefield, the nattiest lad at Whitson Tryste, Wooler Fair, Carlisle Sands, or Stagshaw bank, is not going to show white feather? Ah, this comes of living so long with kilts and bonnets—men forget the use of their daddles." "I may teach you, Master Fleecebumpkin, that I have not lost the use of mine," said Wakefield, and then went on. "This will never do, Robin. We must have a turn-up, or we shall be the talk of the country side. I'll be d——d if I hurt thee—I'll put on the gloves gin thou like. Come, stand forward like a man." "To pe peaten like a dog," said Robin; "is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I'll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language."

A general cry of "No, no,—no law, no lawyer! a bellyful and be friends," was echoed by the bystanders. "But," continued Robin, "if I am to fight, I have no skill to fight like a jackanapes, with hands and nails." "How would you fight then?" said his antagonist: "though I am thinking it would be hard to bring you to the scratch anyhow." "I would fight with proadswuards, and sink point on the first blood drawn—like a gentlemans."

A loud shout of laughter followed the proposal, which indeed had rather escaped from poor Robin's swelling heart, than been the dictates of his sober judgment. "Gentleman, quotha!" was echoed on all sides, with

a shout of unextinguishable laughter: "a very pretty gentleman, God wot—Canst get two swords for the gentleman to fight with, Ralph Heskett?" "No, but I can send to the armoury at Carlisle, and lend them two forks to be making shift with in the meantime."

"Tush, man," said another, "the bonny Scots come into the world with the blue bonnet on their heads, and dirk and pistol at their belt." "Best send post," said Mr Fleecebumpkin, "to the Squire of Corby Castle, to come and stand second to the *gentleman*."

In the midst of this torrent of general ridicule, the Highlander instinctively griped beneath the folds of his plaid. "But it's better not," he said in his own language. "A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility! Make room, the pack of you," he said, advancing to the door. But his former friend interposed his sturdy bulk, and opposed his leaving the house; and when Robin Oig attempted to make his way by force, he hit him down on the floor, with as much ease as a boy bowls down a nine-pin. "A ring! a ring!" was now shouted, until the dark rafters, and the hams that hung on them, trembled again, and the very platters on the *binck* clattered against each other. "Well done, Harry."—"Give it him home, Harry."—"Take care of him now—he sees his own blood!"

Such were the exclamations, while the Highlander, starting from the ground, all his coldness and caution lost in frantic rage, sprung at his antagonist with the fury, the activity, and the vindictive purpose, of an incensed tiger-cat. But when could rage encounter science and temper? Robin Oig again went down in the unequal contest; and as the blow was necessarily a severe one, he lay motionless on the floor of the kitchen. The landlady ran to offer some aid, but Mr Fleecebumpkin would not permit her to approach. "Let him alone," he said, "he will come to within time, and come up to the scratch again. He has not got half his broth yet." "He has got all I mean to

give him, though," said his antagonist, whose heart began to relent towards his old associate; "and I would rather by half give the rest to yourself, Mr Fleecebumpkin for you pretend to know a thing or two, and Robin had not art enough even to peel before setting to, but fought with his plaid dangling about him.—Stand up Robin, my man! all friends now; and let me hear the man that will speak a word against you, or your country for your sake."

Robin Oig was still under the dominion of his passion, and eager to renew the onset; but being withheld on the one side by the peace-making Dame Heskett, and on the other, aware that Wakefield no longer meant to renew the combat, his fury sunk into gloomy sullenness. "Come, come, never grudge so much at it, man," said the brave-spirited Englishman, with the placability of his country, "shake hands, and we will be better friends than ever." Friends!" exclaimed Robin Oig with strong emphasis—"friends!—Never. Look to yourself, Harry Waakfelt." "Then the curse of Cromwell on your proud Scots stomach, as the man says in the play, and you may do your worst and be d——d; for one man can say nothing more to another after a tussel, than that he is sorry for it."

On these terms the friends parted; Robin Oig drew out, in silence, a piece of money, threw it on the table, and then left the alehouse. But turning at the door, he shook his hand at Wakefield, pointing with his forefinger upwards, in a manner which might imply either a threat or a caution. He then disappeared in the moonlight.

Some words passed after his departure, between the bailiff, who piqued himself on being a little of a bully, and Harry Wakefield, who with generous inconsistency, was now not indisposed to begin a new combat in defence of Robin Oig's reputation, "although he could not use his daddles like an Englishman, as it did not come natural to him." But Dame Heskett prevented this second quarrel from coming to a head by her peremptory

interference. "There should be no more fighting in our house," she said; "there had been too much already.—And you, Mr Wakefield, may live to learn," she added, "what it is to make a deadly enemy out of a good friend." "Psha, dame! Robin Oig is an honest fellow, and will never keep malice." "Do not trust to that—you do not know the dour temper of the Scotch, though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot." "And so is well seen in her daughter," said Ralph Heskett.

This nuptial sarcasm gave the discourse another turn; fresh customers entered the tap-room or kitchen, and others left it. The conversation turned on the expected markets, and the report of prices from the different parts of Scotland and England—treaties were commenced, and Harry Wakefield was lucky enough to find a chap for a part of his drove, and at a very considerable profit; an event of consequence more than sufficient to blot out all remembrances of the unpleasant scuffle in the earlier part of the day. But there remained one party from whose mind that recollection could not have been wiped away by possession of every head of cattle betwixt Esk and Eden.

This was Robin Oig M'Combich.—"That I should have had no weapon," he said, and for the first time in my life!—Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk—the dirk—ha! the English blood!—My Muhme's word—when did her word fall to the ground?"

The recollection of the fatal prophecy confirmed the deadly intention which instantly sprung up in his mind. "Ha! Morrison cannot be many miles behind; and if it were an hundred, what then!"

His impetuous spirit had now a fixed purpose and motive of action, and he turned the light foot of his country towards the wilds, through which he knew, by Mr Ireby's report, that Morrison was advancing. His mind was wholly engrossed by the sense of injury—in-

injury sustained from a friend ; and by the desire of vengeance on one whom he now accounted his most bitter enemy. The treasured ideas of self-importance and self-opinion—of ideal birth and quality, had become more precious to him, (like the hoard to the miser,) because he could only enjoy them in secret. But that hoard was pillaged, the idols which he had secretly worshipped had been desecrated and profaned. Insulted, abused, and beaten, he was no longer worthy, in his own opinion, of the name he bore, or the lineage which he belonged to—nothing was left to him—nothing but revenge ; and, as the reflection added a galling spur to every step, he determined it should be as sudden and signal as the offence.

When Robin Oig left the door of the alehouse, seven or eight English miles at least lay betwixt Morrison and him. The advance of the former was slow, limited by the sluggish pace of his cattle ; the last left behind him stubble-field and hedge-row, crag, and dark heath, all glittering with frost-rime in the broad November moonlight, at the rate of six miles an hour. And now the distant lowing of Morrison's cattle is heard ; and now they are seen creeping like moles in size and slowness of motion on the broad face of the moor ; and now he meets them—passes them, and stops their conduct.

“ May good betide us,” said the Southlander—“ Is this you, Robin M'Combich, or your wraith !” “ It is Robin Oig M'Combich,” answered the Highlander, “ and it is not.—But never mind that, put pe giving me the skenedhu.” “ What ! you are for back to the Highlands—The devil !—Have you selt all off before the fair ? This beats all for quick markets.” “ I have not sold—I am not going north—May pe I will never go north again.—Give me pack my dirk, Hugh Morrison, or there will be words between us.” “ Indeed, Robin, I'll be better advised or I gie it back to you—it is a wanchancy weapon in a Higlandman's hand, and I am thinking you will be about some barns-breaking.” “ Prutt, titt ! let me have my wea-

pon," said Robin Oig, impatiently. "Hooly and fairly," said his well-meaning friend, "I'll tell you what will do better than these dirking doings—Ye ken Highlander and Lowlander, and Border-men, are a' ae man's bairns when you are over the Scots dyke. See the Eskdale callants, and fighting Charlie of Liddesdale, and the Lockerby lads, and the four Dandies of Lustruther, and a wheen mair grey plaids, are coming up behind; and if you are wranged, there is a hand of a manly Morrison, we'll see you righted, if Carlisle and Stanwix baith took up the feud." "To tell you the truth," said Robin Oig, desirous of eluding the suspicions of his friend, "I have enlisted with a party of the Black Watch, and must march off to-morrow morning." Enlisted! Were you mad or drunk?—You must buy yourself off—I can lend you twenty notes, and twenty to that, if the drove sell." "I thank you, thank ye, Hughie; but I go with good will the gate that I am going,—so the dirk—the dirk!" "There it is for you then, since less wunna serve. But think on what I was saying.—Waes me, it will be sair news in the braes of Balquidder, that Robin Oig M'Combich should have run an ill gate, and ta'en on." "Ill news in Balquidder, indeed!" echoed poor Robin; "put Cot speed you, Hughie, and send you good marcats. Ye wunna meet with Robin Oig again either at tryste or fair."

So saying, he shook hastily the hand of his acquaintance, and set out in the direction from which he had advanced, with the spirit of his former pace.

"There is something wrang with the lad," muttered the Morrison to himself; "but we will maybe see better into it the morn's morning."

But long ere the morning dawned, the catastrophe of our tale had taken place. It was two hours after the affray had happened, and it was totally forgotten by almost every one, when Robin Oig returned to Heskett's inn. The place was filled at once by various sorts of men, and with noises corresponding to their character.

There were the grave, low sounds of men engaged in busy traffic, with the laugh, the song, and the riotous jest of those who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. Among the last was Harry Wakefield, who amidst a grinning group of smock-frocks, hob-nailed shoes, and jolly English physiognomies, was trolling forth the old ditty,

“What though my name be Roger,
Who drives the plough and cart—”

when he was interrupted by a well-known voice, saying in a high and stern voice, marked by the sharp Highland accent, “Harry Waakfelt—if you be a man, stand up!” What is the matter?—what is it?” the guests demanded of each other. “It is only a d—d Scotsman,” said Fleecebumpkin, who was by this time very drunk, “whom Harry Wakefield helped to his broth to-day, who is now come to have *his could hail* hett again.” “Harry Waakfelt,” repeated the same ominous summons, “stand up, if you be a man!”

There is something in the tone of deep and concentrated passion, which attracts attention and imposes awe, even by the very sound. The guests shrunk back on every side, and gazed at the Highlander, as he stood in the middle of them, his brows bent, and his features rigid with resolution. “I will stand up with all my heart, Robin, my boy, but it shall be to shake hands with you, and drink down all unkindness. It is not the fault of your heart, man, that you don’t know how to clench your hands.”

By this time he stood opposite to his antagonist; his open and unsuspecting look strangely contrasted with the stern purpose, which gleamed wild, dark, and vindictive in the eyes of the Highlander. “’Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl.” “I *can* fight,” answered Robin Oig sternly, but calmly, “and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me to-day how the Saxon churls fight—I show you now how the Highland Dunniewassal fights.”

He seconded the word with the action, and plunged the dagger, which he suddenly displayed, into the broad breast of the English yeoman, with such fatal certainty and force, that the hilt made a hollow sound against the breast-bone, and the double-edged point split the very heart of his victim. Henry Wakefield fell, and expired with a single groan. His assassin next seized the bailiff by the collar, and offered the bloody poinard to his throat, while dread and surprise rendered the man incapable of defence. "It were very just to lay you beside him," he said, "but the blood of a base pick-thank shall never mix on my father's dirk with that of a brave man."

As he spoke, he cast the man from him with so much force that he fell on the floor, while Robin, with his other hand, threw the fatal weapon into the blazing turf-fire. "There," he said, "take me who likes—and let fire cleanse blood if it can."

The pause of astonishment still continuing, Robin Oig asked for a peace-officer, and a constable having stepped out, he surrendered himself to his custody. "A bloody night's work you have made of it," said the constable. "Your own fault," said the Highlander. "Had you kept his hands off me twa hours since, he would have been now as well and merry as he was twa minutes since." "It must be sorely answered," said the peace-officer. "Never you mind that—death pays all debts; it will pay that too."

The horror of the bystanders began now to give way to indignation; and the sight of a favourite companion murdered in the midst of them; the provocation being, in their opinion, so utterly inadequate to the excess of vengeance, might have induced them to kill the perpetrator of the deed even upon the very spot. The constable, however, did his duty on this occasion, and with the assistance of some of the more reasonable persons present, procured horses to guard the prisoner to Carlisle, to abide his doom at the next assizes. While the escort was preparing, the prisoner neither expressed the least interest, nor attempted the slightest reply.

My story is nearly ended. The unfortunate Higginson stood his trial at Carlisle, and was sentenced to death. He met his fate with great firmness, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. "I give a life for the life I took," he said, "and what can I do more?"

COUNTESS OF EXETER.

I AM no teller of stories; but there is one belonging to Burleigh House, of which I happen to know some of the particulars. The late Earl of Exeter had been divorced from his first wife, a woman of fashion, and of somewhat more gaiety of manners than "lords who love their ladies" like. He determined to seek out a second wife in an humbler sphere of life, and that it should be one who, having no knowledge of his rank, should love him for himself alone. For this purpose, he went and settled incognito, under the name of Mr Jones, at Hodnet, an obscure village in Shropshire. He made overtures to one or two damsels in the neighbourhood, but they were too knowing to be taken in by him. His manners were not boorish,—his mode of life was retired,—it was odd how he got his livelihood,—and at last he began to be taken for a highwayman. In this dilemma, he turned to Miss Hoggins, the eldest daughter of a small farmer at whose house he lodged. Miss Hoggins, it would seem, had not been used to romp with the clowns: there was something in the manners of their quiet but eccentric guest which she liked. As he found that he had inspired her with that kind of regard which he wished for, he made honourable proposals to her, and at the end of some months they were married, without his letting her know who he was. They set off in a post-chaise from her father's house, and travelled across the country. In this manner, they arrived at Stamford, and

passed through the town without stopping till they came to the entrance of Burleigh Park, which is on the outside of it. The gates flew open, the chaise entered, and drove down the long avenue of trees that leads up to the front of this fine old mansion. As they drew nearer to it, and she seemed a little surprised where they were going, he said, "Well, my dear, this is Burleigh House, it is the house I have promised to bring you to, and you are the countess of Exeter!"—It is said the shock of this discovery was too much for the young creature, and that she never recovered it.—It was a sensation worth dying for. The world we live in was worth making, had it been only for this. I never wish to have been a lord, but when I think of this story.

