



LONG PACK:

A
NORTHUMBRIAN TALE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE GYPSY'S PROPHECY.



“ Let us sit down on this stone seat, and I will tell you a tale of horrors, concerning the late inhabitants of yonder solitary house, just visible on the hill side, through the gloom of those pines.”

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A NORTHUMBRIAN TALE.

'Twas in the year 1722, when Col. Ridley returned from India, with what, in those days, was counted an immense fortune, and retired to a country seat on the banks of North Tyne, 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 annually to London with his family during the winter months of the year, and at these times there were but few domestics left in his house. At the time treated of, the only domestics remaining were a servant maid, of the name of Alice, who kept the house, and two men, who threshed the corn, and took care of the cattle and out-buildings: there

were also two ploughmen, but they 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 as 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 an agreeable companion for such a maid as Alice, on such a night as that ; yet Alice declared, that from the very beginning 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 to ask a night's lodging, he met a peremptory refusal ; he jested on the subject, said he believed she was in the right, for that it would be impossible for him to keep his own bed, and such

his own bed, and such a sweet creature lying alone under the same roof—took her on his knee, and ravished a kiss. 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 have 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 round are all of the poorer sort, I will rather make you a present of the greatest shawl in my pack than go further.” At the mentioning of the shawl, the picture of Deliberation was pourtrayed 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 they either, unless well acquainted with them.” “What the worse can either your master, or you, or any other person, be, of suffering

the morning?" "I intreat you not to 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 inflexible beings ever I saw, thou art the first! 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 lodging 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; it was an alternative she had proposed, and, against which she could start no plausible objection, so she rather reluctantly consented. "But the pack will be better out of your way," said he, "and safer, if you would 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 his way, wishing Alice a good night.

When Alice and the pack were left in the large house by themselves, she could not, for her life, quit thinking of the pack one moment. What was it that made it so heavy that its owner could not carry it? She would go and see what was in it. It was a very curious pack. At least she would go and handle it, and see what she thought was in it. She went into the parlour—opened a wall-press: she wanted nothing in the press: she never so much as looked into it: her eyes were fixed on the pack. "It was a very queer pack—it was square the one way, but not square the other way—it was a monstrous queer pack. It was now wearing late. She returned from the room in a sort of trepidation—sat down to her wheel, but could not spin one thread. "It is a droll pack yon! What made the man so very earnest with me to tarry all night? Never was man so importunate. What in the world has he got in it? 'Tis a confounded queer pack after all: its so long and so thick. Its a terrible queer pack."

What surmises will fear not give rise to in the mind of a woman! She lighted a 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 at the pack. God of Mercy! she saw it moving as visibly as ever she saw any thing in her life. Every hair in her head stood upright; every inch of flesh on her body crept like a nest of pismires. She hastened into the kitchen as fast as she could, for her knees bent under the load

of terror that had overwhelmed the heart of poor Alice. She puffed 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, Richard! Oh, for mercy! make haste, Richard, 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 has 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, starting at Alice, and letting his chops fall down. Richard had just lifted the flail over his head to begin threshing a sheaf; but when he heard of a living pack, he dropt one end of the hand-staff to the floor, and, leaning on the other, stared 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!" Richard again exclaimed: "Why the woman is mad without all doubts." "Oh, Richard! come away. Heaven knows what is in it! but I saw it moving as 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 thy brain, this is the most unfeasible, unnatural, and impossible. How can a pack made of napkins, and muslins, and corduroy breeches, perhaps, ever become alive? It is

even worse than to suppose a horse's hair will turn to an eel.' So saying he lifted the candle out of the jug, and, turning about, never stopped till he had his hand upon the pack. He felt the bales that surrounded the edges to prevent the goods being rumpled and spoiled, by carrying the cords that bound it, and the canvas 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 cost the honest man £200, if not more. It would cost him more: 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 neither seen him or it, 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 right enough.

During this conversation, in came Edward, a lad about 16 years of age, who herded the cattle. He was son to a coal driver on the border, and possessed a good deal of humour and ingenuity, but somewhat roguish and forward; and was commonly very ragged in his apparel. He was at this time wholly intent on shooting the crows and birds 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 drops of blood on the snow. He had at this very moment come in, great haste for Copenhagen, having seen a glorious chance of sparrows, and a robin red-breast among them,

feeding on the scite of a corn rick, but hearing the talk of something mysterious, and a living pack, he pricked up his ears, and became all attentive. "Faith, Alice," said he, "if you will let me, I'll shoot it." "Hold your peace, fool," said Richard. Edward took the candle from Richard, who still held it in his hand, and, gliding down the passage, edged open the parlour door, and watched the pack attentively for about two minutes. He 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 confided to our care, and the wealth that it contains may tempt some people to use stratagem. Now, if we open up this man's pack, he may pursue us for damages to any amount, but if I shoot at 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 a valuation; so, if none of you will acquiesce, I will take all the blame myself, and ware a shot on 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 it for an assent to what he had been advancing, so, snatching up old Copenhagen in one hand, and the candle in the other, he hastened down the passage, and, without hesitating a moment, fired at the pack.

merciful God ! 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 making 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 one to the other. Alice followed as fast as she could, without lost half the way of Edward. She was all the way sighing and crying most pitifully. Old Richard stood for a short while as if in a state of petrefaction, but at length, after some hasty ejaculations, he went into the parlour. The floor was covered with blood, and the pack thrown upon the ground : but the groans and cries ceased, and only a kind of guttural noise was heard from it. Knowing that then something must be done, Richard 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 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 trying 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 his spittle, and held his peace.

They were soon all three in the parlour, and, in no little terror or agitation of mind, loosed the pack, the principal commodity of which was a stout young dog, 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 swallowing his spittle, and staring at his two companions.

It is generally believed that when Edward fired at the pack, he had not the most distant idea of shooting a man ; but seeing Alice 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 shot at so large a 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 was done, which was no more than what he might have expected, had he been certain he saw the pack moving, makes this asseveration rather doubtful. They made all possible expedition in extricating him, intending to call in 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,

said he, "if his parents are alive, how will their hearts bear this, poor things! said Richard, weeping outright, "Poor things, God pity them."

The way that he was packed up was artful and curious. His knees were brought up parallel to his navel, and his feet and legs stuffed in a hat-box; another hat-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 has 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 would have seen the light of a new day." These dismal 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," said Edward; but none of his companions answered either good or bad. Alice, though rather grown desperate, behaved and assisted better at this

bloody affair than might have been expected. Edward surveyed the pistols all around, two of which were curious of workmanship. "But what do you think he was going to do with all these?" said Edward. "I think you need not ask that," Richard answered. "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 ease and velocity as the streamers around the pole on a frosty night. On Richard's mentioning more concerned, Edward instantly thought of a gang of thieves by night. What devastation he would work amongst them with Copenhagen: how he would make some to lie with their guts in their arms, blow the nether jaw from one, and scatter the brains of another; how Alice would scream, and Richard would pray, and every thing would go on like the work of a wind-mill. Oh, if he had nothing to do but to shoot! but the plaguy long time he always sat in loading, would subject him to a triple disadvantage in the battle. This immediately suggested the necessity of having assistance, two or three others to shoot and keep them at bay while he was loading. The impulse of the moment was Edward's. Off he ran like fire, and warned 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 25 men in the house, and 16 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 pitch-forks, 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. All, however, remained quiet until about 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 set himself 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 they were 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 fate, 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 and flustered by the palpitations of an adjoining heart, every gun was cocked, and pointed towards 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 suspense 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 their account, exceeding

their 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 bulk of the windows; it was, however the catch word to all the rest, and, in the course of two seconds, the whole 16 guns were discharged at them. Before the smoke dispersed, they were all felled like fire, no doubt greatly amazed at the reception they got. Edward and his comrade 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 fright at the noise, and galloped off without them; but those below warmly protested against opening any of the doors until day, so that they were obliged to betake themselves again to their places 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 surprize. An hour or two after the great brush, Edward and his messmate descended again, and begged hard for leave to go and reconoitre for a few minutes, which after some disputes, was granted. They found only four men fallen, who appeared to them to be all quite dead. One of them was lying within the porch. "Faith," said Edward, "here's the gentleman I shot." The other three were without, at a considerable distance from each other. They durst not follow the track farther, as the road entered between a grove 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 side 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 they all remained in anxious incertitude, until the opening day discovered to them, by degrees, that the corpses were all removed, and nothing left but large sheets of frozen blood; and that 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 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 evident. Dr. Herbert, the physician, who

dead and sick within twenty miles were inspected by medical men, and the most extensive search made, but all 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 was, sundry of these were never more seen nor heard of 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 for inspection a fortnight, but none would ever acknowledge as 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 concerned in this bold and base attempt was ever discovered. A constant watch was kept by night for some time. The Colonel liberally rewarded the defenders of his house. 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 tobacconist at Hexham; and Edward was made the Colonel's gamekeeper, and had a present of a fine gold-mounted gun given him. He afterwards procured him a commission in a regiment of foot, where he suffered many misfortunes and disappointments. He was shot through the shoulder at the battle of Fontenay, 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;

ed, generous, and open-hearted in all situations. I have often stood at his knee, and listened with wonder and amazement to his stories of battles and sieges, but none of them ever pleased me so much as that of the Long-Peck.

Alas! alas! his life is fast approaching to its end. He hath, now many years ago, submitted to the conqueror of all mankind. His brave heart is now enclosed of the valley, and his grey hairs lie mixed with the cold earth, beneath the green sod.

THE PROPHECY OF THE GYPSY

THE GYPSY'S PROPHECY

GYPSY'S PROPHECY

On the summit of St. Vincent's

ocks, in the neighbourhood of Clifton,

looking on the Avon, as it rolls its

lazy course towards the Bristol

channel, stands an edifice known by

the name of Cooke's Folly. It consists

of a single round tower, and appears

at a distance rather as the remnant

of some extensive building, than a

One evening his lady, while pregnant with her first child, was walking in their domain, she encountered a strange looking gipsy, who, pestering her for alms, received but a small sum. The man implored a larger gift. 'That,' said the lady, 'will buy you food for the present.'

'Lady,' said the man, 'it is not food for this wretched body I require; the herbs of the field and the waters of the ditch are good enough for that. I asked your alms-for higher purposes. Do not doubt the strength of my suuken eye when I tell you that it can read the skies as they relate the fates of men.'

'What, art thou an astrologer?'

'Aye, lady! my fathers were so before me, even in the times when our people had a home amidst the pyramids of the mighty—in the times when you are told the mightier prophets of the Israelites put the southsayers of Egypt to confusion;—idle tales—but if true, all reckless now. Judah's scattered sons are now desolate as ourselves; but they

bend and bow to laws and ways of other lands—we remain in the stern steadiness of our own. If, then, I give thee more money, how will it be applied? That is not a courteous question, but I'll answer it. The most cunning craftsman cannot work without his tools, and some of mine are broken, which I seek to repair—another crown will be enough. —The lady put the required sum into his hand, and at the same time intimated her desire of having a specimen of his art. Oh! to what purpose should that be?—Why, why seek to know the course of futurity? Destiny runs on in a sweeping and resistless tide. Enquire not what rocks await your bark; the knowledge cannot avail you, for caution is useless against stern necessity. “Truly you are not likely to get rich by your trade, if you thus deter your customers.” “It is not for wealth I labour. I am alone on the earth, and have none to love. I will not mix with the world lest I should learn to hate. This present is nothing

to me. It is in communion with the spirits who have lived in the times that are past, and with the stars, those historians of the time to come, that I feel aught of joy. Fools sometimes demand the exertion of my powers, and sometimes I gratify their childish curiosity." "Notwithstanding I lie under the imputation of folly, I will beg that you predict unto me the fate of the child that I shall bear." "Well, you have obliged me, and I will comply." Note the precise moment at which it enters the world, and soon after you shall see me again." Within a week the birth of an heir awoke the clamorous joy of the vassals, and summoned the strange gipsy to ascertain the necessary points. These learned he returned home; and the next day presented Sir Maurice with a scroll, containing the following words:—

"Twenty times shall Avon's tide
In chains of glittering ice be tied—

Twenty times the woods of Leigh
Shall wave their branches merrily,
In spring burst forth in mantle gay,

And dance in summer's scorching ray—

Twenty times shall autumn's frown
 With all the green to brown—
 And still the child of yesterday
 Shall laugh the happy hours away.
 That period past, another sun
 Shall not his annual journey run,
 Be ore a secret, silent foe,
 Shall strike that boy a deadly blow—
 Such and sure his fate shall be:
 Seek not to change his destiny."

The lady died, and left two girls and
 boy, Walter (for that was the boy's
 name) grew in health and beauty;
 and when he had completed his 20th
 year, Sir Maurice shewed him the
 gypsy's scroll, and requested him to
 retire to the tower which he had built. Walter con-
 sented. Time rolled on—the period of his release from
 voluntary bondage drew near. On the evening
 of the last day, "let me have," said he, "one more
 eggot—the night feels chilly. This, father, is the
 last I shall draw up—to-morrow all will be well—
 good night."

The anxious father could not leave
 the spot. Sleep he knew it was in-
 vain to court, and he therefore de-
 termined to remain where he was. The
 reflections that occupied his mind con-
 tinually varied: at one time he painted
 to himself the proud career of his high-
 spirited boy, known and admired

among the mighty of his time ; a moment after he saw the prediction verified, and the child of his love lying in the tomb. The hour struck, and his daughters came running full of hope. They called, but Walter answered not. A servant had brought a ladder, which he ascended, and looked in at the window. " He is asleep," said the man— " He is dead," murmured the father.

It was e'en so. A serpent had crept from the faggot last sent him—twined itself round his arm—sucked the blood from his throat—and thus fulfilled the Prophecy.

END OF NO. 1



