

like a toom barrel ; never stopping till he was in at his ain house, and the door baith bolted and barred at his tail.

“Did ye ever hear the like of that, Mansie? Weel, man, I’ll explain the hail history of it to ye. Ye see—’Od! how sound that callant’s sleeping,” continued Isaac ; “he’s snoring like a nine-year auld!”

I was glad he had stopped, for I was like to sink through the ground with fear—it no, it would not do.

“Dinna ye ken—sauf us! v. at a fearsome night this is! The trees will be all broken. What a noise in the lum! I daresay there’s some auld hag of a witch-wife gaun to come rumble doun’t. It’s no the first time, I’ll swear. Hae ye a silver sixpence? Wad ye like that?” he bawled up the chimley. “Ye’ll hae heard,” said he, “lang ago, that a wee murdered wean was buried—didna ye hear a voice?—was buried below that corner—the hearth-stane there, where the laddie’s lying on?”

I had now lost my breath, so that I could not stop him.

“Ye never heard tell o’t, didna ye? Weel, I’ve tell’t ye—Sauf us, what swirls of smoke are coming down the chimley—I could swear something is coming down the lum head—Gang out, and see!”

At that moment a clap like thunder was heard—the candle was driven over—the sleeping laddie roared: “Help!” and “Murder!” and “Thieves!” and, as the firm on which we were sitting played flee backwards, cripple Isaac bellowed out, “I’m dead!—I’m killed—shot through the head!—Oh! oh! oh!”

Surely I had fainted away ; for, when I came to myself, I found my red comforter loosed ; my face all wet—Isaac rubbing down his waistcoat with his sleeve—the laddie swigging ale out of a bicker—and the brisk brown stout, which, by casting its cork, had caused all the alarm, whizz, whizz—whizzing in the chimley lug.