

right to compare with her for sweetness of temper, a handsome form, dark locks, and darker eyes, and a face which made every other maiden envious who beheld it. Her name also was a sweet one; at least to a Scottish ear—Agnes Hawthorn. She lived at the distance of four miles into what may be called the interior of the pastoral district, where her father rented also a large sheep farm, bounded on the one side by that of Mr Thompson. Houses are always thinly scattered in countries of that description, but those of farmers in particular; and with the exception of one that intervened about midway betwixt them, Mr Hawthorn and Mr Thompson were nearest neighbors to each other. Two high mountains, with a deep valley between, reared themselves in opposition to Robert's nightly visits to his fair one; but he was an adept in the art of surmounting such obstacles, and, aware of the endearments that awaited him beyond them, he valued not the moor, the stream, or the rocks that lay in his path, or whether the night was a clear or a gloomy one.

No place can be desert where a beautiful woman resides; and upon this principle, though the houses around the dwelling of Agnes were "few and far between," hardly a night passed over her head on which her dwelling was not belaguered by a host of wooers. But Robert Thompson was the "apple of her eye." To him alone she would withdraw the curtain of the window, to whisper that her parents were not sleeping sound enough to permit her to unbar the door, or to ask him if no other youth was lurking near, who might discover her exit from, or entrance into, the house. This was a most necessary precaution, and one which Robert never failed to use upon every visit—always encompassing the house once or twice before he approached the window, and never pattering upon the glass until he had satisfied himself that no human eye was privy to his movements. But men see not, like cats or owls, in the dark; and Robert, with all his vigilance, was one evening so unfortunate as to be discovered by a party of three other young shepherds, who, though all come a-wooing for their "ain band," had clubbed together for the purpose of watching, when they found their several efforts to gain admittance, or even an answer to their entreaties, in vain.

A peat stack, as is common in such places, was built against one of the gables of the house; and upon a *daiss* of it, which was brought a good way down by frequent subtractions for the fire, the watchful triumvirato stily perched themselves. The color of the peats and of their clothes happened to be so similar, that discovery was almost impossible, and there had they the pleasure, or rather the mortification, of seeing their rival in a short while make his appearance, and, after completing his customary search, gain admittance at the door. They had no certain knowledge, however, of the person they had seen, for a plaid totally concealed him from the crown of the head to the knees. But whoever he might be, they were resolved for once to turn the sweets of courtship into bitterness.

No sooner had the door been cautiously closed, and all within sunk into perfect stillness, than the whole three, with a heavy *tramp*, advanced to the window, and wetting the tips of their fingers, and rubbing them repeatedly along the glass, kept up a squeaking noise, so loud as to be heard at a considerable distance. The lovers were by this time seated at the parlour table, with a candle burning before them. A large oaken press, displaying on its front, the rude carving of former times, stood behind them in a corner, from which the young and innocent Agnes had taken, in the open simplicity of her affection, a new silk handkerchief on which, with nice art, she had sewed the name of her Robert; and this she had just presented to him, and breathed a wish that he would wear it for her sake. Robert had pressed the sweet lips by which the wish was uttered, and was cradling her head upon his breast, and vowing how

much, for her sake, he valued the present, when the sound of the spies without interrupted him. "Do you hear that?" said Agnes, starting. "Can it be the tread of men, or do you think it is some of the cattle that he without?"

"I saw nobody when I came in. It must be some of the cattle." The loud squeaking upon the glass of the window instantly resolved their doubts. "You have been observed," said Agnes, alarmed; "some men were here before you came, and tapped long at the window without my answering them; and they have no doubt been watching, and now mean to be revenged."

"It can only be me that they wish to molest," replied Robert with an encouraging smile; "and," added he, rising and casting his plaid over the left shoulder, and knotting it beneath his right arm, "if I can only get out to the bent, they'll be fester than any person I have yet seen, if they catch me."

"Stay," said Agnes, clinging to his arm; "they may cause a stone, or perhaps a shot, to overtake you, if their feet fail them in the chase. And who knows but they may be ready at the door to seize you, the moment it is opened?"

"But then your father and mother will be awakened; and I would rather run the greatest risk without, than be taken by them within."

"I have many a bye corner where I can hido you till all danger is past. Do stay, I beseech you!"

"No, no. The consequences to you might be worse than you are aware of, and I will never seek my own safety at the hazard of yours. I will make my escape in spite of them."

Agnes had no time to reply, for the noise which the fellows were now making without, had already caused a stir in the bed chamber of her father and mother. "What's a' this din about?" had been twice demanded in a half-sleeping tone, by Mr Hawthorn, and Mrs Hawthorn was heard to be out of bed, and rummaging about in search of a candle. Robert pressed the hand of his Agnes in silence, and, snatching his thick hazel staff, proceeded to the door, which he quietly and quickly opened, and was out upon the hill side in an instant. The three spies, who expected no such thing, and who were congregated around the window at a short distance from the door, stood for a moment gazing upon one another in astonishment, before they recovered presence of mind to start in pursuit. "He's out! he's out!" was their first exclamation; when away they darted after him, each casting over his shoulder the end of his plaid, and holding his cudgel horizontally by the middle in his right hand. A low hill, with a gentle acclivity, lay before the house of Hawthorn, over which was the path that Robert every night trod to visit his daughter; and in this direction he now led out his pursuers in his way homewards. He had gained about twenty paces on first starting, and it was evident, as he ascended the hill, that he was capable of still increasing the distance.

With what joy did Agnes behold him, as she stood trembling in the threshold of the door, stretching away like a deer before his pursuers, and setting their cries and menaces at defiance! The house looked towards the south; the moon had about an hour previous risen opposite to where Agnes was standing, and by her pale cloudless light, the anxious maiden was enabled to mark, with considerable precision, the motions and progress of her lover, and of those who followed him. But as they neared the summit of the hill which formed her horizon, the figures of the whole became more indistinct, and their distances less discernable. The hill was level for a short breadth on the top; and as Robert, from the moment of his first setting foot upon the edge of the table-land, appeared at a distance to be standing, while passing over it, Agnes beheld with inexpressible anguish the forms of his three foes emerging in the weather-gleam, and apparently approaching him, until at last the whole group melted away like apparitions beyond the horizon.

"He's caught! he's murdered!" was her first exclamation, as she sprang from the door, and ran with unconscious speed towards the summit of the hill. Her parents were by this time a-foot, with two shepherds and a female servant, who rushed out also on hearing the wild cry of Agnes, whom they fancied to have been in bed. But their surprise, and the bewilderment of mind which people feel on being suddenly roused from profound slumber, prevented them from perceiving the course which the hapless girl had taken, until distance rendered her invisible. Then a sad and unavailing search through and around the premises, was all they could resolve upon.

Agnes, in the mean time, had run, or rather flown, to the opposite side of the hill, at the foot of which lay a deep linn, with a burn leaping along its rocky bottom, at a depth of many fathoms from the edge of the precipices that on either side overhung it. The water was murmuring solemnly through the stillness of the night; the low brooze was sighing plaintively among the hazels and rowan-trees, that waved like spectres beneath the moon beams over the hideous chasm which their foliage partly concealed; and as, on reaching the summit, no mortal was visible to the eye of Agnes, the impressiveness of the scene hushed at once the tumult of her feelings, and awakened her to a sense of her lonely situation. Her limbs, which but a little before seemed possessed of more than human swiftness, now felt the palying effects of their late efforts, and her spirit, subdued by apprehension for her lover's fate, and by the awe which crept upon her in the midst of her solitude, completely annihilated her energy. She fainted and sunk upon the hill side, where nearly half an hour passed over her before recollection returned.

"I will search for him in the linn," were the first words she uttered to herself, as she rose from the spot on which she had fallen, and proceeded feebly to execute her purpose. "Surely," said she in a half-audible voice, while descending to the bottom of the chasm by a steep and difficult path which she chanced to discover—"surely nothing unearthly will harm me in this awful place, since spirits know the errand on which I am come!"

"Nor nothing human either, my dear girl!" said a person at her side, in a low voice, who rose up from a crouching position, and caught her in his arms. Agnes shrieked, but the voice was inaudible; for the unknown, anticipating such a result, had thrown a fold of his plaid over her mouth. "For the love of heaven, my angel, be silent!" said the stranger whispering in her ear, and folding her in a still closer embrace; "do you not know your Robert? I thought my whispering had been more familiar to you. But how, in the name of wonder, have you come here?" This was a question which Agnes was in no capacity to answer; for this discovery had so wrought upon her feelings, that for a long time she lay utterly speechless upon his breast. At length she recovered so far as to be able to articulate, "I came to seek for you. Oh, let us leave this and return home! I am dying with fatigue and terror."

"We will, shortly, but we are watched at present; and how you got in here unnoticed, is perfectly miraculous. Do you perceive the point of that rock opposite, which almost overhangs us here on this side of the burn?" "I do," was the reply. "Well," continued Robert, "one of the fellows is perched there, to trace me, if possible, within the linn, for they saw me entering it, and seem to be perfectly aware that I am at no great distance. The other two are stationed above us on this side; and unless we can find some way of getting out either above or below the place where you entered, we must assuredly be taken. We are safe enough so long as we remain here, however, for they know what advantage I have over them should they attempt to descend. This pool, at our feet should receive the whole three, were they to approach me."

Agnes was convinced of their danger; but from