

## THE SEVEN YEAR'S DEARTH.

It was a good many years before the accession of King William 3d, that a farmer of the name of Kerr rented a farm in the parish of Minniegaff, in the county of Wigton, on the great road leading to Port-Patrick. The farm lay at some distance from the road, at the foot of some hills, a wild and secluded spot possessing few beauties save to a person who had been reared in the neighbourhood, whose earliest associations were blended with the scenes of his youth.

The farm of Kerr was of far greater extent than importance, only a few acres of it being in cultivation; but his flocks were numerous: he was looked upon as a wealthy man at the period of which we speak, had been married for many years, but had no children to enjoy that wealth which increased from year to year. This was the only drawback to his earthly happiness; but he never repined or let a word escape his lips to betray the wish of his heart. Even the rude taunts of his more fortunate neighbours he bore with unruffled countenance, though he felt them keenly.

Such was the situation of the worthy farmer, when one morning in harvest he went out with the earliest dawn to look at some sheep he had upon a hill in a distant part of the farm. He had counted them, and was returning to join his reapers accompanied by Colin, his faithful dog, who in devious excursions circled round the large grey stones that lay scattered about: he had proceeded some way without missing the animal, when he stopped and whistled for him: Colin, contrary to his usual custom, did not come bounding to his side, but answered by a loud barking; a circumstance which a little surprised him: but he proceeded homeward, thinking that he was amusing himself with some animal he had discovered; and being in haste to join his reapers, paid no further attention to this act of disobedience in his favourite: breakfast passed and mid-day came, and still Colin did not make his appearance: his master was both angry and uneasy at his

absence; but in the bustle and laughter the harvest field again forgot the occasional thoughts of his useful dog, that obtruded themselves on his mind: it drew toward evening, and still no Colin came: the circumstance was becoming unaccountable: none had seen the dog: and uneasiness succeeded to anger: he now left his reapers, went to the house to inquire of Grizzell, if the animal had been in the house; but she answered that she had only seen him once in the early part of the day, for a minute or two, when after receiving a piece of cake he had ran off with it in his mouth, nor stopped to eat it, contrary to his usual custom: with the circumstance of his leaving him the morning, and his unaccountable absence confirmed William Kerr in his opinion, that something uncommon must have happened to him: as he could ill do without his assistance to gather his sheep for the night, without returning to his reapers, he set out for the spot where the dog had left him, and anon calling him by his well known title and name. The barren muir echoed the call; but no Colin appeared. At length he came to the place, and was overtaken with fear, as he observed the animal stretch upon the ground, with something close beside him, which he seemed to watch.

"Colin! Colin!" he called, "poor Colin!"

The dog did not rise: he gave every token of joy and pleasure at the sight of his master, and wagging his tail; but he made no effort to stir, fearful, apparently, of disturbing the object that lay beside him.

"Surely," said his master, "my poor Colin is bewitched. Colin, you rascal, come to me." But Colin moved not.

The farmer stood rooted to the spot, he had neither the power to advance nor retreat—a superstitious fear took possession of him: a tingling feeling seemed to excite the muscle of his body: the fear in fact of the fairies was upon him; and conceived himself the victim of fascination, for he could not withdraw his eyes from the object of his alarm.