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BORDER LEGENDS.

NO. VII.

THE BATTE OF MELMERBY.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE HALLS OF THE NORTH.

[WITH AN ENGRAVING.]

There is not
A valley of more quiet happiness,
Hosom'd in greener trees, or with a river
Clearer than thine—there are high hills,
—————“Like barriers by thy side.

The bright river
Bounds like an arrow by, buoyant as youth,
Rejoicing in its strength—on the left side,
Half hidden by the aged trees, that thine
Has spared as honoring their sanctity;
The old grey church: its mossy walls,
And ivy-covered windows, tell how long
It has been sacred—there is a lone path
Winding beside yon hill: no neighbouring height
Commands so wild a view; the ancient spire,
The cottages, their gardens, and the heath,
Spread far beyond, are in the prospect seen
By glimpses, as the green-wood gives way.

L. E. L.

THE only mountains in England of any note are those which constitute the Border Territory or Neutral Ground, near the confines of Scotland, called the Fells. The stupendous and magnificent scenery in this wild district is every where interspersed with green valleys and placid lakes, and woods and rocks and waterfalls.

It has, however, for ages, been so generally resorted to by the lovers of all that is grand and picturesque in nature, and has been so often and so well described by abler pens than mine, that it is by no means now an unknown region.

To those, however, who are familiar with the stupendous scenery on the Continent of Europe all here would be tame and insignificant, were it not for the recollections with which those scenes are forever associated, and the supernatural beings

with which they are every where peopled. Every hill top has its airy sprite; every tarn or lake its fearful wraith; every woody sear its terrible and relentless barghaist; every stunted and hollow tree its bogle, while every cavern, dark and deep, retains certain indelible marks of the bloody revels of the giants, and is still haunted by some deformed hobgoblin, the shrieks of whose unavenged victims are sometimes even yet heard, with fearful distinctness, by the terrified shepherd, when overtaken by the night in his lonely wanderings in those haunted spots. In a word, there's poetry and romance in every thing connected with these Fells; even in the naming of their very names—the lofty Helvellyn!—the grey Strydeneged! In the fierce Helm-wind as it howls through the 'dun-coloured sky' across the vale of Eden, into every recess of which its thunders are echoed back from the black and craggy sides of the towering Skiddaw. In the heather, the broom and blue-berry which forever bloom, and adorn, with their odour and beauty, almost every scrap of popular mountain poetry, eye and prose too, if there be such a thing. What would the Ettrick Shepherd be, away from his native hills and the brags of the rapid Yarrow? What Wordsworth, away from his sylvan haunts on the green mountain side? or the Opium-Eater any where but on the very brink of some cavern "measureless to man?" Where else indeed could a toothless mastiff have howled a response to the castle bell as it toll'd, with its iron tongue, the midnight hour? What, in short, would our arch-enchanter be, take away his mountains with their concomitant rocks and woods

*Melmerby or Melmorby. was the habitation of Melmor, a Dane, who first improved and cultivated the country, about the ninth or tenth century. It is a small manor and parish, bounded on the east by Cross-Fell, and on the other sides by the parishes of Gushy and Addingham. The church is dedicated to St. John, and is rectorial; valued in the king's books, at £12 11s. 5d., and was worth, a century ago, about £70 a year.