

o't to tell ye about. It's an awful place this, and I's glad ye're here, as I do not like to be in it by myself, not even in day light. Queer noises are often heard coming out of that cavern beside ye, wailings like of little babies in their mortal agony; and still queerer sights are seen on the top o' the scair above ye."

We naturally turned our eyes upwards towards the spot he was talking about, when he asked, on seeing us do so:

"Do ye see that red stain on the face of yon smooth, bleached rock?"

We answered all at once in the affirmative; we could hardly do otherwise, it was so distinctly marked. There was a broken and scattered streak of a deep red colour.

"That is the fatal spot from whence he was thrown," he replied; "and there," he continued, pointing with his long bony finger at some broken fragments of the rock, which had evidently fallen from the face of the precipice, and lay scattered about at our feet; "there is the place where he fell."

We naturally now turned our eyes eagerly to the stones indicated, and sure enough there was a dark red stain upon them too.

"Aye, ye may look astonished!" and we did, for we certainly believed that all the extraordinary tales he told us were as true as the world. "The rains," he continued, "have been almost incessantly beating upon these stains for nearly a hundred years, and cannot wash them out! It's ower lang a story to tell ye now, but the first wet evening ye'll come to my hut, and then ye shall know a' about

'The Maccy Stair.'

CHAPTER II.

"I am not solely led
By nice discretion of a maiden's eyes."
Shakespeare.

It was not long, our curiosity was so much excited, ere we found an excuse for calling on our old friend for his promised tale. We preferred a fine evening, however, when all our companions would be otherwise employed, so as to enjoy the luxury alone, and be less liable to interruption.

The old man, after arranging his rushes in such a manner as to employ him a long time without his having to rise for more, and having hid also a goodly heap between us, my cousin and I were only present, so that we might peel, too, and help him, which we did, and to some purpose, without stripping a single rush of all its rind, (a small stripe has to be left to keep the pith together,) a trick we were fond of playing him. He thus be-

gan—but I must not attempt to give the story in his own words, as I cannot exactly recollect them; I shall, however, not only adhere strictly to his detail of the circumstances which I do remember, but as far as I am able, to his simplicity of style and manner, too.

Wastel Head, a lone and solitary farm-house in the midst of a desolate wilderness of Ling, without a single human habitation within several miles of it, just in the same state in which it now stands, or rather stood some ten years ago, for a rail-road now runs through, or near the few enclosures surrounding it, was occupied, at the time to which my tale refers, by a family of the name of Mounsey. This family consisted of an elderly couple, and their two grown-up children, a son, William, and a daughter called Margery.

The fee simple of the farm, or, in the phraseology of that part of the country, of the estate, with its all but boundless common right on the surrounding Fells, was vested in the elder Mounsey; he having inherited the same from his forefathers as far back as the Heptarchy. The family is even now of some note in the Dales, among these mountains, and the head of one branch of it is still called the King of Patterdale.

Wastel Head Mounsey, as he was called, to distinguish him from others of the same name in that vicinity, was not, what would be considered now-a-days, a rich man, nor was he then, when compared with the land-owners in the more cultivated plains, in the fertile valleys of the Eden and the Lune.

There was, however, in those days, very little intercommunion between the Fell-siders and the dwellers in the plains. The former were the oppressed and persecuted Saxons, while the latter claimed their descent from the proud and imperious Normans. Many generations passed away before the two races became so commingled by intermarriages as to obliterate those feelings of hatred and animosity naturally excited in the breasts of the conquered against their oppressors.

Mr. Mounsey was looked upon, however, among his own people, as a rich man, and the hand of his daughter Margery, who was co-heiress with her brother of the wastes of Wastel Head and the appurtenances thereunto belonging, was looked upon as a prize worth winning by the best and bravest of the Border lads, in all that section of the Fells, and considered worth more than all the spoils of the most successful foray ever made into the neighbouring kingdom across the Border. This was merely a mode of expression in vogue long after the circumstances,