

and of perhaps still greater importance, arising also from their proximity to the borders. In the frequent wars between the two countries in those rude times, when the rich occupiers of these splendid mansions would have been robbed and plundered by predatory bands of soldiers belonging alike to friend or foe, the court-yard-wall and iron studded door kept off the ruthless spoiler; and paltry and untenable as such defences might justly be considered in a military point of view, they fully answered all the purposes for which they were intended—indeed there are instances of their having been maintained by a few resolute domestics against fearful odds, for days and weeks.

Such are the Halls of the North, and uniformly situated, as indeed, they are almost everywhere else, in the richest and most fertile localities, and seldom without a reference to the picturesque and beautiful. And if I have failed to exemplify this idea, in my description of those already adverted to, what shall I say of the sweetest and loveliest spot in all the green vales of that garden of Eden, with its neat and comfortable farm-houses embosomed in beech and sycamore, with their rich thriving orchards behind them, and the little church and churchyard in front on the village green? Here stands Strickland Hall, magnificent still, though its glory has lately passed away, and it is partially now in ruins; not so, however, at the period in which the occurrences and events I am describing transpired, for then, what is now a stable was the withdrawing-room; the heavy and costly plaster cornices are still to be seen, and what is now the farmer's kitchen was the great hall.

The Stricklands, to whom this splendid hall belonged, and by whom it was founded, were one of the most respectable, as well as one of the most ancient families in the north; the present head of the house, however, was not of that family, but a Netherby, brother to Philip of Hellbeck Hall, and consequently master Harry's uncle—that same uncle in whose favour the extraordinary substitution in his father's will was made.

This Netherby, whose name was Edmund, was of course a younger son, and considering his father's rather embarrassed circumstances, could hardly have expected any thing at his death, had he indeed been able to make his will; which, owing to the fatal wound he had received from his adversary's sword, he was not, as the light of reason never dawned again upon his blighted intellect; for the few days he lingered, the proud and haughty Philip Netherby was by turns a gibbering idiot or a raving maniac, and hence, most likely, those strange stories concerning his holding converse with the inhabitants of the other

world, had originated in the minds of his superstitious domestics and attendants.

If, however, Edmund Netherby entertained any expectations of wealth from this quarter, his prudent father, aware of the impossibility of such expectations being realised, if they had been entertained, provided him the means of working his own way to riches and honour, and "to add a quartering to his father's shield,"—to use an expression from his valedictory address to him on his final departure from his native hall—which should shed a lustre of additional brightness upon the name of Netherby. I doubt, however, if he had lived to see the day, whether his quartering his arms even with the Stricklands would have been a sufficient compensation for his repudiating the name of Netherby—Strickland Hall and Manor to boot; but his son was a lawyer, and a successful one in more senses of the word than one; besides he lived in a more utilitarian age, and consequently knew better. And thus was exemplified, as in ten thousand instances besides, the beautiful effects of that law of *primogeniture*, which is the fundamental principle of England's greatness—the bulwark of her glory—the mysterious anomaly in her jurisprudence, in the estimation of other nations; but which has contributed more than anything else to exalt her so far above them. Why, here are *two* noble and influential families, constituting no trifling portion of the "thews" and sinews of the state; whereas, if Edmund Netherby had divided his late father's encumbered property with his brother, what would either or both have been?—mere cyphers in the commonwealth. When radicalism and reform, the march of intellect and infidelity, all sister virtues, shall succeed in crying down this *iniquitous* law of primogeniture, I shall say—O England, thy glory has departed!

Edmund, I have said, was a successful lawyer, and from his natural predilections, he accompanied the judges in their northern circuit, and accidentally, through the absence of some older lawyer, became employed to manage and conduct an important cause, in which the late Richard Strickland was either plaintiff or defendant—I never could make out the exact nature of the case—and was particularly interested in its final issue, which, fortunately for our young lawyer, turned out in Sir Richard's favour. He was so delighted with his success, which he attributed entirely to Mr. Netherby's superior skill, that he invited him to his house, where he became a frequent and welcome guest, and he often met his daughter—his only child—the only hope on which to rest the prolongation of his name and family; and suffice it to say, in process of time they were united in wedlock, with Sir Richard's consent and