

THE
Canadian Eclectic Magazine

OF
FOREIGN LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

No. 2.

JANUARY, 1872.

Vol. 1.

(Blackwood's Magazine.)

THE MAID OF SKER.—PART II.

CHAPTER IX.—SAND-HILLS TURNED TO SAND-HOLES.

WHILE I was talking thus with the boy, and expecting his mother every minute (with hope of a little refreshment when the farmer should have dropped off into his usual Sunday sleep), a very strange thing began more and more to force itself on my attention. I have said that the hall of this desolate house was large and long, and had six doorways—narrow arches of heavy stone, without a door to any of them. Three of these arches were at the west and three at the east end of the room, and on the south were two old windows, each in a separate gable, high up from the floor, and dark with stonework and with lead-work; and in the calmest weather these would draw the air and make a rattle. At the north side of the hall was nothing but dead wall, and fireplace, and cupboards, and the broad oak staircase. Having used the freedom to light a pipe, I sat with my face to the chimney-corner, where some wood-ashes were smouldering, after the dinner was gone with; and sitting thus, I became aware of a presence of some sort over my right shoulder. At first I thought it was nothing more than the smoke from my

own pipe, for I puffed rather hard, in anxiety about that little darling. But seeing surprise, and alarm perhaps, in Watkin's face, who sat opposite, I turned round, and there beheld three distinct and several pillars of a brownish-yellow light standing over against the doorways of the western end.

At first I was a little scared, and the more so because the rest of the hall was darkening with a pulse of color gradually vanishing; and for an instant I really thought that the ghosts of the wrecked child's father and mother, and perhaps her nurse, were come to declare the truth about her, and challenge me for my hesitation. But presently I called to mind how many strange things had befallen me, both at sea and on the coast, in the way of feeling and vision too, designed, however, by the Power that sends them, more to forewarn than frighten us, and, as we get used to them, to amuse or edify.

Therefore I plucked my spirit up and approached this odd appearance, and found that no part of it was visible upon the spot where it seemed to stand. But Watkin, who was much emboldened by