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THE HALLS OF THE NORTH.

[WITH AN ENGRAVING.]

"Hast thou thro' Eden's wild-wood vales pursued,
Each mountain scene unjustly rude?"

HOODS.

INTRODUCTION.

It would be impossible to convey to my readers any adequate idea of the romantic, and, to any one unacquainted with these regions, I might add, desolate wildness of that interminable tract of uncultivated country, near the borders of England and Scotland, called the Fells,* and not only does the history of ages past describe the inhabitants as living in such a state of insubordination and barbarism, as might naturally be expected from their locality; but I fear their present condition is very little ameliorated; colliers and miners are generally, if not universally, a rude and rough set of people, and may truly be considered as the legitimate descendants of the sheep-stealers and plunderers of old, in a border foray; and if of a more harmless and less mischievous character, because amenable to salutary laws, yet it may be questioned whether they are not even now more radically vicious and degraded. I speak, however, of a long bygone period; the last thirty or forty years may, and I believe have, produced some changes for the better; but what amount of real and substantial moral benefit has resulted from them, I neither know, nor does it belong to my tale to enquire, as it is but a plain simple unadorned detail of absolute facts; and if some of them should appear so wonderful as to be suspected of improbability, let it be remembered, that the romance of real life is not infrequently more extraordinary than fiction. Indeed it has always been a matter of unexplained astonishment

to me, that writers of novels and romances, instead of torturing their inventive powers, for the purpose of producing some heart-stirring story, should not have attempted to secure for themselves an undying fame, in the literary annals of their country, by becoming the historians of facts, instead of the propagators of fiction, too often demoralizing in its tendency, and always more or less deleterious in its effects.

The affectionate regard which a mountaineer feels for his native hills, amounting to an attachment, deep, strong, unobscuring, and enduring as his own existence, can neither be explained nor understood by a dweller in a champagne country. The cloud-capped summit of the towering Cross-Fell, or his dark blue peak, peering out above the black giirdling cloud, from whence issues forth the fierce and irresistible Helm-wind, and his two supporters, the Dum-Fells, where browsed of yore, in defiance of the united prowess of that pastoral district, the famous Dum Cow, killed, after a furious encounter, by the renowned Guy of Warwick, from which these mountains take their name,—the great snow-drift filling up the chasm between them and Crossfell, from whence is obtained the snow-balls paid to several lords of manors on midsummer day, by which certain lands are held under what is curiously but truly and characteristically termed, the Snow-Ball Tenure. At the foot of these is the fat-famed Hell-Beck Hall, so rich in its thousand legends of fay, and sprite, and wrraith, and burghaist; and in the distance across the beautiful and fertile vale of the Eden, but away to the northward, is the lofty Saddleback, rearing his majestic and

* "Fell,"—stony hill.—*Cole's Diet.*
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