

PREFACE

February—it is matter of surprise that the place has not been more frequently chosen as the retreat of artists and poets in search of inspiration—for at least a month or two in the year, the tempestuous rather than the fine seasons by preference. To be sure, one nook therein is the retreat, at their country's expense, of other geniuses from a distance; but their presence is hardly discoverable. Yet perhaps it is as well that the artistic visitors do not come, or no more would be heard of little freehold houses being bought and sold there for a couple of hundred pounds—built of solid stone, and dating from the sixteenth century and earlier, with mullions, copings, and corbels complete. These transactions, by the way, are carried out and covenanted, or were till lately, in the parish church, in the face of the congregation, such being the ancient custom of the Isle.

As for the story itself, it may be worth while to remark that, differing from all or most others of the series in that the interest aimed at is of an ideal or subjective nature, and frankly fantastic, verisimilitude in the sequence of events has been subordinated to the said aim.

The present is the first publication of this tale in an independent form; and a few chapters have been rewritten since it was issued in the periodical press in 1892.

T. H.

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