

ALLAN MENTIETH.

A Romance.

BY ROBERT HAMILTON.

"He who dares sit in Saint Swithin's chair,
When the night hag wings the troubled air,
Questions three if they speak the spell,
He may ask, and she must tell."—*Waverly*.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, the kingdom of Scotland could lay little claim to the intellectual character for which it is now proverbial among all countries, although, considering its narrow limits and the internal discords with which for centuries it had been agitated, it had nevertheless produced some master spirits who will for ever live in the records of genius. But, a mental darkness prevailed generally over all classes, and especially among the peasantry. * * * The kingdom of Scotland was also divided by civil discord—and the peasantry of its highlands were the vassals or clansmen of various chiefs. These were a race entirely destitute of mental culture, and plunged in the lowest depths of superstition—even the chieftains themselves were men of little or no learning, and holding their titles from the antiquity of birth and their prowess in arms—yet all more or less tinctured with the superstitions and legends of their country. Allan Mentieth, the hero of our story, was the second son of a chieftain of that name, whose father dying in his infancy and the title descending to the eldest son, the care of Allan devolved upon a widowed aunt, who lived on the confines of the highlands, on a large and wealthy estate. The child of her sister, and the only relative for which she almost retained an affection, it is scarcely necessary to assert, that she indulged his whims and caprices to an unbounded extent, and by the time that Allan had reached the age of manhood, he was addicted to every extravagance and vice that the locality of the place afforded him. Through the interest of his aunt and some powerful relatives, a commission was obtained for him in the army of Queen Mary, where, among the younger branches of the noble families of that period, his heedless propensities were encouraged and fostered, 'till they left him so embarrassed, that his frequent calls upon his aunt for pecuniary relief, were ultimately met with a refusal. His credit gone, his desires ungratified, he felt reckless of all around him, and hesitated not at any sacrifice to procure the means to carry out his views. At one period, he had become acquainted with MURDOCK Mc-

Ivor, a man of dissolute habits, and who for many years had been known in the neighbourhood where his aunt resided, as one of the most daring caterans or freebooters which the highlands held. This individual had been once strongly suspected of having committed robbery on the premises of Lady Alice, Allan's aunt, and although it could not be brought directly home to him, he having contrived to effect his escape, yet, it was firmly believed he was the robber, and indeed such was actually the fact, for in connivance with Allan he had been admitted into the premises, and the most valuable pieces of family plate extracted and converted into money, which the two had shared between them. McIVOR had thus the young highlander completely in his power, and whenever he found himself in difficulty, he applied for aid to Allan, which if refused, he threatened to reveal the robbery to his aunt.—For above two years had McIVOR thus held his victim in the thrall, and instead of abating in his demands, was only the more importunate and greedy. A sudden cessation of hostilities about this time, had given the young soldier an opportunity to pay a visit to his aunt, and he felt grateful, if for nothing else, he should for a short period thus escape from the presence and demands of the villain, McIVOR. A brief rebuke from his affectionate aunt for his extravagance was all that he received, and her heart was as open to him as ever. For many months he had resided at the home of his childhood, enjoying the sports of the field, and regarded by all the tenantry of his relative, with respect and kindness—while his winning manners and bold and handsome figure were admirably calculated to make a favourable impression upon the maidens of the neighbourhood—yet there was ever a thoughtful and moody expression upon his features—his eyes, dark as the wing of the raven, was never steadily fixed upon any one object, but its constant wandering betrayed a mind that was ill at ease, yet withal he was a manly and gallant youth. His costume was that of the highlander of those times. The tartan kilt, which came to the knee, betrayed the proportions of a limb worthy of an Appollo; his coat, of the same material, cut so as to expose his neck, which was of exquisite symmetry, and when not browned by the sun of summer, was as white as the snows of his native mountains. His feathers were of just and beautiful proportion—his hair was of the hue of the yellow harvest, while the peaked Gaelic bonnet, plumed with the wing of the eagle, surmounted a brow broad