

JAMIE'S HOME-COMING

when I gaed to the door to see what was wrang.

"It was the man I'd seen passin' the hoose. He was standin' at the gate, which, as a'boddy kens, is but sax steps frae the hoose, an' I wondered at 'im neither runnin' awa nor comin' forrit. I speired at 'im what he meant by terrifyin' a bairn, but he didna say naething. He juist stood. It was ower dark to see his face richt, an' I wasna nane taen aback yet, no till he spoke. Oh, but he had a fearsome word when he did speak. It was a kind o' like a man hoarse wi' a cauld, an' yet no that either.

"'Wha bides i' this hoose?' he said, ay standin' there.

"'It's Davit Patullo's hoose,' I said, 'an' am the wife.'

"'Where's Hendry McQumpha?' he speired.

"'He's deid,' I said.

"He stood still for a fell while.

"'An' his wife, Jess?' he said.

"'She's deid, too,' I said.

"I thocht he gae a groan, but it may hae been the gate.

"'There was a dochter, Leeby?' he said.

"'Ay,' I said, 'she was ta'en first.'