

ter-proof great-coat on, an oil-skin covered hat on his head, and a heavy brass-headed whip in his hand, came stamping into the chamber, and seated himself in an arm-chair, with a scoss which made the floor quiver.

"Jenny," said he, "I have been at Lockerbie Lamb-fair, and there was not one of all the fighting Bells of Gottenbie; nor the wild Irrings of the Scroggs, durst say 'peose-mum' to the Laird of Tulzieknowe: Jenny, I'll make you queen of the border; you shall be a crowned princess among all who sell lambs by the score and deal in tarred fleeces or unlaid wool."

"But, laird," said Jenny, with a look and voice of great simplicity, "you have not come off, I fear, so well with the lads of Lockerbie as you imagine: one eye is not the same colour as the other, and there's something wrong with your brow, as if it had received what men call the Lockerbie lick."

"Aha, lass," said he, "you have an ee in your head: that touch on the eye was a gift from Jamie Carlyle of the Skipuire; he was led hame blind for't; and this welt on the brow was a wipie from left-handed Will Halliday; he got better than he brought—casalties, Jenny woman, casalties; but that's nought; when ye are the lady of Tulzieknowe, ye'll have some practice in the art of repairing cloured crowns and bruized banes; this hand of yours is a saft one, and will be useful in our dale during a fair-time." As the laird said this, he gallantly seized the hand of the heiress, and all but bit it, striving to imprint a kiss on what he called its "lamb's-wool side," namely, the palm.

"It is not known how far this fighting gallant would have carried his homage; for he was interrupted by the coming of a second wooer; one equally boisterous and far tipsier than himself,—an Armstrong by name,—who had just succeeded to a small estate, called Howeholme, contiguous to Butterhole-brae, the careful acquisition of an uncle, who had over-reached others and pinched and pined himself to gather gains which were soon to be scattered by his heir.

"Heiress!" exclaimed this second wooer, "just rise up and use your ain een, and they are bright anes, and of a similar colour,—which is mair than I can say of Tulzie's een there—and they'll convince ye that to marry me is the most profitable speculation ye ever made." She rose as he desired, and with a demure air walked towards the window, and looked out in the direction which the new wooer pointed: "There!" said he, "d'ye see where the sun is shining on that fine green holm, sax hundred acres and odd; all ploughed and cultivated, and bringing clear three guineas an acre? And then, Jenny, d'ye see, that new outstead of houses; sklate roofs; stane-stairs; with corn in the barn, cows in the byre, and horses in the stable? Now, thae acres and thae houses are mine, and they shall all be thine if ye will consent to have our names called on Sunday thrice, that we may be married on Monday; for my great bet of drinking three dozen of bottled porter in three hours and a half, comes off with Will Swan, the English rider, on Tuesday, and marriage, like other follies, should be done suddenly." She was about to answer, when he clapt his hand on her mouth, and said, "Another word, Jenny, another word! Only look how bonnily my land lies into the Butterhole-brae; the one takes the other in its arms, and cries, Oh, to be married."

"What answer she would have returned to this offer can only be guessed. A third wooer, a hoarder, and laird of a small pendicle called Misercraft, appeared on the field, and his coming was announced by a fit of coughing, which seemed about to separate soul and body. He recovered from this, however, and came tottering into the room, looking first at Jenny, then at her two wooers, and finally at himself; for there he was as large as life, in a looking-glass; and it was evident that he saw his whole length for the first time; he went close to the mirror, took a front view, a side view, and finally rose on tip-toe, and as he rose he smiled and muttered, 'No sae far amiss; I see myself to mair purpose here than in a bowle of spring-water.'

"Tulzieknowe looked at Howeholme, and Jenny looked at all three, while her mother, not at all perplexed by this surplus of wooers, began to weigh the merits—that is to say, the wealth—of each in a balance; and it was plain, from her looks, that she inclined to her last-come candidate.

"Jenny," said Misercraft in a whisper, "I have been lang in coming, and I see there are folks before me, wha, I dare say, hae taid for your hand; but they are friends, hiny, real friends; I have a wadset on the lands of Tulzieknowe, which will make ye lady of them without the fash of marrying the laird; and as for Howeholme there, I hand him by the cravat; he is coming quietly into my plaid-neuk—as quietly as I hope you'll come, my bonnie lady. Yere mither there will tell ye what a gowden down-sitting ye will get; we hae talked the matter owre, and made things sure and sicker, sae here's a bridal ring for ye,—it's pure gowd."

"Pure gold," replied Jenny with a glance of which he did not see the archness, "and would you wear and waste precious gold in a matter where bare hands can do the work?"

"The old man turned round to her mother, and said, 'O, but this is a precious lassie; I never heard such a sentiment out of

ony head before; I'll tak' her in her sark; she's an inheritance of herself.'

"Take him, Jenny; take him," whispered her mother; "he has ten thousand pounds of gude set siller, and bonds and bands innumerable—never mind his looks, and as for his cough, there's music in't; his auld brass will buy you a new pan."

"It was evident that neither Tulzieknowe nor Howeholme were easy on the appearance of this third candidate: but they resolved to put on a bold face, and uniting their forces, give him battle, in the presence of the heiress. Tulzieknowe took the field first: while the other wet his throat with a bumper of brandy, took his station a little in the rear, wiped his lips, and tried to stand steady. Tulzie cracked his whip thrice, making the knotted-thing come each time within an inch of Misercraft's foot, and said, 'Weel, old grip-the-gowd, we're glad to see you: od! I thought that cough of yours was serving ye heir to an inheritance in the bedral's croft: but ye have gien auld bare-bones the slip, and are come to woo. But a lass of warm flesh and blood canna take your iron-banded box to her bosom; and as ye have nothing warmer to offer, I would advise ye to slip hame and content yourself with your twa Dalilas, pounds and pence.'

"As he said this, he turned half round on his heel, cracked his great whip close to the miser's face, and gave room to Howeholme, who, cheered on by brandy and a belief in his own good looks, spoke with freedom.

"I wad hae ye, Jenny woman," said he, "to buy your bridal dress of a kirkyard colour, and put on a widow's cap beneath ye're feathers; for Misercraft there canna lang survive the toil, and what's warse, the outlay of bridal and bridal-dinners; ye will be a rosie young widow with a great jointure, and no a jisp the waur for having been married."

"Loud laughed old Misercraft at this, and his laughter was mingled with a fit of coughing, in which the water of good humour ran fast from his eyes; he clapt his expanded palms, one on his own knee, and the other on that of the heiress, and cried 'That's good! that's capital! I never take offence at the nettish words of real gude fallows whose whole life is spent in driving fish into my net; I look on them as my best friends; as men, Jenny, made for thy behoof and mine: let us be kind, therefore, to these lads; they are twa bright spokes in the wheel of our fortune—I bid them baith to their bridal.'

"These words were addressed to inattentive ears, for all eyes were turned on a splendid chariot, which, preceded by two outriders, in liveries, now entered the narrow road that led to the house, and struggled up the steep ascent, showing at every jolt, on the rough and stony way, the form of a handsome young man, attired in the style approved in the circles of the south, and who, unlike some of the visitors in those magic circles, seemed as much at his ease as a peacock when it lifts its train in the sun, amid the children of the dunghill.

"Mair grist for my mill, mair grist for my mill, Jenny, my woman," exclaimed Misercraft. "This is a pigeon prepared for the plucking,—a pig ready for my spit. Jenny, ye are just as good to me as ten thousand pounds laid out at ten per cent.; ae laird drinks, another laird fights, and a third, better than baith, puts his estate on his back, and all for my advantage: ye are a jewel of a lassie—a real jewel."

"A message was now delivered by one of the servants: it was fast followed by the stranger himself. In he came, handsome, good-looking, and self-possessed, and with a look of demure simplicity.

"I have seen this chap before," muttered old Misercraft—"seen him before, that's certain; but he's no for my mill,—he's no for my mill; a cut aboon me, a cut aboon me."

"Tulzieknowe resolved to puzzle him out.

"He's a Rabson!" he said, and of 'a rough-riding race! Ye'll be the family of Foufloss now; or, aiblins, one of the Rabsons of Whackawa? I'm connected with them by my mother's side."

"It may be as you say, sir," replied the stranger; "but I come not here to settle descents or matters of pedigree: I am but a passer-by, as it were; an admirer of hill and stream, and not insensible to the beauties of Butterhole—what do you call it?—brae. The situation is really fine, and the prospect beautiful."

"As he said this he put his glass to his eye, which Misercraft remarked was of pure gold, and stepping up to the window, surveyed the scene, which is really a fine one, with a nodding and approving look—

"A plaic," he exclaimed, "of great capability: fine sweep of the stream; noble ascent of the hill—but nature wants man's hand here."—He then turned to the old dame, and inquired, "Your sister, madam, I presume?" indicating by a nod that he meant her daughter.

"No, sir," replied the dame; "she's my ae daughter, as we of this land word it, and heiress, I may say, of a bonnie bit o' land, and a fair penny of siller. Ye'll no be o' thae parts yersel' now, I jalouse."

"He looked full in her face, and said, 'I should think so; but I have no remembrance of the hour of my birth. A correspondent of mine desires me to inquire about one Wattie,—no,

that's not it—let me look at his letter—one 'Willie Leslie,' whose mother was a Robson, who lived hereabouts while a boy; but you do not remember him, I see.'

"What gude will it do me, think ye, to remember him?" said she, bitterly, "A perfect deevil, that I should say sae! as fu' o' mischief as an egg's fu' o' meat: if he evades hanging, he'll no get his full reward."

"The stranger, on this, walked towards the door, and seemed uncertain what to do: a whelp came to him, and began to snarl. He gave it a touch with his foot, when out sallied the mother with her bristles on end, and her white teeth shown; but when about to fly at him, she stopped, regarded him for a moment, then set up a low howl of recognition, and ran to communicate the discovery to her whelps, who all yelped in chorus. The stranger hurried to his chariot, and drove away.

"There was one, however, who made the discovery earlier than the poor collie, and this was the heiress herself. The voice, the look, and the air of the stranger, reminded her of other days, and of a youth, the orphan son of a poor and honest pair, who, swept away by a disease, which scourged the country like a plague, left him, when some seven years old, to the cold charity of the world. Yet he found friends: one put him to school, another clothed him, and a third purchased books, while from all he got a bed and a mouthful of food; though the care of no one, he took care of himself, and became a good scholar, and before he was fifteen years old, his handsome form, and manly looks were remarked by ail; and as Nature took the task of superintending his manners upon herself, he was perfectly well-bred. His company was acceptable to even the wise; and those who saw far into the future began to prophesy his fate. One affirmed that he was a kindly good-hearted boy; marvellous at his look, knew more of history than any elder of the parish, and would make a figure yet. A second, and this was the good wife of the Butterhole-brae herself, declared that he was an 'ill-deeing deevil; ever for evil and never for good, and wad come to an end that wad have vexed his poor mother, had she been permitted to see it.'

"Hout-tout, good wife, ye shouldna prejudge poor Willie," exclaimed a third; "mair betoken that yere ain Jenny, there where she sits, and reddening like a rose—was beholden to him for mickle of the lear that makes her haud her noddle sae high now. They aften looked into ae book thegither at school, and I have seen them wi' my ain een wandering hand in hand like twa babes in the wood down the wild-cat glen —"

"If it is of William Leslie ye speak," said a gipay lass, inserting her tawny cheek and bright eyes between two of the cronies, "I'll tell ye for saxpence, what will become of him. He'll rin off to a far foreign land, and then come hame, and—but, dame, this is a bad saxpence: I canna withdraw the curtain of truth farther on a bit of watered copper like this."

"Gae away, wi' ye, insolent curtie, as well as cheat," cried the good wife of Butterhole-brae. "My hen-bawks will no be the better of your visit."

"The gipsy laughed and sang, as she tripped away, after her asses and panniers.

"All this, and much more, was present to the mind and heart of Jenny Tamson, as her eye followed the departing stranger.

"It's Willie himself," she said in her thought, "come back after his seven years weird; and how manly and noble he looks. It is but as yesterday that our cheeks lay together over the lesson at school, long after we had learned it: and it seems but an hour since we gathered blaeberrys together on the Fairy-Knowe, and palled nuts in the wild-cat linn; and the ripest and sweetest were aye for 'my wee Jenny,' as he loved to call me. Ay, and dearer than a', on the morning when he was missed, his last foot-steps were seen under my window, and around the flowers which he planted and watered in my little garden—I have watered them frae my een since; and auld Marion the nurse told me that she saw him wandering at midnight like a spirit by the Trysting-tree, and down the walk where I have since set so many flowers; and looking around our house, and up at my window. The very dumb creature knew him, and forbore to bite: and how could I see the lad I have loved sae weel, pass and re-pass over my own threshold, and refrain from leaping into his arms? and yet he must have caught a glance of my ee too, and I'm sure he would see it was wet. But I deserve to lose him, were it only for listening to these three miserable apologies for manhood."

"She rose, and her three wooers stood and looked at her, and at one another, and seemed sensible that fortune was on the turn against them.

"What," she said sorrowfully, "has the drunkard, the bully, and the miser seen in me, that they should hope for my hand, and come here with their contemptible offers, as if a woman's heart were a matter for the market? Begone!"

"As she said this, she hurried out of the house into a little neighbouring arbour, where she had planted the flowers which her lover delighted in, now so wondrously returned, and taking up an instrument of music, sought to soothe her mind with one of the airs which, when a boy, he loved. Her mother followed, and seating herself near, continued to gaze on her daughter, awed by the vehemence of her feelings. While this was passing, one