

The Braes of Yarrow

An Historical Tale of the Sixteenth Century.

"We are safe yet," he said, presently looking up, "he has been waiting to get into the turret chamber. Have ye found what ye sought?"

"No."

"Confound it, what will we do then, for I must take the key back to his room, so that he may never know that it had been away."

"You can do so," returned she sadly, "for the search is in vain."

"Never say that until we are hanged, for ye never ken what we may learn to-morrow."

"But what's that ye have got in your hand?"

"The attention of Mistress Spens was thus called to the rusted key which she unconsciously retained in her hand. She threw it carelessly to the dwarf, who snatched it up with an exclamation of joy, and made a wild caper with his long arms and short legs as if he had become suddenly demoted."

"What has happened?" queried the lady, wondering.

"Victory, victory," cried Horrie, with another caper, and forgetting necessary caution in his mysterious delight.

"Be still, be still, good friend, and tell me what this means," exclaimed Mistress Spens, excitedly.

Horrie checked his fantastic movements and spoke composedly, but with glistening eyes.

"Hide ye there till I come back and then ye shall ken the meaning of it."

Before she could attempt to stay him he darted down the staircase.

He hastened to the sleeping room of Tushie law and threw the key of the turret chamber on the floor so that the chief might find it, and think that it had fallen accidentally from his pouch. Without being seen by any one, Horrie returned to the rampart, where Lady Spens, in a state of excited bewilderment, waited for him.

"Keep no longer in suspense," she said, but say quickly what matter of joy you have found?"

"That will I gladly, my lady; this rusty key that ye held of so small account is the chiefest treasure of the turret chamber."

"Why so?"

"Because it keeps that which will prove your guileman an honest knight, and Tushie-law a doomed scoundrel. I'm sure the proof exists now, for if it didna this bit of old steel would not have been guarded so siccarly—Come wi' me."

He led the way down to the lowest dungeon of the keep, passing only to procure stealthily a candle which, with the help of flint and steel, he lighted. When he had entered a dark and damp passage—

"There is no muckle fear of anybody coming down here unless they canna help it," he said, hurrying forward; "but keep your eyes and ears open lest ill luck should send some gowk dandering this gate."

They now entered a passage which appeared to be roughly hewn out of the rock, and it gradually narrowed as they advanced, till when they reached its extremity, they could not stand abreast.

Horrie gave the light to his companion, and bade her stand back a little. Then, exerting all the strength of his body, he succeeded in rolling over a block of sandstone, which was almost as large as himself, and which had been partly leaning against the rocky wall that terminated the passage.

He leapt nimbly over the stone and knelt upon the clammy floor. Mistress Spens held the light to him, whilst he scraped aside some earth and revealed an iron ring; with this he raised a stone of about a foot square, beneath which was a small iron box bandied with steel and rivetted to the rock.

"It's here," he cried, gleefully, and then, jumping on to the top of the boulder he had moved from its place, he seated himself with his legs crossed and gripping his ankles with his hands.

"Now," he continued, "I will expound to your ladyship this mystery."

Marvelling at the dwarf's strange conduct, hoping, yet quivering with doubt, Mistress Spens listened to his revelation with deepest interest.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Grant is in Washington, and the air is consequently thick with political rumors. In his new Cabinet Stanton is to continue Secretary of War; Wade is to have the Interior Department, and Greeley the Postmaster-Generalship; Sickles is to be made Minister to England in the place of Reverdy Johnson; Rosecrans is to be withdrawn from Mexico, and so on. These rumors will probably live for twenty-four hours, and then die and give place to others.

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