

THE STANDARD BEARER.

CHAPTER I.

THE YEAR TERRIBLE.

THIS is what I, Quintin MacClellan, saw on the grassy summit of the Bennan—a thing which, being seen and overpast in an hour, changed all my life, and so in time by the grace of God and the chafe of circumstances made me for good or evil the man I am.

I was a herd laddie at the time, like David, keeping my father's flocks and kicking up my heels among the collie tykes, with many another shepherd-boy in the wide moorish parishes of Minnigaff, Dalry and the Kells.

Now my father (and his father before him) had been all his life "indweller" in the hill farm of Ardarroch which sits on the purple braeface above the loch of Ken, with a little circumambient yard enclosed by cattle-offices and a dozen red-stemmed fir trees, in which the winds and