

A NIGHT IN THE HIGHLANDS.

THE BORDERER'S DREAM.

Not very long ago, one William Laidlaw, a sturdy Borderer, went on an excursion to a remote district in the Highlands of Scotland. He was a tall and very athletic man, remarkably active, and matchless at cudgel-playing, running, wrestling, and other exercises, for which the Borderers have been noted from time immemorial. To his other accomplishments, he added an excellent temper, was full of good-humour, and a most capital bottle companion. Most of our modern travellers would have performed the greater part of the journey he undertook in a steam-boat, a stage-coach, or some such convenience; but he preferred going on foot, without any companion except an old oaken cudgel, which had been handed down to him from several generations, and which by way of fancy had been christened Knock-him-down. With this trusty friend in his hand, and fifty pounds sterling in his pocket, he found himself, by the fourth day, in one of the most dismal glens of the Highlands. It was by this time night-fall, and both William's appetite and limbs told him it was high time to look for a place of repose, having, since six in the morning, walked nearly fifty English miles.

Now, the question which employed his cogitations at this moment was, whether he should proceed at the risk of losing his way among the bogs and morasses, for which this district is famed, or remain till day-break where he was? Both expedients were unpleasant, and it is difficult to say which he would have adopted, when about a mile to the left, a glimmering among the darkness attracted his notice. It might have been a "Will-o'-wisp," or the light of some evil spirit at its midnight orgies; but whatever the cause might be, it decided Mr. Laidlaw as to his further operations. He did not reflect a moment upon the matter, but exercising "Knock-him-down" in its usual capacity of walking assistant, he found himself in a few minutes alongside the spot from which the light proceeded. It was a Highland cottage, built after the usual fashion, partly of stone, and partly of turf; but without examining too minutely the exterior of the building, he applied the stick to the door with such a degree of

force as he conceived necessary to arouse the inmates.

"Wha's there?" cried a shrill voice, like that of an old woman; "what want ye at this hour of the night?"

"I want lodging, honest woman, if such a thing there is to be got."

"Na, na," replied the inmate, "you can get nae lodging here. Neither gentle nor simple shall enter my house this night. Gang on your ways, you're no aboon five miles frae the Clachan of Dalachier."

"Five deevils!" exclaimed the Borderer; "I tell ye I have walked fifty miles already, and could as soon find out Johnny Groat's as the Clachan."

"Walk fifty more, then," cried the obstinate portress; "But hero you downa enter while I can keep you out."

"If you come to that, my woman," said William, "we shall soon settle the point. In plain language, if you do not let me in wi' your gudo will, I shall enter without it," and with that he laid his shoulder to the door, with the full intention of storming the fortress. A whispering within made him pause a moment.

"And must I let him in?" murmured the old woman to some one who seemed in the interior.

"Yes," answered a half-suppressed voice; "he may enter—he is but one, and we are three—a lowland tup, I suppose."

The door was slowly opened. The person who performed this unwilling act was a woman apparently about seventy, haggard, and bent by an accumulation of infirmity and years. Her face was pale, malignant, and wrinkled, and her little sharp peering eyes seemed like those of the adder, to shoot forth evil upon whomsoever she gazed. As William entered, he encountered this aged sybil, her natural hideousness exposed full to his gaze by the little rush-light she held up above her head, the better to view the tall Borderer.

"You want a night's lodging, say you? Aye, nae doubt, like many others frae the south, come to trouble honest folks."

"There's nae need to talk about troubling,"