

A SCOTTISH RURAL DROLLERY.

In a certain parish in the west of Scotland, there lived, about twenty years since, and for aught we know to the contrary, they live there still, a couple of swains of the names of Andrew Dobbie, and Robert Logan. They were both farm-servants, and resided near each other, their employers being neighbours.

At the distance of about a mile from the residences of these worthies, there lived another party of no less importance to our story. This person was a pretty girl of the name of Betsy Hamilton. She was the only daughter of a small laird, and was, on this account chiefly, but partly also, there is no doubt, on account of her beauty, sadly annoyed with lovers, but most especially by Andrew and Bob. Others came only at intervals, stopped but a short time if they met with no encouragement, and could be dismissed at pleasure. Not so with the two just named. They were both most pertinacious if not welcome wooers. Their visits were frequent, and no discouragement could damp the ardour of their pursuit, nor any hints, however unequivocal, abbreviate their stay. In this respect, in firmness of purpose, so far as courting was concerned, they bore a wonderful resemblance to each other, as the object of their regards found to her sad experience, for she liked neither of them, and was heartily sick of their pertinacity, but she could not help herself. She could by no means get quit of them, and at this Betsy was the more annoyed that the visits of these two lovers frequently interfered with and interrupted certain tête-a-têtes with a more favoured suitor, one whose calls were always welcome. This happy person was George White, a young man, a gardener with a gentleman in the neighbourhood. After what we have said, it would be quite superfluous to observe that Andrew and Bob were rivals, and quite as superfluous almost would it be to say, that they hated each other most cordially, and were morbidly jealous of one another's success with their fair enslaver, whom each endeavoured to prejudice against the other. Although both were in the habit of visiting Betsy, yet they rarely met on these occasions, as, from a perfectly natural feeling, they studiously avoided each other, and so arranged their proceedings as to come in contact as seldom as possible. Their visits were always made after nightfall, that they might not be seen by Betsy's father; a crusty, sturdy old carle, who would have broken their legs had he caught them after his daughter. In daylight, therefore, they durst never be seen within a mile of Winnlestead, which was the name of old Hamilton's farm. They must come under the cloud of night. This, neither of the lovers would have reckoned any great hardship—no hardship at all, indeed, were it not that in going to Winnlestead, they had to pass close by an open country churchyard, and, that of course, after dark too. Now, there was nothing on earth that Andrew and Bob dreaded so much as ghosts, witches, and other members

of the hobgoblin fraternity. The passing of the churchyard, therefore, in the dark, was a dreaded trial to their nerves, and such a one as nothing but the charms of Betsy Hamilton could have induced them to submit to. Having mentioned these particulars, which will be found to be intimately connected with the sequel of our tale, we shall ourselves pay a visit to Winnlestead, and in doing this, we shall find Bob Logan with Betsy Hamilton in earnest and apparently loving confab together through the kitchen window, she on the inside and he on the out; for it was thus that all the interviews were carried on, Betsy's lovers always tapping at the window when they wished to speak with her. Bob was delighted in the change of manner in his sweetheart; and in the confidence which it inspired, ventured to complain of the visits of his rival.

"I'm sure I dinna want to see him," replied Betsy to an insinuation of this kind. "I dinna want to see the face o' him again. I canna be fashed wie the hav'rel." "Are you speaking true, Betsy?" said the simple swain, with a sheepish tenderness in his look and manner; very naturally conceiving that what his rival lost in favour he gained. "Indeed am I," replied Betsy, "and I only wish I could put him frae comin' here, for he's just a plague to me." "And what for dinna you tell him that?" said the delighted lover, "and get quat o' him at ance." "Haith, lad, it's easy spoken. It's no so easy gettin' quat o' him as ye think. I've tell't him a hunder and a hunder times that I dinna want him to be comin' about me, but see if he'll believe me or stay awa' a bit the mair on that account. My heart's just broken wi' him; for quit o' him I canna get, do what I will. Od, man, if ye war worth your lugs, Bob, ye wad fa' on some way o' keepin' him awa' frae me." "What can I do, Betty?" said the unsuspecting Bob. "If he'll no tak' your word, far less will he tak' mine." "I'll tell you what you might do, Bob, and I'm sure it wad cure him o' comin' here. Ye ken Andrew dislikes passing the kirkyard at night, though, as every body kens, there's naething to be feared for. Now, could na ye just throw a white sheet about you some night and waylay him on the skirts of the kirkyard, close by the road, and I warrant if he get a glint o' you, he'll no come my way in a hurry again, and the coast wad be clear for yourself, man, Bob," added Betsy with a sly alluring look.

Bob appreciated the proposal, but by no means relished the idea of performing the business of it. He therefore looked rather blank on its being submitted to him; for he was every bit as great a fool as his rival, and equally dreaded passing the churchyard, so that a worse or more unsuitable hand for frightening another could scarcely have been found. Betsy knew all this very well, but she knew also as well that she had influence enough over Bob to induce him to do almost anything. It was some minutes, however, before Bob made any reply to the daring and horrifying proposal, and during this time he was inwardly cogitating on the possibility of