

towered above the desolation. But the tempest broke long before Malherb reached safety; darkness swallowed him and he struggled storm-foundered among the unfamiliar hills. Then fortune sent another traveller, and a young man, riding bare-backed upon a pony, came into view. Sudden lightning showed the youth, and, waiting for a tremendous volley of thunder that followed upon it, Malherb shouted aloud. His voice, though deep and sonorous, sounded thin as the pipe of a bird thus lifted immediately after the peal.

"Hold there! Where am I, boy? Which is the way to 'Tor Royal?"

"You be going right, sir," shouted the lad; "but 'tis a long road this weather. Best to follow me, if I may make so bold, an' I'll bring 'e to shelter in five minutes."

The offer was good, and Mr. Malherb accepted with a nod.

"Go as fast as you can; I'll keep behind you."

Both horses were moorland bred, for the visitor rode a stout hackney lent by his host. Yet Malherb had to shake up his steed to keep the native in sight. Presently the youth dismounted, and his companion became aware of a low cabin rising like a beehive before him. It stood at the foot of a gentle hill, within a rough enclosure of stone. Some few acres of land had been reclaimed about it, and not far distant, through the murk of the rain, its granite gleaming azure under the glare of the lightning, stood an ancient and famous stone.

"Now I know where I stand," said the stranger. "I came this way three hours since. There rises Siward's Cross—is it not so?"

"Ess, your worship, 'tis so. An' this 'ot do belong to my gran'mother. 'Tis a poor hole for quality, but stormtight. You please to go in that door an' I'll take your hoss after 'e. Us do all live under the same thatch—folks an' beastes."

The boy took both bridles, then kicked open the door of the hut, and shouted to his grandmother.

"Here's a gentleman almost drowned. Put on a handful of sticks an' make a blaze so as he can catch heat, for he be so wet as a frog!"

A loud, clear voice answered from the inner gloom.

"Sticks! Sticks! Be I made o' money to burn sticks at your bidding? If peat keeps the warmth in my carcase, 'twill do the like for him—king or tinker."