

How Nichol Sought His Fortune Elsewhere

and aulder, till the time passes when I'm still brisk and venturesome, and I'm left to naething but regrets. I maun be up and awa', Laird, I carena whither. We a' made different, and I was aye queer and daft and no like ither folk. Ye winna blame me."

I tried to dissuade him, but it was to no purpose. He heard me patiently, but shook his head. I did not tax him with ingratitude, for I knew how little the charge was founded. For myself I was more sorry than words, for this man was joined to me by ties of long holding. I longed to see him beside me at Barns, an unceasing reminder of my stormy days. I longed to have his sage counsel in a thousand matters, to have him at my hand when I took gun to the hills or rod to the river. I had grown to love his wind-beaten face and his shrewd, homely talk, till I counted them as necessary parts of my life. And now all such hopes were dashed, and he was seeking to leave me.

"But where would you go?" I asked.

"I kenna yet," he said. "But there's aye things for a man like me somewhere on the earth. I'm thinkin' o' gaun back to the abroad, whaur there's like to be a steer for some time to come. It's the life I want and no guid-fortune or bad-fortune, so I carena what happens. I trust I may see ye again, Maister John, afore I dee."

There was nothing for it but to agree, and agree I did, though with a heavy heart and many regrets. I gave him a horse to take him to Leith, and offered