

the key from his bosom, he flung it over his left shoulder, crying, 'Keep it, spirit!'

He shut himself up, to ponder on the words of his familiar; and he thought not of Marion till day-break, when with a troubled countenance he entered the apartment where they were fettered.

'How, now, maiden?' he began; 'hast thou considered well my words? wilt thou be my willing bride, and let young Branhholm live?'

'Rather than see her thine, I would'st be hewn in pieces,' exclaimed Walter.

'Tis no bad thought,' said the sorcerer 'thou mayest have thy wish. Yet, boy, ye think that I have no mercy: I will teach thee that I have, and refined mercy too. Now, tell me, were I in thy power as thou art in mine, what fate would ye award to Soulis?'

'Then truly,' replied Walter, 'I would hang thee on the highest tree in the woods.'

'Well spoken, young strong bow,' Soulis replied; 'and I will shew thee, though ye think I have no mercy, that I am more merciful than thou. You would choose for me the highest tree, but I shall give thee the choice of the tree from which you may prefer your body to hang, and from whose top the owl may sing its midnight song, and to which the ravens may gather for a feast; and thou, pretty face,' turning to Marion, 'sith you will not, even to save him, give me thine hand, I will be thy priest and celebrate your marriage, for I will bind your hands together and ye shall hang on the next branch to him.'

'For that I thank thee,' replied she.

He then called his arm men, and putting halters round the necks of his intended victims, they were dragged forth to the woods around the Hermitage, where Walter was to choose the fatal tree.

A deep mist covered the face of the earth; and ere he had approached the wood where he was to carry his merciless project into execution--

'The wood comes towards us!' exclaimed one of his followers. 'What! *the wood comes!*' cried Soulis, and his cheek became pale: he thought of the words of the demon, '*Beware of a coming wood!*' and for a time their remembrance, and the forest that seemed to advance before him, deprived him of resolu-

tion, and before his heart recovered, the followers of the house of Branhholm, numbering fourscore, each bearing a tall branch of the rowan tree in their hands, as a charm against his sorcery, perceived, and raising a loud shout surrounded him.

The cords which bound the victims were cut immediately. But when the followers, Soulis were overpowered, his single arm deen around. Now, there was not a day that passed that complaints were not brought to King Robert, from those residing on the Borders, against Lord Soulis, for his lawless oppression, his cruelty, and his wizard-craft. Now, the King was wearied with their importunities, and he exclaimed peevishly and unthinkingly, 'Boil him, if you please, but let me hear no more about him.' And when the enemies of Soulis heard these words from the lips of the King, they hastened to execute them; and took with them a wise man who was learned in breaking the spells of sorcery, and they arrived before Hermitage Castle, while its lord was contending single-handed against the followers of Branhholm, and his body received no wounds; and they strove to bind him with cords, but his spell snapped them asunder as threads.

'Wrap him in lead,' cried the wise man, 'and boil him therewith, according to the command of the King; for water nor hempen cords have no power over his sorcery.'

Many ran to the castle, and got lead, and they rolled him in it, and he foamed in the impotency of his rage, for he had become as powerless as a child. Others procured a caldron in which it was said many of his incantations were performed. And they bore him to where the stones of the Druids are to be seen till this day, and the stones are pointed out on which the caldron was suspended: they kindled a pile of faggots beneath it, and they bent the living body of Soulis within the lead, and thrust it into the caldron, and the flesh and bones of the wizard were consumed in the boiling lead. Such was the doom of Soulis.

The King sent messengers to prevent his hasty words being carried into execution, but they arrived too late.

In a few weeks there was mirth and merriment and a marriage feast in the bowers of Branhholm, and fair Marion was his bride."