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THE BEGGAR'S CAMP.

I RECUR again to the strange adventures of Sergeant Square, and present another section of them to the readers of the *Border Tales*.

With ruined prospects, and friendships severed by death, (he began,) I resolved to bid, once more, farewell to my native Edinburgh.

I passed two or three days in this listless manner, each being to see me put in force my resolution to depart; till, at length, having provided myself with a seaman's dress, taken the powder out of my hair, seized a stout stick, and provided a small bundle of necessaries, I once more set out upon the world, caring little whether I went to the south or the west, to London or Bristol, to Greenock or Port-Glasgow. I had, in my absent state of mind, almost unconsciously, or perhaps from habit, taken my way down the Canongate, and had reached the girth cross—a few steps, and the streets of Edinburgh would pass from under my feet, perhaps for ever. I neither knew nor cared. A flood of painful recollections came over me, as I stood scarce knowing for what object I had paused. So doubtful and indifferent, so undecided did I stand, that, to put an end to the recollections that pained me whilst I hesitated, I took a piece of copper from my pocket, and, tossing it up into the air, I cried, 'A head for England—a lady for Scotland!' The halfpenny tingled at my feet, the King's head looked to the sky, and, as if relieved of a care, I moved quickly on, nor once looked behind until I had placed Arthur's Seat between me and the city.

Thus moving along, sometimes listlessly, at others quickening my pace, I had journeyed on until I had reached the neighbourhood of Berwick. The day had been overcast with partial light showers; several times I had resolved to stay for the remainder of the day and night in the next inn I came to; but, enticed by partial clearings up of the weather, I still walked on, until towards sunset, when the weather, all at once, put on the most threatening aspect, and the rain fell very heavily. There was neither house nor shelter of any kind in sight; the thick dense clouds that came driving from the west completely obscured the twilight I had calculated upon. At length I perceived, at a small distance from the road, a house, with light issuing from the windows. I knocked for admittance, which was at once cheerfully given, and every exertion made for my comfort by the kind host and hostess—a farmer and his wife. To my inquiries if they could oblige me with a bed for the night—

'You are kindly welcome to the shelter of our roof,' said the farmer, 'and a seat by the fire; and, were it not for a strange circumstance, you might have both a room and a bed.'

'William, William!' said the wife, with a look of great alarm, 'do not speak of it; I could not think of even putting a dog there, far less a Christian. I will give the stranger a pair of blankets, and make a good fire for him; but do not speak of that fearful room. I wish the laird would allow us to pull it down.'

'Grace, my woman,' replied he, 'I did not mean him to pass the night in it. I only, without thinking any harm, mentioned it. I wish, as well as you, that it were taken down.'

Struck by their strange discourse, I requested my kind host to tell me the history of the apartment that seemed to give them so much uneasiness.

Drawing his seat more near to the fire—'I have not the smallest

objection,' said he, 'as it will shew, whatever is the cause of the strange disturbances, that there is no blame on our part. This bit land that I farm has been in our family for more than two nineteen years, and the third nineteen of the lease is nearly expired. Both the old and present lairds have been good landlords to us—we could not well refuse any small favour they required at our hands; and, indeed, we always found ourselves the gainers for any little that was in our power. A few months after the rebels were defeated, and the Rebellion quelled by the battle of Culloden, the young laird came back to the big house again safe, and we all rejoiced. On the day after his arrival, he came to our house to visit us, for he was always like one of ourselves. I saw there was something upon his mind, he was so douce and thoughtful—not in the least like his former way, which was all laughing and chatting with every one. It did not become me to inquire the cause; so, after staying a short time, he requested me to come out and take a turn with him, to see some young trees that had been planted before he joined the King's army. As soon as we were a short distance from the house, he stopped, and, looking me full in the face—

'William,' said he, 'I believe you would not do anything to harm or bring me into trouble.'

I think my face flushed, for I found my ears glow at the supposition.

'No, laird; I would far rather harm or bring myself into trouble. Who has belied me to your Honour? I am certain neither thought nor word of mine ever gave you cause to suspect me.'

I really felt hurt and grieved for a moment, until he took my hand in his, and smiled.

'William,' said he, 'I am sorry if I have unintentionally hurt your honest feelings. I have nothing but good faith in you. I have an affair of importance on hand, and you must aid me.'

'With all my heart,' replied I. 'Only tell me what I am to do?'

'There is one for whose safety I am most anxious,' continued he; 'his life is in danger. In my own house he cannot be concealed; in yours he may. I shall provide for it, if you are willing to encounter the risk and inconvenience. You have no family or servants that reside with you. I shall build an apartment attached to your house, which he shall occupy; and you will attend to all his wants, and administer to his comforts as much as in your power.'

To all this, Grace and I gave our hearty consent. Everything was made ready in much less time than I could have conceived possible; the laird superintending all himself, and we obedient to his will. When all was to his mind, he went from home for a few days, leaving word with me, that whoever should give me his letter, authorizing me to put them in possession of the room, I was at once to comply, and ask no questions.

For those who had taken any part with the Prince, it was a troublesome period. The cruelties committed by the King's troops in the Highlands, made our blood run cold in our veins: and we now pitied those whom we had a few months before hated and feared. Numbers were in prison, waiting a bloody release, more objects of pity than those who were butchered outright. The law sometimes realizes the tales of the crocodiles, and weeps over the victims it is intent to devour. Well, the second evening after the Laird left us, there came to our door a poor, aged man, scarcely able to support himself upon his staff; his keen, grey eyes were at one time fixed upon the ground, and the next, when he looked up, piercing into my inmost thoughts. With a tone of voice which affected humility, he