

they're ringin' i' my ear yet, 'but I must talk a little more, and then——' Here she stopped again a good while, raising her eyes and clasping her hands, and moving her lips, and saying something as in a whisper, which was not meant for any mortal ear to hear. She then turned her dim and sunken eye on me—but it was not dim then as it had been for weeks and weeks of wasting, but seemed us brief and shinin' as it was soon to be, in another and far happier place.

"'Magdalen Langton!' says she—she niver ca'd me any thing but Maud in her life before, an' I trimmell'd a' ower like an espen leaf, as she laid her lilly white hand upon my wrist, so solemn like, and asked me if I believed I had a soul—an immortal soul, that would live, and live, and live for ever in another world?"

"'Surely madam,' I answered, wondering at the question, and thinking my pair mistress was goin' demented—when she went on as if not heeding what I said or thought.

"'An' as ye wish and expect that soul to be saved will ye take care of my dear boy, when the grass is green on his mother's grave?"

"'But my heart was too full to speak—I couldn't."

"'Her Bible was lying on her bed beside her, and she put my hand upon it, and then distinctly said, without a shake or a falter in her voice, just as yane in perfect health would speak:

"'Magdalen Langton!' again thought I, that solemn, lengthened, ominous name, and what a relief plain 'Maud, ye thoughtless hussy,' would have been, for I was young and somewhat thoughtless then.

"'Magdalen Langton!' she again repeated, as if she'd known my thoughts, 'as ye hope that soul to save, by what is written in this blessed book, will ye pledge me in my dying hour to foster, cherish and watch over my poor orphan boy, as if he were your own, so that he may not feel a mother's care is not bestowed upon his helpless days of infancy?"

"'Yes! oh, yes! dear madam,' I exclaimed; but could not say another word for crying; but she was satisfied, and took her hand away, when, clasping it in 'Other, with een upturned to heaven, she faintly ejaculated, in a low but distinct whisper, some words of thanks to one her soul adored, in bloomin' health, in wastin' sickness, and in that darksome hour of death; and in that verra net and attitude, seemed to fall asleep, as we all thought she did, for the poor maister and his sister were in the room, and we all knelt down and prayed so quietly within ourselves, for a lang time, and niver stirred for fear of waking her fraem that sweet and tranquil sleep, till some one thought that she had passed awny,

which we soon, to our sorrow, found was ower true; an' I niver liked to hear anybody ca' me Mistress Magdalen sen—but they may ca' me what they like, now, that the dear boy's gone; and his pair mother's ghaist will haunt me the longest day I have to leave; besides my broken faith an' perjured oath—wae me! wae me! what shall I do?"

Here old John's better feelings got the mastery over the bad humour he had so recently manifested, and he broke in with some solacing probability, for he was one of the audience, that possibly master Harry, who was quite capable, now that he was of age, of taking care of himself, had gone out with his rod to the Eden, or with his gun, to look for the badger they had had seen the day before at the foot of the Fell.

"'Nay, nay!' interrupted Maud; 'nowt, o' I swort—I know better, for his gun's sticking up in her\* brackets, ower the fire-place in the big ha', an' his rod's there too; an' naeboddy saw him gang out o' house—besides he has moped and mourned iver sen the auld gentleman de'd, when any other young man would be rejoiced to be his awn maister, wi' sick a fortin as he had; an' he wad sleep near that haunted chamber, too; I was always afraid no good wad come o't. An' now he's gone—gone! an' the Lord hae mercy upon me!" and then she wrung her hands again, in abject despair, and "would not be comforted because he was not."

It was very evident, as far as her anxious enquiries extended, and they were most minute and particular, that no one had seen him leave the mansion that morning, which was certainly very extraordinary.

"'Aye, ye may laugh and sneer, ye pair, miserable, demented ne'er-do-weel! at all this, because ye know no better!"

This speech was directed by Maud to poor Billy Stone, who rubbed his hands, as he sat hitherto unnoticed in the huge chimney corner, and laughed at all this exhibition of distress, evidently manifesting that he knew more about the matter than any body else, or than he chose to tell, which the shrewd old butler observing, exclaimed, as the thought struck him:

"'I'll bet a guinea that Billy Stone knows a' aboot it, although the elf refuses to tell us."

This suggestion was caught at as a drowning man would catch at a straw, and Billy was assailed, with a thousand questions, by the terror-stricken domestics, before time was allowed him to answer one, and he only laughed the more.

Billy Stone was one of those strange characters found only in the North near the Borders,

\*In the Westmoreland dialect, a gun, a watch, and a scythe are always of the feminine gender.