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THE HALLS OF THE NORTH.*

CHAPTER III.

AWAY! away! thou gallant grey!
 On, on and do thy best!
 Or the Imps of the law, at bonny Broughan Ha'
 Will have frightened the Birds from their nest.

OLD BALLAD.

In the midst of a clump of old sycamores, near the end of the long narrow bridge across a nameless rivulet in a long straggling village, if so small a hamlet may be so designated; between the road leading down the Fell-side into Orton and the little old low church, or rather chapel of ease, surrounded by its numberless headstones with their homely rhymes, mementos sacred, though uncomely ones, of the affectionate regard of the living for the dead, stands, or rather stood, for it has long since fallen into a heap of ruins, a small stone cottage with a thatched roof, a low narrow door, and a small casemented window, divided into two parts by a heavy stone mullion, with its tiny diamond shaped panes, dimmed with dirt, and green with age; except where they were broken and stuffed with old rags, to ward off the blasts of the cold helmswind. The inmates of this small cottage consisted, at the period to which our tale relates, of an elderly couple and their son, and daughter-in-law his wife, and two or three rugged urchins of boys. As to their occupation—they had none, at least none that was ostensible; two or three fowling pieces of different descriptions, one that unscrewed near the breech, and which could be made to assume the shape and appearance of a walking stick; another which could be taken to pieces in lengths short enough to be concealed in the ample pockets which prevailed at that remote period; these, together with some suspicious looking dogs of a mongrel breed, between the greyhound and the pointer, excited in the mind, even of the most casual observer, more than a suspicion that they belonged to pouchers and deer-stalkers; and the tout ensemble of this rude and miserable establish-

ment plainly evinced that its inmates were no better than they should be. Close to the corner of the gable end of this cottage was a gate across the road, by no means an uncommon obstruction at the present day in the bye-roads in England, and on a fine sunny morning in June, on the clatter of a horse's hoofs being heard upon the hard pavement on the bridge, one of the little urchins in the cottage I have mentioned, ran to the gate, which he held open with one hand while with the other he held up his ragged cap, in the hope of receiving a few ha'pence, but was delighted to find that the passing stranger, without slackening the quick pace at which he rode, had thrown into it a white silver coin, when instead of thanking him for so bountiful a largess, he exclaimed:

"Hide, ride! or ye'll be ow'r late; there are men before ye!"

When master Harry, for I need hardly say who was the stranger, drew a tighter rein in order to obtain further information from his mysterious monitor, who evidently knew both him and the object of his journey; but the urchin had delivered the message with which he was charged, and was gone.

"These Mitchels," he said to himself, for he knew them well—too well, as did every gentleman within a circuit of many miles, who was possessed of parks and manors; "these Mitchels are a villainous set of wretches, and it's very absurd for me to take any notice of their mysterious warning," as if deprecating the increased rapidity with which he was pursuing his journey in consequence of it. "There may, however, be some truth in it, for they know every thing," he again reflected as he

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