

The Braes of Yarrow

An Historical Tale of the Sixteenth Century.

CHAPTER I.—THE SECRET OF THE TOWER CHAMBER.

What tiger or what other savage might
Is so exceeding furious and fell
As when he hath arm'd himself with might?
Not fit amongst men that do with reason well,
But 'mongst wild beasts and savage woods do dwell.

Tushielaw, with sullen determination bent upon keeping the truth he had pledged to his dead foster brother, continued to scour the country round in search of Kyrat Hyslop; but still without avail. He had also despatched Eddie Craig and another to Edinburgh to act under the orders of Barras in finding Elliot and settling with him. As has been related, the timely warning of the page Crawford rescued Gilbert from the first attempt of his two assassins.

So the border chief fretted and fumed and hunted his human quarry with his dark purpose still unachieved.

Meanwhile the gipsy youth Kaza, although regarded with little else than scorn by the greater number of the borderers for his lack of strength and hardihood, was pitted by the others on account of being a natural or sort of harmless idiot, rapidly grew in favour with the chief.

None could divine how this favour was obtained; but, probably, even the rude nature of Tushielaw was affected by the weakness and friendless condition of the lad. Besides, little wit as Kaza might have, he appeared to have enough to know that his condition would be improved in the ratio of his service to the chief. Accordingly, he was always ready at his beck to run anywhere or do anything for him, and in return, Tushielaw, in his rough way, liked the lad, finding him useful.

With another person Kaza had found favour, and that was none other than his captor, the dwarf Horrie. Although the latter liked rarely to play some trick on the young gipsy for the amusement of his master, the deformed man and the half wit were great friends.

They were often seen together, often found in out-of-the-way nooks of the tower, playing at hide and seek, as Horrie explained on being questioned.

On one occasion, when Yetholm Will was passing the south turret chamber, the door was slightly ajar, and he overheard the voices of Horrie and Kaza in what appeared to be earnest converse. Now, this chamber was specially devoted to the use of the master; the door, which had recently been renewed, was a double one of strong oak and studded with broad-headed nails. He always carried the key about his person, and never permitted any one to enter the chamber save when he was present.

Curious to know how the dwarf and the natural had got into the secret room, and what they were talking about, Will listened.

'If it be not here, mistress, then it is not in the tower,' said Horrie in a tone of respect such as Will had never known him to use before.

'Then all my labour will be vain,' sighed Kaza, more like a woman, Will thought, than a half-wit gipsy lad.

'The chamber would be a great treasure, guarded so well had there been no secret to guard. Make use of the time and seek high, seek low, seek roof and floor and walls. I have kenned a bit of tapestry hide rare treasures.'

At this Will burst into the room, his dull mind grasping only the commonest notion that the pair were attempting to rob the master. This notion was engendered chiefly by the last word Horrie had uttered—'treasures.'

He found Kaza in the act of raising a portion of the dust-covered tapestry, which he dropped as if in alarm the instant the man appeared. The dwarf was on his knees on the floor scrutinizing every seam and chink.

His attention was attracted by the noise Will made in entering, and twisting his head over his shoulder to see who came, he saluted him with one of his loud hoarse laughs. He did not betray the least fear or confusion.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Capt. Elmhurst, 53rd regiment, now in Quebec, received a blow on the head with a stick, from a Mr. Le Mesurier. A challenge followed. Le Mesurier had the good sense to decline putting himself up for a target to be shot at, and the gallant captain publishes him as a "coward."

At Erie, it took a Justice of the Peace, two lawyers, six jurors and about twenty witnesses the whole afternoon to try a case in which a little girl, about nine years old, had slapped the face of a play mate.

As a memento of the Czar's recent visit to Poland, he has issued an imperial ukase, forbidding the males to wear mustaches, and the women to wear the Polish toquet.

There is every reason to believe that Mr. Gwynne has received the Poine Judgeship, rendered vacant by Mr. Draper's retirement.

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