

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

Seven or eight years ago, I was travelling between Berwick and Selkirk; and having started at the crowing of the cock, I had left Melrose before four in the afternoon. On arriving at Abbotsford, I perceived a Highland soldier, apparently fatigued as myself, leaning upon a walking stick, and gazing intently on the fairy palace of the magician whose wand is since broken, but whose magic still remains. I am no particular disciple of Lavater's; yet the man carried his soul upon his face, and we were friends at the first glance. He wore a plaid Highland bonnet, and a coarse grey great-coat, buttoned to the throat. His dress bespoke him to belong only to the ranks; but there was a dignity in his manner, and a fire, a glowing language, in his eyes, worthy of a chieftain. His height might exceed five feet nine, and his age be about thirty. The traces of manly beauty were still upon his cheeks; but the sun of a western hemisphere had tinged them with a ruddy hue, and imprinted untimely furrows.

Our conversation related chiefly to the classic scenery around us; and we had pleasantly journeyed together for two or three miles, when we arrived at a little sequestered burial-ground by the way side, near which there was neither church nor dwelling. Its low wall was thinly covered with turf, and we sat down upon it to rest. My companion became silent and melancholy, and his eyes wandered anxiously among the graves.

"Here," said he, "sleep some of my father's children, who died in infancy."

He picked up a small stone from the ground—and throwing it gently about ten yards, "That," added he, "is the very spot. But, thank God! no grave-stone has been raised during my absence! It is a token I shall find my parents living; and," and continued with a sigh, "may I also find their love! 'Tis hard, sir, when the heart of a parent is turned against his own child."

He dropped his head upon his breast for a few moments, and was silent; and hastily raising his forefinger to his eyes, seemed to wash away a solitary tear. Then turning to me, he continued—"You may think, sir, this weakness in a common soldier; but human hearts beat beneath a red coat. My father, whose name is Campbell, and who was brought from Argyleshire while young, is a wealthy farmer in this neighbourhood.—Twenty years ago I loved a being gentle as the light of a summer moon. We were chil-

dren together, and she grew in beauty on my sight, as the star of evening steals into glory through the twilight. But she was poor and portionless, the daughter of a mean shepherd. Our attachment offended my father. He commanded me to leave her for ever. I could not, and he turned me from his house. I wandered—I knew not, and I cared not, whither. But I will not detain you with my history. In my utmost need, I met a sergeant of the forty-second, who was then upon the recruiting service, and in a few weeks I joined that regiment of proud hearts. I was at Brussels when the invitation to the wolf and the raven rang at midnight through the streets. It was the herald of a day of glory and of death. There were three Highland regiments of us—three joined in one, joined in rivalry, in love, and in purpose; and, thank Fate! I was present when the Scots Greys, flying to our aid, raised the electric shout, 'Scotland for ever!' 'Scotland for ever!' returned our tartaned clansmen: 'Scotland for ever!' reverberated as from the hearts we had left behind us; and 'Scotland for ever!' re-echoed 'Victory!' Heavens! added he, starting to his feet, and grasping his staff, as the enthusiasm of the past gushed back upon his soul, "to have joined in that shout was to live an eternity in the vibration of a pendulum!"

In a few minutes the animated soul that gave eloquence to his tongue, drew itself back into the chambers of humanity, and resuming his seat upon the low wall, he continued: "I left my old regiment with the prospect of promotion, and have since served in the West Indies; but I have heard nothing of my father, nothing of my mother, nothing of her I love!"

While he was yet speaking the grave digger, with a pick-axe and spade over his shoulder, entered the ground: he approached within a few yards of where we sat: and he measured off a narrow piece of earth; it encircled the little stone which the soldier had thrown to mark out the burial-place of his family. Convulsion rushed over the features of my companion; he shivered: he grasped my arm: his lips quivered: his breathing became short and loud: the cold sweat trickled from his temples: he sprang over the wall; he rushed towards the spot.

"Man!" he exclaimed in agony, "whose grave is that?"

"Hoot! awa wi' ye!" said the grave digger, starting back at his manner; "whatna way is that to gliff a body! are ye daft?"

"Answer me," cried the soldier, seizing his