

"are ye acquainted wi' him, Sir?" "I ought to be," replied I; "the person you speak of is merely my father."

"Your father?" exclaimed he, opening his mouth and eyes to their full width, and standing for a moment the picture of surprise—"Gude gracious! ye dinna say sae!—is he really your father? Lash, man, do you no ken, then, that I'm your cousin? Ye've heard o' your cousin, Willie Stewart."

"Fifty times," replied I.

"Weel, I'm the vera man," said he—"Gie's your hand; for, 'odsake man, I'm as glad as glad can be. This is real extraordinary. I've often heard o' you—it will be you that writes the buiks—faith ye'll be able to mak something o' this. But come awa into the house—ye, dinna stir a mile fur'er for a week at ony rate."

So saying, and still grasping my hand, he led me to the farm-house. On crossing the threshold—

"Here, lassie," he cried, in a voice that made roof and rafters ring, "bring ben the speerits, and get on the kettle—here's a cousin that I ne'er saw in my life afore."

A few minutes served mutually to confirm and explain our newly discovered relationship.

"Man," said he, as we were filling a second glass, "ye've just come in the very nick o' time; an' I'll tell ye how. Ye see I am gann to be married the day after the morn; an' no haein' a friend o' ony kin-kind in this quarter, I had to ask an acquaintance to be the best man. Now, this was vexin' me mair than ye can think, particularly, ye see, because the sweetheart has aye been hinting to me that it wadna be lucky or me no to hae a bluid relation for a best man. For that matter, indeed, luck here, luck there, I no care the toss up o' a ha'penny 'bout omens mysel'; but now that ye've fortunately come, I'm a great deal easier, an' 't will be ae craik out o' the way, for it will please her; an' ye may guess, between you an' me, that she's worth the pleasin', or I wadna had her; so I'll just step over an' tell the ither lad that I hae a cousin come to be my best man, an' he'll think naething o't."

On the morning of the third day, the bride and her friends arrived. She was the only child of a Lammermoor farmer, and was in rath a real mountain flower—a heath blossom; for the rude health that laughed upon her cheeks approached nearer the hue of the rather-bell, than the rose and vermillion of

which poets speak. She was comely withal, possessing an appearance of considerable strength, and was rather abov'e the middle size—in short, she was the very *belle ideal* of a miller's wife!

But to go on. Twelve couple accompanied the happy miller and his bride to the manse, independent of the married, middle-aged, and grey-haired visitors, who followed behind and by our side. We were thus proceeding onward to the house of the minister, whose blessing was to make a couple happy, and the arm of the blooming bride was through mine, when I heard a voice, or rather let me say a sound, like the croak of a raven, exclaim—

"Mercy on us! saw ye e'er the like o' that!—the best man, I'll declare, has a black coat on!"

"An' that's no lucky!" replied another

"Lucky!" responded the raven voice—"just perfectly awfu'! I wadna it had happened at the weddin' o' a bairn o' mine for the king's dominions."

I observed the bride steal a glance at my shoulder; I felt, or thought I felt, as if she shrunk from my arm; and when I spoke to her, her speech faltered. I found that my cousin, in avoiding one omen, had stumbled upon another, in my black coat. I was wroth with the rural prophetess, and turned round to behold her. Her little grey eyes, twinkling through spectacles, were wink, winking upon my ill-fated coat. She was a crooked, (forgive me for saying an ugly,) little, old woman; she was "bearded like a pard," and walked with a crooked stick mounted with silver. (On the very *Spot** where she then was, the last witch in Scotland was burned.) I turned from the grinning sibyl with disgust.

On the previous day, and during part of the night, the rain had fallen heavily, and the Broxburn was swollen to the magnitude of a little river. The manse lay on the opposite side of the burn, which was generally crossed by the aid of stepping-stones; but, on the day, in question, the tops of the stones were barely visible. On crossing the burn, the foot of the bridge slipped, and the bridegroom, in his eagerness to assist her, slipped also—knee-deep in the water. The raven voice was again heard—it was another omen.

The kitchen was the only room in the manse large enough to contain the spectators assembled to witness the ceremony, which passed over smoothly enough, save that when the

*The last person burned for witchcraft in Scotland, was at "Spot"—the scene of our present story.