

vileges thereunto belonging; which consisted, among other things, of a common right on Cross-Fell, an immunity from all church cess or rates, from hearth-penny, peter-pence and tithes, as well as from all other dues and demands ecclesiastic whatsoever, together with certain undefined pew and chancel privileges, rights of sepulture, &c. &c.

These privileges and immunities were of so extraordinary a character as to induce me, on seeing the advertisement in a paper published at "Bonny Carlisle," to make some enquiry as to their meaning and origin. The following explanatory legend was the result of this enquiry:

On the beautiful but moonless night which closed the Eve of Christmas, in the year of grace—, when the minnners and morrice-dancers had completed their grotesque and merry gambols around the Yule-clog fire, in one of "the houses" I have mentioned, to the perfect satisfaction of a large party. All the most respectable inhabitants of that lovely valley had assembled there on this festive occasion. No! not all! there was one missing. One, whose absence was so remarkable that every body noticed it.

"What can be the reason why Edward Falcon is not here to-night?" was whispered in anxious enquiry by every one. Indeed, his absence was the more remarkable as it was at his own home—in his father's, or rather his mother's, house, that the party had assembled, and had been got up, doubtless, in a great measure for his especial benefit. The amusements of the evening (slugged for a while,—the mysterious absence of Edward Falcon was a damper upon them, for more reasons than one. He was indeed the very life and soul of every merry-making in all that country side. He was a fearless and a reckless youth, but haughty, as some thought, and proud withal, yet had he ever for the poorest of the parish, when he met them in the narrow footpath leading to the church, or in the deep indented lane, or on the village green, a cheering smile and a bly the good-day for each and all. And Edward Falcon was decidedly a universal favorite. There was another reason too, why he was missed so markedly on this great occasion. His kind and fond and dotting mother, noted his absence with many a sad and anxious and enquiring look, for he was her only child, her only hope, her stay, her solace and her sole dependance—in a word, he was the only son of his mother and she was a widow. The boisterous revelry of the assembled villagers soon however dissipated this feeling of disappointment, and all were blithe and gay, and Edward Falcon was, or seemed to be forgotten.

The hour was now approaching for their depar-

ture to the little lone church for the celebration of Midnight Mass.

Fresh fuel was heaped upon the red hearth to burn up against their return, for the night was bitter cold. Some one then more bold than the rest might be seen peering through the back door to see if any unearthly visiter, attracted by the noise of their merry-making, were loitering still within the sacred precincts of the court yard or the cottage garden.

After piously crossing themselves to guard against the attacks of such hidden and dangerous eaves-droppers, they sallied forth into the dim starlight, in silence and in fear.

Their way to the church led past a number of little cottages in which merry-makings like their own on a smaller scale had been carried on; and the cavalcade was increased, as it moved along, by several little groups of revelleis who were right glad of such protection.

On they went, and thus they gathered and grew as they passed along till the last cottage door had opened, to add its little quota to their number. The mill and miller's house was yet in their way. A little garth separated it from the well beaten footpath they were treading. Across it came, to join the throng, the miller's daughter with the young and stalwart heir of the other "house" in the village which I have mentioned. No notice was taken of this little accession to their number other than some titterings among the younger members of that procession.

Their way now led them down the steep descent into the little dell along the elm-fringed banks of the lonely little rivulet, or across some sudden bend in its meandering course, as it wound its devious way around that Holme of lovely green, which constituted at that period the best portion of the globe, if not the whole of it.

This lovely meadow was always adorned with a darker and a richer tint than could be found in any other green valley betwixt the sunny hills of that romantic district. It was given, or rather bequeathed, to this then poor benefice, by a lady—the last of the noble De Cliffords. She died under very extraordinary circumstances shortly after her mysterious nuptials, which were never consummated.*

In a corner of the chancel the cemetery can yet be discerned. A mutilated and dingy figure of a female is rudely sculptured upon a marble slab, the only one perhaps that ever adorned this lone and sequestered church, pointing out, most

* These extraordinary and mysterious circumstances have been minutely described and explained in a former number of the *Border Legends* published in the Garland, and entitled "The Three Gibbets."