

sun, to the very windows of the mansion, combine, altogether, to render it one of the most delightful and romantic spots that the lover of the picturesque could probably pourtray to his imagination.

In the exterior of the Hall, there is nothing sufficiently peculiar or extraordinary to require a description, save and except, that it had the air and appearance of being the residence, not so much of a man of wealth, as of an ancient name and family; and this was certainly so far peculiar in that thinly peopled neighbourhood, as to entitle it to the high and honourable designation of the "*Great Hall*."

But if there were but few striking features in its external appearance, there was quite enough to make up for the deficiency, if such it could be called, in its internal arrangements, which had been so fancifully and whimsically ordered, that hardly any two rooms were either on the same level, or their ceilings of the same height, while narrow passages and winding staircases, not to mention the subterranean communications, extending no one knew whither, prevailed to such an interminable extent, as to render it somewhat difficult for a stranger, led up as far into the interior as the haunted chamber, as all strangers were, to find his way out again.

Of the inmates of the mansion it will not be necessary to give any succinct description; as all that the reader may care to know about them, will naturally be elicited in the course of my story.

On a bright and balmy morning in June, or, to speak in the more correct language of that locality, the "*forenoon*," for they have more divisions of the day than two—and it was too late for what they termed the morning, for the sun was careering high above the loftiest peak behind the ha', and yet the young master Harry, as the new proprietor of Hell-Beek Hall was still called by his late father's old and faithful domestics, had not ordered his morning meal, a circumstance so unusual that it excited the wonder and astonishment of the whole household.

The old butler had been in the breakfast room a dozen times, to stir up the fire, and see that every thing was comfortable, for in that northern climate, fires are generally requisite throughout the summer, at least in the mornings and evenings, if not all day; and old Maud Langton, the housekeeper, a thin, spare, crabbed fixture on the premises for more than two generations, and as completely the mistress of the house, to all intents and purposes, as if it had been her own—just such a character as might be considered far more likely to give her master notice to quit, than to receive such a notice from him; in her case, how-

ever, either event would have been alike improbable, if such a ridiculous and absurd idea could ever have entered the head of either party—she too manifested still stronger symptoms of impatience, mingled with anxiety and fear.

"Heeh, sirs! but the world's come to a purty pass!" she exclaimed to the old man, as she met him on one of the winding stairs leading to his master's sleeping apartment, at the door of which he had just himself been reconnoitring, and where she was going on a similar errand. "Nino o'clock struck," she continued in the same sharp key, "an' no maister Harry to his breakfast yet; an' the fine dappled trot that Billy Stone, the imp! caught this blessed morn. in the deepest laub in the ings,* a' soddan an' spoilt, though I fried it mysel', an' feybye a' this, he has got news for the maister, whilk I mann an' will tell him. Oh! but if his grandfather, God be wid him, that naebod's dared to mention this three an' twenty years, had seen seek a seet as an heir o' his hoose in bed at seek an' hoor; but the pair silly† had's mebbly not ower weel, an' me here clavering like an' auld full as I is, to make his heed-wark‡ warse, sary man." This was said in a softer and lower tone; but was lost upon John; if intended for his benefit, as she had ascended far beyond his hearing, with the quick and elastic step of a girl in her teens, while he was also widening the distance between himself and the speaker, although at a much slower pace.

"But let her find it out as I have done," he muttered to himself, as if deprecating some suitings of his conscience, for not having spared the old dame, what to him had been a long and tedious journey, by informing her, that the young master was not there. "But what business has she to be pottering up to maister's room, as if I was't sufficient to leuk after him, or if he war't baith auld enough an' big enough to tak' care o' himself? but the woman's mad this morning, it's my belief," he continued with more acrimony than he had ever before been known to manifest towards her; indeed he was kind and obliging to every one, and more particularly to Mistress Langton, as he always respectfully designated her, and this was owing to his young master having been placed under her care, and his regard for her was always regulated by her kindness to her foster-son, which was all but a mother's affection, deep, pure, and abiding; for they had one common interest in this idol of their mutual worship and adoration; they both regarded him

* "Ings," low marshy meadows through which a river winds its tortuous course.

† "Silly," and "sary," in the Westmoreland dialect, are terms of familiar endearment, sometimes of pity.

‡ Head-ache.