

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NIGHT-WANDERING.

LATE going home that night, and very late, from Bailie Alan's, Ninian, in the empty street, could not but wonder at the fair face put on life and the aspect of the world by sleep. Here, surely, dwelt the innocent, unconscious: hearts at ease, untroubled heads on feather pillows. The high lands towered on either hand of him, all packed with slumberers, drifting, though they did not know it, like the clouds. Dark windows broke the walls of the lime-washed tenements; the cobbles of the gaping closes might have never known a footstep. Prevailed a smell of peat on fires smothered for the morning. Dead leaves from garden trees, and from the policy, were blown about the causeway; they pattered on before him, crisp, like little living things. Behind him on the walls high tide was beating, and the river made that noise which never changed in it from year to year—so mournful always in the night-time, even with the memories of its pools of fish, so like the voice of time made audible.

His footsteps echoed through the burgh, startling himself a little, like the footsteps of a man whom he had passed deep in the forest hunting-path in small dark hours of morning, once, when searching for a dog astray. The man had stepped out from the dust below the fir-trees suddenly, and came to him, and passed without an answer to his salutation, pacing slow, and melting into shade again, incredible but for his foot-