

THE SPAN O' LIFE

CHAPTER I

"AFTER HIGH FLOODS COME LOW EBBS"

EVERY one knows of my connection with the ill-starred Rebellion of Prince Charles, and for this it was that I found myself, a few months after the disaster of Culloden, lying close in an obscure lodging in Greek Street, Soho, London.

Surely a rash proceeding, you may say, this adventuring into the lion's den! But such has not been my experience: in an escalado, he who hugs closest the enemy's wall has often a better chance than he who lies at a distance. And so I, Hugh Maxwell of Kirkconnel, Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis, Captain en seconde in Berwick's Foot in the service of His Most Christian Majesty, and late Aide-de-Camp to General Lord George Murray in the misdirected affair of His Royal Highness Charles, Prince of Wales and Regent for his illustrious father, "Jacobus Tertius, Rex Angliæ, Hiberniæ, et Franciæ, Dei Gratia"—Heaven save the mark!—found it safer and more to my taste to walk abroad in London under the nose of the usurping but victorious Hanoverian than to continue skulking under the broader heavens of the Highlands.

I will not deny there were moments when I would