

in which it had originated, had ceased to exist.

Poor Margery, quite unconscious of the value thus set, not upon her head but her hand, quietly pursued the even tenor of her way, like a good girl as she was, and a beautiful one, too, in the eyes of one at least, to whom she had plighted that hand, together with a warm and feeling heart, without which that little hand would have been but cold and valueless.

Yet she was not a beauty—an admission which proves that my tale is not a fiction of the imagination. But she was kind, warm-hearted and affectionate. She could not boast of a single accomplishment, so essential in the formation of a fine lady of the present day, but she could make her first baby a dress, or her husband a shirt, could darn her own stockings, and superintend the cooking of a family dinner, or the putting down of a churning of butter. And more than all, she could take a gallop over the Fells, if need were, with the best of the Borderers.

She was not ugly—far from it. On the contrary, she was a fine, handsome young woman; her bust and figure unexceptionable, her features, every one of which was the index of intellectuality and womanly affection, and had originally been most regular and beautiful, were marred, although but slightly, by that fell ravager, the small-pox, yet enough to prevent her from now laying claim to the character that might otherwise have been assigned to her.

The young Fellsider, Edward Arkland, to whom she had plighted her hand and heart, was a young man every way worthy of her, except that he could not boast of so fair a lineage; probably because his genealogy had not been considered of sufficient importance to be handed down from generation to generation. There were unfortunately no parish registers kept in those days, and he, consequently, could not trace his pedigree farther back than to his great-grandfather, who had been, still more unfortunately, somebody whom nobody knew. And the family pride of Wastel Head was touched and offended at the idea of a connection so far beneath her, in their estimation at least.

And yet to Edward Arkland the prize was willingly awarded by all the rest of the Fellsiders, with the exception of one solitary individual, generally known by the name of Richard Swindale, from the circumstance of his possessing and occupying a small farm in the dale, of that name. Hogherd,* I believe, was his real name. He was of a character the very reverse

of that of his open, frank and manly rival; for he also was an aspirer, but the only one besides Edward Arkland, to the fair prize that all else looked upon as well worth the winning, but far beyond their reach. He was dark, gloomy and unsocial, and yet there never was a merry-making, or a sheep-shearing, for miles round, at which he was not present; but there was something so repulsive about him, whether arising from his inordinate selfishness, or from the sinister expression of low cunning and deceit in every feature of his face, or from his groundless pretensions to be something above his neighbours; groundless, because nearly all the Fellsiders were land-owners as well as he; or whatever else was the cause, he was certainly singled out, in the most marked manner, as the black sheep of the flock, to use a pastoral simile so well understood in that locality; and never enjoyed that friendly and familiar intercourse with his equals, to which his circumstances otherwise so well entitled him.

He was a dark, scheming, intriguing and dangerous man; yet was he looked upon with more of scorn than of fear, and in accordance with this feeling, he was always spoken of under the contemptuous appellation of Dick Hogg.

These preliminary observations concerning some of the most prominent personages connected with my story, however tiresome to the reader, are absolutely necessary for its full development.

CHAPTER III.

"Were the doctrine new,
That the earth moved, this day would make it true;
For every part to dance and reel goes."

Donne.

On a fine sunny morning in June 17—, the fells and dales were all alive and in motion. At a very early hour, horsemen were seen on all the heights behind and around Wastel Head, or descending the hill sides down to that lonely house, the goal to which all were hastening. On a nearer approach they had to slacken their pace in order to thread their way through the thousands of sheep collected round the premises.

Wastel Head was anything but a lonely house that busy morning. The baying of dogs—the shouts of the shepherds—the bleating of the sheep, and anon, as the guests arrived, the neighing of horses, together with the loud voices and the merry laugh of their riders, might be heard commingling with these noises; all denoting that this was the morning of the grand sheep-shearing at Wastel Head.

And now the work began, but still the more distant visitors came pouring in, and the stream

* The famous Hogarth was born in this dale; his name was originally Hogherd.