

the ignorant were willing to deceive themselves; and what we now laugh at as the clever trick of a "hocus-pocus" man, was scarce more than a century ago, received as a miracle—as a thing performed by the hand of the "prince of the powers of the air."—Religion without knowledge, and still swaddled in darkness, fostered the idle fear; yea, there are few superstitions, though prostituted by wickedness, that did not owe their existence to some glimmering idea of religion.—They had not seen the lamp which lightens the soul, and leadeth it to knowledge; but, having perceived its far-off reflection, plunged into the quagmire of error—and hence proceeded superstition. But I digress into a descant on the superstitions of our fathers, nor should I have done so, but that it is impossible to write a *Border Tale* of the olden time without bringing them forward; and, when I do so, it is not with the intention of instilling into the minds of my readers the old idea of sorcery, witchcraft, and visible spirits, but of shewing what was the belief and conduct of our forefathers. Therefore, without further comment, I shall cut short these remarks, and simply observe, that the thoughts of the young stranger still running upon Leyden, he turned to the elder, after they had sat together for some time, and said, "Did you know Dr. Leyden, sir?"

"Ken him!" said the old man; "fifty years ago, I've wrought day's-work beside his father for months together!"

They continued their conversation for some time, and the younger inquired of the elder, if he were acquainted with Leyden's ballad of "Lord Soulis?"

"Why, I hae heard a verse or twa o' the ballant, sir," said the old man, "but I'm sure everybody kens the story. However, if ye're no perfectly acquaint wi' it, I'm sure I'm willing to let ye hear it wi' great pleasure; and a remarkable story it is—and just as true, sir, ye may tak my word on't, as that I'm raising this bottle to my lips."

So saying, the old man raised the flask to his mouth, and after a regular fisher's draught, added—

"Well, sir, I'll let ye hear the story aboot Lord Soulis:—You have, no doubt, heard of Hermitage Castle, which stands upon the river of that name, at no great distance frae Hawick. In the days of the great and good King Robert the Bruce, that castle was inhabited by Lord Soulis.* He was a man whose very name spread terror far and wide, for he was a tyrant and a sorcerer. He had a giant's strength, an evil eye† and a demon's heart; and he kept his "familiar," locked in a chest. Peer and peasant became pale at the name of Lord Soulis. His hand smote down the strong, his eye blasted the healthy. He oppressed the poor, and he robbed the rich. He ruled over his vassals with a rod of iron. From the banks of the Tweed to the Teviot, and the Jed, with their tributaries, to beyond the Lothians, an incessant war was raised against him to Heaven and to the king. But his life was protected by a charm and mortal weapons could not prevail against him. (The seriousness with which the narrator said this, shewed that he gave full credit to the tradition, and believed in Lord Soulis as a sorcerer.)

He was a man of great stature, and his person was exceeding powerful. He had a royal blood in his veins, and laid claim to the crown of Scotland in opposition to the Bruce. But two things troubled him; and the one was to place the crown of Scotland on his head; the other, to possess the hand of a fair and true maiden, named Marion, who was about to be wed with Walter, the young heir of Braemarholm, the stoutest and the boldest youth in all the wide Borders. Soulis was a man who was not only of a cruel heart, but it was filled with forbidden thoughts; and, to accomplish his purposes, he went down into the dungeon of his castle, in the dead of night, that no man might see him perform the 'dead without a name.' He carried a magic lamp in his hand, which threw around

* He was also proprietor of Eccles in Berwickshire, and, according to history, was so in the town of Berwick; but tradition sayeth otherwise.

† There is, perhaps, no superstition more widely diffused than the belief in the fascination of an evil eye or a malignant glance; and, I am sorry to say, the absurdity has still its believers.

‡ Each sorcerer was supposed to have his familiar spirit, that accompanied him; Soulis was said to keep his locked in a chest.