

window with the driver, saying, "Pray, good people, do permit us to light the lamps, and you shall have any recompense." No sooner did George hear the lady's voice, than, in despite of his mother's frowns, he sprang to the door and unlocked it. With an awkward sort of gallantry he ushered in the fair stranger. She was, indeed, the loveliest first foot that had ever crossed the threshold of Mrs. Rogers. She had no sooner entered, than Nelly saw and felt this, and, with a civility which formed a strange contrast to her answers to the driver, she smoothed down for her the cushioned arm-chair by the side of the fire. The young lady (for she hardly appeared to exceed seventeen) politely declined the proffered hospitality. "Sit down, my sweet young leddy; now, do sit down just to oblige me," said Nelly. "Ye are our first-foot, and I hope--I'm sure ye'll be a lucky ane; and ye wadna, ye canna gaun' out without tasting wi' us on a New Year's morning."

The young lady sat down; and Nelly hastened to spread upon the table little mountains of short bread, (of which she was a notable maker,) with her spice loaf, milk-scones, and her best ewe-cheese, and her cream-cheese, which was quite a fancy!--And while his mother was so occupied George produced three or four sorts of home-made wine of his own manufacture; for, in his catalogue of capabilities as a genius, it must be admitted that he had some which might be said to belong to the useful.

"Now, make yoursel at hame, my dear leddy," said Nelly; "need nae pressing. Or if ye wad like it better, I'll get ye ready a cup o' tea in a minute or twa; the kettle's boiling; and it's only to mask, so dinna say no. Indeed, if ye'll only consent to stop a night, ye shall hae the best bed in the house, and we'll put the horses in the stable; for its no owre and aboon lucky to gie or tak a light on a New Year's morning."

A faint smile played across the lips of the fair stranger, at the mixture of Nelly's kindness and credulity; and she thanked her for her hospitality, but stated that she must proceed on her journey, as she was hastening to the deathbed of a near and only relative. The young lady, however, sat longer than she wist, for she had entered in conversation with George, how, she knew not, and he knew not; but they were pleased with each other; and there were times (though it was only at times) that George could talk like an inspired being; and this was one of those

times. The knowledge, the youth, the beauty of the lovely stranger, had kindled all the fires of his genius within him. Even his father was surprised, and his mother found that the chaise-driver was lighting the lamp--and how long the fair lady might have listened to George, we cannot tell, had not the driver hinted, "All's ready, Ma'am; the horses will get no good in the cold." So she arose and took leave of her entertainers; and George accompanied her to the chaise, and shook her hand and bade her farewell, though she had been an old and a very dear friend. He even thought, as she replied "Farewell," that there was a sadness in her tone, as if she were sorry to say it.

Richard and his spouse retired to rest; but still the thought of having given a light out of her house on a New Year's morning troubled her, and she feared that, after all, her lovely first foot would prove an unlucky one. George laid his head upon his pillow to dream dreams, and conjure up visions of the fair stranger.

A short week had not passed, however--Richard was returning from Kelso market, the roads were literally a sheet of ice; it was said that bones are most easily broken in frosty weather; his horse fell and rolled over him, and he was carried home bruised, and with his leg broken. Nelly was loud in her lamentations, and yet louder in her upbraidings, against George and against herself that she permitted a light to be carried out of her house on a New Year's morning. "It was born in upon me," said she, "the leddy wadna be lucky, that something would come out of the gien the light!" But this was not all, before two months elapsed, and just as her husband was beginning to set his foot to the ground again, from friction and negligence together, the thrashing machine took fire. It was still a severe frost, there was scarce a drop of water to be procured about the place, and, in spite of the exertions of all the people on the farm, and their neighbours who came to their assistance, the fierce flames roared, spread and rushed from stack to stack, until the barn, the stables, the stack-yard, and the dwelling-house, presented a heap of smoldering ashes and smoking ruins. Yet this was not the worst evil which had that day fallen upon Richard Rogers. He was one of those individuals who have an aversion to the very name of a bank, and he had the savings and the profits of twenty years, in fifty pound notes, and in five pound notes, and crown pieces, locked away in a strong drawer in his bedroom. In the confusion of