there could have been no dispute whatsoever, the right being so clearly on my side, if you had pleased to bear witness according to the dictates of truth "

"Maister Mordaunt," said the jagger, "I must own there was, as it were, a coloring or shadow of justice on your side; but then, the justice that I meddle with, is only justice in the way of trade. to have an ellwand of due length, if it be not something worn out with leaning on it in my lang and painful journeys, and to buy and sell by just weight and measure, twenty-four merks to the lispund; but I have nothing to do, to do justice betwixt man and man, like a Fowd or a Lawright-man, at a lawting lang syne."

"No one asked you to do so, but only to give evidence according to your conscience," replied Mordaunt, not greatly pleased either with the part the jagger had acted during the dispute, or the construction which he seemed to put on his own motives for yielding up the point.

But Bryce Snailsfoot wanted not his answer: "My conscience," he said, "Maister Mordaunt, is as tender as ony man's in my degree; but she is something of a timorsome nature, cannot abide angry folk, and can never speak above her breath. when there is aught of a fray going forward. Indeed, she hath at all times a small and low voice."

"Which you are not much in the habit of listening to," said Mordaunt.

"There is that on your ain breast that proves the contrary," said Bryce, resolutely.

"In my breast?" said Mordaunt somewhat angrily,-" what know I of you?"

"I said on your breast, Maister Mordaunt, and not in it. I am sure nae eye that looks on that waistcoat upon your own gallant brisket, but will say, that the merchant who sold such a piece for four dollars had justice and conscience, and a kind shouldna be sae thrawart wi' me for having spared the breath of my mouth in a fool's quarrel,"

"I thrawart!" said Mordaunt; "pooh, you silly man! I have no quarrel with you."

"I am glad of it," said the travelling merchant; "I will quarrel with no man, with my will-least by my advice, you will quarrel nane with Captain Cleveland. He is like one of you cutters and as little of slicing a man, as we do of flinching a way of pastime, when you hae nothing better to

The company had now almost all dispersed; and Mordaunt, aughing at the jagger's caution, pade him good-night, and went to his own place of repose, which had been assigned to him by Eric Scambester (who acted the part of chamberlain, as with the hammack of a sailor.

## CHAPTER XIX.

I pass like night from land to land. I have strange power of speech ; So soon as e'er his fat. I see. I know the man that rust hear me. To him my tale I teach. COLERIDGE'S Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

THE daughters of Magnus Troil shared the same bed, in a chamber which had been that of their parents before the death of their mother. Magnus, who suffered grievously under that dispensation of Providence, had become discusted with the apartment. The nuptial chamber was abandoned to the pledges of his bereaved affection. of whom the eldest was at that period only four vears old, or thereabouts; and having been their nursery in infancy, continued, though now tricked and adorned according to the best fashion of the islands, and the taste of the lovely sisters themselves, to be their sleeping-room, or, in the old Norse dialect, their bower.

It had been for many years the scene of the most intimate confidence, if that could be called confidence, where, in truth, there was nothing to be confided; where neither sister had a secret; and where every thought that had birth in the bosom of the one, was, without either hesitation or doubt, confided to the other as spontaneously as it had arisen. But, since Cleveland abode in the mansion of Burgh-Westra, each of the lovely sisters had entertained thoughts which are not lightly or easily communicated, unless she who listens to them has previously assured herself that the confidence will be kindly received. Minna had noticed, what other and less interested observers had been unable to perceive, that Cleveland, namely, held a lower rank in Brenda's opinheart to a customer to the boot of a' that; sae ye ion than in her own; and Brenda, on her side, thought that Minna had hastily and unjustly joined in the prejudices which had been excited against Mordaunt Mertoun in the mind of their father. Each was sensible that she was no longer the same to her sister; and this conviction was a painful addition to other painful apprehensions which they of all with an old customer; and if you will walk supposed they had to struggle with. Their manner toward each other was, in outward appearances, and in all the little cares by which affection slashers that have come into Kirkwall, that think can be expressed, even more assiduously kind than before, as if both, conscious that their interwhale-it's their trade to fight, and they live by it: nal reserve was a breach of their sisterly union, and they have the advantage of the like of you, strove to atone for it by double assiduity in those that only take it up at your own hand, and in the external marks of affection, which, at other times, when there was nothing to hide, might be omitted without inferring any consequences.

On the night referred to in particular, the sisters felt more especially the decay of the confidence which uses to exist betwixt them. The proposed voyage to Kirkwall, and that at the time of the fair, when persons of every degree in well as butler), in a small room or rather closet, in these islands repair thither, either for business or one of the out-houses, furnished for the occasion amusement, was likely to be an important incident in lives usually so simple and uniform as theirs; and a few months ago, Minna and Brends

ing in their talk with each other, all that was likely to happen on so momentous an occasion. she sung with such simple, yet natural humor, as But now the subject was just mentioned, and suf- seldom failed to produce shouts of laughter and fered to drop, as if the topic was likely to produce applause, while all who could, or who could not a difference betwixt them, or to call forth a more sing, were irresistibly compelled to lend their was willing to make to the other.

tleness of disposition, that each sister imputed to herself the fault that there was aught like estrangement existing between them; and when, having finished their devotions and betaken themselves to their common couch, they folded each other in their arms, and exchanged a sisterly kiss, and a sisterly good-night, they seemed mutually to ask pardon, and to exchange forgive- Thor. ness, although neither said a word of offence. either offered or received; and both were soon plunged in that light and yet profound repose, which is only enjoyed when sleep sinks down on the eyes of youth and innocence.

On the night to which the story relates, both sisters were visited by dreams, which, though varied by the moods and habits of the sleepers, bore yet a strange general resemblance to

Minna dreamed that she was in one of the most lonely recesses of the beach, called Swar- tained an iron lamp well trimmed, and, in winter, taster, where the incessant operation of the waves, indenting a calcareous rock, has formed a deep halier, which, in the language of the island, means a subterranean cavern, into which the tide ebbs and flows. Many of these run to an extraordinary and unascertained depth under ground, and are the secure retreat of cormorants and seals, which it is neither easy nor safe to pursue to their extreme recesses. Amongst these, this halier of Swartaster was accounted peculiarly inaccessible, and shunned both by fowlers and by seamen, on account of sharp angles and turnings in the cave itself, as well as the sunken rocks which rendered it very dangerous for skiffs or boats to advance far into it, especially if there was the usual swell of an island tide. From the dark-browed mouth of this cavern, it seemed to Minna in her dream, that she beheld a mermaid issue, not in the classical dress of a Nereid, as in Claud Halcro's mask of the preceding evening, but with comb and glass in hand, according to popular belief, and lashing the waves with that long scaly train, which, in the traditions of the country, forms so frightful a contrast with the fair face, long tresses, and displayed bosom, of a human and earthly female, of surpassing beauty. She seemed to beckon to Minna, while her wild notes rang sadly in her ear, and denounced, in prophetic sounds, calamity and woe.

The vision of Brenda was of a different descripthought, in her favorite bower, surrounded by gotten. She was required to sing; and she strove reality. Brenda, on the other hand, had, in her

would have been awake half the night, anticipat- to entertain them with a lively ditty, in which she was accounted eminently successful, and which open display of their several opinions than either voices to the chorus. But, on this occasion, it seemed as if her own voice refused all its usual Yet such was their natural openness and gen- duty, and as if, while she felt herself unable to express the words of the well-known air, it assumed, in her own despite, the deep tones and wild and melancholy notes of Norna of Fitfulhead, for the purpose of chanting some wild Runic rhyme, resembling those sung by the heathen priests of old, when the victim (too often human) was bound to the fatal altar of Odin or of

> At length the two sisters at once started from sleep, and, uttering a low scream of fear, clasped themselves in each other's arms. For their fancy had not altogether played them false; the sounds, which had suggested their dreams, were real, and sung within their apartment. They knew the voice well, indeed, and yet, knowing to whom it belonged, their surprise and fear were scarce the less, when they saw the well-known Norna of Fitful-head, seated by the chimney of the apartment, which, during the summer season, cona fire of wood or of turf.

> She was wrapped in her long and ample garment of wadmaal, and moved her body slowly to and fro over the pale flame of the lamp, as she sung lines to the following purport, in a slow, sad, and almost an unearthly accent :-

" For leagues along the watery way, Through gulf and stream my course has been; The billows know my Runic lay, And smooth their crests to silent green. " The billows know my Runic lay,-The gulf grows smooth, the stream is still; But human hearts, more wild than they, Know but the rule of wayward will. "One hour is mine, in all the year, To tell my woes,-and one alone ; When gleams this magic lamp, 'tis here,-When dies the mystic light, 'tis gone. " Daughters of northern Magnus, hall! The lamp is lit, the flame is clear,-

To you, I come to tell my tale,

Awake, arise, my tale to hear!"

Norna was well known to the daughters of Troil, but it was not without emotion, although varied by their respective dispositions, that they beheld her so unexpectedly, and at such an hour. Their opinions with respect to the supernatural attributes to which she pretended, were extremely different.

Minna, with an unusual intensity of imagination, although superior in talent to her sister, was tion, yet equally melancholy. She sat, as she more apt to listen to, and delight in, every tale of wonder, and was at all times more willing to her father and a party of his most beloved friends, admit impressions which gave her fancy scope amongst whom Mordaunt Mertoun was not for- and exercise, without minutely examining their readily suffer herself to be imposed upon, or than cold," overawed, by pompous pretensions of any kind paid involuntary homage, by her fears, to ideas, which her reason disowned; and hence Claud Halcro used to say, in reference to many of the traditionary superstitions around Burgh-Westra, our own more enlightened days, there are few whose undoubting mind and native courage have disowned and despised.

Under the power of such different feelings, Minna, when the first moment of surprise was over, prepared to spring from her bed, and go to greet Norna, who, she doubted not, had come on some errand fraught with fate; while Brenda, who only beheld in her a woman partially deranged in her understanding, and who yet, from the extravagance of her claims, regarded her as an undefined object of awe, or rather terror, detained her sister by an eager and terrified grasp. while she whispered in her ear an anxious entreaty that she would call for assistance. But the soul of Minna was too highly wrought up by the crisis at which her fate seemed to have arrived, to permit her to follow the dictates of her sister's fears; and, extricating herself from Brenda's hold, she hastily threw on a loose night-gown, and stepping boldly across the apartment, while visitor :-

"Norna, if your mission regards us, as your without fear."

"Norna, dear Norna," said the tremulous voice of Brenda,-who, feeling no safety in the bed after Minna quitted it, had followed her, as fuginow stood half concealed by her sister, and holding fast by the skirts of her gown,-"Norna, dear Norna," said she, "whatever you are to say, let it housekeeper, and she will find you a bed for the

"No bed for me!" said their nocturnal visitor: 'no closing of the eyes for me! They have watched as shelf and stack appeared and disaphave seen the man of Hov sink into the sea, and the Lawting, with the Raddmen and Lawright the Peak of Hengeliff arise from it, and yet they have not tasted of slumber; nor must they sium-

gaiety, a slight propensity to satire, and was often ber now till my task is ended. Sit down, 'hen. tempted to laugh at the very circumstances upon Minna, and thou, silly trembler, sit down, while which Minna founded her imaginative dreams; I trim my lamp-Don your clothes, for the tale is and, like all who love the ludicrous, she did not long, and ere tis done, ye will shiver with worse

"For Heaven's sake, then, put it off till daywhatever. But, as her nerves were weaker and light, dear Norna!" said Brenda: "the dawn more irritable than those of her sister, she often cannot be far distant; and if you are to tell us of any thing frightful, let it be by daylight, and not by the dim glimmer of that blue lamp !"

"Patience, fool!" said their uninvited guest, "Not by daylight, should Norna tell a tale that that Minua believed them without trembling, and might blot the sun out of heaven, and blight the that Brenda trembled without believing them. In hopes of the hundred boats that will leave this shore ere noon, to commence their deep-sea fishing,-ay, and of the hundred families that will not felt Minna's high-wrought tone of enthu- await their return. The demon, whom the sounds siasm; and perhaps still fewer, who have not, at will not fail to awaken, must shake his dark wings one time or other, felt, like Brenda, their nerves over a shipless and a boatless sea, as he rushes confess the influence of terrors which their reason from his mountain to drink the accents of horror be over so well to listen to."

> "Have pity on Brenda's fears, good Norna," said the elder sister, "and at least postpone this frightful communication to another place and

> "Maiden, no!" replied Norna, sternly: "it must be told while that lamp yet burns. Mine is no daylight tale-by that lamp it must be told. which is framed out of the gibbet-irons of the cruel Lord of Wodensvoe, who murdered his brother; and has for its nourishment-but be that nameless-enough that its food never came either from the fish or from the fruit!-See, it waxes dim and dimmer, nor must my tale last longer than its flame endureth. Sit ve down there, while I sit here opposite to you, and place the lamp betwixt us; for within the sphere of its light the demon dares not venture."

The sisters obeyed, Minna casting a slow, aweher heart throbbed rather with high excitement struck, yet determined look all around, as if to than with fear, she thus addressed her singular see the Being, who, according to the doubtful words of Norna, hovered in their neighborhood. while Brenda's fears were mingled with some words seem to express, there is one of us, at least, share both of anger and of impatience. Norna who will receive its import with reverence, but paid no attention to either, but began her story in the following words:

"Ye know, my daughters, that your blood is allied to mine, but in what degree ye know not; for there was early hostility betwixt your grandtives crowd into the rear of an advancing army, sire and him who had the misfortune to call me because they dare not remain behind, and who daughter.-Let me term him by his Christian name of Erland, for that which marks our relation I dare not bestow. Your grandsire Olave was the brother of Erland. But when the wide Uda. be to-morrow. I will call Euphane Fea, the possessions of their father Rolfe Troil, the most rich and well estated of any who descended from the old Norse stock, were divided betwixt the brothers, the Fowd gave to Erland his father's lands in Orkney, and reserved for Olave those of Hialtland. Discord arose between the brethren; peared betwixt Burgh-Westra and Orkney-they for Erland held that he was wronged; and when men, confirmed the division, he went in wrath to feared not the apparition, for, Minna, my heart Orkney, cursing Hialtland and its inhabitantscursing his brother and his blood.

"But the love or the rock and of the mountain still wrought on Erland's mind, and he fixed his dwelling not on the soft hills of Ophir, or the green plains of Gramesey, but in the wild and mountainous Isle of Hoy, whose summit rises to the sky like the cliffs of Foulah and of Feroe.\* He knew,-that unhappy Erand,-whatever of legendary lore Scald and Bard had left behind them; and to teach me that knowledge, which was to cost us both so dear, was the chief occupation of his old age. I learned to visit each lonely barrow-each lofty cairn-to tell its appropriate tale, and to soothe with rhymes in his praise I knew where the sacrifices were made of vore to Thor and to Odin-on what stones the blood of the victims flowed-where stood the dark-browed priest-where the crested chiefs, who consulted the will of the idol-where the more distant crowd of inferior worshippers, who looked on in awe or in terror. The places most shunned by the timid peasants had no terrors for me; I dared walk in the fairy circle, and sleep by the magic

linger about the Dwarfie Stone, as it is called, a relic of antiquity, which strangers look on with curiosity, and the natives with awe. It is a huge fragment of a rock, which lies in a broken and rude valley, full of stones and precipices, in the recesses of the Ward-hill of Hoy. The inside of the rock has two couches, hewn by no earthly hand, and having a small passage between them. The doorway is now open to the weather; but beside it lies a large stone, which, adapted to grooves, still visible in the entrance, once had served to open and to close this extraordinary dwelling, which Trolld, a dwarf famous in the northern Sagas, is said to have framed for his own favorite residence. The lonely shepherd avoids the place, for at sunrise, high noon, or sunset, the misshapen form of the necromantic owner may sometimes still be seen sitting by the Dwarfie Stone. † I

country, being retained both in Orkney and Zetland, and pre-

be seen, it is said, at midnight. So says the geographer Bleau,

although, according to Dr. Wallace, it cannot be the true body

of the sun which is visible, but only its image refracted through

It has been rather undervalued by their late historian, Mr.

Barry. The Island of Hoy rises abruptly, starting as it were

out of the sea, which is contrary to the gentle and flat character

of the other Isles of Orkney. It consists of a mountain, having

different eminences or peaks. It is very steep, furrowed with

some watery cloud upon the horizon.

\* And from which hill of Hoy, at midsummer, the sun may

† This is one of the wonders of the Orkney Islands, though

senting, in their constitution, the rude origin of a parliament.

was as bold, and my hand was as innocent, as yours. In my childish courage, I was even but too presumptuous, and the thirst after things unattainable led me, like our primitive mother, to desire increase of knowledge, even by prohibited means. I longed to possess the power of the Voluspæ and divining women of our ancient race; to wield, like them, command over the elements and to summon the ghosts of deceased heroes from their caverns, that they might recite their daring deeds, and impart to me their hidden treasures. Often when watching by the Dwarfie Stone, with mine eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, which rises above that gloomy valley, I have distinguished, among the dark rocks, that wonderthe spirit of the stern warrior who dwelt within. ful carbuncle.\* which gleams ruddy as a furnace to them who view it from beneath, but has ever become invisible to him whose daring foot has scaled the precipices from which it darts its splendor. My vain and youthful bosom burned to investigate these and an hundred other mysteries, which the Sagas that I perused, or learned from Erland, rather indicated than explained; and in my daring mood, I called on the Lord of

sandstone, composing one solid mass, which has long since been "But, for my misfortune, I was chiefly fond to detached from a belt of the same materials, cresting the eminence above the spot where it now lies, and which has slid down till it reached its present situation. The rock is about seven feet high, twenty-two feet long, and seventeen feet broad. The upper end of it is hollowed by iron tools, of which the marks are evident. into a sort of apartment, containing two beds of stone, with a passage between them. The uppermost and argest bed is five feet eight inches long, by two feet broad, which was supposed to be used by the dwarf himself; the lower couch is shorter, and rounded off, instead of being squared at the corners. There is an entrance of about three feet and a half square, and a stone lies before it calculated to fit the opening. A sort of skylight window gives light to the apartment. We can only guess at the purpose of this monument, and different ideas have been suggested. Some have supposed it the work of some travelling mason; but the cui bono would remain to be accounted for. The Rev. Mr. Barry conjectures it to be a hermit's cell; but it displays no symbol of Christianity, and the door opens to the westward. The Orcadian traditions allege the work to be that of a dwarf, to whom they ascribe supernatural powers, and a malevolent disposition, the attributes of that race in Norse mythology. Whoever inhabited this singular den certainly enjoyed

"Pillow cold, and sheets not warm."

I observed, that commencing just opposite to the Dwarfie Stone, and extending in a line to the sea-beach, there are a number of small barrows, or cairns, which seem to connect the stone with a very large cairn where we landed. This curious monument may therefore have been intended as a temple of some kind to the northern Dil Manes, to which the cairns

might direct worshippers. \* "At the west end of this stone (i. c. the Dwarfie Stone) stands an exceeding high mountain of a steep ascent, called the Ward-hill of Hoy, near the top of which, in the months of May, June, and July, about midnight, is seen something that shines and sparkles admirably, and which is often seen a great way off. It hath shined more brightly before than it does now, and though many have climbed up the hill, and attempted to tavines, and placed so as to catch the mists of the Western search for it, yet they could find nothing. The vulgar talk of it as Ocean, and has a noble and picturesque effect from all points some enchanted carbuncle, but I take it rather to be some water of view. The highest peak is divided from another eminence, sliding down the face of a smooth rock, which, when the called the Ward Hill, by a long swampy valley full of peatsun, at such a time, shines upon, the reflection causeth that adbogs. Upon the slope of this last hill, and just where the prinmirable splender."-Dr. WALLACE'S Description of the Islands cipal mountain of Hoy opens into a hollow swamp, or corri, of Orkney, 12mo, 1700, p. 52. ties what is called the Dwarfie Stone. It is a great fragment of

<sup>\*</sup> The Law ing was the Comitia, or Supreme Court, of the

the Dwarfie Stone to aid me in attaining knowledge inaccessible to mere mortals."

"And the evil spirit heard your summons?" said Minna, her blood curdling as she listened.

"Hush," said Norna, lowering her voice, "vex him not with reproach—he is with us—he hears us even now."

Brenda started from her seat .- "I will to Euphane Fea's chamber." she said. "and leave you, Minna and Norna, to finish your stories of hobgoblins and of dwarfs at your own leisure: I care not for them at any time, but I will not endure them at midnight, and by this pale lamplight."

She was accordingly in the act of leaving the room, when her sister detained her.

"Is this the courage," she said, "of her, that disbelieves whatever the history of our fathers tells us of supernatural prodigy? What Norna has to tell concerns the fate, perhaps, of our father and his house ;--if I can listen to it, trusting terior of the mysterious stone. that God and my innocence will protect me from all that is malignant, you, Brenda, who believe not in such influence, have surely no cause to tremble. Credit me, that for the guiltless there is no fear."

"There may be no danger," said Brenda, unable to suppress her natural turn for humor, "but as the old jest-book says, there is much fear, However, Minna, I will stay with you;-the rather," she added, in a whisper, "that I am loath to leave you alone with this frightful woman, and that I have a dark staircase and long passage betwixt Euphane Fea, else I would have her here ere I were five minutes older."

"Call no one hither, maiden, upon peril of thy life," said Norna, "and interrupt not my tale again; for it cannot and must not be told after that charmed light has ceased to burn."

"And I thank Heaven," said Brenda to herself, "that the oil burns low in the cruise! I am sorely tempted to lend it a puff, but then Norna would be alone with us in the dark, and that would be worse."

So saying, she submitted to her fate, and sat down, determined to listen with all the equanimity which she could command to the remaining part of Norna's tale, which went on as follows:

"It happened on a hot summer day, and just about the hour of noon," continued Norna, "as I sat by the Dwarfle Stone, with my eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, whence the mysterious and everburning carbuncle shed its rays more brightly than usual, and repined in my heart at the restricted bounds of human knowledge, that at length I could not help exclaiming, in the words of an ancient Saga-

> Dwellers of the mountain, rise, Trolld the powerful, Haims the wise! Ye who taught weak woman's tongue Words that sway the wise and strong, Ye who taught weak woman's hand How to wield the magic wand, And wake the gales on Foulah's steep, Or lull wild Sumburgh's waves to sleep !-Still are ye yet !- Not yours the power

Ye knew in Odin's mightier hour, What are ye now but empty names, Powerful Trolld, sagacious Haims, That, lightly spoken, lightly heard, Float on the air like thistle's heard ?'

"I had scarce uttered these words," proceeded Norna "ere the sky, which had been till then unusually clear, grew so suddenly dark around me, that it seemed more like midnight than noon. A single flash of lightning showed me at once the desolate landscape of heath, morass, mountain, and precipice, which lay around; a single clap of thunder wakened all the echoes of the Ward-hill, which continued so long to repeat the sound, that it seemed some rock, rent by the thunderbolt from the summit, was rolling over cliff and precipice into the valley. Immediately after, fell a burst of rain so violent, that I was fain to shun its pelting, by creeping into the in-

"I seated myself on the larger stone couch, which is cut at the farther end of the cavity, and, with my eyes fixed on the smaller bed, wearied myself with conjectures respecting the origin and purpose of my singular place of refuge. Had it been really the work of that powerful Trolld, to whom the poetry of the Scalds referred it? Or was it the tomb of some Scandinavian chief, interred with his arms and his wealth, perhaps also with his immolated wife, that what he loved best in life might not in death be divided from him? Or was it the abode of penance, chosen by some devoted anchorite of later days? Or the idle work of some wandering mechanic, whom chance, and whim, and leisure, had thrust upon such an undertaking? I tell you the thoughts that then floated through my brain, that ye may know that what ensued was not the vision of a prejudiced or prepossessed imagination, but an apparition.

as certain as it was awful. "Sleep had gradually crept on me, amidst my lucubrations, when I was startled from my slumbers by a second clap of thunder; and, when I awoke, I saw, through the dim light which the upper aperture admitted, the unshapely and indistinct form of Trolld the dwarf, seated opposite to me on the lesser couch, which his square and misshapen bulk seemed absolutely to fill up. I was startled, but not affrighted; for the blood of the ancient race of Lochlin was warm in my veins. He spoke; and his words were of Norse, so old, that few, save my father, or I-myself. could have comprehended their import, - such language as was spoken in these islands ere Olave planted the cross on the ruins of heathenism. His meaning was dark also and obscure, like that which the Pagan priests were wont to deliver, in the name of their idols, to the tribes that assembled at the Helgafels.\* This was the import,-

> A thousand winters dark have flown, Since o'er the threshold of my Stone

A votaress pass'd, my power to own. Visitor hold Of the mansion of Trolld, Maiden haughty of heart, Who hast hither presumed,-Ungifted, undoom'd, Thou shalt not depart; The power thou dost covet O'er tempest and wave, Shall be thine, thou proud maiden, By beach and by cave,-By stack \* and by skerry, t by noup t and by voe, By air & and by wick, ¶ and by helyer \*\* and gio, †† And by every wild shore which the northern winds know, And the northern tides lave. But though this shall be given thee, thou desperately brave, I doom thee that never the gift thou shalt have, Till thou reave thy life's giver

"I answered him in nearly the same strain; for the spirit of the ancient Scalds of our race was upon me, and, far from fearing the phantom, with whom I sat cooped within so narrow a space, I felt the impulse of that high courage which thrust the ancient Champions and Druidesses upon contests with the invisible world, when they thought that the earth no longer contained enemies worthy to be subdued by them. Thereore did I answer him thus:-

Of the gift which he gave.'

Dark are thy words, and severe, Thou dweller in the stone; But trembling and fear To her are unknown Who hath sought thee here, In thy dwelling lone. Come what comes soever, The worst I can endure; Life is but a short fever, And Death is the cure.'

"The Demon scowled at me, as if at once intensed and overawed; and then, coiling himself up in a thick and sulphureous vapor, he disapment, feel the influence of fright, but then it seized me. I rushed into the open air, where the tempest had passed away, and all was pure and serene. After a moment's breathless pause, I the phantom, which I could not, as often happens, recall so distinctly to memory at the time, black as my guilt and sorrow !" as I have been since able to do.

"It may seem strange that such an apparition myself to believe it the work of fancy-I thought rative. I had lived too much in solitude, and had given way too much to the feelings inspired by my favorite studies. I abandoned them for a time, and

\* Stack. A precipitous rock rising out of the sea.

\*\* Helver, A cavern into which the tide flows,

tt Gio. A deep ravine which admits the sea.

† Noup. A round-headed eminence.

Voe. A creek, or inlet of the sea.

& Air. An open sea-beach.

Wick. An open bay.

ing of the sea.

visit at Kirkwall when I learned to know your father, whom business had brought thither. He easily found access to the relation with whom I lived, who was anxious to compose, if possible, the feud which divided our families. Your father, maidens, has been rather hardened than changed by years-he had the same manly form, the same old Norse frankness of manner and of heart, the same upright courage and honesty of disposition, with more of the gentle ingenuousness of youth, an eager desire to please, a willingness to be pleased, and a vivacity of spirits which survives not our early years. But though he was thus worthy of love, and though Erland wrote to me, authorizing his attachment, there was another-a stranger, Minna, a fatal stranger -full of arts unknown to us, and graces which to the plain manners of your father were unknown. Yes, he walked, indeed, among us like a being of another and of a superior race.-Ye look on me as if it were strange that I should have had attractions for such a lover; but I present nothing that can remind you that Norna of the Fitful-head was once admired and loved as Illa Troil-the change betwixt the animated body and the corpse after decease, is scarce more awful and absolute than I have sustained, while I vet linger on earth. Look on me, maidens-look on me by this glimmering light-Can ye believe that these haggard and weather-wasted featuresthese eyes, which have been almost converted to stone, by looking upon sights of terror-these locks, that, mingled with gray, now stream out, the shattered pennons of a sinking vessel-that these, and she to whom they belong, could once be the objects of fond affection ?-But the waning lamp sinks fast, and let it sink while I tell my infamy.-We loved in secret, we met in secret, till peared from his place. I did not, till that mo- I gave the last proof of fatal and of guilty passion! -And now beam out, thou magic glimmer-shine out a little space, thou flame so powerful even in thy feebleness-bid him who hovers near us, keep his dark pinions aloof from the circle thou dost hasted home, musing by the way on the words of illuminate-live but a little till the worst be told, and then sink when thou wilt into darkness, as

I mixed with the youth of my age. I was upon a

While she spoke thus, she drew together the remaining nutriment of the lamp, and trimmed should, in time, have glided from my mind, like a its decaying flame; then again, with a hollow vision of the night-but so it was. I brought voice, and in broken sentences, pursued her nar-

"I must waste little time in words. My love was discovered, but not my guilt. Erland came to Pomona in anger, and transported me to our solitary dwelling in Hoy. He commanded me to see my lover no more, and to receive Magnus, ir whom he was willing to forgive the offences o. + Sherry. A flat insulated rock, not subject to the overflowhis father, as my future husband. Alas ! I no long er deserved his attachment-my only wish was to escape from my father's dwelling, to conceal my shame in my lover's arms. Let me do him justice-he was faithful-too, too faithful-his perfidy would have bereft me of my senses; but

<sup>\*</sup> Or consecrated mountain, used by the Scandinsviae priects for the purposes of their idol-worship.

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the fatal consequences of his fidelity have done me a tenfold injury."

She paused, and then resumed, with the wild tone of insanity. "It has made me the powerful and the despairing Sovereign of the Seas and Winds !"

She paused a second time after this wild exclamation, and resumed her narrative in a more composed manner.

My lover came in secret to Hoy, to concert measures for my flight, and I agreed to meet him, that we might fix the time when his vessel should come into the Sound. I left the house at midnight."

Here she appeared to gasp with agony, and went on with her tale by broken and interrupted sentences. "I left the house at midnight-I had to pass my father's door, and I perceived it was sound of my steps might not break his slumbers, I closed the fatal door-a light and trivial actionbut, God in heaven! what were the consequences! -my father was dead-dead through my actdead through my disobedience-dead through my infamy! All that follows is mist and darknessthat I said and did, all that was said and done, until I became assured that my doom was accompassages which she had to traverse. plished, and walked forth the calm and terrible being you now behold me-the Queen of the Elements-the sharer in the power of those beings to whom man and his passions give such sport as the tortures of the dog-fish afford the fisherman, when he pierces his eyes with thorns, and turns him once more into his native element, to traverse the waves in blindness and agony.\* No, maidens, she whom you see before you is impassive to the follies of which your minds are the sport. I am she that have made the offering-I am she that hereaved the giver of the gift of life which he gave me-the dark saying has been interpreted by my deed, and I am taken from humanity, to be somewretched !"

As she spoke thus, the light, which had been long quivering, leaped high for an instant, and seemed about to expire, when Norna, interrupting herself, said hastily, "No more now-he comeshe comes-Enough that ye know me, and the right I have to advise and command you .- Approach now, proud Spirit I if thou wilt."

So saying, she extinguished the lamp, and passed out of the apartment with her usual loftiness of step, as Minna could observe from its measured cadence.

## CHAPTER XX.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared-The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent, When we have chid the hasty-footed time For parting us-O, and is all forgot? MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM,

THE attention of Minna was powerfully arrested by this tale of terror, which accorded with and explained many broken hints respecting Norna, which she had heard from her father and other near relations, and she was for a time so lost in surprise, not unmingled with horror, that she did not even attempt to speak to her sister Brenda. When, at length, she called her by her name, she received no answer, and, on touching her hand, she found it cold as ice. Alarmed to the uttermost, she threw open the lattice and the open-I thought he watched us, and, that the window-shutters, and admitted at once the free air and the pale glimmer of the hyperborean summer night. She then became sensible that her sister was in a swoon. All thoughts concern--At morn, the room was full of suffocating vapor ing Norna, her frightful tale, and her mysterious connexion with the invisible world, at once vanished from Minna's thoughts, and she hastily ran to the apartment of the old housekeeper, to suma choking, suffocating, stifling mist envelopes all mon her aid, without reflecting for a moment what sights she might encounter in the long dark

The old woman hastened to Brenda's assistance, and instantly applied such remedies as her experience suggested; but the poor girl's nervous system had been so much agitated by the horrible tale she had just heard, that, when recovered from her swoon, her utmost endeavors to compose her mind could not prevent her falling into a hysterical fit of some duration. This also was subdued by the experience of old Euphane Fea, who was well versed in all the simple pharmacy used by the natives of Zetland, and who, after administering a composing draught, distilled from simples and wild flowers, at length saw her patient resigned to sleep. Minna stretched herself bething pre-eminently powerful, pre-eminently side her sister, kissed her cheek, and courted slumber in her turn; but the more she invoked it, the farther it seemed to fly from her eyelids; and if at times she was disposed to sink into repose, the voice of the involuntary parricide seemed again to sound in her ears, and startled her into consciousness.

The early morning hour at which they were accustomed to rise, found the state of the sisters different from what might have been expected. A sound sleep had restored the spirit of Brenda's lightsome eye, and the rose on her laughing cheek; the transient indisposition of the preced ing night having left as little trouble on her look, as the fantastic terrors of Norna's tale had been able to impress on her imagination. The looks of Minna, on the contrary, were melancholy, downcast, and apparently exhausted by watching and anxiety. They said at first little to each other, as if afraid of touching a subject so fraught with emotion as the scene of the preceding night

A was not until they had performed together their devotions, as usual, that Brenda, while lacing Minna's boddice (for they rendered the services of the toilet to each other reciprocally), pecame aware of the paleness of her stster's ooks; and having ascertained, by a glance at the mirror, that her own did not wear the same dejection, she kissed Minna's cheek, and said affectionately, "Claud Halcro was right, my dearest sister, when his poetical folly gave us these names of Night and Day."

"And wherefore should you say so now?" said Minna.

"Because we each are bravest in the season that we take our name from: I was frightened well-nigh to death, by hearing those things last cially to attend on you." night, which you endured with courageous firmness; and now, when it is broad light, I can think of them with composure, while you look as pale as a spirit who is surprised by sunrise."

"You are lucky, Brenda," said her sister, gravely, "who can so soon forget such a tale of wonder and horror."

"The horror," said Brenda, "is never to be forgotten, unless one could hope that the unfortunate woman's excited imagination, which shows itself so active in conjuring up apparitions, may have fixed on her an imaginary crime."

"You believe nothing, then," said Minna, "of her interview at the Dwarfie Stone, that wondrous place, of which so many tales are told, and which, for so many centuries, has been reverenced as the work of a demon, and as his abode?"

"I believe." said Brenda, "that our unhappy relative is no impostor,-and therefore I believe that she was at the Dwarfie Stone during a thunder-storm, that she sought shelter in it, and that, during a swoon, or during sleep perhaps, some traditions with which she was so conversant; but I cannot easily believe more."

"And yet the event," said Minna, "corresponded to the dark intimations of the vision."

"Pardon me," said Brenda, "I rather think the dream would never have been put into shape, or perhaps remembered at all, but for the event. heart at this moment!" She told us herself she had nearly forgot the vision, till after her father's dreadful death,-and who shall warrant how much of what she then supposed herself to remember was not the creation of her own fancy, disordered as it naturally was, by the horrid accident? Had she really seen and conversed with a necromantic dwarf, she was likely to remember the conversation long enough -at least, I am sure I should."

"Brenda," replied Minna, "you have heard the good minister of the Cross-Kirk say, that human wisdom was worse than folly, when it was applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension; and that, if we believed no more than we could stances as certain as they were unintelligible."

"You are too learned yourself, sister," answered Brenda, "to need the assistance of the good minister of Cross-Kirk; but I think his doctrine only related to the mysteries of our religion, which it is our duty to receive without investigation or doubt-but in things occurring in common life, as God has bestowed reason upon us, we cannot act wrong in employing it. But you, my dear Minna, have a warmer fancy than mine, and are willing to receive all those wonderful stories for truth, because you love to think of sorcerers, and dwarfs, and water-spirits, and would like much to have a little trow, or fairy, as the Scotch call them, with a green coat, and a pair of wings as brilliant as the hues of the starling's neck, spe-

"It would spare you at least the trouble of lacing my boddice," said Minna, "and of lacing it wrong, too; for in the heat of your argument you nave missed two eyelet-holes."

"That error shall be presently mended," said Brenda; "and then, as one of our friends might say, I will haul tight and belay-but you draw your breath so deeply, that it will be a difficult matter."

"I only sighed," said Minna, in some confusion, "to think how soon you can trifle with and ridicule the misfortunes of this extraordinary woman."

"I do not ridicule them, God knows!" replied Brenda somewhat angrily; "it is you, Minna, who turn all I say in truth and kindness, to something harsh or wicked. I look on Norna as a woman of very extraordinary abilities, which are very often reconciled with a strong cast of insanity; and I consider her as better skilled in the signs of the weather than any woman in Zetland. But that she has any power over the elements, I no more believe, than I do in the nursedream visited her, concerned with the popular ry stories of King Erick, who could make the wind blow from the point he set his cap to."

Minna, somewhat nettled with the obstinate incredulity of her sister, replied sharply, "And yet, Brenda, this woman-half-mad woman, and the veriest impostor-is the person by whom you choose to be advised in the matter next your own

"I do not know what you mean," said Brenda, coloring deeply, and shifting to get away from her sister. But as she was now undergoing the ceremony of being laced in her turn, her sister had the means of holding her fast by the silken string with which she was fastening the boddice, and tapping her on the neck, which expressed, by its sudden writhe, and sudden change to a scarlet hue, as much pettish confusion as she had desire to provoke, she added more mildly, "Is it not strange, Brenda, that, used as we have been by the stranger Mordaunt Mertoun, whose assurance has brought him uninvited to a house where his presence is so unacceptable, you should still look understand, we should resist the evidence of our on or think of him with favor? Surely that you senses, which presented us, at every turn, circum- do so should be a proof to you, that there are such things as spells in the country, and that you

<sup>\*</sup> This cruelty is practised by some fishers, out of a vindicsive hatred to these ravenous fishes.

yourself labor under them. It is not for nought of the nameless and birthless stranger, Mordannet to it, Brenda, and be wise in time."

about his neck. I could see all the gold chains lifted a milk-pail?" of all the bailies of Edinburgh, that Lady Glowfancy with one of the wearers." And, having not guilty in general to such an indictment, she the most innocent actions." immediately resumed in a different tone, "But you, have judged far too hastily about this young but Maddie and Clara Groatsettar." friend of ours, who has been so long our most inhow little difference he made betwixt us; and him off at once, because a wandering seaman, of yourself, but that your ear was better engaged," whom we know nothing, and a peddling jagger, liar, speak words and carry tales in his disfavor, I do not believe he ever said he could have his or harbored such a thought, as that of making a choice between us."

"Perhaps," said Minna coldly, "you may have had reason to know that his choice was already determined."

way to her natural vivacity, and springing from "Even from you, Minna," she said, "I will not ter that concerns them not." endure this! You know that all my life I have made distinction betwixt you and me until-"

her short, and her sister replied, with a smile, "Until when, Brenda? Methinks your love of bringing out."

lightly."

my rivalry, either in his love or friendship. But and who knew how to mask a false heart with bethink you better, Brenda-this is no scandal of Cleveland's-Cleveland is incapable of slander- own warning. There are other strangers at Burgh no falsehood of Bryce Snailsfoot-not one of our Westra besides this poor Mordaunt Mertoun." friends or acquaintance but says it has been the common talk of the island, that the daughters of the rapidity with which her sister retorted her Magnus Troil were patiently awaiting the choice suspicion and her caution. But her natural lofti-

that Mordaunt wears a chain of elfin gold-look Mertoun .- Is it fitting that this should be said of us, the descendants of a Norwegian Jarl, and the "I have nothing to do with Mordaunt Mer-daughters of the first Udaller in Zetland? or, toun," answered Brenda, hastily, "nor do I know would it be modest or maidenly to submit to it or care what he or any other young man wears unresented, were we the meanest asses that ever

"The tongues of fools are no reproach," replied rowrum speaks so much of, without falling in Brenda, warmly; "I will never quit my own thoughts of an innocent friend for the gossip of thus complied with the female rule of pleading the island, which can put the worst meaning on

"Hear but what our friends say," repeated to say the truth, Minna, I think you, and all of Minna; "hear but the Lady Glowrowrum; hear

"If I were to hear Lady Glowrowrum," said timate companion. Mind, Mordaunt Mertoun is Brenda, steadily, "I should listen to the worst no more to me than he is to you-who best know tongue in Zetland; and as for Maddie and Clara Groatsettar, they were both blithe enough to get that, chain or no chain, he lived with us like a Mordaunt to sit betwixt them at dinner the day brother with two sisters; and yet you can turn before yesterday, as you might have observed

"Your eyes, at least, have been but indifferwhom we well know to be a thief, a cheat, and a ently engaged, Brenda," retorted the elder sister. "since they were fixed on a young man, whom all the world but yourself believes to have talked choice of either of us, and only waited to see of us with the most insolent presumption; and which was to have Burgh-Westra and Bredness even if he be innocently charged, Lady Glowrow-Voe-I do not believe he ever spoke such a word, rum says it is unmaidenly and hold of you even to look in the direction where he sits, knowing it must confirm such reports."

"I will look which way I please," said Brenda, growing still warmer; "Lady Glowrowrum shall neither rule my thoughts, nor my words, "I will not endure this," said Brenda, giving nor my eyes. I hold Mordaunt Mertoun to be innocent,-I will look at him as such,-I will speak between her sister's hands; then turning round of him as such; and if I did not speak to him and facing her, while her glowing cheek was ri- also, and behave to him as usual, it is in obedience valled in the deepness of its crimson, by as much to my father, and not for what Lady Glowrowrum. of her neck and bosom as the upper part of the and all her nieces, had she twenty instead of two. half-laced boddice permitted to be visible, - could think, wirk, nod, or tattle, about the mat-

"Alas! Brenda," answered Minna, with calmspoken the truth, and that I love the truth; and ness, "this vivacity is more than is required for I tell you that Mordaunt Mertoun never in his life the defence of the character of a mere friend !-Beware !- He who rained Norna's peace for ever, Here some feeling of consciousness stopped was a stranger, admitted to her affections against the will of her family."

"He was a stranger," replied Brenda, with truth seems choked with the sentence you were emphasis, "not only in birth, but in manners. She had not been bred up with him from her "Until you ceased to do him the justice he de-youth, -she had not known the gentleness, the serves," said Brenda, firmly, "since I must speak frankness, of his disposition, by an intimacy of out. I have little doubt that he will not long many years. He was indeed a stranger in charthrow away his friendship on you, who hold it so acter, temper, birth, manners, and morals,some wandering adventurer, perhaps, whom "Be it so," said Minna; "you are secure from chance or tempest had thrown upon the islands, frank brow. My good sister, take home von

Minna seemed for a moment overwhelmed with

ness of disposition enabled her to reply with as- Spanish story which you took from me long since. sumed composure.

"Were I to treat you, Brenda, with the want of confidence you show towards me, I might reply, that Cleveland is no more to me than Mordaunt was; or than young Swaraster, or Lawrence reminds you of the book I mean :- is it more Ericson, or any other favorite guest of my father's, wise, think you, to mistake a windmill for a now is. But I scorn to deceive you, or to disguise my thoughts .- I love Clement Cleveland."

"Do not say so, my dearest sister," said Brenda, abandoning at once the air of acrimony with which the conversation had been latterly conducted, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck, with looks and with a tone of the most earnest affection,-"do not say so, I implore you! I will renounce Mordaunt Mertoun,-I will swear never to speak to him again; but do not repeat that you love this Cleveland ! "

"And why should I not repeat," said Minna, disengaging herself gently from her sister's grasp, "a sentiment in which I glory? The boldness, the strength and energy, of his character, to which command is natural, and fear unknown,-these very properties, which alarm you for my happiness, are the qualities which ensure it. Remember. Brenda, that when your foot loved the calm smooth sea-beach of the summer sea, mine ever delighted in the summit of the precipice, when the waves were in fury."

"And it is even that which I dread," said Brenda: "it is even that adventurous disposition which now is urging you to the brink of a precipice more dangerous than ever was washed by a spring-tide. This man, -do not frown, I will say no slander of him.-but is he not, even in your own partial judgment, stern and overbearing? accustomed, as you say, to command; but, for that very reason, commanding where he has no right to do so, and leading whom it would most become him to follow? rushing on danger, rather for its own sake, than for any other object? And settled and stormy, whose life has hitherto been led in scenes of death and peril, and who, even while sitting by your side, cannot disguise his impatience again to engage in-them? A lover, methinks, should love his mistress better than his than the pleasure of inflicting death on others."

"And it is even for that I love him," said Minna, "I am a daughter of the old dames of Norway, who could send their lovers to battle degraded race strive for distinction, or must pracdangers. No whale-striking, bird-nesting favor- which he had reduced her ? " ite for me; my lover must be a Sea-king, or what else modern times may give that draws near to that lofty character."

of spells and of charms You remember the lowed up in horror and despair."

because I said, in your admiration of the chivalry of the olden times of Scandinavia, you rivalled the extravagance of the hero. Ah. Minna! your color shows that your conscience checks you, and giant, or the commander of a paltry corsair for a Kiempe, or a Vi-king?"

Minnie did indeed color with anger at this insinuation, of which, perhaps, she felt in some degree the truth.

'You have a right," she said, "to insult me because you are possessed of my secret."

Brenda's soft heart could not resist this charge of unkindness; she adjured her sister to pardon her, and the natural gentleness of Minna's feelings could not resist her entreaties.

"We are unhappy," she said, as she dried her sister's tears, "that we cannot see with the same eves-let us not make each other more so by mutual insult and unkindness. You have my secret-It will not, perhaps, long be one, for my father shall have the confidence to which he is entitled, so soon as certain circumstances will permit me to offer it Meantime, I repeat, you have my secret, and I more than suspect that I have yours in exchange, though you refuse to own it."

"How, Minna!" said Brenda; "would you have me acknowledge for any one such feelings as you allude to, ere he has said the least word that could justify such a confession!"

"Surely not; but a hidden fire may be distinguished by heat as well as flame."

"You understand these signs, Minna," said Brenda, hanging down her head, and in vain endeavoring to suppress the temptation to repartee which her sister's remark offered: "but I can only say, that, if ever I love at all, it shall not be until I have been asked to do so once or twice can you think of being voked with a spirit so un- at least, which has not yet chanced to me. But do not let us renew our quarrel, and rather let us think why Norna should have told us that horrible tale, and to what she expects it should lead,"

"It must have been as a caution," replied Minna-"a caution which our situation, and, I own life; but yours, my dear Minna, loves her less will not deny it, which mine in particular, might seem to her to call for .- but I am alike strong in my own innocence, and in the honor of Cleveland."

Brenda would fain have replied, that she did not confide so absolutely in the latter security as with a smile, and slay them with their own in the first; -but she was prudent, and, forbear hands, if they returned with dishonor. My ing to awaken the former painful discussion, only lover must scorn the mockeries by which our replied, "It is strange that Norna should have said nothing more of her lover. Surely he could tise them only in sport, and in earnest of noble not desert her in the extremity of misery to

"There may be agonies of distress," said Minna, after a pause, "in which the mind is so much jarred, that it ceases to be responsive even "Alas. my sister!" said Brenda, "it is now to the feelings which have most engrossed it;that I must in earnest begin to believe the force her sorrow for her lover may have been swal