

## THE MONASTERY.

### CHAPTER I.

O ay! the Monks, the Monks they did the mischief!  
Theirs all the grossness, all the superstition  
Of a most gross and superstitious age—  
May He be praised that sent the healthful tempest  
And scatter'd all these pestilential vapours!  
But that we owed them *all* to yonder Harlot  
Throned on the seven hills with her cup of gold,  
I will as soon believe, with kind Sir Roger,  
That old Moll White took wing with cat and broomstick,  
And raised the last night's thunder.

*Old Play.*

THE village described in the Benedictine's manuscript by the name of Kennaquhair, bears the same Celtic termination which occurs in Traquhair, Caquhair, and other compounds. The learned Chalmers derives this word Quhair, from the winding course of a stream; a definition which coincides in a remarkable degree with the serpentine turns of the river Tweed near the village of which we speak. It has been long famous for the splendid Monastery of Saint Mary, founded by David the First of Scotland, in whose reign were formed, in the same county, the no less splendid establishments of Melrose, Jedburgh, and Kelso. The donations of land with which the King endowed these wealthy fraternities procured him from the Monkish historians the epithet of Saint, and from one of his impoverished descendants the splenetic censure, "that he had been a sore saint for the Crown."



It seems probable, notwithstanding, that David, who was a wise as well as a pious Monarch, was not moved solely by religious motives to those great acts of munificence to the church, but annexed political views to his pious generosity. His possessions in Northumberland and Cumberland became precarious after the loss of the Battle of the Standard; and since the comparatively fertile valley of Teviotdale was likely to become the frontier of his kingdom, it is probable he wished to secure at least a part of these valuable possessions by placing them in the hands of the monks, whose property was for a long time respected, even amidst the rage of a frontier war. In this manner alone had the King some chance of insuring protection and security to the cultivators of the soil; and, in fact, for several ages the possessions of these Abbeys were each a sort of Goshen, enjoying the calm light of peace and immunity, while the rest of the country, occupied by wild clans and marauding barons, was one dark scene of confusion, blood, and unremitted outrage.

But these immunities did not continue down to the union of the crowns. Long before that period the wars betwixt England and Scotland had lost their original character of international hostilities, and had become on the part of the English a struggle for subjugation, on that of the Scots a desperate and infuriated defence of their liberties. This introduced on both sides a degree of fury and animosity unknown to the earlier period of their history; and as religious scruples soon gave way to national hatred spurred by a love of plunder, the patrimony of the Church was no longer sacred from incursions on either side. Still, however, the tenants and vassals of the great Abbeys had many advantages over those of the lay barons, who were harassed by constant military duty, until they became desperate, and lost all relish for the arts of peace. The vassals of the church, on the other hand, were only liable to be called to arms on general occasions, and at other times were permitted in

comparative quiet to possess their farms and *feus*.\* They of course exhibited superior skill in every thing that related to the cultivation of the soil, and were therefore both wealthier and better informed than the military retainers of the restless chiefs and nobles in their neighbourhood.

The residence of these church vassals was usually in a small village or hamlet, where, for the sake of mutual aid and protection, some thirty or forty families dwelt together. This was called the Town, and the land belonging to the various families by whom the Town was inhabited, was called the Township. They usually possessed the land in common, though in various proportions, according to their several grants. The part of the Township properly arable, and kept as such continually under the plough, was called *in-field*. Here the use of quantities of manure supplied in some degree the exhaustion of the soil, and the *feuars* raised tolerable oats and bear,† usually sowed on alternate ridges, on which the labour of the whole community was bestowed without distinction, the produce being divided after harvest, agreeably to their respective interests.

There was, besides, *out-field* land, from which it was thought possible to extract a crop now and then, after which it was abandoned to the "skiey influences," until the exhausted powers of vegetation were restored. These out-field spots were selected by any *feuar* at his own choice, amongst the sheep-walks and hills which were always annexed to the Township, to serve as pasture to the community. The trouble of cultivating these patches of out-field, and the precarious chance that the crop would pay the labour, were considered as

\* Small possessions conferred upon vassals and their heirs, held for a small quit-rent, or a moderate proportion of the produce. This was a favourite manner, by which the churchmen peopled the patrimony of their convents; and many descendants of such *feuars*, as they are called, are still to be found in possession of their family inheritances in the neighbourhood of the great Monasteries of Scotland.

† Or *bigg*, a coarse kind of barley.



giving a right to any feuar, who chose to undertake the adventure, to the produce which might result from it.

There remained the pasturage of extensive moors, where the valleys often afforded good grass, and upon which the whole cattle belonging to the community fed indiscriminately during the summer, under the charge of the Town-herd, who regularly drove them out to pasture in the morning, and brought them back at night, without which precaution they would have fallen a speedy prey to some of the Snatchers in the neighbourhood. These are things to make modern agriculturists hold up their hands and stare; but the same mode of cultivation is not yet entirely in desuetude in some distant parts of North Britain, and may be witnessed in full force and exercise in the Zetland Archipelago.

The habitations of the church-feuars were not less primitive than their agriculture. In each village or town were several small towers, having battlements projecting over the side-walls, and usually an advanced angle or two with shot-holes for flanking the door-way, which was always defended by a strong door of oak, studded with nails, and often by an exterior grated door of iron. These small peel-houses were ordinarily inhabited by the principal feuars and their families; but upon the alarm of approaching danger, the whole inhabitants thronged from their own miserable cottages, which were situated around, to garrison these points of defence. It was then no easy matter for a hostile party to penetrate into the village, for the men were habituated to the use of bows and fire-arms, and the towers being generally so placed, that the discharge from one crossed that of another; it was impossible to assault any of them individually.

The interior of these houses was usually sufficiently wretched, for it would have been folly to have furnished them in a manner which could excite the avarice of their lawless neighbours. Yet the families themselves exhibited in their appearance a degree of comfort, information, and independence, which could hardly have been expected. Their in-field supplied them with bread and home-brew-

ed ale, their herds and flocks with beef and mutton, (the extravagance of killing lambs or calves was never thought of.) Each family killed a mart, or fat bullock, in November, which was salted up for winter use, to which the good wife could, upon great occasions, add a dish of pigeons or a fat capon,—the ill-cultivated garden afforded “lang-cale,”—and the river gave salmon to serve as a relish during the season of lent.

Of fuel they had plenty, for the bogs afforded turf; and the remains of the abused woods continued to give them logs for burning, as well as timber for the usual domestic purposes. In addition to these comforts, the good man would now and then sally forth to the greenwood, and mark down a buck of season with his gun or his cross-bow; and the Father Confessor seldom refused him absolution for the trespass, if duly invited to take his share of the smoking haunch. Some, still bolder, made, either with their own domestics or by associating themselves with the moss-troopers, in the language of shepherds, “a start and overloup;” and the golden ornaments and silken head-gear worn by the females of one or two families of note, were invidiously traced by their neighbours to such successful excursions. This, however, was a more inexpiable crime in the eyes of the Abbot and Community of St. Mary’s, than the borrowing one of the “gude king’s deer;” and they failed not to discountenance and punish, by every means in their power, offences which were sure to lead to severe retaliation upon the property of the church, and which tended to alter the character of their peaceful vassalage.

As for the information possessed by those dependants of the Abbacies, they might have been truly said to be better fed than taught, even though their fare had been worse than it was. Still, however, they enjoyed opportunities of knowledge from which others were excluded. The Monks were in general well acquainted with their vassals and tenants, and familiar in the families of the better class among them, where they were sure to be received with the respect due to their twofold char-



acter of spiritual father and secular landlord. Thus it often happened, when a boy displayed talents and inclination for study, one of the brethren, with a view to his being bred to the church, or out of good-nature, in order to pass away his own idle time if he had no better motive, initiated him into the mysteries of reading and writing, and imparted to him such other knowledge as he himself possessed. And the heads of these allied families, having more time for reflection, and more skill, as well as stronger motives for improving their small properties, bore amongst their neighbours the character of shrewd, intelligent men, who claimed respect on account of their comparative wealth, even while they were despised for a less warlike and enterprising turn than the other Borderers. They lived as much as they well could amongst themselves, avoiding the company of others, and dreading nothing more than to be involved in the deadly feuds and ceaseless contentions of the secular landholders.

Such is a general picture of these communities. During the fatal wars in the commencement of Queen Mary's reign, they had suffered dreadfully by the hostile invasions. For the English, now a Protestant people, were so far from sparing the church-lands, that they forayed them with more unrelenting severity than even the possessions of the laity. But the peace of 1550 had restored some degree of tranquillity to these distracted and harassed regions, and matters began again gradually to settle upon the former footing. The Monks repaired their ravaged shrines—the feuar again roofed his small fortalice, which the enemy had ruined—the poor labourer rebuilt his cottage—an easy task, where a few sods, stones, and a few pieces of wood from the next copse, furnished all the materials necessary. The cattle, lastly, were driven out of the wastes and thickets in which the remnant of them had been secreted; and the mighty bull moved at the head of his seraglio and their followers, to take possession of their wonted pastures. There ensued peace and quiet, the state of the age and nation

considered, to the Monastery of Saint Mary, and its dependencies, for several tranquil years.

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## CHAPTER II.

In yon lone vale his early youth was bred,  
Not solitary then—the bugle-horn  
Of fell Alecto often waked its windings,  
From where the brook joins the majestic river,  
To the wild northern bog, the curlicu's haunt,  
Where oozes forth its first and feeble streamlet.

*Old Play.*

WE have said, that most of the feuars dwelt in the village belonging to their townships. This was not, however, universally the case. A lonely tower, to which the reader must now be introduced, was at least one exception to the general rule.

It was of small dimensions, yet larger than those which occurred in the village, as intimating that in case of assault, the proprietor would have to rely upon his own unassisted strength. Two or three miserable huts, at the foot of the fortalice, held the bondsmen and tenants of the feuar. The site was a beautiful green knoll, which started up suddenly in the very throat of a wild and narrow glen, and which, being surrounded, except on one side, by the winding of a small stream, afforded a position of considerable strength.

But the great security of Glendearg, for so the place was called, lay in its secluded and almost hidden situation. To reach the Tower, it was necessary to travel three miles up the glen, crossing about twenty times the little stream, which, winding through the narrow valley, encountered at every hundred yards the opposition of a rock or precipitous bank on the one side, which altered its course,