

"I trust my senses have not forsaken me—yet how my thoughts should arrange themselves into rhimes which I despise, and music which I care not for, or why there should be the sound of a female voice in ears, to which its melody has been so long indifferent, baffles my comprehension, and almost realizes the vision of Philip the Sacristan.—Come, good mule, betake thee to the path, and let us hence while our judgment serves us."

But the mule stood as if she had been rooted to the spot, backed from the point to which she was pressed by her rider, and by her ears laid close into her neck, and her eyes almost starting from their sockets, testified that she was under great terror.

While the Sub-Prior, by alternate threats and soothing, endeavoured to reclaim the wayward animal to her duty, the wild musical voice was again heard close beside him.

"What ho! Sub-Prior, and came you but here
To conjure a book from a dead woman's bier!
Sain you, and save you, be wary and wise,
Ride back with the book or you'll pay for your prize.
Back, back,
There's death in the track!
In the name of my master, I bid thee bear back."

"In the name of my Master," said the astonished Monk, "that name before which all things created tremble, I conjure thee to say what thou art, that hauntest me thus?"

The same voice replied,

"That which is neither ill nor well,
That which belongs not to Heaven nor to hell,
A wreath of the mist, a bubble of the stream,
'Twixt a waking thought and a sleeping dream;
A form that men spy,
With the half-shut eye,
In the beams of the setting sun am I."

"This is more than simple phantasy," said the Sub-Prior, rousing himself; though, notwithstanding the nat-

ural hardihood of his temper, the sensible presence of a supernatural being so near him, failed not to make his blood run cold and his hair bristle. "I charge thee," he said aloud, "be thine errand what it will, to depart and trouble me no more!—False spirit, thou canst not appal any save those who do the work negligently."

The voice immediately answered:

"Vainly, Sir Prior, would'st thou bar me my right!
Like the star when it shoots, I can dart through the night;
I can dance on the torrent and ride on the air,
And travel the world with the bonny night-mare.
Again, again,
At the crook of the glen,
Where bicker's the burnie, I'll meet thee again."

The road was now apparently left open; for the mule collected herself, and changed from her posture of terror to one which promised advance, although a profuse perspiration, and general trembling of the joints, indicated the bodily terror she had undergone.

"I used to doubt the existence of Cabalists and Rosicrucians," thought the Sub-Prior, "but by my Holy Order, I know no longer what to say!—My pulse beats temperately—my hand is cool—I am fasting from every thing but sin, and possessed of my ordinary faculties.—Either some fiend is permitted to bewilder me, or the tales of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and others who treat of occult philosophy, are not without foundation.—At the crook of the glen? I could have desired to avoid a second meeting, but I am on the service of the church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against me."

He moved forward accordingly, but with precaution, and not without fear; for he neither knew the manner in which, or the place where, his journey might be next interrupted by his invisible attendant. He descended the glen without interruption for about a mile farther, when, just at the spot where the brook approached the steep hill, with a winding so abrupt as to leave scarcely room for a horse to pass, the mule was again visited with

the same symptoms of terror which had before interrupted her course. Better acquainted than before with the cause of her restiveness, the Priest employed no effort to make her proceed, but addressed himself to the object, which he doubted not was the same that had formerly interrupted him, in the words of solemn exorcism prescribed by the church of Rome on such occasions.

In reply to his demand, the voice again sung ;—

“ Men of good are bold as sackless,*
Men of rude are wild and reckless.
Lie thou still
In the nook of the hill,
For those be before thee that wish thee ill.”

While the Sub-Prior listened, with his head turned in the direction from which the sounds seemed to come, he felt as if something rushed against him ; and ere he could discover the cause, he was pushed from his saddle with gentle but irresistible force. Before he reached the ground his senses were gone, and he lay long in a state of insensibility ; for the sunset had not ceased to gild the top of the distant hill when he fell,—and when he again became conscious of existence, the pale moon was gleaming on the landscape. He awakened in a state of terror, from which, for a few minutes, he found it difficult to shake himself free. At length he sat up on the grass, and became sensible, by repeated exertion, that the only personal injury which he had sustained was the numbness arising from extreme cold. The motion of something near him made the blood again run to his heart, and by a sudden effort he started up, and, looking around, saw to his relief that the noise was occasioned by the footsteps of his own mule. The peaceable animal had remained quietly beside her master during his trance, browsing on the grass which grew plentifully in that sequestered nook.

* *Sackless*—Innocent.

With some exertion he collected himself, remounted the animal, and meditating upon his wild adventure, descended the glen till its junction with the broader valley through which the Tweed winds. The draw-bridge was readily dropped at his first summons, and so much had he won upon the heart of the churlish warden, that Peter appeared himself with a lantern to show the Sub-Prior his way over the perilous pass.

“ By my sooth, sir,” he said, holding the light up to Father Eustace’s face ; “ you look sorely travelled and deadly pale—but a little matter serves to weary out you men of the cell. I now, who speak to you—I have ridden—before I was perched up here on this pillar betwixt wind and water—it may be thirty Scots miles before I broke my fast, and have had the red of a bramble rose in my cheek all the while—But will you taste some food, or a cup of distilled waters ?”

“ I may not,” said Father Eustace, “ being under a vow ; but I thank you for your kindness, and pray you to give what I may not accept to the next poor pilgrim who comes hither pale and fainting, for so it shall be the better both with him here, and with you hereafter.”

“ By my faith, and I will do so,” said Peter Bridge-Ward, “ even for thy sake—It is strange now, how this Sub-Prior gets round one’s heart more than the rest of these cowed gentry, that think of nothing but quaffing and stuffing—Wife, I say—wife, we will give a cup of distilled waters and a crust of bread unto the next pilgrim that comes over ; and ye may keep for the purpose the grunds of the last grey-beard,* and the ill-baked bannock which the bairns couldna eat.”

While Peter issued these charitable, and, at the same time, prudent injunctions, the Sub-Prior, whose mild interference had awaked the Bridge-Ward to such an act of unwonted generosity, was pacing onward to the Monastery. In the way, he had to commune with and

* An old-fashioned name for an earthen-jar for holding spirits.

subdue his own rebellious heart, an enemy, he was sensible, more formidable than any which the external powers of Satan could place in his way.

Father Eustace had indeed strong temptation to suppress the extraordinary incident which had befallen him, which he was the more reluctant to confess, because he had passed so severe a judgment upon Father Philip, who, as he was now not unwilling to allow, had, on his return from Glendearg, encountered obstacles somewhat similar to his own. Of this the Sub-Prior was the more convinced, when, feeling in his bosom for the Book which he had brought off from the Tower of Glendearg, he found it was amissing, which he could only account for by supposing it had been stolen from him during his trance.

“If I confess this strange visitation,” thought the Sub-Prior, “I become the ridicule of all my brethren—I whom the Primate sent hither to be a watch, as it were, and a check upon their follies. I give the Abbot an advantage over me which I shall never again recover, and Heaven only knows how he may abuse it, in his foolish simplicity, to the dishonour and loss of Holy Kirk.—But then, if I make not true confession of my shame, with what face can I again presume to admonish or restrain others?—A vow, proud heart,” continued he, addressing himself, “that the weal of Holy Church interests thee less in this matter than thine own humiliation—Yes, Heaven has punished thee even in that point in which thou didst deem thyself most strong, in thy spiritual pride and thy carnal wisdom. Thou hast laughed at and derided the inexperience of thy brethren—stoop thyself in turn to their derision—tell what they may not believe—affirm that which they will ascribe to idle fear, or perhaps to idle falsehood—sustain the disgrace of a silly visionary, or a wilful deceiver.—Be it so; I will do my duty, and make ample confession to my Superior. If the discharge of this duty destroys my usefulness in this house, God and Our Lady will send me where I can better serve them.”

There was no little merit in the resolution thus piously and generously formed by Father Eustace. To men of any rank the esteem of their order is naturally most dear; but in the monastic establishment, cut off, as the brethren are, from other objects of ambition, as well as from all exterior friendship and relationship, the place which they hold in the opinion of each other is all in all.

But the consciousness how much he should rejoice the Abbot and most of the other Monks of St. Mary's, who were impatient of the unauthorized yet irresistible control, which he was wont to exercise in the affairs of the convent by a confession which would put him in a ludicrous, or perhaps even in a criminal point of view, could not weigh with Father Eustace in comparison with the task which his belief enjoined.

As, strong in his feelings of duty, he approached the exterior gate of the Monastery, he was surprised to see torches gleaming, and men assembled around it, some on horseback, some on foot, while several of the Monks, distinguished through the night by their white scapularies, were making themselves busy among the crowd. The Sub-Prior was received with a unanimous shout of joy, which at once made him sensible that he had himself been the object of their anxiety.

“There he is! there he is! God be thanked—there he is, hale and fear!” exclaimed the vassals; while the Monks exclaimed “*Te Deum laudamus*—the blood of thy servants is precious in thy sight!”

“What is the matter, children? what is the matter, my brethren?” said Father Eustace, dismounting at the gate.

“Nay, brother, if thou know'st not, we will not tell thee, till thou art in the refectory,” answered the Monks: “Suffice it that the Lord Abbot had ordered these, our zealous and faithful vassals, instantly to set forth to guard thee from imminent peril—Ye may ungirth your horses children, and dismiss; and, to-morrow, each who was at this rendezvous may send to the convent kitchen for a

quarter of a yard of roast-beef, and a black-jack full of double ale."¹³

The vassals dispersed with joyful acclamation, and the Monks, with equal jubilee, conducted the Sub-Prior into the refectory.

CHAPTER X.

Here we stand—

Woundless and well, may Heaven's high name be bless'd for't!
As erst, ere treason couch'd a lance against us.

Decker.

No sooner was the Sub-Prior hurried into the refectory by his rejoicing companions, than the first person on whom he fixed his eye proved to be Christie of the Clint-hill. He was seated in the chimney-corner, fettered and guarded, his features drawn into that air of sulky and turbid resolution with which those hardened in guilt are accustomed to view the approach of punishment. But as the Sub-Prior drew near to him, his face assumed a more wild and startled expression, while he exclaimed—“The devil! the devil himself, brings the dead back upon the living!”

“Nay,” said a monk to him, “say rather, that Our Lady foils the attempts of the wicked on her faithful servants—our dear brother lives and moves.”

“Lives and moves!” said the ruffian, rising and shuffling towards the Sub-Prior as well as his chains would permit; “nay, then I will never trust ashen shaft and steel point more—It is even so,” he added, as he gazed on the Sub-Prior with astonishment; “neither wem nor wound—not as much as a rent in his frock!”

“And whence should my wound have come?” said Father Eustace.

“From the good lance that never failed me before,” replied Christie of the Clint-hill.

“Heaven absolve thee for thy purpose!” said the Sub-Prior; “wouldst thou have slain a servant of the altar?”

“To choose!” answered Christie, “the Fifemen say, an the whole pack of ye were slain, there were more lost at Flodden.”

“Villain! art thou heretic as well as murderer?”

“Not I, by Saint Giles,” replied the rider; “I listened blithely enough to the Laird of Monance, when he told me ye were all cheats and knaves; but when he would have had me go hear one Wiseheart, a gospeller, as they call him, he might as well have persuaded the wild colt that had flung one rider to kneel down and help another into the saddle.”

“There is some goodness about him yet,” said the Sacristan to the Abbot, who at that moment entered—“He refused to hear a heretic preacher.”

“The better for him in the next world,” answered the Abbot. “Prepare for death, my son—we deliver thee over to the secular arm of our Baillie, for execution on the Gallow-hill by peep of light.”

“Amen!” said the ruffian; “’tis the end I must have come by sooner or later—and what care I whether I feed the crows at Saint Mary’s or at Carlisle?”

“Let me implore your reverend patience for an instant,” said the Sub-Prior; “until I shall inquire”—

“What!” exclaimed the Abbot, observing him for the first time—“Our dear brother restored to us when his life was unhop’d for!—nay, kneel not to a sinner like me—stand up—thou hast my blessing. When this villain came to the gate, accused by his own evil conscience, and crying out he had murdered thee, I thought that the pillar of our main aisle had fallen—no more shall a life so precious be exposed to such risks, as occur in this Border country; no longer shall one beloved and rescued of Heaven hold so low a station in the church, as that of a