



*The Devil
I Am Sure*

Three Short Stories by James Hogg



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MARY BURNET

THE BROWNIE OF THE BLACK HAGGS

STRANGE LETTER OF A LUNATIC

Introduction by David Robb

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INTRODUCTION

JAMES Hogg, “The Ettrick Shepherd” (1770–1835), was a prominent member of the literary world of Walter Scott’s Edinburgh. A shepherd indeed, he was born into a farming family at Ettrick, south-west of Selkirk. His mother, Margaret Laidlaw, a noted tradition-bearer, provided ballad material for Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Hogg himself was drawn to literature while still a teenager and wrote poems and plays for local entertainment. He began, however, to have poems printed in periodicals and in 1801 he published his first collection, *Scottish Pastorals*.

At first, his reputation was as a poet, although he also published on sheep-farming. In 1810 he moved to Edinburgh with a view to making a literary career and started his own weekly periodical, *The Spy*, which ran for a year. It was his long poem *The Queen’s Wake* which, in 1813, cemented his reputation. However, it was his involvement in the newly launched *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1817 which turned him into a star: he was at the heart of its boldly scurrilous and innovative journalism and became the principal attraction (as a fictionalised character) of its long-running series of the Blackwood’s group’s supposed table-talk, the *Noctes Ambrosianae*.

He continued to write poems and songs, and tales which drew on the history, legends and fairy beliefs of the Scottish Borders. In 1818 he published a full-length novel, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, encouraged (as were others) by the fashionable enthusiasm for Scottish fiction sparked by Walter Scott's Waverley Novels. In 1822 he published an even more innovative work, steeped in his Romantic vision of Border history and legends, *The Three Perils of Man*, which was followed a year later by *The Three Perils of Women*. In 1824 there appeared an equally ingenious and original novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. This is now regarded as his masterpiece. Always a kenspeckle personality in the circles around Scott and *Blackwood's*, he created one of the most distinctive bodies of work, in poetry and prose, of the Scottish nineteenth century.

And in the nineteenth century, it was probably for his tales and poems, rather than his novels, that he was remembered best. In the wake of the modern enthusiasm for *The Justified Sinner*, however, his stories, with the rest of his substantial output, have had to be rediscovered and reclaimed as achievements in their own right. As regards the three reprinted here, "Mary Burnet" and "The Brownie of the Black Hags" appeared in *Blackwood's* in 1828, and "Strange Letter of a Lunatic" was published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1830.

His most characteristic fictions, which certainly include these three tales as well as the novels mentioned above, are usually compounded of several types of source material and narrative interest. In other words, they combine, in varying degrees, stories of the supernatural, stories which draw particularly on the folk beliefs of the Scottish countryside (familiar to Hogg, surely, from his mother's tales in particular) and

stories which reflect a prominent awareness on Hogg's part of the quirks and possibilities of human psychology. Sometimes, too, they seem to foreshadow the murder mysteries which have become such standard popular reading for more recent generations. The "mix" of these elements inevitably varies from story to story, and this is what makes each of his tales, at their best, stand apart: the reader notes the features which are constantly present in his writing, but finds that Hogg is by no means a formulaic writer and that each of his best tales feels like a fresh inspiration, while being clearly his and no one else's.

The pleasure for the reader, then, is double and, in a way, contradictory (things being "double" are entirely characteristic of Hogg, in all sorts of ways, as anyone who reads a number of his works can easily ascertain). Thus, the reader experiences, at one and the same time, the escapist pleasure of reading a tale of wonder (a supernatural tale, or a modernised folktale of the fairy people and their doings) and also the pleasing challenge of what we might call a tale-to-be-made-sense-of—in other words, a tale in which we feel challenged to work out what "really" happened. Hogg makes sure that we never succeed. To this end, he is a master of narrative framing: his tales usually rely on the creation of doubt as to what even the narrator can "know" and reliably tell us, either because the narrator is recounting material from a distant past derived from the oral tradition (that great domain of fascinating but unreliable stories), or because the narrator is inherently untrustworthy.

"The Brownie of the Black Hags" features, obviously, that folk-tale supernatural creature, the household "brownie", though there is surely room for doubt (again, a constant device

of Hogg's) as to whether Merodach—despite his weird name—is anything other than a very peculiar-looking mortal. As we get into the tale, however, the interest shifts from Merodach to the psychology of the always out-of-control Lady Wheelhope, and the tale is shaped by the destructive spiral of the relationship between the two.

The shape of “Mary Burnet”, on the other hand, is episodic and chainlike: it gives us a sequence of three mysteries, and while we can begin to make sense of it in terms of the possible experiences of real people (at one level, it is a tale of attempted seduction, of disastrous sexual obsession and of a child lost through marriage into a higher social sphere), its principal appeal derives from the fairy-tale quality which pervades it.

As for “Strange Letter of a Lunatic”, the supernatural hints of the opening pages take second place to the psychological puzzle which emerges. In it, Hogg draws less upon the folk heritage of his Scottish background than he does upon the Romantic motif of the *doppelgänger*. At which point, all readers of *The Justified Sinner* feel on familiar ground.



MARY BURNET

IN this class of my pastoral legends, I must take a date, in some instances, a century earlier than the generality of those of the other classes, and describe a state of manners more primitive and visionary than any I have witnessed, simple and romantic as these have been; and I must likewise relate scenes so far out of the way of usual events, that the sophisticated gloss and polish thrown over the modern philosophic mind, may feel tainted by such antiquated breathings of superstition. Nevertheless, be it mine to cherish the visions that have been, as well as the hope of visions yet in reserve, far in the ocean of eternity, beyond the stars and the sun. For, after all, what is the soul of man without these? What but a cold phlegmatic influence, so inclosed within the walls of modern scepticism, as scarcely to be envied by the spirits of the beasts that perish?

However, as all my legends hitherto have been founded on facts, or are of themselves traditionary tales that seem originally to have been founded on facts, I should never have thought of putting the antiquated and visionary tales of my friends, the Fairies and Brownies, among them, had it not been for the late advice of a highly valued friend, who held it as indispensable, that these most popular of all traditions by the shepherd's ingle-side, should have a place in his Calendar.

At all events, I pledge myself to relate nothing that has not been handed down to me by tradition. How these traditions have originated, I leave to the professors of moral philosophy, in their definitions of pneumatology, to determine.

The following incidents are related as having occurred at a shepherd's house, not a hundred miles from St Mary's Loch; but, as the descendants of one of the families still reside in the vicinity, I deem it requisite to use names which cannot be recognised, save by those who have heard the story.

John Allanson, the farmer's son of Inverlawn, was a handsome, roving, and incautious young man, enthusiastic, amorous, and fond of adventure, and one who could hardly be said to fear the face of either man, woman, or spirit. Among other love adventures, he fell a-courting Mary Burnet, of Kirkstyle, a most lovely and innocent maiden, and one who had been bred up in rural simplicity. She loved him, but yet she was afraid of him; and though she had no objection to meeting with him among others as oft as convenient, yet she carefully avoided meeting him alone, though often and earnestly urged to it. One day, the sinful young man, finding an opportunity, at Our Lady's Chapel, after mass, urged his suit for a private meeting so ardently, and with so many vows of love and sacred esteem, that poor Mary was won; at least so far won, as to promise, that *perhaps* she would come and meet him.

The trysting place was a little green sequestered spot, on the very verge of the lake, well known to many an angler, and to none better than the writer of this old tale; and the set time when the King's Elwand (now foolishly termed the Belt of Orion) set his first golden knob above the hill. Allanson came too early; for his heart yearned to clasp his beloved Mary all

alone; and he watched the evening autumnal sky with such eagerness and devotion, that he thought every little star that arose in the south-east the top knob of the King's Elwand; but no second one following in the regular time, he began to think the Gowden Elwand was lost for that night, or withheld by some spiteful angel, out of envy at the abundance of his promised enjoyment. The Elwand did at last arise in good earnest, and then the youth, with a heart palpitating with agitation, had nothing for it but to watch the heathery brow by which bonny Mary Burnet was to descend. No Mary Burnet made her appearance, even although the King's Elwand had now measured its own equivocal length five or six times up the lift.

Young Allanson now felt all the most poignant miseries of disappointment; and, as the story goes, uttered in his heart some unhallowed wish, and even repeated it so often, as to give the vagrant spirits of the wild a malicious interest in the event. He wished that some witch or fairy would influence his Mary to come to him in spite of her maidenly scruples and overstrained delicacy. In short, it is deemed that he wished to have her there, by whatever means or agency.

This wish was thrice repeated with all the energy of disappointed love. It was thrice repeated, and no more, when, behold, Mary appeared on the brae, with wild and eccentric motions, speeding to the appointed place. Allanson's enthusiasm, or rather excitement, seems to have been more than he was able to bear, as he instantly became delirious with joy, and always professed that he could remember nothing of their first meeting, save that Mary remained silent, and spoke not a word, neither good nor bad. He had no doubt, he said, that his words and actions both were extravagant; but he had no conception that

they could be anything but respectful; yet, for all that, Mary, who had never uttered a word, fell a-sobbing and weeping, refusing to be comforted. This melting tenderness the youth had not construed aright; for, on offering some further blandishments, the maid uttered a piercing shriek, sprung up, and ran from him with amazing speed.

At this part of the loch, which, as I said, is well known to many, the shore is overhung by a precipitous cliff, of no great height, but still inaccessible, either from above or below. Save in a great drought, the water comes to within a yard of the bottom of this cliff, and the intermediate space is filled with rough unshapely pieces of rock fallen from above. Along this narrow and rude space, hardly passable by the angler at noon, did Mary bound with the swiftness of a kid, although surrounded with darkness. Her lover, pursuing with all his energy, called out, "Mary! Mary! my dear Mary, stop and speak with me. I'll conduct you home, or anywhere you please, but do not run from me. Stop, my dearest Mary—stop!"

Mary would not stop; but ran on, till, coming to a little cliff that jutted into the lake, round which there was no passage, and, perceiving that her lover would there overtake her, she uttered another shriek, and plunged into the lake. The loud sound of her fall into the still lake rung in the young man's ears like the knell of death; and if before he was crazed with love, he was now as much so with despair. He saw her floating lightly away from the shore towards the deepest part of the loch; but, in a short time, she began to sink, and gradually disappeared, without uttering a throb or a cry. A good while previous to this, Allanson had flung off his bonnet, shoes, and coat, and plunged in after the treasure of his soul. He swam to the place where she disappeared; but there was neither boil

nor gurgle on the water, nor even a bell of departing breath, to mark the place where his beloved had sunk. Being strangely impressed, at that trying moment, either to live or die with her, he tried to dive, in hopes either to bring her up or to die in her arms; and he thought of their being so found on the shore of the lake with a melancholy satisfaction; but by no effort of his could he reach the bottom, nor knew he what distance he was still from it. With an exhausted frame, and a despairing heart, he was obliged again to seek the shore, and, dripping wet as he was, and half naked, he ran to her father's house with the woful tidings. Everything there was quiet. The old shepherd's family, of whom Mary was the youngest, and sole daughter, were all sunk in quiet repose; and oh how the distracted lover wept at the thoughts of wakening them to hear the doleful tidings! But waken them he must; so, going to the little window close by the goodman's bed, he called, in a melancholy tone, "Andrew! Andrew Burnet, are you waking?"

"Troth, man, I think I be: or, at least, I'm half-an'-half. What hast thou to say to auld Andrew Burnet at this time o' night?"

"Are you waking, I say?"

"Gudewife, am I waking? Because if I be, tell that stravaiger sae. He'll maybe tak' your word for it, for mine he winna tak'."

"O Andrew, none of your humour to-night;—I bring you tidings the most woful, the most dismal, the most heart-rending, that ever were brought to an honest man's door."

"To his window, you mean," cried Andrew, bolting out of bed, and proceeding to the door. "Gude sauff us, man, come in, whaever you be, an' tell us your tidings face to face; an' then we'll can better judge of the truth of them. If they be in concord wi' your voice, they are melancholy indeed. Have the reavers come, and are our kye driven?"

“Oh, alas! waur than that—a thousand times waur than that! Your daughter—your dear beloved and only daughter, Mary—”

“What of Mary?” cried the gudeman. “What of Mary?” cried her mother, shuddering and groaning with terror; and at the same time she kindled a light.

The sight of their neighbour, half-naked, and dripping with wet, and madness and despair in his looks, sent a chillness to their hearts, that held them in silence, and they were unable to utter a word, till he went on thus—“Mary is gone; your darling and mine is lost, and sleeps this night in a watery grave,—and I have been her destroyer.”

“Thou art mad, John Allanson,” said the old man, vehemently, “raving mad; at least I hope so. Wicked as thou art, thou hadst not a heart to kill my dear child. O yes, you are mad—God be thanked, you are mad. I see it in your looks and whole demeanour. Heaven be praised, you are mad! You *are* mad, but you’ll get better again. But what do I say?” continued he, as recollecting himself,—“We can soon convince our own senses. Wife, lead the way to our daughter’s bed.”

With a heart throbbing with terror and dismay, old Jean Linton led the way to Mary’s chamber, followed by the two men, who were eagerly gazing, one over each of her shoulders. Mary’s little apartment was in the farther end of the long narrow cottage; and as soon as they entered it, they perceived a form lying on the bed, with the bed-clothes drawn over its head; and on the lid of Mary’s little chest, that stood at the bed-side, her clothes were lying neatly folded, as they wont to be. Hope seemed to dawn on the faces of the two old people when they beheld this, but the lover’s heart sunk still deeper in despair. The father called her name, but the form on the

bed returned no answer; however, they all heard distinctly the sobs, as of one weeping. The old man then ventured to pull down the clothes from her face; and, strange to say, there indeed lay Mary Burnet, drowned in tears, yet apparently nowise surprised at the ghastly appearance of the three naked figures. Allanson gasped for breath, for he remained still incredulous. He touched her clothes—he lifted her robes one by one,—and all of them were dry, neat, and clean, and had no appearance of having sunk in the lake.

There can be no doubt that Allanson was confounded by the strange event that had befallen him, and felt like one struggling with a frightful vision, or some energy beyond the power of man to comprehend. Nevertheless, the assurance that Mary was there in life, weeping although she was, put him once more beside himself with joy; and he kneeled at her bedside, beseeching but to kiss her hand. She, however, repulsed him with disdain, uttering these words with great emphasis—“You are a bad man, John Allanson, and I entreat you to go out of my sight. The sufferings that I have undergone this night, have been beyond the power of flesh and blood to endure; and by some cursed agency of yours have these sufferings been brought about. I therefore pray you, in His name, whose law you have transgressed, to depart out of my sight.”

Wholly overcome by conflicting passions, by circumstances so contrary to one another, and so discordant with everything either in the works of Nature or Providence, the young man could do nothing but stand like a rigid statue, with his hands lifted up, and his visage like that of a corpse, until led away by the two old people from their daughter’s apartment. They then lighted up a fire to dry him, and began to question him

with the most intense curiosity; but they could elicit nothing from him, but the most disjointed exclamations—such as, “Lord in Heaven, what can be the meaning of this!” And at other times—“It is all the enchantment of the devil; the evil spirits have got dominion over me!”

Finding they could make nothing of him, they began to form conjectures of their own. Jean affirmed that it had been the Mermaid of the loch that had come to him in Mary’s shape, to allure him to his destruction; “and he had muckle reason to be thankful that he had kept in some bounds o’ decency wi’ her, else he wad hae been miserable through life, an’ a thousand times waur through eternity.”

But Andrew Burnet, setting his bonnet to one side, and raising his left hand to a level with that, so that he might have full scope to motion and flourish with it, suiting his action to his words, thus began, with a face of sapience never to be excelled:—

“Gudewife, it doth strike me that thou art very wide of the mark. It must have been a spirit of a great deal higher quality than a meer-maiden, who played this ex-tra-ordinary prank. The meer-maiden is not a spirit, but a beastly sensitive creature, with a malicious spirit within it. Now, what influence could a cauld clatch of a creature like that, wi’ a tail like a great saumont-fish, hae ower our bairn, either to make her happy or unhappy? Or where could it borrow her claes, Jean? Tell me that. Na, na, Jean Linton, depend on it, the spirit that courtit wi’ poor sinfu’ Jock there, has been a fairy; but whether a good ane or an ill ane, it is hard to determine.”

How long Andrew’s disquisition might have lasted, will never be known, for it was interrupted by the young man falling into a fit of trembling that was fearful to look at, and

threatened soon to terminate his existence. Jean ran for the family cordial, observing, by the way, that “though he was a wicked person, he was still a fellow-creature, and might live to repent;” and influenced by this spark of genuine humanity, she made him swallow two horn-spoonfuls of strong aquavitæ, while Andrew brought out his best Sunday shirt, and put it on him in place of his wet one. Then putting a piece of scarlet thread round each wrist, and taking a strong rowan-tree staff in his hand, he conveyed his trembling and astonished guest home, giving him at parting this sage advice:—

“I’ll tell you what it is, Jock Allanson,—ye hae run a near risk o’ perdition, an’ escaping that for the present, o’ losing your right reason. But tak’ an auld man’s advice—never gang again out by night to beguile ony honest man’s daughter, lest a worse thing befall thee.”

Next morning Mary dressed herself more neatly than usual, but there was manifestly a deep melancholy settled on her lovely face, and at times the unbidden tear would start into her eye. She spoke no word, either good or bad, that ever her mother could recollect, that whole morning; but she once or twice observed her daughter gazing at her, as with an intense and melancholy interest. About nine o’clock in the morning, she took a hay-raik over her shoulder, and went down to a meadow at the east end of the loch, to coil a part of her father’s hay, her father and brother engaging to join her about noon, when they came from the sheep-fold. As soon as old Andrew came home, his wife and he, as was natural, instantly began to converse on the events of the preceding night; and in the course of their conversation, Andrew said, “Gudeness be about us, Jean, was not yon an awfu’ speech o’ our bairn’s to young Jock Allanson last night?”

“Ay, it was a downsetter, gudeman, and spoken like a good Christian lass.”

“I’m no sae sure o’ that, Jean Linton. My good woman, Jean Linton, I’m no sae sure o’ that. Yon speech has gi’en me a great deal o’ trouble o’ heart, for d’ye ken, an take my life,—ay, an take your life, Jean,—nane o’ us can tell whether it was in the Almighty’s name, or the devil’s, that she discharged her lover.”

“O fy, Andrew, how can ye say sae? How can ye doubt that it was in the Almighty’s name?”

“Couldna she have said sae then, and that wad hae put it beyond a’ doubt? An’ that wad hae been the natural way too; but instead of that, she says, ‘I pray you, in the name of him whose law you have transgressed, to depart out o’ my sight.’ I confess I’m terrified when I think about yon speech, Jean Linton. Didna she say, too, that ‘her sufferings had been beyond what flesh an’ blood could have endured?’ What was she but flesh and blood? Didna that remark infer that she was something mair than a mortal creature? Jean Linton, Jean Linton! what will you say, if it should turn out that our daughter *is* drowned, and that yon was the fairy we had in the house a’ the night and this morning?”

“O haud your tongue, Andrew Burnet, an’ dinna make my heart cauld within me. We hae aye trusted in the Lord yet, an’ he has never forsaken us, nor will he yet gie the wicked power ower us or ours.”

“Ye say very weel, Jean, an’ we maun e’en hope for the best,” quoth old Andrew; and away he went, accompanied by his son Alexander, to assist their beloved Mary on the meadow.

No sooner had Andrew set his head over the bents, and come in view of the meadow, than he said to his son, “I wish Jock Allanson maunna hae been east the loch fishing for geds

the day, for I think my Mary has made very little progress in the meadow.”

“She’s ower muckle ta’en up about other things this while, to mind her wark,” said Alexander: “I wadna wonder, father, if that lassie gangs a black gate yet.”

Andrew uttered a long and a deep sigh, that seemed to ruffle the very fountains of life, and, without speaking another word, walked on to the hay field. It was three hours since Mary had left home, and she ought at least to have put up a dozen coils of hay each hour. But, in place of that, she had put up only seven altogether, and the last was unfinished. Her own hay-raik, that had an M and a B neatly cut on the head of it, was leaning on the unfinished coil, and Mary was wanting. Her brother, thinking she had hid herself from them in sport, ran from one coil to another, calling her many bad names, playfully; but, after he had turned them all up, and several deep swathes besides, she was not to be found. Now, it must be remarked, that this young man, who slept in the byre, knew nothing of the events of the foregoing night, the old people and Allanson having mutually engaged to keep them a profound secret. So that, when old Andrew said, “What in the world can hae come o’ the lassie?” his son replied, with a lightsome air, “Off wi’ some o’ the lads, to be sure, on some daft errand. Od ye ken little about her; she wad rin through fire an’ water to be wi’ a handsome young lad. I believe, if the deil himsell war to come to her in the form of a braw, bonny lad, he might persuade her to do ought ever he likit.”

“Whisht, callant, how can ye speak that gate about your only sister? I’m sure, poor lassie, she has never gi’en ane o’ us a sair heart in a’ her life—till now,” added Andrew, after a long pause; and the young man, perceiving his father looking

so serious and thoughtful, dropped his raillery, and they began to work at the hay. Andrew could work none; he looked this way and that way, but in no way could he see Mary approaching: so he put on his coat, and went away home, to pour his sorrows into the bosom of his old wife; and in the meantime, he desired his son to run to all the neighbouring farm-houses and cots, every one, and make inquiries if anybody had seen Mary.

When Andrew went home and informed his wife that their darling was missing, the grief and astonishment of the aged couple knew no bounds. They sat down, and wept together, and declared, over and over, that this act of Providence was too strange for them, and too high to be understood. Jean besought her husband to kneel instantly, and pray urgently to God to restore their child to them; but he declined it, on account of the wrong frame of his mind, for he declared, that his rage against John Allanson was so extreme, as to unfit him for approaching the throne of his Maker. "But if the profligate refuses to listen to the entreaties of an injured parent," added he, "he shall feel the weight of an injured father's arm."

Andrew went straight away to Inverlawn, though without the least hope of finding young Allanson at home, for he had no doubt that he had seduced his daughter from her duty; but, on reaching the place, to his still farther amazement, he found the young man lying ill of a burning fever, raving incessantly of witches, spirits, and Mary Burnet. To such a height had his frenzy arrived, that when Andrew went there, it required three men to hold him in the bed. Both his parents testified their opinions openly, that their son was bewitched, or possessed of a demon, and the whole family was thrown into the greatest consternation. The good old shepherd, finding

enough of grief there already, was obliged to confine his to his own bosom, and return disconsolate to his little family circle, in which there was a woful blank that night.

His son returned also from a fruitless search. No one had seen any traces of his sister, but an old crazy woman, at a place called Oxcleuch, said that she had seen her go by in a grand chariot with young Jock Allanson, toward the Birkhill Path, and by that time they were at the Cross of Dumgree. The young man said he asked her what sort of a chariot it was, as there was never such a thing in that country as a chariot, nor yet a road for one. But she replied, that he was widely mistaken, for that a great number of chariots sometimes passed that way, though never any of them returned. These words appearing to be merely the ravings of superannuation, they were not regarded; but when no other traces of Mary could be found, old Andrew went up to consult this crazy dame once more, but he was not able to bring any such thing to her recollection. She spoke only in parables, which to him were incomprehensible.

Bonny Mary Burnet was lost. She left her father's house at nine o'clock on a Wednesday morning, the 17th of September, neatly dressed in a white jerkin and green bonnet, with her hay-raik over her shoulder; and that was the last sight she was doomed ever to see of her native cottage. She seemed to have had some presentiment of this, as appeared from her demeanour that morning before she left it. Mary Burnet of Kirkstyle was lost, and great was the sensation produced over the whole country by the mysterious event. There was a long ballad extant at one period on the melancholy catastrophe, which was supposed to have been composed by the chaplain of St Mary's, but I have only heard tell of it,

without ever hearing it sung or recited. Many of the verses concluded thus:—

“But bonny Mary Burnet
We will never see again.”

The story soon got abroad, with all its horrid circumstances, and there is little doubt that it was grievously exaggerated. The gossips told of a love-tryst by night, at the side of the loch—of the young profligate’s rudeness, which was carried to that degree, that she was obliged to throw herself into the lake, and perish, rather than submit to infamy and sin. In short, there was no obloquy that was not thrown on the survivor, who certainly in some degree deserved it, for, instead of growing better, he grew ten times more wicked than he was before.

In one thing the whole country agreed, that it had been the real Mary Burnet who was drowned in the loch, and that the being which was found in her bed, lying weeping and complaining of suffering, and which vanished the next day, had been a fairy, an evil spirit, or a changeling of some sort, for that it never spoke save once, and that in a mysterious manner; nor did it partake of any food with the rest of the family. Her father and mother knew not what to say or what to think, but they wandered through this weary world like people wandering in a dream.

Everything that belonged to Mary Burnet was kept by her parents as the most sacred relics, and many a tear did her aged mother shed over them. Every article of her dress brought the once comely wearer to mind. The handsome shoes that her feet had shaped, and even the very head of

her hay-raik, with an M and B cut upon it, were laid carefully by in the little chest that had once been hers, and served as dear memorials of one that was now no more. Andrew often said, "That to have lost the darling child of their old age in any way would have been a great trial, but to lose her in the way that they had done, was really mair than human frailty could endure."

Many a weary day did he walk by the shores of the loch, looking eagerly for some vestige of her garments, and though he trembled at every appearance, yet did he continue to search on. He had a number of small bones collected, that had belonged to lambs and other minor animals, and, haply, some of them to fishes, from a fond supposition that they might once have formed joints of her toes or fingers. These he kept concealed in a little bag, in order, as he said, "to let the doctors see them." But no relic, besides these, could he ever discover of his Mary's body.

Young Allanson recovered from his raging fever scarcely in the manner of other men, for he recovered all at once, after a few days' raving and madness. Mary Burnet, it appeared, was by him no more remembered. He grew ten times more wicked than before, and hesitated at no means of accomplishing his unhallowed purposes. His passion for women grew into a mania, that blinded the eyes of his understanding, and hindered him from perceiving the path of moral propriety, or even that of common decency. This total depravity the devout shepherds and cottagers around him regarded as an earthly and eternal curse fixed on him; a mark like that which God put upon Cain, that whosoever knew him might shun him. They detested him, and, both in their families and in the wild, when there was no ear to hear but that of Heaven, they prayed protection

from his devices, as if he had been the wicked one; and they all prophesied that he would make a bad end.

One fine day, about the middle of October, when the days begin to get very short, and the nights long and dark, on a Friday morning, the next year but one after Mary Burnet was lost, a memorable day in the fairy annals, John Allanson, younger of Inverlawn, went to a great hiring fair at a village called Moffat in Annandale, in order to hire a housemaid. His character was so notorious, that not one pretty maiden in the district would serve in his father's house; so away he went to the fair at Moffat, to hire the prettiest and loveliest girl he could there find, with the generous intention of seducing her as soon as she came home. This was no supposititious accusation, for he acknowledged his plan to Mr David Welch of Cariferan, who rode down to the market with him, and seemed to boast of it, and dwell on it, with delight. But the maidens of Annandale had a guardian angel in the fair that day, of which neither he nor they were aware.

Allanson looked through the hiring market, and through the hiring market, and at length fixed on one, which indeed was not difficult to do, for there was no such form there for elegance and beauty. She had all the appearance of a lady, but she had the badge of servitude in her bosom, a little rose of Paradise, without the leaves, so that Allanson knew she was to hire. He urged her for some time, with emotions of the wildest delight, and at length meeting with his young companion, Mr David Welch, he pointed her out to him, and asked how she would suit.

Mr Welch answered, that he was in great luck indeed, if he acquired such a mistress as that. "*If?*" said he,—"I think you need hardly have put an *if* to it. Stop there for a small space,

and I will let you see me engage her in five minutes." Mr Welch stood still and eyed him. He took the beauty aside. She was clothed in green, and as lovely as a new blown rose.

"Are you to hire, pretty maiden?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you hire with me?"

"I care not though I do. But if I hire with you, it must be for the long term."

"Certainly. The longer the better. What are your wages to be?"

"You know, if I hire, I must be paid in kind. I must have the first living creature that I see about Inverlawn to myself."

"I wish it may be me, then. But what the devil do you know about Inverlawn?"

"I think I *should* know about it."

"Bless me! I know the face as well as I know my own, and better. But the name has somehow escaped me. Pray, may I ask your name?"

"Hush! hush!" said she solemnly, and holding up her hand at the same time; "Hush, hush, you had better say nothing about that here."

"I am in utter amazement!" exclaimed he. "What is the meaning of this? I conjure you to tell me your name?"

"It is Mary Burnet," said she, in a soft whisper; and at the same time she let down a green veil over her face.

If Allanson's death-warrant had been announced to him at that moment, it could not have deprived him so completely of sense and motion. His visage changed into that of a corpse, his jaws fell down, and his eyes became glazed, so as apparently to throw no reflection inwardly. Mr Welch, who had kept his eye steadily on them all the while, perceived his comrade's

dilemma, and went up to him. "Allanson?—Mr Allanson? What the deuce is the matter with you, man?" said he. "Why, the girl has bewitched you, and turned you into a statue!"

Allanson made some sound with his voice, as if attempting to speak, but his tongue refused its office, and he only jabbered. Mr Welch, conceiving that he was seized with some fit, or about to faint, supported him into the Johnston Arms, and got him something to drink; but he either could not, or would not, grant him any explanation. Welch being, however, resolved to see the maiden in green once more, persuaded Allanson, after causing him to drink a good deal, to go out into the hiring-market again, in search of her. They ranged the market through and through, but the maiden in green was gone, and not to be found. She had vanished in the crowd the moment she divulged her name, and even though Welch had his eye fixed on her, he could not discover which way she went. Allanson appeared to be in a kind of stupor as well as terror, but when he found that she had left the market, he screwed his courage to the sticking place once more, and resolving to have a winsome housemaid from Annandale, he began again to look out for the top of the market.

He soon found one more beautiful than the last. She was like a sylph, clothed in robes of pure snowy white, with green ribbons. Again he pointed this new flower out to Mr David Welch, who declared that such a perfect model of beauty he had never in his life seen. Allanson, being resolved to have this one at any wages, took her aside, and put the usual question.

"Do you wish to hire, pretty maiden?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you hire with me?"

"I care not though I do."

“What, then, are your wages to be? Come—say? And be reasonable; I am determined not to part with you for a trifle.”

“My wages must be in kind; I work on no other conditions. Pray, how are all the good people about Inverlawn?”

Allanson’s breath began to cut, and a chillness to creep through his whole frame, and he answered, with a faltering tongue,—

“I thank you,—much in their ordinary way.”

“And your aged neighbours,” rejoined she, “are they still alive and well?”

“I—I—I think they are,” said he, panting for breath. “But curse me, if I know who I am indebted to for these kind recollections.”

“What,” said she, “have you so soon forgot Mary Burnet of Kirkstyle?”

Allanson started as if a bullet had gone through his heart. The lovely sylph-like form glided into the crowd, and left the astounded libertine once more standing like a rigid statue, until aroused by his friend, Mr Welch. He tried a third fair one, and got the same answers, and the same name given. Indeed, the first time ever I heard the tale, it bore that he tried *seven*, who all turned out to be Mary Burnets of Kirkstyle; but I think it unlikely that he would try so many, as he must long ere that time have been sensible that he laboured under some power of enchantment. However, when nothing else would do, he helped himself to a good proportion of strong drink. While he was thus engaged, a phenomenon of beauty and grandeur came into the fair, that caught the sole attention of all present. This was a lovely dame, riding in a gilded chariot, with two liverymen before, and two behind, clothed in green and gold; and never sure was there so splendid a meteor

seen in a Moffat fair. The word instantly circulated in the market, that this was the Lady Elizabeth Douglas, eldest daughter to the Earl of Morton, who then sojourned at Auchincastle, in the vicinity of Moffat, and which lady at that time was celebrated as a great beauty all over Scotland. She was afterwards Lady Keith; and the mention of this name in the tale, as it were by mere accident, fixes the era of it in the reign of James the Fourth, at the very time that fairies, brownies, and witches, were at the rifest in Scotland.

Every one in the market believed the lady to be the daughter of the Earl of Morton, and when she came to the Johnston Arms, a gentleman in green came out bareheaded, and received her out of the carriage. All the crowd gazed at such unparalleled beauty and grandeur, but none was half so much overcome as Allanson. His heart, being a mere general slave to female charms, was smitten in proportion as this fair dame excelled all others he had ever seen. He had never conceived aught half so lovely either in earth, or heaven, or fairyland, and his heart, at first sight, burned with an inextinguishable flame of love towards her. But alas, there is reason to fear there was no spark of that refined and virtuous love in him, which is the delight of earth and heaven. It might be more fervent and insufferable, but it wanted the sweet serenity and placid delights of the former. His was not a ray from the paradise above, but a burning spark from the regions below. From thence it arose, and in all its wanderings, thitherward it pointed again.

While he stood in this burning fever of love and admiration, his bosom panting, and his eyes suffused with tears, think of his astonishment, and the astonishment of the countless crowd that looked on, when this brilliant and matchless beauty beckoned him towards her! He could not believe his senses,

but looked hither and thither to see how others regarded the affair; but she beckoned him a second time, with such a winning courtesy and smile, that immediately he pulled off his beaver cap and hasted up to her; and without more ado she gave him her arm, and the two walked into the hostel.

Allanson conceived that he was thus distinguished by Lady Elizabeth Douglas, the flower of the land, and so did all the people of the market; and greatly they wondered who the young farmer could be that was thus particularly favoured; for it ought to have been mentioned that he had not one personal acquaintance in the fair save Mr David Welch of Cariferan. But no sooner had she got him into a private room, than she began to inquire kindly of his health and recovery from the severe malady by which he was visited. Allanson thanked her ladyship with all the courtesy he was master of; and being by this time persuaded that she was in love with him, he became as light as if treading on the air. She next inquired after his father and mother. "Oho!" thinks he to himself, "poor creature, she is terribly in for it! but her love *shall not* be thrown away upon a backward or ungrateful object."

He answered her with great politeness, and at length began to talk of her noble father and young Lord William, but she cut him short by asking if he did not recognise her.

"Oh, yes! He knew who her ladyship was, and remembered that he had seen her comely face often before, although he could not recall to his memory the precise time or places of their meeting."

She asked him for his old neighbours of Kirkstyle, and if they were still in life and health!!

Allanson felt as if his heart were a piece of ice. A chillness spread over his whole frame; he sank back on a seat, and

remained motionless; but the beautiful and adorable creature soothed him with kind words, and even with blandishments, till he again gathered courage to speak.

“What!” said he; “and has it been your own lovely self who has been playing tricks on me this whole day?”

“A first love is not easily extinguished, Mr Allanson,” said she. “You may guess, from my appearance, that I have been fortunate in life; but, for all that, my first love for you has continued the same, unaltered and unchanged, and you must forgive the little freedoms I used to-day to try your affections, and the effects my appearance would have on you.”

“It argues something for my good taste, however, that I never pitched on any face for beauty to-day but your own,” said he. “But now that we have met once more, we shall not so easily part again. I will devote the rest of my life to you, only let me know the place of your abode.”

“It is hard by,” said she, “only a very little space from this; and happy, happy, would I be to see you there to-night, were it proper or convenient. But my lord is at present from home, and in a distant country.”

“I should not conceive that any particular hinderance to my visit,” said he; “for, in truth, I account it one of the most fortunate events that has happened to me; and visit you I will, and visit you I shall, this night,—that you may depend upon.”

“But I hope, Mr Allanson, you are not of the same rakish disposition that you were on our first acquaintance? for, if you are, I could not see your face under my roof on any account.”

“Why, the truth is, madam, that the country people reckon me a hundred degrees worse; but I know myself to be, in fact, many thousand degrees better. However, let it suffice,

that I have no scruples in visiting my old sweetheart in the absence of her lord, nor are they increased by his great distance from home.”

With great apparent reluctance she at length consented to admit of his visit, and offered to leave one of her gentlemen, whom she could trust, to be his conductor; but this he positively refused. It was his desire, he said, that no eye of man should see him enter or leave her happy dwelling. She said he was a self-willed man, but should have his own way; and after giving him such directions as would infallibly lead him to her mansion, she mounted her chariot and was driven away.

Allanson was uplifted above every sublunary concern. Sinful as the adventure was, he gloried in it, for such adventures were his supreme delight. Seeking out his friend, David Welch, he imparted to him his extraordinary good fortune, but he did not tell him that she was not the Lady Elizabeth Douglas. Welch insisted on accompanying him, but this he would in nowise admit; the other, however, set him on the way, and refused to turn back till he came to the very point of the road next to the lady's splendid mansion; and in spite of all that Allanson could say, Welch remained there till he saw his comrade enter the court-gate, which glowed with lights as innumerable as the stars of the firmament.

“Ah, what a bad girl that Lady Elizabeth Douglas must be for all her beauty,” said Mr Welch to himself. “But, oh! that I had had that wild fellow's fortune to-night!” David Welch did not think so before that day eight days. Let no man run on in evil, and expect that good will spring out of it.

Allanson had promised to his father and mother to be home on the morning after the fair to breakfast. He came not either that day or the next; and the third day the old man mounted

his white pony, and rode away towards Moffat in search of his son. He called at Cariferan on his way, and made inquiries at Mr Welch. The latter manifested some astonishment that the young man had not returned; nevertheless he assured his father of his safety, and desired him to return home; and then with reluctance confessed that the young man was engaged in an amour with the Earl of Morton's beautiful daughter; that he had gone to the castle by appointment, and that he, David Welch, had accompanied him to the gate, and seen him enter, and it was apparent that his reception had been a kind one, since he had tarried so long.

The old man lifted off his bonnet with the one hand, and with the other wiped a tear from his eye, saying, at the same time, "Then I'll never see him alive again! For several years I have foreseen that women would infallibly be the end of him; and now that he is gone upon his wild adventures in the family of the proud Earl Douglas of Morton, how is it likely that he shall ever escape the fate that in reality he deserves? How inscrutable are the divine decrees! My son was born to the doom that has overtaken him. On the night that he was born, there was a weeping and wailing of women all around our house, and even in the bed where his mother was confined; and as it was a brownie that brought the midwife, no one ever knew who she was, or whence she came. His life has been one of mystery, and his end will be the same."

Mr Welch, seeing the old man's distress, was persuaded to accompany him on his journey, as the last who had seen his son and seen him enter the castle. On reaching Moffat they found his steed standing at the hostel, whither it had returned in the night of the fair before the company broke up; but the owner had not been heard of since seen in company with Lady

Elizabeth Douglas. The old man set out for Auchincastle, taking Mr David Welch along with him; but long ere they reached the place, Mr Welch assured him he would not find his son there, as it was nearly in a different direction that they rode, by appointment, on the evening of the fair. However, to the castle they went, and were admitted to the Earl, who laughed heartily at the old man's tale, and seemed to consider him in a state of derangement. He sent for his daughter Elizabeth, and questioned her concerning her meeting with the son of the old respectable countryman—of her appointment with him on the night of the preceding Friday, and concluded by saying he hoped she had him still in some safe concealment about the castle.

The lady, hearing her father talk thus flippantly, and seeing the serious and dejected looks of the old man towards her, knew not what to say, and asked an explanation. But Mr Welch put a stop to it by declaring to old Allanson that the Lady Elizabeth was not the lady with whom his son made the appointment, for he had seen her, had considered her lineaments very minutely, and would engage to know her again among ten thousand; nor was that the castle to which he had conducted his son, nor anything like it. "But go with me," continued he, "and though I am a stranger in this district, I think I can take you to the very place."

Away they went again; and Mr Welch traced the road from Moffat, by which young Allanson and he had gone to the appointed place, until, after travelling several miles, they came to a place where a road struck off to the right at an angle. "Now I know we are right," said Welch; "for here we stopped, and your son intreated me to return, which I refused, and accompanied him to yon large tree, and a little way beyond it,

from whence I saw him received in at the splendid gate. We shall now be in sight of the mansion in three minutes."

They passed on to the tree, and a space beyond it; but then Mr Welch lost the use of his speech, as he perceived that there was neither palace nor gate there, but a tremendous gulf, fifty fathoms deep, and a dark stream foaming and boiling below.

"How is this?" said old Allanson. "There is neither mansion nor habitation of man here!"

Welch's tongue for a long space refused its office, and there he stood like a statue, gazing on the altered and awful scene. "He only who made the spirits of men," said he, at last, "and all the spirits that sojourn in the earth and air, can tell how this is. We are wandering in a world of enchantment, and have been influenced by some agencies above human nature, or without its pale; for here of a certainty did I take leave of your son—and there, in that direction, and apparently either on the verge of that gulf, or the space above it, did I see him received in at the court-gate of a mansion, splendid beyond all conception. How can human comprehension make anything of this?"

They went forward to the verge, Mr Welch leading the way to the very spot on which he saw the gate opened, and there they found marks where a horse had been plunging. Its feet had been over the brink, but it seemed to have recovered itself, and deep, deep down, and far within, lay the mangled corpse of John Allanson; and in this manner, mysterious beyond all example, terminated the career of that wicked and flagitious young man. What a beautiful moral may be extracted from this fairy tale!

But among all these turnings and windings, there is no account given, you will say, of the fate of Mary Burnet; for

this last appearance of hers at Moffat seems to have been altogether a phantom or illusion. Gentle and kind reader, I can give you no account of the fate of that maiden; for though the ancient fairy tale proceeds, it seems to me to involve her fate in ten times more mystery than what is previously related, for, if she was not a changeling, or the Queen of the Fairies herself, I can make nothing of her.

The yearly return of the day on which Mary was lost, was observed as a day of mourning by her aged and disconsolate parents,—a day of sorrow, of fasting, and humiliation. Seven years came and passed away, and the seventh returning day of fasting and prayer was at hand. On the evening previous to it, old Andrew was moving along the sands of the loch, still looking for some relic of his beloved Mary, when he was aware of a little shrivelled old man, who came posting towards him. The creature was not above five spans in height, and had a face scarcely like that of a human creature; but he was, nevertheless, civil in his deportment, and sensible in speech. He bade Andrew a good evening, and asked him what he was looking for. Andrew answered, that he was looking for that which he would never find.

“Pray, what is your name, ancient shepherd?” said the stranger; “for methinks I should know something of you, and perhaps have a commission to you.”

“Alas! why should you ask after my name?” said Andrew. “My name is now nothing to any one.”

“Had not you once a beautiful daughter, named Mary?” said the stranger.

“It is a heart-rending question, man,” said Andrew; “but certes, I had once a beloved daughter named Mary.”

“What became of her?” said the stranger.

Andrew shook his head, turned round, and began to move away; it was a theme that his heart could not brook. He sauntered along the loch sands, his dim eye scanning every white pebble as he passed along. There was a hopelessness apparent in his stooping form, his gait, his eye, his features,—in every step that he took there was a hopeless apathy. The dwarf followed him along, and began to expostulate with him. “Old man, I see you are pining under some real or fancied affliction,” said he. “But in continuing to do so, you are neither acting according to the dictates of reason nor true religion. What is man that he should fret, or the son of man that he should repine, under the chastening hand of his Maker?”

“I am far frae justifying mysell,” returned Andrew, surveying his shrivelled monitor with some degree of astonishment. “But there are some feelings that neither reason nor religion can o’ermaster; and there are some that a parent may cherish without sin.”

“I deny the position,” said the stranger, “taken either absolutely or in relative degree. All repining under the Supreme decree is leavened with unrighteousness. But, subtleties aside, I ask you, as I did before, What became of your daughter?”

“Ask the Father of her spirit, and the framer of her body,” said Andrew, solemnly; “ask Him into whose hands I committed her from childhood. He alone knows what became of her, but *I do not*.”

“How long is it since you lost her?”

“It is seven years to-morrow.”

“Ay! you remember the time well. And are you mourning for her all this while?”

“Yes; and I will go down to the grave mourning for my only daughter, the child of my age, and of all my affection. O, thou

unearthly-looking monitor, knowest thou aught of my darling child? for if thou dost, thou wilt know, that she was not like other women. There was a simplicity, a purity, and a sublimity about my lovely Mary, that was hardly consistent with our frail nature.”

“Wouldst thou like to see her again?” said the dwarf, snappishly.

Andrew turned round his whole frame, shaking as with a palsy, and gazed on the audacious shrimp. “See her again, creature!” cried he vehemently—“Would I like to see her again, say’st thou?”

“I said so,” said the dwarf, “and I say farther, Dost thou know this token? Look and see if thou dost.”

Andrew took the token, and looked at it, then at the shrivelled stranger, and then at the token again; and at length he burst into tears, and wept aloud; but they were tears of joy, and his weeping seemed to have some breathings of laughter intermingled in it. And still as he kissed and kissed the token, he brayed out in broken and convulsive sentences,—“Yes, auld body, I *do* know it!—I *do* know it!—I *do* know it! It is indeed the same golden Edward, with three holes in it, with which I presented my Mary on her birth day, in her eighteenth year, to buy her a new suit for the holidays. But when she took it, she said—ay, I mind weel what my bonny woman said,—‘It is sae bonny and sae kenspeckle,’ said she, ‘that I think I’ll keep it for the sake of the giver.’ O, dear, dear! and blessed little creature, tell me how she is, and where she is? Is she living, or is she dead? Is she in earth or in heaven? for I ken weel she is in ane of them.”

“She is living, and in good health,” said the dwarf; “and better, and brawer, and happier, and lovelier than ever; and if

you make haste, you will see her and her family at Moffat to-morrow afternoon. They are to pass there on a journey, but it is an express one, and I am sent to you with that token, to inform you of the circumstance, that you may have it in your power to see and embrace your beloved daughter once before you die."

"And am I to meet my Mary at Moffat? Come away, little, dear, welcome body, thou blessed of heaven, come away, and taste of an auld shepherd's best cheer, and I'll gang foot for foot with you to Moffat, and my auld wife shall gang foot for foot with us too. I tell you, little, blessed, and welcome crile, come along with me."

"I may not tarry to enter your house, or taste of your cheer, good shepherd," said the being. "May plenty still be within your walls, and a thankful heart to enjoy it. But my directions are neither to taste meat nor drink in this country, but to haste back to her that sent me. Go—haste, and make ready, for you have no time to lose."

"At what time will she be there?" cried Andrew, flinging the plaid from him, to run home with the tidings.

"Precisely when the shadow of the Holy Cross falls due east," cried the dwarf; and turning round, he hastened on his way.

When old Jean Linton saw her husband coming hobbling and running home without his plaid, and having his doublet flying wide open, she had no doubt that he had lost his wits; and, full of anxiety, she met him at the side of the kail-yard. "Gudeness preserve us a' in our right senses, Andrew Burnet, what's the matter wi' you?"

"Stand out o' my gate, wife, for, d'ye see, I'm rather in a haste."

"I see that, indeed, gudeman; but stand still, an' tell me what has putten you *in sic* a haste. Ir ye drunken or ir ye dementit?"

"Na, na; but I'm gaun awa till Moffat."

"O, gudeness pity the poor auld body! How can ye gang to Moffat, man? Or what have ye to do at Moffat? Dinna ye mind that the morn is the day o' our solemnity?"

"Haud out o' my gate, auld wife, an' dinna speak o' solemnities to me. I'll keep it at Moffat the morn.—Ay, gudewife, an' ye shall keep it at Moffat, too. What d'ye think o' that, woman? Too-who, ye dinna ken the mettle that's in an auld body till it be tried."

"Andrew—Andrew Burnet!"

"Get away wi' your frightened looks, woman; an' haste ye, gang an' fling me out my Sabbath-day claes. An', Jean Linton, my woman, d'ye hear, gang an' pit on your bridal gown, and your silk hood, for ye maun be at Moffat the morn too; an' it is mair nor time we were away. Dinna look sae bumbazed, woman, till I tell ye, that our ain Mary is to meet us at Moffat the morn."

"O, Andrew! dinna sport wi' the last feelings of an auld forsaken heart."

"Gude forbid, my auld wife, that I ever sported wi' feeling o'yours," cried Andrew, clasping her in his arms, and bursting into tears; "they are a' as sacred to me as breathings frae the Throne o' Grace. But it is true that I tell ye; our dear bairn is to meet us at Moffat the morn, wi' a son in every hand; an' we maun e'en gang an' see her aince again, an' kiss her an' bless her afore we dee."

The tears now rushed from the old woman's eyes like fountains, and dropped from her sorrow-worn cheeks to the

earth, and then, as with a spontaneous movement, she threw her skirt over her head, kneeled down at her husband's feet, and poured out her soul in thanksgiving to her Maker. She then rose up quite deprived of her senses through joy, and ran crouching away on the road towards Moffat, as if hasting beyond her power to be at it. But Andrew brought her back; and they prepared themselves for their journey.

Kirkstyle being twenty miles from Moffat, they set out on the afternoon of Tuesday, the 16th of September; slept that night at a place called Turnberry Sheil, and were in Moffat next day by noon. Wearisome was the remainder of the day to that aged couple; they wandered about conjecturing by what road their daughter would come, and how she would come attended. "I have made up my mind on baith these matters," said Andrew; "at first I thought it was likely that she would come out o' the east, because a' our blessings come frae that airt; but finding now that that would be o'er near to the very road we hae come oursells, I now take it for granted she'll come frae the south; an' I just think I see her leading a bonny boy in every hand, an' a servant lass carrying a bit bundle ahint her."

The two now walked out on all the southern roads, in hopes to meet their Mary, but always returned to watch the shadow of the Holy Cross; and, by the time it fell due east, they could do nothing but stand in the middle of the street, and look round them in all directions. At length, about half a mile out on the Dumfries road, they perceived a poor beggar woman approaching with two children following close to her, and another beggar a good way behind. Their eyes were instantly riveted on these objects; for Andrew thought he perceived his

friend the dwarf in the one that was behind; and now all other earthly objects were to them nothing, save these approaching beggars. At that moment a gilded chariot entered the village from the south, and drove by them at full speed, having two livery men before, and two behind, clothed in green and gold. "Ach-wow! the vanity of worldly grandeur!" said Andrew, as the splendid vehicle went thundering by; but neither he nor his wife deigned to look at it farther, their whole attention being fixed on the group of beggars. "Ay, it is just my woman," said Andrew, "it is just hersell; I ken her gang yet, sair pressed down wi' poortith although she be. But I dinna care how poor she be, for baith her an' hers sall be welcome to my fireside as lang as I hae ane."

While their eyes were thus strained, and their hearts melting with tenderness and pity, Andrew felt something embracing his knees, and, on looking down, there was his Mary, blooming in splendour and beauty, kneeling at his feet. Andrew uttered a loud hysterical scream of joy, and clasped her to his bosom; and old Jean Linton stood trembling, with her arms spread, but durst not close them on so splendid a creature, till her daughter first enfolded her in a fond embrace, and then she hung upon her and wept. It was a wonderful event—a restoration without a parallel. They indeed beheld their Mary, their long-lost darling; they held her in their embraces, believed in her identity, and were satisfied. Satisfied, did I say? They were happy beyond the lot of mortals. She had just alighted from her chariot; and, perceiving her aged parents standing together, she ran and kneeled at their feet. They now retired into the hostel, where Mary presented her two sons to her father and mother. They spent the evening in every social endearment;

and Mary loaded the good old couple with rich presents, watched over them till midnight, when they both fell into a deep and happy sleep, and then she remounted her chariot, and was driven away. If she was any more seen in Scotland, I never heard of it; but her parents rejoiced in the thoughts of her happiness till the day of their death.

MOUNT BENDER, *Jan.* 10, 1828.



THE BROWNIE OF THE BLACK HAGGS

WHEN the Sprots were lairds of Wheelhope, which is now a long time ago, there was one of the ladies who was very badly spoken of in the country. People did not just openly assert that Lady Wheelhope was a witch, but every one had an aversion even at hearing her named; and when by chance she happened to be mentioned, old men would shake their heads and say, "Ah! let us alane o' her! The less ye meddle wi' her the better." Auld wives would give over spinning, and, as a pretence for hearing what might be said about her, poke in the fire with the tongs, cocking up their ears all the while; and then, after some meaning coughs, hems, and haws, would haply say, "Hech-wow, sirs! An a' be true that's said!" or something equally wise and decisive as that.

In short, Lady Wheelhope was accounted a very bad woman. She was an inexorable tyrant in her family, quarrelled with her servants, often cursing them, striking them, and turning them away; especially if they were religious, for these she could not endure, but suspected them of every thing bad. Whenever she found out any of the servant men of the laird's establishment for religious characters, she soon gave them up to the military, and got them shot; and several girls that were regular in their devotions, she was supposed to have popped off with

poison. She was certainly a wicked woman, else many good people were mistaken in her character, and the poor persecuted Covenanters were obliged to unite in their prayers against her.

As for the laird, he was a stump. A big, dun-faced, pluffy body, that cared neither for good nor evil, and did not well know the one from the other. He laughed at his lady's tantrums and barley-hoods; and the greater the rage that she got into, the laird thought it the better sport. One day, when two servant maids came running to him, in great agitation, and told him that his lady had felled one of their companions, the laird laughed heartily at them, and said he did not doubt it.

"Why, sir, how can you laugh?" said they. "The poor girl is killed."

"Very likely, very likely," said the laird. "Well, it will teach her to take care who she angers again."

"And, sir, your lady will be hanged."

"Very likely; well, it will learn her how to strike so rashly again—Ha, ha, ha! Will it not, Jessy?"

But when this same Jessy died suddenly one morning, the laird was greatly confounded, and seemed dimly to comprehend that there had been unfair play going. There was little doubt that she was taken off by poison; but whether the lady did it through jealousy or not, was never divulged; but it greatly bamboozled and astonished the poor laird, for his nerves failed him, and his whole frame became paralytic. He seems to have been exactly in the same state of mind with a colley that I once had. He was extremely fond of the gun as long as I did not kill any thing with her, (there being no game laws in Ettrick Forest in those days,) and he got a grand chase after the hares when I missed them. But there was one day that I chanced for a marvel to shoot one dead, a few paces before

his nose. I'll never forget the astonishment that the poor beast manifested. He stared one while at the gun, and another while at the dead hare, and seemed to be drawing the conclusion, that if the case stood thus, there was no creature sure of its life. Finally, he took his tail between his legs, and ran away home, and never would face a gun all his life again.

So was it precisely with Laird Sprot of Wheelhope. As long as his lady's wrath produced only noise and splutter among the servants, he thought it fine sport; but when he saw what he believed the dreadful effects of it, he became like a barrel organ out of tune, and could only discourse one note, which he did to every one he met. "I wish she maunna hae gotten something she has been the waur of." This note he repeated early and late, night and day, sleeping and waking, alone and in company, from the moment that Jessy died till she was buried; and on going to the churchyard as chief mourner, he whispered it to her relations by the way. When they came to the grave, he took his stand at the head, nor would he give place to the girl's father; but there he stood, like a huge post, as though he neither saw nor heard; and when he had lowered her late comely head into the grave, and dropped the cord, he slowly lifted his hat with one hand, wiped his dim eyes with the back of the other, and said, in a deep tremulous tone, "Poor lassie! I wish she didna get something she had been the waur of."

This death made a great noise among the common people; but there was no protection for the life of the subject in those days; and provided a man or woman was a true loyal subject, and a real Anti-Covenanter, any of them might kill as many as they liked. So there was no one to take cognizance of the circumstances relating to the death of poor Jessy.

After this, the lady walked softly for the space of two or three years. She saw that she had rendered herself odious, and had entirely lost her husband's countenance, which she liked worst of all. But the evil propensity could not be overcome; and a poor boy, whom the laird, out of sheer compassion, had taken into his service, being found dead one morning, the country people could no longer be restrained; so they went in a body to the Sheriff, and insisted on an investigation. It was proved that she detested the boy, had often threatened him, and had given him brose and butter the afternoon before he died; but the cause was ultimately dismissed, and the pursuers fined.

No one can tell to what height of wickedness she might now have proceeded, had not a check of a very singular kind been laid upon her. Among the servants that came home at the next term, was one who called himself Merodach; and a strange person he was. He had the form of a boy, but the features of one a hundred years old, save that his eyes had a brilliancy and restlessness, which was very extraordinary, bearing a strong resemblance to the eyes of a well-known species of monkey. He was froward and perverse in all his actions, and disregarded the pleasure or displeasure of any person; but he performed his work well, and with apparent ease. From the moment that he entered the house, the lady conceived a mortal antipathy against him, and besought the laird to turn him away. But the laird, of himself, never turned away any body, and moreover he had hired him for a trivial wage, and the fellow neither wanted activity nor perseverance. The natural consequence of this arrangement was, that the lady instantly set herself to make Merodach's life as bitter as it was possible, in order to get early quit of a domestic every

way so disgusting. Her hatred of him was not like a common antipathy entertained by one human being against another,— she hated him as one might hate a toad or an adder; and his occupation of jotteryman (as the laird termed his servant of all work) keeping him always about her hand, it must have proved highly disagreeable.

She scolded him, she raged at him, but he only mocked her wrath, and giggled and laughed at her, with the most provoking derision. She tried to fell him again and again, but never, with all her address, could she hit him; and never did she make a blow at him, that she did not repent it. She was heavy and unwieldy, and he as quick in his motions as a monkey; besides, he generally had her in such an ungovernable rage, that when she flew at him, she hardly knew what she was doing. At one time she guided her blow towards him, and he at the same instant avoided it with such dexterity, that she knocked down the chief hind, or foresman; and then Merodach giggled so heartily, that, lifting the kitchen poker, she threw it at him with a full design of knocking out his brains; but the missile only broke every plate and ashet on the kitchen dresser.

She then hastened to the laird, crying bitterly, and telling him she would not suffer that wretch Merodach, as she called him, to stay another night in the family. “Why, then, put him away, and trouble me no more about him,” said the laird.

“Put him away!” exclaimed she; “I have already ordered him away a hundred times, and charged him never to let me see his horrible face again; but he only flouts me, and tells me he’ll see me at the devil first.”

The pertinacity of the fellow amused the laird exceedingly; his dim eyes turned upwards into his head with delight; he

then looked two ways at once, turned round his back, and laughed till the tears ran down his dun cheeks, but he could only articulate "You're fitted now."

The lady's agony of rage still increasing from this derision, she flew on the laird, and said he was not worthy the name of a man, if he did not turn away that pestilence, after the way he had abused her.

"Why, Shusy, my dear, what has he done to you?"

"What done to me! has he not caused me to knock down John Thomson, and I do not know if ever he will come to life again?"

"Have you felled your favourite John Thomson?" said the laird, laughing more heartily than before; "you might have done a worse deed than that. But what evil has John done?"

"And has he not broke every plate and dish on the whole dresser?" continued the lady, disregarding the laird's question; "and for all this devastation, he only mocks at my displeasure,—absolutely mocks me,—and if you do not have him turned away, and hanged or shot for his deeds, you are not worthy the name of man."

"O alack! What a devastation among the china metal!" said the laird; and calling on Merodach, he said, "Tell me, thou evil Merodach of Babylon, how thou dared'st knock down thy lady's favourite servant, John Thomson?"

"Not I, your honour. It was my lady herself, who got into such a furious rage at me, that she mistook her man, and felled Mr Thomson; and the good man's skull is fractured."

"That was very odd," said the laird, chuckling; "I do not comprehend it. But then, what the devil set you on smashing all my lady's delft and china ware?—That was a most infamous and provoking action."

“It was she herself, your honour. Sorry would I have been to have broken one dish belonging to the house. I take all the house-servants to witness, that my lady smashed all the dishes with a poker, and now lays the blame on me.”

The laird turned his dim and delighted eyes on his lady, who was crying with vexation and rage, and seemed meditating another personal attack on the culprit, which he did not at all appear to shun, but rather encourage. She, however, vented her wrath in threatenings of the most deep and desperate revenge, the creature all the while assuring her that she would be foiled, and that in all her encounters and contests with him, she would uniformly come to the worst. He was resolved to do his duty, and there before his master he defied her.

The laird thought more than he considered it prudent to reveal; but he had little doubt that his wife would wreak that vengeance on his jotteryman which she avowed, and as little of her capability. He almost shuddered when he recollected one who had taken *something that she had been the waur of*.

In a word, the Lady of Wheelhope’s inveterate malignity against this one object, was like the rod of Moses, that swallowed up the rest of the serpents. All her wicked and evil propensities seemed to be superseded by it, if not utterly absorbed in its virtues. The rest of the family now lived in comparative peace and quietness; for early and late her malevolence was venting itself against the jotteryman, and him alone. It was a delirium of hatred and vengeance, on which the whole bent and bias of her inclination was set. She could not stay from the creature’s presence, for in the intervals when absent from him, she spent her breath in curses and execrations, and then not able to rest, she ran again to seek him, her eyes gleaming with the anticipated delights of vengeance,

while, ever and anon, all the scaith, the ridicule, and the harm, redounded on herself.

Was it not strange that she could not get quit of this sole annoyance of her life? One would have thought she easily might. But by this time there was nothing farther from her intention; she wanted vengeance, full, adequate, and delicious vengeance, on her audacious opponent. But he was a strange and terrible creature, and the means of retaliation came always, as it were, to his hand.

Bread and sweet milk was the only fare that Merodach cared for, and he having bargained for that, would not want it, though he often got it with a curse and with ill will. The lady having intentionally kept back his wonted allowance for some days, on the Sabbath morning following, she set him down a bowl of rich sweet milk, well drugged with a deadly poison, and then she lingered in a little anteroom to watch the success of her grand plot, and prevent any other creature from tasting of the potion. Merodach came in, and the house-maid says to him, "There is your breakfast, creature."

"Oho! my lady has been liberal this morning," said he; "but I am beforehand with her.—Here, little Missie, you seem very hungry to-day—take you my breakfast." And with that he set the beverage down to the lady's little favourite spaniel. It so happened that the lady's only son came at that instant into the anteroom, seeking her, and teasing his mamma about something which took her attention from the hall-table for a space. When she looked again, and saw Missie lapping up the sweet milk, she burst from her lobby like a dragon, screaming as if her head had been on fire, kicked the bowl and the remainder of its contents against the wall, and lifting Missie in her bosom, she retreated hastily, crying all the way.

“Ha, ha, ha—I have you now!” cried Merodach, as she vanished from the hall.

Poor Missie died immediately, and very privately; indeed, she would have died and been buried, and never one have seen her, save her mistress, had not Merodach, by a luck that never failed him, popped his nose over the flower garden wall, just as his lady was laying her favourite in a grave of her own digging. She, not perceiving her tormentor, plied on at her task, apostrophizing the insensate little carcass,—“Ah! poor dear little creature, thou hast had a hard fortune, and hast drank of the bitter potion that was not intended for thee; but he shall drink it three times double, for thy sake!”

“Is that little Missie?” said the eldrich voice of the jotteryman, close at the lady’s ear. She uttered a loud scream, and sunk down on the bank. “Alack for poor little Missie!” continued the creature in a tone of mockery, “My heart is sorry for Missie. What has befallen her—whose breakfast cup did she drink?”

“Hence with thee, thou fiend!” cried the lady; “what right hast thou to intrude on thy mistress’s privacy? Thy turn is coming yet, or may the nature of woman change within me.”

“It is changed already,” said the creature, grinning with delight; “I have thee now, I have thee now! And were it not to shew my superiority over thee, which I do every hour, I should soon see thee strapped like a mad cat, or a worrying bratch. What wilt thou try next?”

“I will cut thy throat, and if I die for it, will rejoice in the deed; a deed of charity to all that dwell on the face of the earth. Go about thy business.”

“I have warned thee before, dame, and I now warn thee again, that all thy mischief meditated against me will fall double on thine own head.”

“I want none of your warning, and none of your instructions, fiendish cur. Hence with your elvish face, and take care of yourself.”

It would be too disgusting and horrible to relate or read all the incidents that fell out between this unaccountable couple. Their enmity against each other had no end, and no mitigation; and scarcely a single day passed over on which her acts of malevolent ingenuity did not terminate fatally for some favourite thing of the lady's, while all these doings never failed to appear as her own act. Scarcely was there a thing, animate or inanimate, on which she set a value, left to her, that was not destroyed; and yet scarcely one hour or minute could she remain absent from her tormentor, and all the while, it seems, solely for the purpose of tormenting him.

But while all the rest of the establishment enjoyed peace and quietness from the fury of their termagant dame, matters still grew worse and worse between the fascinated pair. The lady haunted the menial, in the same manner as the raven haunts the eagle, for a perpetual quarrel, though the former knows that in every encounter she is to come off the loser. But now noises were heard on the stairs by night, and it was whispered among the menials, that the lady had been seeking Merodach's bed by night, on some horrible intent. Several of them would have sworn that they had seen her passing and repassing on the stair after midnight, when all was quiet; but then it was likewise well known, that Merodach slept with well fastened doors, and a companion in another bed in the same room, whose bed, too, was nearest the door. Nobody cared much what became of the jotteryman, for he was an unsocial and disagreeable person; but some one told him what they had seen, and hinted a suspicion of the lady's intent. But

the creature only bit his upper lip, winked with his eyes, and said, "She had better let alone; she will be the first to rue that."

Not long after this, to the horror of the family and the whole country side, the laird's only son was found murdered in his bed one morning, under circumstances that manifested the most fiendish cruelty and inveteracy on the part of his destroyer. As soon as the atrocious act was divulged, the lady fell into convulsions, and lost her reason; and happy had it been for her had she never recovered either the use of reason, or her corporeal functions any more, for there was blood upon her hand, which she took no care to conceal, and there was too little doubt that it was the blood of her own innocent and beloved boy, the sole heir and hope of the family.

This blow deprived the laird of all power of action; but the lady had a brother, a man of the law, who came and instantly proceeded to an investigation of this unaccountable murder; but before the Sheriff arrived, the housekeeper took the lady's brother aside, and told him he had better not go on with the scrutiny, for she was sure the crime would be brought home to her unfortunate mistress; and after examining into several corroborative circumstances, and viewing the state of the raving maniac, with the blood on her hand and arm, he made the investigation a very short one, declaring the domestics all exculpated.

The laird attended his boy's funeral, and laid his head in the grave, but appeared exactly like a man walking in a trance, an automaton, without feelings or sensations, oftentimes gazing at the funeral procession, as on something he could not comprehend. And when the death-bell of the parish church fell a-tolling, as the corpse approached the kirk-stile, he cast a dim eye up towards the belfry, and said hastily, "What,

what's that? Och ay, we're just in time, just in time." And often was he hammering over the name of "Evil Merodach, King of Babylon," to himself. He seemed to have some far-fetched conception that his unaccountable jotteryman had a hand in the death of his only son, and other lesser calamities, although the evidence in favour of Merodach's innocence was as usual quite decisive.

This grievous mistake of Lady Wheelhope (for every landward laird's wife was then styled Lady) can only be accounted for, by supposing her in a state of derangement, or rather under some evil influence, over which she had no control; and to a person in such a state, the mistake was not so very unnatural. The mansion-house of Wheelhope was old and irregular. The stair had four acute turns, all the same, and four landing-places, all the same. In the uppermost chamber slept the two domestics,—Merodach in the bed farthest in, and in the chamber immediately below that, which was exactly similar, slept the young laird and his tutor, the former in the bed farthest in; and thus, in the turmoil of raging passions, her own hand made herself childless.

Merodach was expelled the family forthwith, but refused to accept of his wages, which the man of law pressed upon him, for fear of farther mischief; but he went away in apparent sullenness and discontent, no one knowing whither.

When his dismissal was announced to the lady, who was watched day and night in her chamber, the news had such an effect on her, that her whole frame seemed electrified; the horrors of remorse vanished, and another passion, which I neither can comprehend nor define, took the sole possession of her distempered spirit. "He *must* not go!—He *shall* not go!" she exclaimed. "No, no, no—he shall not—he shall not—he

shall not!" and then she instantly set herself about making ready to follow him, uttering all the while the most diabolical expressions, indicative of anticipated vengeance.—"Oh, could I but snap his nerves one by one, and birl among his vitals! Could I but slice his heart off piecemeal in small messes, and see his blood lopper and bubble, and spin away in purple slays; and then to see him grin, and grin, and grin, and grin! Oh—oh—oh—How beautiful and grand a sight it would be to see him grin, and grin, and grin!" And in such a style would she run on for hours together.

She thought of nothing, she spake of nothing, but the discarded jotteryman, whom most people now began to regard as a creature that was not canny. They had seen him eat, and drink, and work like other people; still he had that about him that was not like other men. He was a boy in form, and an antediluvian in feature. Some thought he was a mule, between a Jew and an ape; some a wizard, some a kelpie, or a fairy, but most of all, that he was really and truly a Brownie. What he was I do not know, and therefore will not pretend to say; but be that as it may, in spite of locks and keys, watching and waking, the Lady of Wheelhope soon made her escape and eloped after him. The attendants, indeed, would have made oath that she was carried away by some invisible hand, for that it was impossible she could have escaped on foot like other people; and this edition of the story took in the country; but sensible people viewed the matter in another light.

As for instance, when Wattie Blythe, the laird's old shepherd, came in from the hill one morning, his wife Bessie thus accosted him.—"His presence be about us, Wattie Blythe! have ye heard what has happened at the ha'? Things are aye turning waur and waur there, and it looks like as if Providence

had gi'en up our laird's house to destruction. This grand estate maun now gang frae the Sprots, for it has finished them."

"Na, na, Bessie, it isna the estate that has finished the Sprots, but the Sprots that hae finished it, an' themsells into the boot. They hae been a wicked and degenerate race, an' aye the langer the waur, till they hae reached the utmost bounds o' earthly wickedness; an' it's time the deil were looking after his ain."

"Ah, Wattie Blythe, ye never said a truer say. An' that's just the very point where your story ends, and mine commences; for hasna the deil, or the fairies, or the brownies, ta'en away our lady bodily, an' the haill country is running and riding in search o' her; and there is twenty hunder merks offered to the first that can find her, an' bring her safe back. They hae ta'en her away, skin an' bane, body an' soul, an' a', Wattie!"

"Hech-wow! but that is awsome! And where is it thought they have ta'en her to, Bessie?"

"O, they hae some guess at that frae her ain hints afore. It is thought they hae carried her after that Satan of a creature, wha wrought sae muckle wae about the house. It is for him they are a' looking, for they ken weel, that where they get the tane they will get the tither."

"Whew! Is that the gate o't, Bessie? Why, then, the awfu' story is nouter mair nor less than this, that the ledly has made a lopment, as they ca't, and run away after a blackgaird jotteryman. Hech-wow! wae's me for human frailty! But that's just the gate! When aince the deil gets in the point o' his finger, he will soon have in his haill hand. Ay, he wants but a hair to make a tether of, ony day. I hae seen her a braw sonsy lass, but even then I feared she was devoted to destruction, for she aye mockit at religion, Bessie, an' that's no a good mark of a young

body. An' she made a' its servants her enemies; an' think you these good men's prayers were a' to blaw away i' the wind, and be nae mair regarded? Na, na, Bessie, my woman, take ye this mark baith o' our ain bairns and ither folk's—If ever ye see a young body that disregards the Sabbath, and makes a mock at the ordinances o' religion, ye will never see that body come to muckle good. A braw hand she has made o' her gibes an' jeers at religion, an' her mockeries o' the poor persecuted hill-folk!—sunk down by degrees into the very dregs o' sin and misery! run away after a scullion!”

“Fy, fy, Wattie, how can ye say sae? It was weel kenn'd that she hatit him wi' a perfect an' mortal hatred, an' tried to make away wi' him mae ways nor ane.”

“Aha, Bessie; but nipping an' scarting are Scots folk's wooing; an' though it is but right that we suspend our judgments, there will naebody persuade me, if she be found alang wi' the creature, but that she has run away after him in the natural way, on her twa shanks, without help either frae fairy or brownie.”

“I'll never believe sic a thing of any woman born, let be a lady weel up in years.”

“Od help ye, Bessie! ye dinna ken the stretch o' corrupt nature. The best o' us, when left to ourselfs, are nae better than strayed sheep, that will never find the way back to their ain pastures; an' o' a' things made o' mortal flesh, a wicked woman is the warst.”

“Alack-a-day! we get the blame o' muckle that we little deserve. But, Wattie, keep ye a gayan sharp look-out about the cleuchs and the caves o' our glen, or hope, as ye ca't; for the lady kens them a' gayan weel; and gin the twenty hunder merks wad come our way, it might gang a waur gate. It wad tocher a' our bonny lasses.”

“Ay, weel I wat, Bessie, that’s nae lee. And now, when ye bring me amind o’t, the L— forgie me gin I didna hear a creature up in Brock-holes this morning, skirling as if something war cutting its throat. It gars a’ the hairs stand on my head when I think it may hae been our leddy, an’ the droich of a creature murdering her. I took it for a battle of wulcats, and wished they might pu’ out ane anither’s thrapples; but when I think on it again, they war unco like some o’ our leddy’s unearthly screams.”

“His presence be about us, Wattie! Haste ye. Pit on your bonnet—take your staff in your hand, and gang an’ see what it is.”

“Shame fa’ me, if I daur gang, Bessie.”

“Hout, Wattie, trust in the Lord.”

“Aweel, sae I do. But ane’s no to throw himsell ower a linn, an’ trust that the Lord’s to kep him in a blanket; nor hing himsell up in a raip, an’ expect the Lord to come and cut him down. An’ it’s nae muckle safer for an auld stiff man to gang away out to a wild remote place, where there is ae body murdering another.—What is that I hear, Bessie? Haud the lang tongue o’ you, and rin to the door, an’ see what noise that is.”

Bessie ran to the door, but soon returned an altered creature, with her mouth wide open, and her eyes set in her head.

“It is them, Wattie! It is them! His presence be about us! What will we do?”

“Them? whaten them?”

“Why, that blackguard creature, coming here, leading our leddy be the hair o’ the head, an’ yerking her wi’ a stick. I am terrified out o’ my wits. What will we do?”

“We’ll *see* what they *say*,” said Wattie, manifestly in as great terror as his wife; and by a natural impulse, or as a last resource, he opened the Bible, not knowing what he did, and then hurried on his spectacles; but before he got two leaves turned over, the two entered, a frightful-looking couple indeed. Merodach, with his old withered face, and ferret eyes, leading the Lady of Wheelhope by the long hair, which was mixed with grey, and whose face was all bloated with wounds and bruises, and having stripes of blood on her garments.

“How’s this!—How’s this, sirs?” said Wattie Blythe.

“Close that book, and I will tell you, goodman,” said Merodach.

“I can hear what you hae to say wi’ the beuk open, sir,” said Wattie, turning over the leaves, as if looking for some particular passage, but apparently not knowing what he was doing. “It is a shameful business this, but some will hae to answer for’t. My leddy, I am unco grieved to see you in sic a plight. Ye hae surely been dooms sair left to yourself.”

The lady shook her head, uttered a feeble hollow laugh, and fixed her eyes on Merodach. But such a look! It almost frightened the simple aged couple out of their senses. It was not a look of love nor of hatred exclusively; neither was it of desire or disgust, but it was a combination of them all. It was such a look as one fiend would cast on another, in whose everlasting destruction he rejoiced. Wattie was glad to take his eyes from such countenances, and look into the Bible, that firm foundation of all his hopes and all his joy.

“I request that you will shut that book, sir,” said the horrible creature; “or if you do not, I will shut it for you with a vengeance;” and with that he seized it, and flung it against the

wall. Bessie uttered a scream, and Wattie was quite paralysed; and although he seemed disposed to run after his best friend, as he called it, the hellish looks of the Brownie interposed, and glued him to his seat.

“Hear what I have to say first,” said the creature, “and then pore your fill on that precious book of yours. One concern at a time is enough. I came to do you a service. Here, take this cursed, wretched woman, whom you style your lady, and deliver her up to the lawful authorities, to be restored to her husband and her place in society. She is come upon one that hates her, and never said one kind word to her in his life, and though I have beat her like a dog, still she clings to me, and will not depart, so enchanted is she with the laudable purpose of cutting my throat. Tell your master and her brother, that I am not to be burdened with their maniac. I have scourged, I have spurned and kicked her, afflicting her night and day, and yet from my side she will not depart. Take her. Claim the reward in full, and your fortune is made, and so farewell.”

The creature bowed and went away, but the moment his back was turned the lady fell a-screaming and struggling like one in an agony, and, in spite of all the old couple’s exertions, she forced herself out of their hands, and ran after the retreating Merodach. When he saw better would not be, he turned upon her, and, by one blow with his stick, struck her down; and, not content with that, he continued to kick and baste her in such a manner as to all appearance would have killed twenty ordinary persons. The poor devoted dame could do nothing, but now and then utter a squeak like a half-worried cat, and writhe and grovel on the sward, till Wattie and his wife came up and withheld her tormentor from further violence. He then bound her hands behind her back with a strong cord,

and delivered her once more to the charge of the old couple, who contrived to hold her by that means and take her home.

Wattie had not the face to take her into the hall, but into one of the outhouses, where he brought her brother to receive her. The man of the law was manifestly vexed at her reappearance, and scrupled not to testify his dissatisfaction; for when Wattie told him how the wretch had abused his sister, and that, had it not been for Bessie's interference and his own, the lady would have been killed outright,

“Why, Walter, it is a great pity that he did not kill her outright,” said he. “What good can her life now do to her, or of what value is her life to any creature living? After one has lived to disgrace all connected with them, the sooner they are taken off the better.”

The man, however, paid old Walter down his two thousand merks, a great fortune for one like him in those days; and not to dwell longer on this unnatural story, I shall only add, very shortly, that the Lady of Wheelhope soon made her escape once more, and flew, as by an irresistible charm, to her tormentor. Her friends looked no more after her; and the last time she was seen alive, it was following the uncouth creature up the water of Daur, weary, wounded, and lame, while he was all the way beating her, as a piece of excellent amusement. A few days after that, her body was found among some wild haggis, in a place called Crook-burn, by a party of the persecuted Covenanters that were in hiding there, some of the very men whom she had exerted herself to destroy, and who had been driven, like David of old, to pray for a curse and earthly punishment upon her. They buried her like a dog at the Yetts of Keppel, and rolled three huge stones upon her grave, which are lying there to this day. When they found

her corpse, it was mangled and wounded in a most shocking manner, the fiendish creature having manifestly tormented her to death. He was never more seen or heard of in this kingdom, though all that country-side was kept in terror for him many years afterwards; and to this day, they will tell you of THE BROWNIE OF THE BLACK HAGGS, which title he seems to have acquired after his disappearance.

This story was told to me by an old man, named Adam Halliday, whose great grandfather, Thomas Halliday, was one of those that found the body and buried it. It is many years since I heard it; but, however ridiculous it may appear, I remember it made a dreadful impression on my young mind. I never heard any story like it, save one of an old foxhound that pursued a fox through the Grampians for a fortnight, and when at last discovered by the Duke of Athole's people, neither of them could run, but the hound was still continuing to walk after the fox, and when the latter lay down the other lay down beside him, and looked at him steadily all the while, though unable to do him the least harm. The passion of inveterate malice seems to have influenced these two exactly alike. But, upon the whole, I scarcely believe the tale can be true.

MOUNT BENDER, *Sept.* 10, 1828.



STRANGE LETTER OF A LUNATIC TO MR JAMES HOGG, OF MOUNT BENDER

SIR;—As you seem to have been born for the purpose of collecting all the whimsical and romantic stories of this country, I have taken the fancy of sending you an account of a most painful and unaccountable one that happened to myself, and at the same time leave you at liberty to make what use of it you please. An explanation of the circumstances from you would give me great satisfaction.

Last summer in June, I happened to be in Edinburgh, and walking very early on the Castle Hill one morning, I perceived a strange looking figure of an old man watching all my motions, as if anxious to introduce himself to me, yet still kept at the same distance. I beckoned him, on which he came waddling briskly up, and taking an elegant gold snuff-box, set with jewels, from his pocket, he offered me a pinch. I accepted of it most readily, and then without speaking a word, he took his box again, thrust it into his pocket, and went away chuckling and laughing in perfect ecstasy. He was even so overjoyed, that, in hobbling down the platform, he would leap from the ground, clap his hands on his loins, and laugh immoderately.

“The devil I am sure is in that body,” said I to myself, “What does he mean? Let me see. I wish I may be well enough! I feel very queer since I took that snuff of his.” I stood there

I do not know how long, like one who had been knocked on the head, until I thought I saw the body peering at me from a shady place in the rock. I hastened to him; but on going up, I found myself standing there. Yes, sir, myself. My own likeness in every respect. I was turned to a rigid statue at once, but the unaccountable being went down the hill convulsed with laughter.

I felt very uncomfortable all that day, and at night having adjourned from the theatre with a party to a celebrated tavern well known to you, judge of my astonishment when I saw another me sitting at the other end of the table. I was struck speechless, and began to watch this unaccountable fellow's motions, and perceived that he was doing the same with regard to me. A gentleman on his left hand, asked his name, that he might drink to their better acquaintance. "Beatman, sir," said the other: "James Beatman, younger, of Drumloning, at your service; one who will never fail a friend at a cheerful glass."

"I deny the premises, principle and proposition," cried I, springing up and smiting the table with my closed hand. "James Beatman, younger, of Drumloning, you cannot be. I am he. I am the *right* James Beatman, and I appeal to the parish registers, to witnesses innumerable, to——"

"Stop, stop, my dear fellow," cried he, "this is no place to settle a matter of such moment as that. I suppose all present are quite satisfied with regard to the premises; let us therefore drop the subject, if you please."

"O yes, yes, drop the dispute!" resounded from every part of the table. No more was said about this strange coincidence; but I remarked, that no one present knew the gentleman, excepting those who took him for me. I heard them addressing him often regarding my family and affairs, and I really thought

the fellow answered as sensibly and as much to the point as I could have done for my life, and began seriously to doubt which of us was the *right* James Beatman.

We drank long and deep, for the song and the glass went round, and the greatest hilarity prevailed; but at length the gentleman at the head of the table proposed calling the bill, at the same time remarking, that we should find it a swinging one. "George, bring the bill, that we may see what is to pay."

"All's paid, sir."

"All paid? You are dreaming, George, or drunk. There has not a farthing been paid by any of us here."

"I assure you all's paid, however, sir. And there's six of claret to come in, and three Glen-Livat."

"Come, George, let us understand one another. Do you persist in asserting that our bill is positively paid?"

"Yes, certainly, sir."

"By whom then?"

"By this good gentleman here," tapping me on the shoulder.

"Oh, Mr Beatman, that's unfair! That's unfair! You have taken us at a disadvantage. But it is so like yourself!"

"Is it, gentlemen? Is it indeed so like myself? I'm sorry for it then; I'll take a bet yon rascal is the *right* James Beatman after all. For, upon the word and honour of a gentleman, I *did not* pay the bill. No, not a farthing of it."

"Gie ower, lad, an' haud the daft tongue o' thee," cried a countryman from the other end of the table. "Ye hae muckle to flee intil a rage about. I think the best thing ye can do to oblige us a', will be to pouch the affront; or I sal take it aff thee head for half a mutchkin; for I ken thou wast out twice, and stayed a gay bitty while baith times. Thou'rt fou. Count thee siller, lad."

This speech set them in a roar of laughter, and, convinced that the countryman was right, and that I, their liberal entertainer, was quite drunk, they all rose simultaneously, and wishing me a good night, left me haranguing them on the falsity of the waiter's statement.

The next morning I intended to have gone with the Stirling morning coach, but arriving a few minutes too late, I went into the office, and began abusing the book-keeper for letting the coach go off too soon. "No, no, sir, you wrong me," said he; "the coach started at the very minute. But as you had not arrived, another took your place, and here is your money again."

"The devil it is," said I; "why, sir, I gave you no money, therefore mine it cannot possibly be."

"Is not your name Mr James Beatman?"

"Yes, to be sure it is. But how came you to know my name?"

"Because I have it in the coach-book here. See!—Mr James Beatman, paid 17s. 6d.; so here it is."

I took the money, fully convinced that I was under the power of some strange enchantment. And ever on these occasions, my mind reverted to the little crooked gentleman, and the gold snuff-box.

From the coach-office I hastened to Newhaven, to catch one of the steamboats going up the Frith; and on the quay whom should I meet face to face but my whimsical namesake and second self, Mr James Beatman. I had almost fainted, and could only falter out, "How is this? You here again?"

"Yes, here I am," said he, with perfect frankness; "I lost my seat in the Stirling coach by sleeping a few minutes too long; but the lad gave me my money again, though I had quite forgot having paid it. And as I must be at Stirling to-day

to meet Mr Walker, I have taken my passage in the Morning Star of Alloa, and from thence I must post it to Stirling."

I was stupified, bamboozled, dumbfounded! And could do nothing but stand and gape, for I had lost *my* place in the coach, got *my* money again, which I never paid—had taken *my* passage in the Morning Star of Alloa, and proposed posting it to Stirling to meet Mr Walker. It must have been the devil, thought I, from whom I took the pinch on the Castle Hill, for I am either become two people, else I am *not* the *right* James Beatman.

I took my seat on one of the sofas in the elegant cabin of the Morning Star—Mr Beatman *secundus* placed himself right over against me. I looked at him—he at me. I grinned—he did the same; but I thought there was a sly leer in his eye which I could not attain, though I was conscious of having been master of it once; and just as I was considering who of us could be the *right* James Beatman, he accosted me as follows:—

"Yon was truly a clever trick you played us last night, though rather an expensive one to yourself. However, as it made me come off with flying colours, I shall take care to requite it in some way, and with interest too!"

"Do you say so?" said I; "you are a strange wag, and I wish I could comprehend you! I suppose you will be talking of requiting me for the Stirling coach hire next."

"Very well remembered," cried he; "I could not recollect of having paid that money, but I now see the trick. You are a strange wag; but here is the sum for you in full."

"Thank you, kindly, sir! very much obliged to you indeed! Five and thirty shillings into pocket! Good! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed he; "and now, sir, if you will be so friendly and affable as to accept the one half of last night's

bill from me, just the half, I will take it kind, and shall regard that business as settled."

"With all my heart, sir! with all my heart, sir!" said I, "only tell me this simple question. Do you suppose that I *am not* the right James Beatman, younger, of Drumloning? For I tell you, sir, and tremble while I do so, that I *am* the right James Beatman;" and saying so, I gave a tremendous tramp on the floor, on which the captain seized me by the shoulder behind, saying, "Who doubts it, sir? No one I am sure can be mistaken in that. Come into the starboard chamber here, and let us have something to drink."

I went with all my heart; but at that moment I felt my mind running on the old warlock on the Castle Hill; and I had no sooner taken my seat, than, on lifting my eyes, there was my companion sitting opposite to me, with the same confounded leer on his face as before. However, we began our potations in great good humour. Ginger beer and brandy mixed was the delicious beverage, and we swigged at it till I felt the far-famed Morning Star begin to twirl round with me like a te-totum. Thinking we were going to sink, I clambered above. All was going on well, but with a strong head-wind, and the ladies mortal sick. I felt quite dizzy, and the roll of the boat rendered it terribly difficult for me to keep my feet. The ladies began to titter and laugh at me. They were all sitting on two forms, the one row close behind the other, and looking miserably bad; and as one freedom courts another, I put my hands in the pockets of my trousers, and steadying myself right in front of them, began an address, condoling with them on their deplorable and melancholy faces, and advising them to go down below, and drink ginger beer mixed with a *leetle* brandy, and there was no fear; when unluckily, at

this point of my harangue, a great roll of the vessel ruining my equipoise, threw me right across four of the ladies, who screamed horribly; and my hands being entangled in my pockets, my head top heavy, and my ears stunned with female shrieks, all that I could do I could not get up: but my efforts made matters still worse. The ladies at length, by a joint effort, tumbled me over, but it was only to throw me upon other four on the next bench, and these I fairly overset. Then there was laughing, screaming, clapping of hands, and loud hurras, all mixed together, for every person on board was above by this time. I never was so much ashamed in my life, and had no other resource, but to haste down once more to the brandy and ginger beer.

We drank on and sung until we came near the quay at Alloa. There were five of us; but I had not seen my namesake from the time we first entered, for he never molested me, unless when I was quite sober. But on calling the steward, and enquiring what was to pay, he told us all was paid for our party. The party stared at one another, and I at the steward; till a Mr Anderson asked, who had the kindness, or rather the insolence to do such a thing. The man said it was I; but I being conscious of having done no such thing, denied it with many oaths. Each of the party, however, flung down his share, which the steward obliged me to pocket. I felt myself in a strange state indeed, and quite uncertain whether I was the *right* James Beatman or not.

On going up to the Tontine, I found dinner and a chaise for Stirling ordered in my name; and, though feeling quite as if in a dream, I sat down with the rest of our boat party. But scarcely had I taken my seat, ere I was desired to speak with one in another room. There I found the captain, who received

me with a grave face, and said, "This is a very disagreeable business, Mr Beatman."

"What is it, sir?"

"About this young lady who was on board. Her brother wants to challenge you; but I told him that you were a little intoxicated, else you were quite incapable of such a thing, and I was sure you would make any apology."

"I will, indeed, sir. I will make any apology that shall be required; for, in truth, it was a mere accident, which I could not help, and I am truly sorry for it. I will make any apology."

He then took me away to a genteel house out of the town, and introduced me to a most beautiful and elegant young lady, still in teens, who eyed me with a most ungracious look, and then said, "Sir, had it not been for the dread of peril, I would have scorned an apology from such a person; but as matters stand at present, I am content to accept of one. But I must tell you, that if you had not been a coward and a poltroon, you never would have presumed to look me again in the face."

"My dear madam," said I, "there is some confounded mistake here; for, on the word of a gentleman, I declare, and by the honour of manhood, I swear that I never till this moment beheld that lovely face of yours."

The whole party uttered exclamations of astonishment and abhorrence on hearing these words, and the captain said, "Good G—, Mr Beatman, did you not confess it to me, saying you were sorry for it, and that you were willing to make any apology?"

"Because I thought this had been one of the ladies whom I overthrew on deck," said I, "when yon unmannerly wave made me lose my equilibrium; but on honour and conscience, this divine creature I never saw before. And if I had, sooner

than have offered her any insult, I would have cut off my right hand."

The lady declared I was the person. Other two gentlemen did the same, and the irritated brother had me committed for a criminal assault, and carried to prison, which I liked very ill. But on being conducted off, I said, "Gentlemen, I cannot explain this matter to you, though I understand well enough who is the aggressor. I have for the last twenty-four hours been struggling with an inextricable phenomenon—plague on the old fellow with the gold snuff-box! But I have *now* the satisfaction of knowing that *I am* the right James Beatman after all!"

There was I given over to the constables, and put under confinement till I could find bail, which detained me in Alloa till next day at noon; and ere I reached Stirling, Mr Walker had gone off to the Highlands without me, at which I was greatly vexed, as he was to have taken me with him in his gig to the braes of Glen-Orchy, where we were to have shot together. I asked the landlord when Mr Walker went away, and the former told me he only went off that day, for that he had waited four and twenty hours on a companion of his, a strange fish, who had got into a scrape with a pretty girl about Alloa, but that he came at last, and Walker and he went off together: this was a clinker. Who was I to think was the *right* James Beatman now?

I could get no conveyance for two days, and at length I reached Inverouran, where the only person I found was my namesake, who once more placed himself over against me, and still with the same malicious leer on his face. I accused him at once of the insult to the young lady, which was like to cost me so dear. He shook his head with a leering smile, and

said, "I well knew it was not he who was guilty, but myself; for saving that he was pitched headlong right upon a whole covey of ladies, when he was tipsy with ginger beer and brandy, he had never so much as seen a lady during the passage."

"You sir," said I. "Do you presume to say that *you* were tipsy with ginger beer and brandy, and that *you* were pitched upon the two tiers of ladies? Then, sir, let me tell you that you are one of the most notorious impostors that ever lived. A most unaccountable and impalpable being, who has taken a fancy to personate me, and to cross and confound me in every relation of life. I will submit to this no longer, and therefore pray favour me with your proper address." He gave me my own, on which I got into such a rage at him, that I believe I would have pistoled him on the spot, had not Mr Fletcher, the landlord, at that moment, tapped me on the shoulder, and told me that Mr Watten and Mr Walker wanted me in the next room. I followed him; but in such bad humour that my chagrin would not hide, and forthwith accused Mr Walker of leaving me behind, and bringing an impostor with him. He blamed me for such an unaccountable joke, a mistake it could not be, for I surely never would pretend to say that I did not come along with him. Mr Watten, an English gentleman, then asked me if I would likewise deny having won a bet from him at angling of five pounds. I begged his pardon, and said, I recollected of no such thing. "Well then, to assist your memory, here is your money," said he. I said, I would not take it, but run double or quits with him for the greatest number of birds bagged on the following day; for the real fact was, that neither trout nor bait had I taken since I left Edinburgh. Walker and he stared at one another, and began a reasoning

with me, but I lost all manner of temper at their absurdity, and went away to my bed.

Never was there a human creature in such a dilemma as I now found myself. I was conscious of possessing the same body and spirit that I ever did, without any dereliction of my mental faculties. But here was another being endowed with the same personal qualifications, who looked as I looked, thought as I thought, and expressed what I would have said; and more than all seemed to be engaged in every transaction along with me, or did what I should have done and left me out. What was I next to do, for in this state I could not live? I had become, as it were, two bodies, with only one soul between them, and felt that some decisive measures behoved to be resorted to immediately, for I would much rather be out of the world than remain in it on such terms.

Overpowered by these bewildering thoughts, I fell asleep, and the whole night over dreamed about the old man and the gold snuff-box, who told me that I was now himself, and that he had transformed his own nature and spirit into my shape and form; and so strong was the impression, that when I awoke, I was quite stupid. On going out early for a mouthful of fresh air, my second was immediately by my side. I was just going to break out in a rage at this endless counterfeiting of my person, when he prevented me, by beginning first.

“I am sorry to see you looking so disturbed this morning,” said he, “and must really entreat of you to give up this foolery. The joke is worn quite stale, I assure you. For the first day or so it did very well, and was rather puzzling; but now I cannot help pitying you, and beg that you will forthwith appear in your own character, and drop mine.”

“Sir, I have no other character to appear in,” said I. “I was born, christened, and educated as James Beatman, younger, of Drumloning; and that designation I will maintain against all the counterfeits on earth.”

“Well, your perversity confounds me,” replied he; “for you must be perfectly sensible that you are acting a part that is not your own. That you are either a rank counterfeit, or, what I rather begin to suspect, the devil in my likeness.”

These words overpowered me so much, that I fell a trembling, for I thought of the vision of last night, and what the old man had told me; and the thoughts of having become the devil in my own likeness, was more than my heart could brook, and I dare say I looked fearfully ill.

“O ho! old Cloots, are you caught?” cried he, jeeringly; “well, your sublime majesty will choose to keep your distance in future, as I would rather dispense with your society.”

“Sir, I’ll let you know that I am *not* the devil,” cried I, in great wrath, “and if you dare, sir, it shall be tried this moment, and on this spot, who is the counterfeit, and who is the *right* James Beatman, you or I.”

“To-night at the sun going down, that shall be tried here, if you change not your purpose before that time,” said he. “In the meanwhile let us hie to the moors, for our companions are out, and I have a bet of ten guineas with that Englishman.” And forthwith he hasted after the other two, and left me in dreadful perplexity, whether I was the devil or James Beatman. I followed to the moors—those dark and interminable moors of Buravurich—but not one bird could I get. They would scarcely let me come in view of them; and, moreover, my dog seemed to be in a dream as well as myself. He would do nothing but stare about him like a crazed beast, as if constantly

in a state of terror. At the croak of the raven he turned up his nose, as if making a dead point at heaven, and at the yell of the eagle he took his tail between his legs and ran. I lost heart and gave up the sport, convinced that all was not right with me. How could a person shoot game while in a state of uncertainty whether he was the devil or not?

I returned to Inverouran, and at night-fall Mr Watten came in, but no more. He was no sooner seated than he began to congratulate me on my success, acknowledging that he was again fairly beat.

“And pray how do you know that I have beat you?” said I.

“Why, what means this perversity?” said he; “did we not meet at six o’clock as agreed, and count our birds, and found that you had a brace more? You cannot have forgot that.”

“Very well, my dear sir,” said I, “as I do not choose to give a gentleman the lie, against my own interest, I’ll thank you for my money, and then I’ll tell you what *I* suppose to be the truth.” He paid it. “And now,” continued I, “the d—l a bird did I count with you or any other person to-day, for the best of reasons, I had not one to count.”

At the setting of the sun I loaded my pistols and attended at the appointed place, which was in a little concealed dell near the corner of the lake. My enemy met me. We fired at six paces distance, and I fell. Rather a sure sign that I *was* the right James Beatman, but which of the I’s it was that fell I never knew till this day, nor ever can.

These, sir, are all the incidents that I recollect relating to this strange adventure. When I next came a little to myself, I found myself in this lunatic asylum, with my head shaven, and my wounds dressed, and waited upon by a great, burly vulgar fellow, who refuses to open his mouth in answer to any

question of mine. I have been frequently visited by my father, and by several surgeons; but they, too, preserve toward me looks of the most superb mystery, and often lay their fingers on their lips. One day I teased my keeper so much, that he lost patience, and said, "Whoy, sur, un you wooll know the treuth, you have droonken away your seven senses. That's all, so never mind."

Now, sir, this vile hint has cut me to the heart. It is manifest that I have been in a state of derangement; but instead of having been driven to it by drinking, it has been solely caused by my wound, and by having been turned into two men, acting on various and distinct principles, yet still conscious of an idiosyncrasy.—These circumstances, as they affected me, were enough to overset the mind of any one, and though to myself quite unintelligible, I send them to you, in hopes that, by publishing them, you may induce an inquiry, which may tend to the solution of this mystery that hangs over my fate.

I remain, sir, your perplexed, but very humble servant,

JAMES BEATMAN.

This letter puzzled me exceedingly, and certainly I would have regarded it altogether as the dream of a lunatic, had it not been for two circumstances. These were his being left behind at Stirling, and posting the rest of the road himself; and the duel, and wound at the last. These I could not identify with the visions of a disordered imagination, if there were any proofs abiding. And having once met with Mr Walker, of Crowell, at the house of my friend Mr Stein, the distiller, I wrote to him, requesting an explanation of these circumstances, and all others relating to the unfortunate catastrophe, which came under his observation. His answer was as follows:—

“SIR;—I feel that I cannot explain the circumstances relating to my young friend’s misfortune to your satisfaction, and for the sake of his family who are my near relatives, I dare not tell you what I think, because these thoughts will not conform to human reason. This thing is certain, that neither Mr Watten nor I ever saw more than one person. I took him from Stirling to Inverouran on the Black Mount with me in my own gig; yet strange to say, a chaise arrived at the inn the night but one after our arrival with the same gentleman, as we supposed, who blamed me bitterly for leaving him behind. The chaise came after dark. Mr Beatman had been with us on the previous evening, and we had not seen him subsequently till he stepped out of the carriage. These are the facts, reconcile them if you can. Mr Beatman’s hallucinations were first manifested that night. The landlord came into us, and said, ‘I wat pe te mhotter with te prave shentleman’ in te oter rroom? Hu! she pe cot into creat pig tarnnation twarvel with her own self. She pe eiter trunk or horn mat.’

“I sent for him and he came on the instant, but looked much disturbed. On the 12th he shot as well as I ever saw him do, and was excellent company; but that night he was shot, as he affirms in a duel, and carried in dangerously wounded, in a state of utter insensibility, in which he continued for six weeks.

“This duel, is of all things I ever heard of, the most mysterious. He was seen go by himself into the little dell at the head of the loch. I myself heard the two shots, yet there was no other man there that any person knew of, and still it was quite impossible that the pistol could have been fired by his own hand. The ball had struck him on the right side of the head, leaving a considerable fracture, cut the top of his right ear, and lodged in his shoulder; so that it must either have been

fired at him while in a stooping posture, or from the air straight above him. Both the pistols were found discharged, and lying very near one another. This is all that I or any mortal man know of the matter, save himself; and though he is now nearly well and quite collected, he is still perfectly incoherent about that.

“I remain, sir, yours truly,

“ALEXANDER WALKER.

“CROWELL, *Nov.* 6, 1827.”



NOTES

Mary Burnet

Like Hogg's poem "Kilmeny", "Mary Burnet" is rooted in Border folk traditions about Fairyland; and, as in "Kilmeny", Fairyland in Hogg's story seems to be associated with the Christian heaven. In reading "Mary Burnet" it should be remembered that green was the colour usually worn by the fairies; that the numbers three and seven had a mystical significance; and that scarlet twine and rowan-tree wood were thought to give protection against fairy enchantments and witchcraft.

The revisions by Robert Hogg and William Blackwood for the 1829 reprinting of this story were particularly extensive, and their numerous cuts amount in total to almost two thousand words. This edition reprints the story from the February 1828 number of *Blackwood's* (vol. xxiii, pp. 214–27). On p. 8 line 7 of the present edition, "Jean" is a correction for "Jane".

The Brownie of the Black Haggs

This story has been reprinted from the October 1828 number of *Blackwood's* (vol. xxiv, pp. 489–96), where it first appeared. Merodach was the name of the city-god of Babylon, and Evil-Merodach was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, whom he succeeded on the throne of

Babylon. For “the rod of Moses, that swallowed up the rest of the serpents”, see Exodus, chapter 7.

Strange Letter of a Lunatic

Hogg offered this story to Blackwood in April 1830 (see National Library of Scotland MS 4027, fol. 185), but it was rejected. The story eventually appeared in the December 1830 number of *Fraser's Magazine*, and is reprinted for only the second time in the present edition. A manuscript of “Strange Letter of a Lunatic” in Hogg’s hand survives in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (MS Papers 42 item 2). This is clearly the manuscript offered to Blackwood, as it takes the form of a letter addressed to Christopher North, the fictional editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*. A comparison of this manuscript with the *Fraser's* version shows that the story was extensively re-written before being sent to London for publication; Hogg no doubt produced a second manuscript (now lost) from which the *Fraser's* text was printed. I have reproduced the *Fraser's* text (vol. II p. 526–32), with the following emendations, which seek to correct errors by the printer:

- p. 55 l. 12 I beckoned him, on which] I beckoned him on,
which *FM*
- p. 57 l. 18 gentleman here,] gentleman here, *FM*
- p. 57 l. 18 shoulder.] shoulder.” *FM*
- p. 57 l. 25 “Gie ower,] “Gie awer, *FM*
- p. 57 l. 30 Count thee siller,] Count the siller *FM*
- p. 59 l. 21 with interest too!"] with interest too?" *FM*
- p. 61 l. 8 and these I fairly] and there I fairly *FM*
- p. 63 l. 27 Inverouran] Inverauran *FM*
- p. 64 l. 26 I said, I would not take it,] I said, “I would not
take it, *FM*

NOTES

- p. 67 l. 29 shaven, and] shaven. and *FM*
p. 69 l. 18 mat.']} mat." *FM*

Throughout this story, periods following "Mr" have been removed, to match the style of the first two stories.



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James Hogg, “The Ettrick Shepherd” (1770–1835), is remembered today as the author of that strange and unsettling novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. To his contemporaries, though, he was probably better known for his poems and for his stories – especially his supernatural tales, which often drew upon the folk-beliefs of the Scottish countryside.

The three stories in this volume – “Mary Burnet”, “The Brownie of the Black Hags”, and “Strange Letter of a Lunatic” – fall into this category. In each, Hogg shows his mastery of the craft of storytelling, and his understanding of the quirks, possibilities, and dark undercurrents of human psychology.



Cover image: “The Brownie of Blednoch”, by Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864–1933)
Image courtesy of Glasgow Life Photo Library

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