

THE
STORY TELLER.

THE MURDER DISCOVERED.
THE WIDOW AND HER SON.
ENCOUNTER WITH A LION.
THE SOLDIER'S WIFE.
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GRANT AND
M·PHERSON, AT HELL BRIDGE, A
DANGEROUS PASS IN THE HIGH-
LANDS OF SCOTLAND.



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blood THE MURDER DISCOVERED.

I accompanied the gentleman into the garden and was shown the place where her own father found his murdered daughter. The grass was red with blood, and the marks of feet were quite visible on the ground, which happened to be soft and wet. In endeavouring to trace the footsteps, we observed that they led over some ground which had been newly dug with the spade, and that they had made a remarkably distinct impression on the loose soil. On examining that impression we saw that there was something particular in the form of the shoe. It was uncommonly broad and large, and round-toed, and, from its shape, gave reason to suspect that its wearer was what is called flat-soled. It had also been lately pieced at the heel and toe, and armed with broad-headed tacks, the points of which were distinctly marked. This was an important discovery, and Mr Johnson, who was accustomed to use his pencil, set himself, with the assistance of the surgeon, to take a correct measurement and drawing of it on paper. In the meantime, Mr Thomson and I continued the search, and having traced the footsteps to the garden wall, the good minister, who happened to be before me, uttered an exclamation of horror, and directed my attention to a stone on the top of the wall which was stained with blood. On looking more minutely, we saw the marks of bloody fingers on the stone, and concluded that the murderer had made his retreat out of the garden at this place. A plowed field on the other side of the wall favoured our further search, and we tracked the villain to a small piece of water where he had probably washed his hands, and through which he appeared to have waded, as the prints of feet were

seen on the opposite bank. I threw off my shoes and stockings, and followed the course we supposed the murderer had taken as accurately as I could; but as the ground on the other side was covered with wood, I could trace him no farther. On my return, I observed something bright at the bottom of the water, which I took up, and found to be a larged clasped knife, with the letters R. S. scratched rudely on the handle. I shuddered to think that with this very instrument the fatal deed was probably committed, and we were confirmed in this opinion by discovering marks of blood on the handle, which the water had not wholly washed away.

When the ceremony of interment was over, and before any person began to retire, Mr Thomson, standing on a grave-stone, informed the company, that it was the wish of the sheriff that no person should be permitted to leave the church-yard till an examination had taken place, which might serve to throw some light on this dark and horrid business. "Huzza!" cried Robert Stewart; "that's right! I'll guard the yett, and let none out." "You are saved that trouble, young man," replied Mr Thomson, "for there are constables already posted at the gate, and none need attempt to escape." "I must request every person," continued he, "to sit down on the grass in the vacant space at the north side of the church, arranged as nearly in rows as possible. That you may not think this request unnecessary, I will explain to you the reason of it. The murderer, whoever he was, left the impression of his shoe on some new dug ground near the spot where the crime was committed. An accurate drawing of the form and dimensions of that impression has been taken by my friend Mr Johnson, and is now in my hand. Our intention is to examine the feet of all who are present and compare their shoes with this draught, in hopes that this measure may tend to detect the

guilty person." My eyes were steadily fixed on Robert Stewart during this speech, and I observed his face turn red and pale by turns. The marks of guilt were visible, I thought, on his countenance; but when Mr Thomson ceased speaking, he had recovered himself sufficiently to exclaim, "What good 'ill that do? D'ye think the man that killed the lass wad liae the face to come here? or, if he was here, how could you find him out by the sted o' his foot? A hunder folk may lia'e shoon o' the same size, and if made by ae shoemaker, they may be a' the same shape too. It may mak innocent folk suspected, and will do mair ill than good; sae for my part I winna consent till't. Come, let us be off lads." As he spake, he pulled some of his companions by the arm, and turned towards the gate, with the intention of making his escape. "The first man that leaves the church-yard before he is examined," cried Mr Johnson from among the crowd, "will be taken up as a suspected person, and committed to jail. I have the authority of the sheriff for saying so." A murmur of approbation succeeded his speech, and Stewart turned back intimidated, and seated himself on a grave-stone at a little distance, folding his arms across his breast, and kicking his heels against one of the feet of the stone, in order to appear very much at his ease. As soon as silence was obtained, Mr Thomson, in a few simple words, refuted Stewart's objections, and at the same time held up to public view Mr Johnson's drawing of the footstep, to convince the people that there was something so remarkably peculiar in its shape, there could be little doubt of finding out the person to whom it belonged, by the means proposed. Every one now seemed eager to have his shoes examined, and hastened to seat himself on the grass. Two shoemakers were employed to take the measurement, and Mr Johnson accompanied them with the drawing in his hand. Stewart

had placed himself in the middle of the crowd, and I saw him make one or two unsuccessful attempts to shift his seat, so as to escape examination. When at last his turn came, his colour suddenly changed to a deadly pale, and with a horrid groan, he fell senseless on the ground. He was restored by the application of some water, which was quickly procured, and looking wildly round him, he exclaimed, "You cannot say that I did it! it was dark—who saw me?" "God Almighty saw you, unhappy young man!" said Mr Johnson, in a tone which thrilled through my heart; for he had now taken the dimensions of Stewart's shoe, and found it correspond in every particular to the copy he had drawn. The murderer, for I had now no doubt that this was he, having recovered his strength, started up on his feet, and drawing a sharp-pointed knife from his pocket, threatened to stab to the heart the man that laid hands on him. He then made a desperate spring, and before any person had sufficient presence of mind to prevent him, reached the church-yard wall, which he cleared without difficulty, but losing his balance when he reached the other side, he stumbled forward, and fell on the point of his knife. He was now overtaken and secured, and as he was losing much blood, he was conveyed to the manse, which happened to be the nearest house; the surgeon, who was present, attended him for the purpose of dressing his wound. The knife had entered the bowels, and made a dangerous wound, which the surgeon immediately pronounced likely to prove fatal. The unfortunate wretch overheard the opinion of the surgeon, and cried out with a savage joy, which filled every person present with horror, "Then I'll disappoint the law yet. If I could na mak my escape in ae way, I'll do it in another. Sleep, sleep, they say, it's a sleep." "Alas! young man," said Mr Thomson, shuddering as he spake, "in that

sleep there are awful dreams to the wicked—dreams do I say? they are horrible realities. God grant that I may not find—” “It’s a lie!” interrupted he with a dreadful oath, “I’ll no believe it—sae ye needna preach to me.” Mr Thomson, finding he could do no good by continuing the conversation, left the room; and it was not long after this he learned that the wretched murderer died, still hardened and impenitent.

THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

DURING my residence in the country, I used frequently to attend at the old village church. Its shadowy aisles, its mouldering monuments, its dark oaken pannelling, all reverend with the gloom of departed years, seemed to fit it for the haunt of solemn meditation. A Sunday, too, in the country is so holy in its repose—such a pensive quiet reigns over the face of nature, that every restless passion is charmed down, and we feel all the natural religion of the soul gently springing up within us:

“Sweet day, so pure, so calm, so bright,
The bridle of the earth and sky.”

I do not pretend to be what is called a devout man; but there are feelings that visit me in a country church, and the beautiful serenity of nature, which I experience no where else; and if not a more religious, I think I am a better man on Sunday, than on any other day of the seven.

But in this church I felt myself continually thrown back upon the world, by the frigidity and pomp of the poor worms around me. The only being that seemed thoroughly to feel the humble and prostrate

piety of a true christian, was a poor decrepit old woman, bending under the weight of years and infirmities. She bore the traces of something better than abject poverty. The lingerings of decent pride were still visible in her appearance. Her dress, though humblo in the extreme, was scrupulously clean. Some trivial respect, too, had been awarded her; for she did not take her seat among the village poor, but sat alone on the steps of the altar. She seemed to have survived all love, all friendship, all society, and to have nothing left but the hopes of heaven. When I saw her feebly rising and bending her aged form in prayer—habitually conning her prayer-book, which her palsied hand and failing eyes would scarce permit her to read, but which she evidently knew by heart—I felt persuaded that the faltering voico of that poor woman arose to heaven far beforo the responses of the clerk, the swell of the organ, or the chaunting of the choir.

I am fond of loitering about country churches, and this was so delightfully situated, that it frequently attracted me. It stood on a knoll, round which a small stream made a beautiful bend, and then wound its way through a long reach of soft meadow scenery. The church was surrounded by yew trees, which seemed almost coeval with itself. Its tall gothic spire shot up lightly from among them, with rooks and crows generally wheeling about it. I was seated there one still sunny morning, watching two labourers who were digging a grave. They had chosen one of the most remote and neglected corners of the church-yard; where from the number of nameless graves around, it would appear that the indigent poor and friendless were huddled into the earth. I was told that the new-mado grave was for the only son of a poor widow. While I was meditating on the distinctions of worldly rank, which extend thus down into the very dust, the toll

of the bell announced the approach of the funeral. They were the obsequies of poverty, with which pride had nothing to do. A coffin of the plainest materials, without pall or covering, was borne by some of the villagers. The sexton walked before, with an air of cold indifference. There were no mock mourners in the trappings of affected woe; but there was one real mourner, who feebly tottered after the corpse. It was the aged mother of the deceased—the poor old woman whom I had seen seated on the steps of the altar. She was supported by a humble friend, who was endeavouring to comfort her. A few of the neighbouring poor had joined the train, and some of the children of the village were running hand in hand, now shouting with unthinking mirth, and now pausing to gaze, with childish curiosity, on the grief of the mourner.

As the funeral train approached the grave, the parson issued from the church porch, arrayed in the surplice, with prayer book in hand, and attended by the clerk. The service, however, was a mere act of charity. The deceased had been destitute, and the survivor penniless. It was shuffled through, therefore, in form, but coldly and unfeelingly. The well fed priest moved but a few steps from the church-door; his voice could scarcely be heard at the grave; and never did I hear the funeral service, that sublime and touching ceremony, turned into such a frigid mummery of words.

I approached the grave. The coffin was placed on the ground. On it were inscribed the name and age of the deceased—"George Somers, aged 26 years." The poor mother had been assisted to kneel down at the head of it. Her withered hands were clasped, as if in prayer; but I could perceive by a feeble rocking of the body, and a convulsive motion of the lips, that she was gazing on the last relics of her son, with the yearnings of a mother's heart.

The service being ended, preparations were made to deposit the coffin in the earth. There was that bustling noise which breaks so harshly on the feelings of grief and affection; directions given in the cold tones of business; the striking of spades into sand and gravel; which at the grave of those we love, is, of all sounds the most withering. The bustle around seemed to awaken the mother from a wretched reverie. She raised her glazed eyes, and looked about with a faint wildness. As the men approached with cords to lower the coffin into the grave, she rung her hands, and broke into an agony of grief. The poor woman who attended her took her by the arm, endeavouring to raise her from the earth, and to whisper something like consolation—"Nay, now—nay, now—don't take it so sorely to heart." She could only shake her head and wring her hands, as one not to be comforted.

As they lowered the body into the earth, the creaking of the cords seemed to agonize her; but when on some accidental obstruction there was a justling of the coffin, all the tenderness of the mother burst forth; as if any harm could come to him who was far beyond the reach of worldly suffering.

I could see no more—my heart swelled into my throat—my eyes filled with tears—I felt as if I were acting a barbarous part, in standing by and gazing idly on this scene of maternal anguish. I wandered to another part of the church-yard, where I remained until the funeral train had dispersed.

When I saw the mother slowly and painfully quitting the grave, leaving behind her the remains of all that was dear to her on earth, and returning to silence and destitution, my heart ached for her. What, thought I, are the distresses of the rich? they have friends to soothe—pleasures to beguile—a world to divert and dissipate their griefs. What are the sorrows of the young? their growing minds soon

close above the wound—their elastic spirits soon rise beneath the pressure—their green and ductile affections soon twine round new objects. But the sorrows of the poor, who have no outward appliances to soothe—the sorrows of the aged, with whom life at best is but a wintry day, and who can look for no after-growth of joy—the sorrows of the widow, aged, solitary, destitute, mourning over an only son, the last solace of her years; these are indeed sorrows which make us feel the impotency of consolation.

It was sometime before I left the church-yard: On my way homeward I met with the woman who had acted as comforter; she was just returned from accompanying the mother to her lonely habitation; and I drew from her some particulars connected with the affecting scene I had witnessed.

The parents of the deceased had resided in the village from childhood. They had inhabited one of the neatest cottages, and by various rural occupations, and the assistance of a small garden, had supported themselves creditably and comfortably, and led a happy and blameless life. They had one son, who had grown up to be the staff and pride of their age.—“Oh, Sir!” said the good woman, “he was such a likely lad, so sweet-tempered, so kind to every one around him, so dutiful to his parents! It did one’s heart good to see him on a Sunday, dressed out in his best, so tall, so straight, so cheery, supporting his old mother to church—for she was always fonder of leaning on George’s arm, than on her goodman’s; and poor soul she might well be proud of him, for a finer lad there was not in all the country round.”

Unfortunately, the son was tempted, during a year of scarcity and agricultural hardship, to enter into the service of one of the small craft that plied on a neighbouring river. He had not been long in this employ, when he was entrapped by a press-gang, and

carried off to sea. His parents received tidings of his seizure ; but beyond that they could learn nothing. It was the loss of their main prop. The father, who was already infirm, grew heartless and melancholy, and sunk into his grave. The widow, left lonely in her age and feebleness, could no longer support herself, and came upon the parish. Still there was a kind feeling towards her throughout the village, and a certain respect, as being one of the oldest inhabitants. As no one applied for the cottage in which she had passed so many happy days, she was permitted to remain in it, where she lived solitary and almost helpless. The few wants of nature were chiefly supplied from the scanty productions of her little garden, which the neighbours would now and then cultivate for her. It was but a few days before the time at which these circumstances were told me, that she was gathering some vegetables for her repast, when she heard the cottage door which faced the garden suddenly open ; a stranger came out, and seemed to be looking eagerly and wildly around. He was dressed in seaman's clothes, was emaciated and ghastly pale, and bore the air of one broken by sickness and hardships. He saw her and hastened towards her ; but his steps were faint and faltering ; he sunk on his knees before her, and sobbed like a child. The poor woman gazed upon him with a vacant and wandering eye. " Oh my dear, dear mother ! don't you know your son ? your poor boy George ! " It was the wreck of her once noble lad, who, shattered by wounds, by sickness, and by foreign imprisonment, had at length dragged his wasted limbs homeward, to repose among the scenes of his childhood.

I will not attempt to detail the particulars of such a meeting, where joy and sorrow were so completely blended ; still he was alive ; he was come home ; he might yet live to comfort and cherish her old age ;

Nature, however, was exhausted in him; and if any thing had been wanting to finish the work of fate, the desolation of his native cottage had been sufficient. He stretched himself on the pallet on which his widowed mother had passed many a sleepless night, and he never rose from it again.

The villagers, when they heard that George Somers had returned, crowded to see him, offering every comfort and assistance that their humble means afforded. He was too weak, however, to talk; he could only look his thanks. His mother was his constant attendant; and he seemed unwilling to be helped by any other hand.

There is something in sickness, that breaks down the pride of manhood, that softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of infancy. Who that has languished, even in advanced life, in sickness and despondency; who that has pined on a weary bed, in the neglect and loneliness of a foreign land, but has thought on the mother "that looked on his childhood," that smoothed his pillow, and administered to his helplessness? Oh! there is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son, that transeends all other affections of the heart. It is neither chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment; she will glory in his fame, and exult in his prosperity: and if adversity overtake him, he will be the dearer to her by misfortune: and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him; and if the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him.

Poor George Somers had known well what it was to be in sickness, and none to soothe—lonely, and in prison, and none to visit him. He could not endure his mother from his sight; if she moved away, his

eye would follow her. She would sit for hours by his bed, watching him as he slept. Sometimes he would start from a feverish dream, and look anxiously up until he saw her venerable form bending over him, when he would take her hand, lay it on his bosom, and fall asleep with the tranquillity of a child. In this way he died.

My first impulse on hearing this humble tale of affliction, was to visit the cottage of the mourner, and administer pecuniary assistance, and, if possible comfort. I found, however, on inquiry, that the good feelings of the villagers had prompted them to do every thing that the case admitted; and as the poor know best how to console each other's sorrows, I did not venture to intrude.

The next Sunday I was at the village church, when, to my surprise, I saw the poor old woman tottering down the aisle to her accustomed seat on the steps of the altar.

She had made an effort to put on something like mourning for her son; and nothing could be more touching than this struggle between pious affection and utter poverty: a black ribband or so,—a faded black handkerchief, and one or two more such humble attempts to express by outward signs the grief which passes show. When I looked round on the storied monuments, the stately hatchments, the cold marble pomp, with which grandeur mourned magnificently over departed pride, and turned to this poor widow, bowed down by age and sorrow, at the altar of her God, and offering up the prayers and praises of a pious, though broken heart, I felt that this living monument of real grief was worth them all.

I related her story to some of the wealthy members of the congregation, and they were moved by it. They exerted themselves to render her situation more comfortable, and to lighten her afflictions. It

was, however, but smoothing a few steps to the grave. In the course of a Sunday or two after she was missed from her usual seat at church, and before I left the neighbourhood, I heard with a feeling of satisfaction, that she had quietly breathed her last, and had gone to rejoin those she loved, in that world where sorrow is never known, and friends are never parted.

ENCOUNTER WITH A LION.

THE day was exceedingly pleasant, and not a cloud was to be seen. For a mile or two we travelled along the banks of the river, which in this part abounded in tall mat-rushes. The dogs seemed much to enjoy prowling about and examining every bushy place, and at last met with some object among the rushes, which caused them to set up a most vehement and determined barking. We explored the spot with caution, as we suspected, from the peculiar tone of the bark, that it was what it proved to be, lions. Having encouraged the dogs to drive them out, a task which they performed with great willingness, we had a full view of an enormous black maned lion and lioness. The latter was seen only for a minute, as she made her escape up the river, under concealment of the rushes; but the lion came steadily forward, and stood still to look at us. At this moment we felt our situation not free from danger, as the animal seemed preparing to spring upon us, and we were standing on the bank, at the distance of only a few yards from him, most of us being on foot and unarmed, without any visible possibility of escaping. I had given up my horse to the hunters,

and was on foot myself; but there was no time for fear, and it was useless to attempt avoiding him. I stood well on my guard, holding my pistols in my hand, with my finger on the trigger, and those who had muskets, kept themselves prepared in the same manner. But at this instant the dogs boldly flew in between us and the lion, and surrounding him, kept him at bay by their violent and resolute barking. The courage of these faithful animals was most admirable; they advanced up to the side of the huge beast, and stood making the greatest clamour in his face, without the least appearance of fear. The lion, conscious of his strength, remained unmoved at their noisy attempts, and kept his head towards us. At one moment, the dogs, perceiving his eyes thus engaged, had advanced close to his feet, and seemed as if they would actually seize hold of him; but they paid dearly for their imprudence, for, without discomposing the majestic and steady attitude in which he stood fixed, he merely moved his paw, and at the next instant I beheld two lying dead. In doing this he made so little exertion, that it was scarcely perceptible by what means they had been killed. Of the time which we gained by the interference of the dogs, not a moment was lost; we fired upon him; one of the balls went through his side just between the short ribs, and the blood immediately began to flow; but the animal still remained standing in the same position. We had no doubt that he would spring upon us; every gun was instantly re-loaded; but happily we were mistaken, and were not sorry to see him move quietly away, though I had hoped in a few minutes to have been enabled to take hold of his paw without danger.

THE SOLDIER'S WIFE.

It is now many years since the first battalion of the 17th Regiment of Foot, under orders to embark for India,—that far distant land, where so many of our brave countrymen have fallen victims to the climate, and where so few have slept in what soldiers call “the bed of glory,”—were assembled in the barrack yard of Chatham, to be inspected previously to their passing on board the transports, which lay moored in the Downs.

It was scarcely day-break, when the merry drum and fife were heard over all parts of the town, and the soldiers were seen sallying forth from their quarters, to join the ranks, with their bright firelocks on their shoulders, and the knapsacks and canteens fastened to their backs by belts as white as snow. Each soldier was accompanied by some friend or acquaintance,—or by some individual, with a dearer title to his regard than either; and there was a strange and sometimes a whimsical mingling of weeping and laughter among the assembled groups.

The second battalion was to remain in England, and the greater portion of the division was present, to bid farewell to their old companions in arms. But among husbands and wives, uncertainty as to their destiny prevailed—for the lots were yet to be drawn—the lots that were to decide which of the women should accompany the regiment, and which should remain behind. Ten of each company were to be taken, and chance was to be the only arbiter. Without noticing what passed elsewhere, I confined my attention to that company which was commanded by my friend Captain Loden, a brave and excellent officer, who, I am sure, has no more than myself forgotten the scene to which I refer.

The women had gathered round the flag-serjeant,

who held the lots in his cap, ten of them marked, "to go," and all the others containing the fatal words "to remain." It was a moment of dreadful suspense; and never have I seen the extreme of anxiety so powerfully depicted in the countenances of human beings; as in the countenances of each of the soldiers' wives who composed that group. One advanced and drew her ticket; it was against her, and she retreated sobbing. Another, she succeeded; and giving a loud huzza, ran off to the distant ranks to embrace her husband. A third came forward with hesitating steps: tears were already chasing each other down her cheek, and there was an unnatural paleness on her interesting and youthful countenance. She put her small hand into the serjeant's cap, and I saw by the rise and fall of her bosom even more than her looks revealed. She unrolled the paper, looked upon it, and with a deep groan, fell back and fainted. So intense was the anxiety of every person present, that she remained unnoticed, until the tickets had been drawn, and the greater number of the women had left the spot. I then looked round and beheld her supported by her husband, who was kneeling upon the ground, gazing upon her face, and drying her fast falling tears with his coarse handkerchief, and now and then pressing it to his own manly cheek.

Captain Loden advanced towards them.—"I am sorry, Henry Jenkins," said he, "that fate has been against you; but bear up and be stout-hearted."

"I am so, Captain," said the soldier, as he looked up, and passed his rough hand across his face; "but 'tis a hard thing to part from a wife, and she so soon to be a mother."

"Oh! Captain," sobbed the young woman, "as you are both a husband and a father, do not take him from me. I have no friend in the wide world, but one, and will you let him bide with me? Oh! take

me with him,—take me with him,—for the love of God take me with him, Captain.” She fell on her knees, laid hold of the officer’s sash, clasped it firmly between her hands, and looked up in his face, exclaiming, “Oh! leave me my only hope, at least till God has given me another;” and repeated in heart-rending accents, “Oh! take me with him, take me with him!”

The gallant officer was himself in tears; he knew that it was impossible to grant the poor wife’s petition, without creating much discontent in his company, and he gazed upon them with that feeling with which a good man always regards the sufferings he cannot alleviate. At this moment, a smart young soldier stepped forward, and stood before the Captain, with his hand to his cap.

“And what do you want, my good fellow?” said the officer.

“My name’s John Carty, plase yer honour, and I belong to the second battalion.”

“And what do you want here?”

“Only, yer honour,” said Carty, scratching his head, “that poor man and his wife there, is sorrow-hearted at parting, I’m thinking.”

“Well, and what then?”

“Why, yer honour, they say I am a likely lad, and I know I’m fit for sarvice,—and if your honour would only let that poor fellow take my place in Captain Bond’s company, and let me take his place in yours,—why, yer honour would make two poor things happy, and save the life of one of ’em, I’m thinking.”

Captain Lodon considered for a few minutes, and directing the young Irishman to remain where he was, proceeded to his brother officer’s quarters. He soon made arrangements for the exchange of the soldiers, and returned to the place where he had left them.

“Well, John Carty,” said he, “you go to Bengal with me; and you, Henry Jenkins, remain at home with your wife.”

“Thank yer honour,” said John Carty, again touching his cap as he walked off.

Henry Jenkins and his wife both rose from the ground, and rushed into each other's arms. “God bless you, Captain,” said the soldier, as he pressed his wife closer to his bosom. “Oh, bless him for ever!” said the wife; “bless him with prosperity, and a happy heart!—bless his wife, and bless his children;” and she again fainted.

The officer, wiping a tear from his eye, and exclaiming, “May you never want a friend when I am far from you,—you, my good lad, and your amiable and loving wife!” passed on to his company. The happy couple went in search of John Carty.

* * * * *

About twelve months since, as two boys were watching the sheep confided to their charge, upon a wide heath, in the county of Somerset, their attention was attracted by a soldier, who walked along apparently with much fatigue, and at length stopped to rest his weary limbs beside the old finger-post, which at one time pointed out the way to the neighbouring villages, which now afforded no information to the traveller, for age had rendered it useless.

The boys were gazing upon him with much curiosity, when he beckoned them towards him, and enquired the way to the village of Eldenby.

The eldest, a fine intelligent lad of about twelve years of age, pointed to the path, and asked if he was going to any particular house in the village.

“No, my little lad,” said the soldier; “but it is on the high road to Frome, and I have friends there; but, in truth, I am very wearied, and perhaps may

find in yon village some person who will befriend a poor fellow, and look to God for a reward.

“Sir,” said the boy, “my father was a soldier, many years ago, and he dearly loves to look upon a red coat; if you come with me, you may be sure of a welcome.”

“And you can tell us stories about foreign parts,” said the younger lad, a fine chubby-cheeked fellow, who, with his watch-cloak thrown carelessly over his shoulder, and his crook in his right hand, had been minutely examining every portion of the soldier’s dress.

The boys gave instructions to their intelligent dog, who, they said, would take good care of the sheep during their absence; and in a few minutes the soldier and his young companions reached the gate of a flourishing farm house, which had all the external tokens of prosperity and happiness. The younger boy trotted on a few paces before, to give his parents notice that they had invited a stranger to rest beneath their hospitable roof; and the soldier had just crossed the threshold of the door, when he was received by a joyful cry of recognition from his old friends, Henry Jenkins and his wife; and he was welcomed as a brother to the dwelling of those, who, in all human probability, were indebted to him for their present enviable station.

It is unnecessary to pursue this story further than to add, that John Carty spent his forlough at Elden-by farm; and that at the expiration of it, his discharge was purchased by his grateful friends. He is now living in their happy dwelling; and his care and exertions have contributed greatly to increase their prosperity. Nothing has gone wrong with them since John Carty was their steward.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters,” said the wise man, “and it shall be returned to thee after many days.”

HELL BRIDGE.

THERE is a narrow pass between the mountains in the neighbourhood of Bendearg, in the Highlands of Scotland, which, at a little distance, has the appearance of an immense artificial bridge thrown over a tremendous chasm; but on nearer approach, is seen to be a wall of nature's own masonry, formed of vast and rugged bodies of solid rock, piled on each other, as if in the giant's sport of architecture. Its sides are in some places covered with trees of a considerable size; and the passenger who has a head steady enough to look down, may see the eyrie of birds of prey beneath his feet. The path across is so narrow, that it cannot admit of two persons passing; and, indeed, none but natives would attempt the dangerous route, though it saves a circuit of three miles: yet it sometimes happens that two travellers meet, owing to the curve formed by the pass preventing a view across from either side; and when this is the case, one lies down, while the other crawls over his body. One day, a Highlander, walking along the pass, when he had gained the highest part of the arch, observed another coming leisurely up, and being himself one of the patrician order, called him to lie down; the person, however, disregarded the command, and the Highlanders met on the summit. They were Cairn and Bendearg, of two families in enmity to each other. "I was first at the top," said Bendearg, "and called out first, lie down, that I might pass over in peace." "When the Grant prostrates himself before the M'Pherson," answered the other, "it must be with a sword through his body." "Turn back, then," said Bendearg, "and repass as you came;" "Go back yourself, if you like it," replied Grant; "I will not be the first of my name to turn before the M'Pherson." They then threw

their bonnets over the precipice, and advanced with a slow and cautious pace closer to each other—they were both unarmed. Stretching their limbs like men preparing for a desperate struggle, they planted their feet firmly on the ground, compressed their lips, knit their brows, and fixing fierce and watchful eyes on each other, stood prepared for an onset. They both grappled at the same moment; but, being of an equal strength, were unable to shift each other's position—standing fixed on the rock, with suppressed breath, and muscles strained to the top of their bent, like statues carved out of the solid stone. At length M'Pherson, suddenly removing his right foot, so as to give him greater purchase, stooped his body, and bent his enemy down with him by main strength, till they both leaned over the precipice, looking downward into the terrible abyss. The contest was as yet doubtful, for Grant had placed his foot firmly on an elevation at the brink, and had equal command of his enemy, but at this moment M'Pherson sunk slowly and firmly on his knee, and while Grant suddenly started back, stooping to take the supposed advantage, whirled him over his head into the gulf. M'Pherson fell backwards, his body partly hanging over the rock, a fragment gave way beneath him, and he sunk farther, till catching with a desperate effort at the solid stone above, he regained his footing. There was a pause of death-like stillness, and the bold heart of M'Pherson felt sick and faint. At length, as if compelled unwillingly by some mysterious feeling, he looked down over the precipice. Grant had caught with a death-like grip, by the rugged point of a rock—his enemy was almost within his reach. His face was turned upward, and there was in it horror and despair; but he uttered no word or cry. The next moment he loosed his hold, and his brains were dashed out before the eyes of his heredi-

tary foe ; the mangled body disappeared among the trees, and his last heavy and hollow sound arose from the bottom. M'Pherson returned home an altered man. He purchased a commission in the army, and fell bravely in the wars of the Peninsula. The Gaelic name of the place where this tragedy was acted signifies HELL BRIDGE.

FINIS.