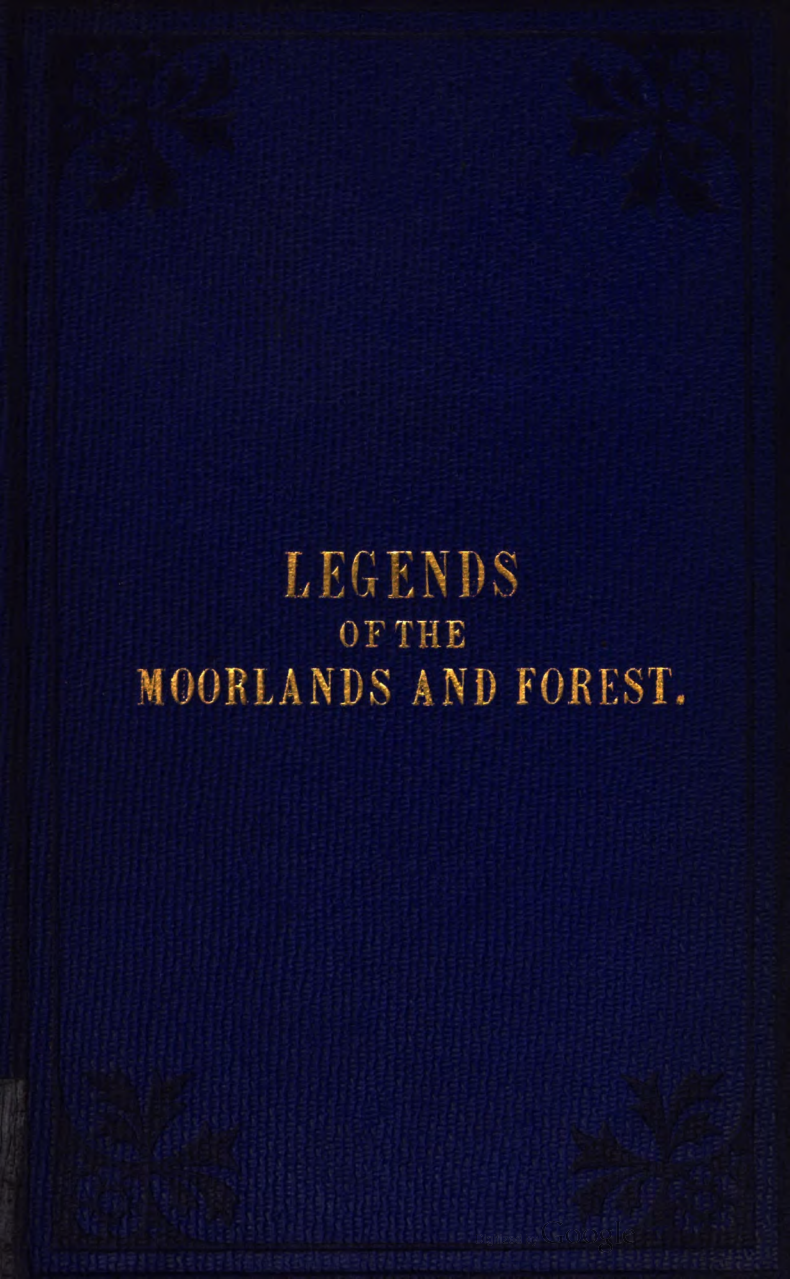

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LEGENDS
OF THE
MOORLANDS AND FOREST.



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LEGENDS

OF THE

MOORLANDS AND FOREST

IN

North Staffordshire.

“ Ever drifting, drifting, drifting,
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart;
Till at length in books recorded,
They, like hoarded
Household words, no more depart.”

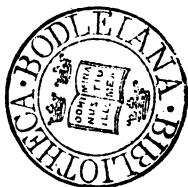
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THE CHIEFTAIN.

“This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the
hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the
twilight,
Stand, like Druids of old, with voices sad and prophetic.”

EVANGELINE.

Part the First.

ENVELOPED in the gloom of yonder hill,
Methinks I see a form approaching ; still,
And with a solemn pace, he treads the way
Between those rocks, whose towering spirals gray
Appear to threaten his devoted head,
And form the pilgrim's last sad lowly bed.
But he has vanished to my fix'd sight,
And deepening shadows mark the approach of night.
Come, Spirit of the Wild ! and tell thy tale,
While on the dusky heath yon moon, so pale,
Reflects her borrowed light ; tell how that cave,
Whose rocky base the silvery waters lave,

Was once the favor'd haunt of Chief renown'd—
A dread and terror to the country round.
His history was a wonder ; no one knew
How the mysterious being found a clue
To that retreat : he came from,—none knew where,
But long his darings were recorded there.
His stature towering, and his aspect stern,
Yet it was known that dark wild Chief could mourn,
And in the deep retirings of his soul,
The past, with all its gloomy horrors, stole.
'Twas said, a guilty conscience' bitter pang
The dark confession from his bosom wrang ;
Or, that keen memory's retrospective glance
Wrapped up his mighty soul in gloomy trance :
That be,—'twas on this spot, long years ago,
Where at my feet the rippling waters flow ;
These craggy steps, still feathered by the trees,
Which scarcely wave their branches to the breeze,
All lay in silence round,—a thoughtful one,
Of tall and stately mien, walked here alone.
Perhaps musing on the past, and present scene,
And what his direful destiny had been,—
His heedless feet the scattered brushwood pressed ;
His arms were folded on his heaving breast ;
Upwards his eyes were raised, and one bright star
Met his enquiring fix'd glance afar.

Anon he heard the rustling branches shake,
And fickle fancy (ever light and wake)
Direct before his eyes a figure drew,
And well its swarthy lineaments he knew.
With mimic step, and well affected pace,
And arms across, it upward seemed to gaze;—
A shrill wild laugh, at length, the silence broke,
And, coldly shuddering, thus the Chieftain spoke :

“Dark being ! tell me how thou darest intrude,
And break upon my lonely solitude ;
Hast thou to learn that uncontrolled I reign,
And here supreme, I hold my wide domain ?
Yon hills, whose towering summits rise so high,
These rocky cliffs, which seem to pierce the sky,
And this deep river, coursing through the vale,
Are all within the gloomy Bandit’s pale.”

He paused, so conscious of his vaunted power,
And o’er his knitted brows, expression lour
Told the proud swellings of his haughty breast,
And the obedience due to his behest.
It seemed to listen, and attentive scan
The wide expanse thus domineered by man ;
Its haggard features slackened to a smile,
And mockery sat upon the tongue of guile.

“Ah, is it so! methinks I once before
Beheld the lawless rebel, vain, deplore
How happiness, so fleeting to the grasp,
Eluded e’en his mighty power to clasp.
But mark me, if thou yet canst feel the sting
Which disappointed hopes around thee fling,
Before another moon is on the wane,
That direful conflict thou shalt pass again.
Yon star, which shone so brightly to thine eye,
Behold the threatening clouds around it fly;
And soon the tempest, it foretels, shall burst,
To tell the fearless Einyg how I durst
Intrude upon the lone retiring shade,
Doubtless for his high contemplation made.”

It said, and, with a keen malicious glance,
Retreated from the Chief’s direct advance:
He saw it turn, and, by the moonlight dim,
Stood ’twixt the rocky precipice and him.
A bugle instant from his belt he drew,
And, with an effort, three loud blasts he blew;
The sounds were echoed by surrounding hills,
And, gradually receding, all was still:
Soon on the rocks a hundred figures bound,
And hollow voices ring the peal around;
Within the view of those high torrs they stay,

Where Einyg held his dismal foe at bay.
Each looked defiance, but the Chief's dark form
Seemed like the rising mist before a storm ;
Or, as the eagle with expanded wings,
In wrath destructive on its victim springs.
And now it stood upon the very verge
Of that high cliff, while onward seemed to urge
Its fierce opponent, with impassioned brow,
Eager to plunge it in the depths below.
Whether, 'twas treacherous fancy's powerful rein
Had brought a phantom to his maddened brain ;
Or being, fashioned in unearthly mould,
Thus held its converse, as tradition told,—
He found himself alone, a vacant stare
Succeeding to his lately troubled air.
Bewildered at the scene, he sought the deep,
Where low in death's forgetfulness might sleep
That form, whose dread forebodings made him start
At recollections, buried in his heart.
No trace or vestige left, but what alone
Its parting words o'er Einyg's mind had thrown ;
And though his soul felt somewhat strangely wild,
He forced himself to wear an aspect mild.
There stood his followers, each in order ranged,
Who when he joined them mutual looks exchanged ;
The disappearance of the foe, they thought,

Was an event so full of mystery fraught,
That with suspicious eye they could but view
One, who might prove so direfully untrue.
He marked the glance, and quick his manners stern
Showed from his vengeance what they had to learn ;
That form, so giant-like, with rolling eye,
Dilated in unusual majesty.
Used as they were to tremble and obey,
Their steps in silence bent the forest way,
And round where Castle-cliff's rude spirals stand,
The Chieftain Einyg led his lawless band.

Amid the Wild, of verdant trees bereft,
Nature's convulsion a deep chasm left :
The hilly side an open entrance leaves,
Where mountain heather its sweet odour gives.
Here dreary Lud Church stands, for ages famed,
After some bold and daring Ludite named ;
The airy tops, with shrubs and thistles grown,
Werescreened by brushwood o'er the opening thrown.
Tales full of wonder long had been afloat,
How places, thus immured, and so remote,
Should ever fix the wandering robber's eye,
And make him pass some wealthier country by.
But yet, if contemplation ever cheered,
And to the Chief his solitude endeared,

If o'er that lovely scene his spirit turned,
Or for sublime realities he mourned,—
It was a scene for such indulgence framed,
And oft his uncontrolled emotions tamed.
How wildly deep, upon yon starry height,
Was heaved the tender sigh of fond regret !
Thoughts that he strove, but vainly had repress,—
Hopes which too long lay smothered in his breast,—
Came like a Voice upon the howling blast,
And disappointment stalked the desert waste.

Part the Second.

THE Forest woods with autumn's tints now glowed,
Where Dane's clear course in cheerful murmurs
 flowed ;
An evening's sun yet stole a lingering glance,
To check the lengthening shadows' quick advance.
Along yon craggy mountain's beaten way,
A weary Huntsman hailed the closing day ;
Tired of the sport, with careless eye he viewed
This scene of nature's rudest solitude.

And as he rode, and shadows grew apace,
Some tangled thickets barred the mountain trace,
Through which, with wakening eyes, he urged his
steed,

Then down the deep descent, with reckless heed,
He reached a gentle slope, and rocky dell,
Where shades of overarching beech trees fell.
Here lay the Forest road, and far below,
Mid jutting crags, he heard the river flow,
Where, through the gloom profound, on that bright
stream,

The moon, refulgent, cast her silvery beam.
Above him frowning stood, with brow so proud,
The heathery mountain wrapped in purple shroud,
And, stretching onward, with its crest sublime,
Defied alike the rage of storm or time.
Beyond that hill, a mile or two away,
His old ancestral hall in distance lay ;
And there he knew a gentle watch was kept
By eyes which in his absence never slept.
He mused upon her grace, and statelý brow,
And how she had rejected many a vow
Of rich and powerful suitors, who, of yore,
On prancing steeds, had graced her father's door.
Now stout of heart, and redolent with pride,
He all the dangers of the night defied ;

And upwards gazing, hailed a glorious star,
Then thought of Eva's beauteous eyes afar.
Thus, gay at ease, with memory's busy train,
And joyful hopes, he loosely held the rein,
When quick his snorting hunter pricked her ears,
As on his path a glimmering light appears,
And o'er the heath there came an echoing horn,
From crag to crag on distant breezes borne ;
While on the mountain ridge dark figures rise,
And shrieks and echoes pierce the vaulted skies.
With rapid glance, he deemed the pathway clear,
But words of deafening horror struck his ear :
Pausing a moment, with suspended breath,
There fell in whispering tones,—“Eva and Death !”
“Eva and Death !” now caught by every breeze,
Came wildly murmuring through the Forest trees,
And sighing on, to where the waters flow,
Sounded in dying wailings deep and low.
Starting, with maddened haste, he gave the rein,
And fiercely sought to reach the distant plain ;
But, lo ! before his eyes, upraised in air,
Gleamed the bright flashes of a torch's glare !
The fiery courser, struck with wild affright,
Plunged madly on, to take her homeward flight ;
But stopped, when suddenly, as if from earth,
A form of giant stature started forth.

With haughty glance the Huntsman eyed his foe,
Yet checked his ire, and bent his angry brow :
The other held, with iron grasp, the rein,
And answered back his glance in cold disdain.
“Now to the ground,” he said, “before too late,
And measure each the other’s direful hate ;
For thou, the vilest traitor in my path,
Shalt answer here my just revenge and wrath.”

“Well, be it so,” his startled voice replied,
“For I no traitor’s heart or hand will hide :
But thou, if now my ears deceive me not,
Wast once the once the guardian of my happy lot !
Lord Hugo, what mischance has o’er thee passed,
Since I, thy friend and brother, saw thee last ?”

With fierce and sudden anger in his eye,
As if rekindled by his foe’s reply,
The Chieftain drew his figure to its height,
And said, with irony and stern regret,—
“What needs it to repeat, and tear again
The wrongs which drove me from my fellow men ?
In life’s fair day a serpent crossed my path
Which I had cherished in my home and hearth :
The lands he heired had fallen to the crown ;
These I redeemed, and pledged for them my own :
No benefits there lacked, for in my soul

I loved the youth, and deemed his honour whole.
But soon there came a time when maiden's smile
I sought and won ; nor did I dream of guile
In one whom nature, in her fairest mood,
Had graced with all the charms of womanhood.
With ever ready smile she welcomed me,
While on the serpent all her witchery
In secret was bestowed ; and thus he earned
That which, in course of time, I madly learned.
And then it chanced that I to Court was called,
To answer charges which my soul appalled :
Deeds of the blackest treachery stained my name,
And tarnished every former act and aim.
My father's lands were forfeit, and bestowed
Upon the wretch whose own to me he owed ;
And to my heritage, with monstrous pride,
Betook himself to revel with his bride.
Not to avenge my wrongs, but to retrieve
My house's name, I asked a short reprieve,
That I might combat with my hated foe,
And end the struggle, or repeal the woe.
By myrmidons well guarded, the decree
Was given forthwith, that over land and sea
I be conveyed, to perish as I might,
But to redress no wrong, and seek no right.
Now, for the wretch who gave his hand and heart,

To work the wily serpent's deadly part,
I fain would, singly, from his height have hurled,
And point a beacon to the gazing world ;—
Say thou, what guerdon does the man deserve,
Who could so well his benefactor serve ? ”

With knitted brows, alternate flushed and pale,
The Huntsman listened to the lengthened tale
Of horrid wrongs of which he was accused ;
Of noble confidence, and trust abused ;
And where was kindly graciousness so late,
He ill could bear this bitter scorn and hate.

“ Now with, or without weapons,” said the Chief,
“ So take thy choice, and let the strife be brief.”

In silence, either for a space repressed
The deep contending passions of his breast ;
And as their towering forms together stood,
Each bore the stamp of truth and gentle blood :
Upon their noble brows no wily leer,
Or cringe obsequious, marked their past career.
Of large colossal stature, stood the Chief ;
Slighter, but stately, and in bold relief,
The Huntsman gazed, erect : in accents slow
He spoke, but loud, and with a feverish glow :

"With weapons, or without, then take thy stand ;
 But against thee I will not lift my hand.
 The benefits thou heap'dst would ill excuse
 So rash an act, nor yet their vile abuse ;
 Thy false report, my secret conscience spurns,
 And to avenge, my slighted honour burns.
 But where's the wretch who could thine ears delude,
 And give thee doubts of my fair rectitude ?
 Methinks he found a somewhat ready ear
 With which to work his dark designs so clear.

* * * * *

When thou wert gone, I from my mansion stole,
 And reached the Court ; for in my secret soul
 Misgivings seized me, that some evil tide
 Had fallen thee, which I could ill abide.
 I found thee fled, and from officials stern,
 The where or whither by no art could learn :
 But this I heard, that in abeyance lay
 Thy title and estates ; then quick away
 I hastened to secure myself thy land,
 To give it scatheless back into thine hand.
 Thy castle walls no revelry have seen,
 Since thou in exile from her hall hast been ;
 Thy old retainers yet their places fill,
 And they can witness if I wrought thee ill.
 If for my blood thou thirst, now take my life,

But spare to me the memory of my wife :
Not fairer, in its whiteness, is the flower
That in stern winter lives its little hour,
Than she in holy thought and pure intent,
On gentle acts of kindness ever bent.
None other, in my ear, would dare have cast
So vile a tale, and so pervert the past ;
And little, could I once have dreamed to be
Hateful of all, I ever owed to thee.”

In gloomy silence wrapped, the Chieftain yet
Essayed to speak ; and still his eyes were set
In glaring wildness, and he looked askance,
As if communing, in his moody trance.
From yon dark shrubs, whose boughs still interlace
In close companionship, with ambling pace,
A stealthy form emerged, before their eyes,
Strangely proportioned, and of dwarfish size.
As by a basilisk, their steadfast gaze
Was fixed upon the creature, and his ways.
With wild contortions, high he threw in air
His sinewy limbs, and jagged locks all bare ;
But wilder, and more dreadful, was the leer,
Which broke, in horrid laughter, on their ear.

“Eva and Death !” —in mocking tones, he cried,

The rocks and vales, their echoing notes replied.
“Hugo De Spencer,* let that name, once more
Bring to thy mind, the palmy days of yore;
And how the wretch, thy arrogance then spurned,
Won thee a name, thou had'st not else have earned.
Canst thou forget, how on one smiling day
In summer, when the sun shone bright and gay,
And birds were carolling among the trees,
And floating zephyrs whispered in the breeze;
And lords and ladies in their dazzling sheen,
Were holding stately revels on the green;
And, above all, was one, most sweetly fair,
In regal loveliness, presiding there?
Her matchless symmetry of form and face,
Beamed with the virtues of her noble race;
And over all, soft undulations stole,
Breathing the modest graces of her soul,
She was, ‘the observed of all observers,’ yet
Meekly unconscious where all eyes were set.
Drink deeply, Hugo, in that flood of light,
When thy proud Castle gave so fair a sight;
And let the memory of what once has been,
Invest with horror every passing scene.
These limbs distorted, grovelling to the earth,
Have been mis-shapen from my very birth;

* Hugh De Spencer.

With smooth beguiling tongue, and curious art,
Well formed to act some strange, unwonted part ;
Yet I, the scion of a noble race,
Was in my youth, not destitute of grace,—
The grace of soul,—with intellect most rare,
And gentle qualities, all seeming fair.
But was I ever young? when aught I knew,
Creation all lay open to my view ;
And men, who fame for arts and learning bore,
Found me triumphant in their mystic lore.
Thou, with thy falcon-eye, and piercing ken,
And figure towering o'er thy fellow-men ;—
With thy proud step, and prouder bearing still,
Shewing thy high, indomitable will,—
Stir'dst up new passions in my secret soul,
Which reason sought nor aided to control.
And I was ready, when design or chance
Impelled thy careless speech, or scornful glance,
To take fresh umbrage, and recount anew
Each hateful feeling, as it onward grew.
One day on hawking all thy guests were bent,
And the fair Eva, with her leash intent ;
Thou, in thy ready gallantry, drew near
To aid, and speak soft words into her ear :
I chanced, unwittingly, to cut the string,
And at the jerk the falcon made her spring ;—

When thou, in furious anger turning round,
Drov'st me, imperiously, from off the ground.
Bold as thou wert, with words to flow at will,
Thy deeper passions lay, far hid and still,
Beneath the surface ; but I knew full well
The charm that bound thee with its secret spell.
In all but this thy confidence was given
To him thou countedst dearest under heaven ;
And there thy wayward whim professed to be
Most careless of thy heart's idolatry.
So brave Sir Swithelm, in his generous mind,
Thoughtless of ill, and to thy misery blind,
Seeing no obstacle where thou wert not,
Soon gaily triumphed in his happy lot ;
And what was wanting, in what each believed,
I, by my secret agency, achieved.
Still,—in thy mailed fortitude secure,
Arrayed as in a panoply most sure,—
Thy high-bred honour's bright unsullied fame
Gave to thy being life, and end, and aim.
To undermine, and sow the seeds of strife,—
To sap the undercurrent of thy life,—
To brand thee as a traitor, and to give
Such proofs as should forbid thy chance to live
And to avenge ;—then, beyond all control,
The iron would enter in thy very soul,

If thou couldst but believe that he, thy friend,
Had wrought thy ruin for his selfish end.
This I accomplished ; all, except thy death ;
And I could never learn what single breath
Averted that, or by what means thou came
To join these rebels, and disguise thy name.
But now, again, in yonder East the gloom
Of coming clouds announce thy fearful doom ;
And then, O mighty Hugo, shall my hate
Be only quenched in thy most direful fate ! ”

The hideous spectre, with envenomed tongue,
Through the rank grass, thus murmuring, paced
along ;
And ever and anon it turned its head,
To see if they to follow might be led.
But all its wiles were lost upon the Chief,
Whose head seemed bowed in mingled rage and
grief ;
For crowding memories, like a whirlwind stole,
And seized, with keen remorse, his anguished soul.
Meanwhile, the Huntsman, with his wary eye,
Intently watched the Dwarf steal slowly by ;
And in yon covert, where the shrubs grow bare,
Crouch, like a tiger in its forest lair.
So that, when whizzing through the stilly night,

An arrow from the thicket winged its flight,
His warding arm received the fatal dart,
Aimed by the caitiff at the Chieftain's heart !

Within the precincts of that ancient hill,
Where Castle-cliff her hoary shadow still
Casts o'er the scene, how does my spirit drink
The memory of the past, and love to think
That here one faithful heart once stood and braved,
And through all scorn, its benefactor saved !

Tradition tells how that for many a day,
In mortal agony, the Huntsman lay ;
But that no skilful leech could there be found
To draw the poison from his deadly wound.
There did the tempest of unwonted grief
Assail the gentle Eva. No relief
Was there : as in its quiet depths her soul
Had fondly loved, so now, without control,
Her heart's devoted passion seemed to rise,
And weary heaven with prayers and endless sighs !
Till, as it chanced, a palmer, tall and grey,
Sought at the castle gate one night to stay ;
And by his wondrous art and pious cares,
Sir Swithlem's life was granted to their prayers !
Long it was told, how that, from curious eyes

Of friends and menials, in his pilgrim guise,
The Chieftain, with his lips, the poison drew,
But never after met the Huntsman's view !

Now, through the length of England rang the
 peal
Of merry sounds, that every heart might feel
The joys of freedom ; for this happy land
Was rescued from a tyrant's grasping hand.
And to the Chief a royal pardon came
For all past misdemeanors ; and the fame
Of long forgotten exploits rose at last
To shroud the memory of the guilty past.
But well he knew there was no rest or home
For him, in any future that might come,
For at the fountain, where his young lips quaffed
The sweet and gushing nectar, the fierce waft
Of sorrow long had dried it at the spring,—
And there, the flowers of life lay withering !
Yon wild umbrageous shades, and mossy dell,
Where solitude her vast mysterious spell
Had cast of old,—he lingering turned to see,
Where he was wont to wander, wild and free.
Then came the bitterness, the waste of years,
Which he would fain obliterate with tears
Of weakly nature ! How his soul had nursed

Its dark consuming passions; and had cursed,
With vows of deep revenge and deadly strife,
The hand thus lately risked to save his life.
So he went forth,—not to his Castle-home,
Though high in splendour rose its lordly dome;
And he an earl, with heritage restored,
And royal favours waiting at his board.
Far from those scenes he went, with his small band
Of faithful followers, to the Holy Land;
And there he seemed to bear a charmèd life,
For long he courted death in battle strife,
And brilliant deeds of daring, loud and long
Formed the rich verses of the minstrel's song.

Not far from hence, an ancient Castle stood,
With quaint old Chapel in its neighbourhood;
And, differently diverging, far away,
Lie two broad roads, still called the Earl's Highway.
Within that Chapel* small there lay of old
A form in armour, of a warrior bold,
Of giant-like proportions; said to be
Placed by his friend, Sir Swithelm of the Ley:†
His arms were folded close across his breast,
And thus, 'twas said, the Chieftain sank to rest.

* The ancient Chapel of Rushton Spencer.

† Swithamley.

CASTER'S BRIDGE.

“MONK. Are there robbers in these mountains?

SHEP. Yes, and worse than that.”

THE SPANISH STUDENT.

FROM this low mossy seat can I yet see,
As in the days of yore, an ancient tree
Of beech and sycamore on either side
Yon sparkling streamlet, with its silvery tide:
Stretched over it,—with its arch of dark gray stone,
And battlemented sides, by moss o’ergrown,—
Old Caster’s Bridge* had yet a voice to tell
The bygone legends of this lonely dell;
And there the Black-brook,† rolling underneath,

* Partly from natural decay, and an inundation of the stream, this bridge fell in about the year 1840, uprooting the two old trees of beech and sycamore which stood at each end of it. It consisted of a single arch, with battlements, and formed a beautifully picturesque object, when viewed looking up the stream. A temporary wooden bridge with rails is now thrown over the place where it stood.

† This stream, called the *Black-brook*, from the colour of the soil or pebbles over which it runs, joins the river Dane about twenty yards below the bridge.

Flows with impetuous torrent from yon heath,
Which clothes the jutting sides of that ravine,
Where the tall pine trees rear their heads between.
In yonder copse a hostel once had stood,
Near to that fence of briars and underwood ;
And, 'neath those rising hillocks on the green,
The old foundations yet are plainly seen.
Strange things have long been talked about and told
By patriarchs of the country, gray and old,
Who in their youth had heard their sires relate
Darings and deeds of robbers, and their fate.
And the old Forest road then wound along
Through shading trees, which echoed to the song
Of birds ; and wild notes, mingling low,
Came murmuring from old Dane's perpetual flow.
Though quite secluded, and for miles remote
From human dwellings, once the devious route
Of that broad road resounded to the tread
Of beast of burden, through the country led :
And cattle drivers, from the cultured Frith
Beyond those purple hills, with jocund mirth,
Chatted and laughed along the heathery way,
Or sung, with well-tuned voice, some quaint old
 roundelay.
But that was past, and then there came a time
When these deep wilds no longer heard the chime

Of merry human voices, and the rude
But social sounds that broke the solitude.
Traffic had ceased,—the cause long since unknown;
And this wide track, by grass soon overgrown,
Was only pressed by the lone traveller's tread,
As through those arching cliffs he onward sped.
Haste, weary pilgrim, to that distant plain,
Where the bright sky in daylight shines again,
And from these dark recesses, make all speed
To reach yon heights, which to the country lead:
Nor look around for shelter here, nor rest,
Nor in that gloomy hostel be a guest.
Among the soil, where once had stood the door,
Portions may yet be found of molten ore;
And it is said, a furnace gave its name
To that lone dwelling, long of doubtful fame.
Mysterious whispers through the country spread;
And when, by pleasure or for profit, led
Through that wild forest, "with staves in their
hands,"

The peasantry essayed to go in bands.
And then, they often heard it rumoured o'er
That men had journeyed on that way before;
But as they singly and alone had been,
No trace of them had yet been found or seen:
Over the dreary Roches some had crost,

And it was feared, inevitably lost !
Tedious the way along that forest then ;
And near its entrance, in a stony glen,
Now called The Paddock, by the beaten road,
A good old farmer and his wife abode.
Passing this place, a Pedlar took his way,
And though invited much, and warned to stay
By all the horrors which could thither tend,
He was resolved to reach his journey's end ;
So giving many thanks, he took his pack,
And placed it sturdily upon his back.
Leaving the grim old Roches to the right,
Lit by the evening sun, grotesque and bright,
He hastened to ascend the neighbouring hill,
And stood on that broad heath all bare and still,—
Casting a glance, keen and sagacious o'er
The country he had thought to see no more.
For he had left it in his youth, and been
The sport of fortune, and through many a scene
Of danger and vicissitude had passed,
Thus to those strange old haunts to come at last.
In all his wanderings, he had never met
With aught like this,—so glorious, and yet
So wild in its magnificence,—the sun
With lingering rapture, cast a lustre on
The gorgeous landscape ; and the Pedlar's soul

Upwards, in humble adoration, stole!
But he must forward press, or else the night
Would surely overtake him; and the light
Would soon be dim; and the moon, cold and pale,
Have risen, ere his steps could reach the vale.
There he emerged at length, and soon espied
A lonely cottage near the river side,
And by the door he saw a mastiff stand
To note when travellers were near at hand.
Then forth there came a man with grisly beard,
And close behind, a woman stood, and peered
With furtive looks; and then they both begin
To soothe the dog, and ask the stranger in.
Familiar all the rest, but of this place
He could not, in his mind, recall a trace;
But he was weary, and that day had come
From far; and now, as he drew nearer home,
The thought arose that he would turn and rest,
And for the night repose, then start refreshed.
While thus he pondered, on his listening ear
There broke the sound of children's voices near;
So on the instant, without more ado,
To the wide open door he slowly drew.
Eased of his burthen, then, without restraint,
He stretched his limbs, and, feeling tired and faint,
Called loudly for his supper and a bed,

And then he heard the slow and distant tread
Of many feet ; so going to the door,
He thought they must be busy melting ore—
From the great light and heat—their only trade,
Of which, they said, a living could be made.
The latch he had already in his hand,
But a strange thought, that moment, made him
stand

And listen : and a voice distinctly said,
“ Mother, when will that queer old man be dead ?
I'm sure the oven will soon be very hot !” *
Though chained with trembling horror to the spot,
The wary Pedlar's footsteps lingered not,
But without thought, on to the river went,
And thought and power, for that brief space were
lent

By Providence : for, climbing up the side,
From where the stonework rose above the tide,
He reached the top, and grasped a narrow ridge,
Within the arching roof of Caster's Bridge !
Ere it was done, there came upon his track
Right to the water's edge, a murderous pack
Of women, men, and dogs ; who sure revealed
Their horrid purpose, as he lay concealed.
Some up, and others down, they scoured the stream,

* Words said to have been used in the hearing of the Pedlar.

With torches in their hands ; nor did they dream
Of his escape, or that their destined prey
Would ever see the light of opening day.
With what tenacity his fingers clung,
As on his ear their dreadful voices rung !
And thus the night in greater part was passed,
And every breath the Pedlar deemed his last !
At length deciding that the place was cleared,
They o'er the bridge and down the river steered ;
And then he freely breathed, and strove to think—
So gliding down, he crept along the brink,
And struck into a thicket, from the dell,
Which in his boyhood he remembered well.
Slowly beneath the briars, which grew among
The tangled brushwood, on he moved along
With hands and feet all torn, beyond that height,
O'er which the moon poured forth her silvery light.
There he was safe and stood upon his feet,
And then his heart with wild emotions beat ;
And from its pent-up terror, eased by sighs,
He raised with speechless gratitude his eyes,
And poured his soul in thankfulness and praise
To that great Power, who through such dreadful
ways
Had safely brought him, and now strangely cast
His footsteps near his dear old home at last !

That word was like a magnet to his soul,
Which turned as true as needle to the pole ;
And well he knew that had his eyes been dim,
That devious road would still be plain to him.
But they were bright and piercing, and on high
The moon careered in beauty silently ;
And many a turning did his footsteps take
Through lowland dingle and by upland brake,
Ere on a slope he got, and then there rushed
The tide of old remembrances, which gushed
As from a well-spring that had long been dry,
Till, at its need, some hidden streams supply.
In sorrow and in sad abasement, now
He called to mind how he had made a vow
Never to come again till he had earned
Some lordly independence ; and had spurned
His mother's dear caresses and her tears,
And laughed in thoughtless mockery at her fears.
The homestead seemed as firm, as when of old
He left it ; and the gable, strange and bold,
Still looked grotesque ; and at an angle there,
He saw the ancient pollard, gray and bare.
Nature appeared externally the same ;
And then *hope*, with her tender memories, came
And whispered to his heart, so long estranged,
That, perhaps, within all might be yet unchanged.

Now from the narrow window lights were gleaming,
And sounds of merriment and joy came teeming,
And flitting figures, full of life and glee,
Were keeping up some old festivity.

He seemed as in a dream, when by the hand
They led him forth to join that charm'd band:
Enough for them, a night-worn stranger, he
Partook their mirth and hospitality.

Then did the past before his vision roll,
As he beheld the strange old wassail bowl;
And looking in the corner, there he saw
An aged dame, whose word appeared the law.
Straight he began, with earnest eyes, to trace
The features of his memory on her face;
And kneeling at her feet in sorrow wild,
Implored his mother to behold her child!
The voice of nature once more called to life
Her hope deferred; but the forgotten strife
'Twixt grief and joy seemed for a while too great—
Like ground, on which the spring shower falls too
late.

His father and his brother both were gone,
And there she waiting sat, all still and lone;
But sightless though she was, upon her ear
Fell the familiar tones, to memory dear;
And it was strange to see her fingers now

Part the blanched locks from off his furrowed brow,
And then, a throb of pleasure at her heart,
Make the relieving tears, unbidden, start.
Yet bright days were in store, for he had wealth,
And, better far than riches, he had health ;
And that gay youthful band around him strove
To shed an atmosphere of peace and love ;
While in his godly life they all might see
The sacred uses of adversity.

* * * * *

Now to the nearest town, without delay,
The honest Pedlar wended on his way,
And gave such evidence and clear report
Of all that happened in that dread resort
Of desperadoes, that their promised aid
By the authorities was quickly made ;
And down those rugged steeps, and through the vale,
Came proud plumes waving in the autumn gale,
And the high sun gleamed on their glittering spears,
As o'er the gray old bridge that bright red band
appears.

The soldiers came ; and from the infested place
They dragged the wretched inmates, with no space
To hide or fly ; for from the walls around
They fiercely razed the building to the ground.

And then no doubt remained as to their crimes,
Which they in full confessed, and of the times
When weary travellers, albeit brave and bold,
Had lost their lives, a sacrifice to gold.*
So they had murdered them, and quenched their
 life

Of light and hope ; all in their wretched strife
For filthy lucre, which now sure, though slow,
Had wrought their own irrevocable woe :
For to the laws atonement must be made,
And their most wretched lives the forfeit paid !
Then, it is said, there came a fearful flood,
Which inundated the whole neighbourhood ;
And rising high, to where those ruins lay,
It washed them, in its fury, all away !

 Ages are gone since then, and gently now
Glides on that river in its peaceful flow :
It sounds a mournful requiem to the past,
Sighing and moaning in the forest blast ;
Then oft, like sweetest music, soft and clear,
Soothes with bewitching tones the listening ear ;
And to the unquiet soul and troubled breast,
Breathes, from yon far-off land, of peace and rest.

* There is a tradition that gold has from time to time been found where these ruins once lay.

THE HERITAGE.

“Some have too much, yet still they crave.”

LORD VANE.

“Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
In bare and desolate bosoms.”

BYRON.

ABOVE yon wood, not wide in its extent,
Juts out an oddly-shaped old tenement,
Black with the rage which many a wintry storm
Has poured upon its antiquated form.
Some hidden strength in that old gable lies,
And the strong mullioned windows, of a size
Diminutive, speak of an age long past,
When no bright sun could penetrate, nor cast
Its orient beams within that quaint old room,
To light it up or dissipate the gloom.
Then from the court peeped a gray arch of stone,
Through which the ancient inmates walked alone,
When to the gay parterre, or park, anon,
For pleasure or for thought, they sauntered on.

How have they gazed down in that vale beneath ;
Or, lost in reverie, scanned the distant heath,
Fringing with purple yon bright sky of gold,
Ere to her bosom night its glories fold.

Then thoughts of home and interests of life,
Or inward passions for rude conflict rife,
Oft here have agitated many a breast,
Long since, on earth for ever, laid at rest.

Centuries ago, those walls, grotesque and strange,
Formed a fair edifice ; with a broad range
Of richly-cultured lands, pertaining to,
And stretching out far as the eye could view.

And a fair daughter graced her father's board,
In whom those lands would centre, and the hoard
Of well-filled coffers, which he smiling told
Should be "the dowry of her weight in gold."

And she grew up, most beauteous and fair,
With form of flexile grace, and golden hair
Shading a neck of pearly white ; but still
Of temper proud, and high imperious will.

One, so endowed by nature, and the gift
Which fortune lavished in those days of thrift
And pomp and gaudy show, was sure to meet
With many vows, and suitors at her feet.

And there came one, of gay and gallant mien,
With trappings rare, such as no eye had seen ;

From far off lands and lineage high, he came,
Led by report of beauty, and the fame
Of her rich heritage; and well he meant,
If all were true, to rest him there content.
Those gnarled old trunks, where once bright foliage
grew,
What halcyon hours beneath their shadows flew!
And o'er yon winding path, once trimly kept,
That lady and her knight right gaily swept
On steed and palfrey, all in bright array,
As, with high bounding hopes, they rode away.

Before she left that roof, did there a voice
Breathe gentle benediction on her choice?
And did soft prayers, from faithful hearts, attend
That proud one, and in supplication bend
Before the throne of grace, that she might be
Kept from the sin of vile idolatry?
Or, did the films of ignorance obscure
The mental vision, and grieved hearts immure
In cloistered gloom, forbidding truth's bright rays
To cheer and gladden the heaven-directed gaze?
O age of darkness, and of human thrall,
How does the record of thy reign appal!
She went and came, that lady of the hall,
While in its glory, concentrated all

Her heart's devotion ; and she stood alone,
Peerless and proud, that it would be her own.

How many a cup, once offered to the lip,
Some strange untoward event has caused to slip,—
And as the sparkling draught before us lay,
Dashed it, with all our cherished hopes, away !
So now, unwonted tidings reached her ear,
That an event, unlooked for many a year,
Had eased her parents' hearts of half their care,
And given the blessing of a son and heir.
Then joy once more revisited that place,
To hail a scion of its ancient race ;
And bright hopes breathed around his infant head,
That he to deeds of glory might be led ;
Whilst his fond parents oft recounted o'er
The future greatness laid for him in store ;
Forgetting, while these dreams their thoughts
engage,
That he would claim his sister's heritage.
Time passed away, and that young child was left,—
Of their fond love and fostering care bereft ;
And to that sister's hands, with their last breath
Resigned him, ere their voices sank in death,—
Their dying lips conjuring her to be
The guardian of his helpless infancy.

'Tis said, that if, within the secret soul,
One *sin* is left to reign without control,
There we shall be most tempted, and the strife
To fall or conquer, end but with our life!
The story of that child has long outlived
The age in which he suffered and was grieved ;
And little fancy human nature needs
To tell how first began ungentle deeds ;
The thwarting of his infant mind at play,—
The stern rebuke, when he would have his way,—
His look of wonder, and his throbbing heart
In mute surprise, when none might take his part !
Thus with his soul contracted,—then his frame
Began to suffer, till there soon became
No aim, or interest, to attach his life,
Or help to buffet that perpetual strife.
Wild and ungoverned, first, against it all,
His mind then sank beneath that iron thrall ;
And that once bounding step, so light and free,
Now ambled on in feeble idiotcy !
He died,—and then, one sad and piercing wail
Rose wildly forth upon the midnight gale,
With horrid sounds, as if some deed unfair
Of human crime had been committed there ;
And still a strange old attic oft is shown,
Where that poor boy was left to die, alone !

But what of her, who for a season bore
 The gentle name of sister ; sure in store,
 Though in the far-off distance, still there lay
 A fearful reckoning for some future day !
 Firm and compressed, awhile, she triumphed o'er
 The pangs of conscience ; but there never more
 Came peace or quiet within her troubled breast,
 Or answer to her longing here for rest.
 A curse was on her store and on her land,
 For nothing prospered where she laid her hand ;
 And so she dragged, for many a weary year,
 That bitter burden, till there rose a fear,
 When the appointed term of life went by,
 That, that strange wandering being could not die !*
 A *curse* was on her soul,—because *alone*
 She knew she might not bear it—nor atone ;
 And that those shining acres, one by one,
 Would dwindle all away, as years went on :
 So to her son the *curse* adhered,—that he,
 With all his race, should come to penury.

* * * * *

The last of those broad lands has long been sold ;
 And earth since then seemed to her heart to fold

* This fear seems really to have been entertained. The current expression used, with regard to her, is, that she could neither “doe nor die,” meaning, she could neither live nor die.

Its smiling verdure, and the doom to haste
 Which laid that bygone glory drear and waste.
 And artist's practised eye can no where trace
 In that old hall* one architectural grace;
 But rising o'er the vale, with hill behind,
 It strikes with interest strange, though undefined.
 And still the inmates of that stern old place
 Are the descendants of its ancient race,
 And to its falling homestead love to cling
 Through weal or woe,—in joy or sorrowing.
 At night, when all is still and sunk to rest,
 And those good people, with untroubled breast
 Have fallen asleep, from their incessant toil
 Of patient industry, on other's soil,
 Their own no longer,—through the shadowy gloom
 A tall straight form emerges from that room,
 Where, it is said, that infant met his doom,—
 Holding a ghastly head, all pale and bare,
 At which, transfixed, she looks with vacant stare!†

Such is the legend; and some years ago
 The barn floor had, by chance, to undergo

* This is on the property of Sir John Harpur Crewe, Bart.

† An aged person belonging to this old place used to relate, that a tall figure walked into her room at night, and placed a head on the foot of her bed, whence she distinctly heard it roll off on to the floor; shewing how strangely superstitious fancies mingled with the realities which gave rise to the tradition.

Repair, when, underneath, was found
Some ancient grave-stones in the broken ground.
So this had been the chapel, standing near
That quaint old residence ; and haply, here
They worshipped as of old ; and here, away,
Each in his last long slumber silent lay !

The blight has fallen and the curse has sped ;
But yet the humble soul by hope is led
Through the long night to see a brighter day,
When those dark films and clouds may pass away.
For that same righteous Hand, which dried the
 spring,
Can fertilizing showers in bounty fling,
And o'er the desert waste, and on the store,
May make His blessing rest for evermore !

LUD CHURCH.

“To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe, with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.”

MILTON.

Part the First.

LIKE ancient pilgrims to some favourite shrine,
But in a purer faith, our steps incline
To tread those rugged steeps, and onward haste
To thy old fane, hoar temple of the waste.
Mysterious Lud Church ! eye has never gazed
On dome or tower of thine, by mortal raised ;
But there thou liest hid in gloom profound,
A temple to the Highest, underground ;
Yet not beneath the ground, for high aloof,
The canopy of heaven is thy roof,
And there thy ancient portal, open wide,
Is entered from the heathery mountain side.

When thou wert formed, or how, is only known
To thy omniscient Architect alone!
If still the same, as when he formed the earth,
Or did convulsive nature give thee birth?
Or, as tradition tells, some mighty cave
Collapsed to narrow bounds? and refuge gave
To some true followers of His little flock,
Who worshipped here within the clefted rock,
In days when faith like precious gold was tried,
And by the great Refiner purified:
With hymnal chants, floating on balmy air,
They consecrated this a house of prayer.
O fitting temple for the heart to raise,
In self abandonment, her hymns of praise;
With nought to charm the sense, or lure the eye
From calm repose, on vast infinity!
No storied urn is here, or marble bust
To tell, where now is laid the sleeping dust
Of those who counted not their lives too dear,
So they the contrite heart might win and cheer.
From thinly-peopled hamlets hither stole
The stalwart mountaineer, for here the soul
Her high intelligence began to feel
And be endued with somewhat kindred zeal:
But seed thus wildly o'er the moorland sown,
Is, until harvest, known to God alone.

When from these sterile rocks and fastness strong,
Had ceased the echo of the Ludite's song,
Silence her ancient vigil sought to keep
In one long reverie, profound and deep,—
Broke only by the raven's cry at night ;
Or startled moorgame in her heathery flight ;
Or cruel hawk,* building her nest on high,
Within the precincts of the sanctuary.

At the south entrance, by the rocky door,
A slanting fissure opens near the floor,
From which a subterranean passage led
To where the river sweeps its pebbly bed.
Half way between a spacious area lies,
Forming an inner cave of monstrous size,†

* Some years ago an eccentric artist, in one of his excursions to Lud Church, resolved to take a hawk's nest which he saw high up in the rocks ; and with the aid of a ladder he succeeded, at the risk of his life. One of his young friends, still more daring, caused himself to be let down by a rope through the opening above, and accomplished in safety his hazardous and dangerous purpose—the old birds hovering round him, and uttering the most piercing cries.

† This inner cavern, which is entered by a narrow slanting fissure from Lud Church, was explored some time ago by a student, in the love of daring and adventure, accompanied by two men, one of them a miner. They crept along in an horizontal position, until they came to that perpendicular descent above described ; whence proceeding, they arrived at those three steps which bore the appearance of masonry. The size of the cavern seemed to be from sixty to eighty feet long, and about twenty high. They left there a newspaper, with other tokens, bearing the date of their visit. As they returned, a terrible clap, as of thunder, seemed to threaten the closing of the small aperture by which they had entered, in which case their destruction would have been inevitable.

Reached by a perpendicular descent
Of many feet, with ropes and body bent ;
Whence gliding for a while, there seem to be
Three stony steps of ancient masonry.
Diverging paths there are, to use at need ;
But one, direct descending, seems to lead
Beneath where Castle-cliff's old shadows sweep,
O'er what might once have been her donjon keep ;
And the hoarse blast of the wild forest gale,
Perhaps oft has borne some prisoner's dying wail !
Was there a castle once on that high cliff,
With those strange spirals all in bold relief
Projecting from that mass of rock and stone,
As by some great convulsion overthrown ?
Black Captain,* it is said, was wont to hold
His orgies here, and with his robbers bold,
Levied a tribute, which was called "black mail,"
On all strange travellers who crossed his pale :
Thus few passed singly,—high and low degree
"Banded together in a company."
Yet from one band a lady vanished here,
Who never more was heard of, far or near ;
Then the Black Captain was himself pursued
To every haunt of this wild solitude.

* He lived about the end of the seventeenth, or beginning of the eighteenth century, and must not be confused with the "Chieftain," the fragments of whose history bear a much earlier date.

But whether to that inner cave's retreat
 He bore the victim of a daring feat,
 Or to a strange and distant land she fled,
 From some stern guardian to escape the dread—
 Lost in conjecture, now must ever be,
 A dark impenetrable mystery.

* * * * *

Part the Second.

ONE day, by chance, over the purple waste,
 A huntsman and his hounds were seen to haste ;
 And in full cry after their frightened prey,
 Saw not the yawning chasm in the way :
 The bounding courser crossed the dread ravine,
 But the poor hounds were dashed the rocks between ;
 Amazed, when he regained the solid heath,
 The rider still went on, nor stopped to breathe ;
 For he began to fear some ambush lay
 At every step along that heathery way.
 And now his hounds were gone, the game was lost,
 So homeward o'er the mountain ridge he cross'd ;
 And ever and anon the dying yell
 Of his loved hounds, came o'er him like a spell.

Then vexed at heart, he took his weary way
Towards yon dark wood through which his mansion
lay ;

And, as he neared it, in the deepening gloom,
A light gleamed from the window of each room,
As if to honour some invited guest,
While his chafed spirit stood in need of rest.
Within the court he got, and left his steed,
Calling the groom to give her what she need,—
But lo ! the unwonted sight that met his eyes :
Before him stood steeds of all forms and size,
And baggage heaped around, and voices high
Poured forth their loud discordant revelry !
The squire, for such he was, turned to a door,
Which by a passage led into the store ;
And thence he saw the butler, keys in hand,
Dispensing goblets to an armed band.
And stalwart troopers, with their clanging swords,
Compelled the man to bring forth all his hoard
Of choicest wines ; and then, with noisy glee,
Shouted, “ Prince Charlie’s come from o’er the
sea.”

The squire saw well that no constraining power
Would now control those spirits for an hour ;
And that to pillage, and appropriate then,
Was but the wont of these uproarious men ;

So he stole forth again with noiseless tread
To find the whereabouts his men had fled.
And one he well could trust stood cowering near,
That in his service never knew a fear,
And who, with hasty sketch of what to do,
To the low side door silently withdrew.
The squire himself then to the barn repaired,
And from his hunting coat and buskins bared,
Wrapped well his legs and arms in bands of straw,
Ere to the open door the soldiers draw.
There with his face besmeared, and peering eyes,
They find a man in strange unusual guise,
Threshing, with flail in hand, the ripened grain ;
“ Now thus,” he cried, and struck at it again.
“ Now thus,” to all their questions he replied,*
And some from laughs and merriment, aside
Proclaimed, for sure he must an idiot be
To work, while all were feasting merrily !
But well he played his part, nor did he shrink
From all their gibes and sneers, or seem to think
Of aught except the work he had to do,
And then the flail with double ardour flew.

* The squire, who acted so prominent a part in this tale, was an ancestor of the late E. Trafford, Esq., of Swithamley Hall, and his grave, in a neighbouring church-yard, bears the inscription—“ Now thus,” in reference to this incident. The present possessor is Philip L. Brocklehurst, Esq.

Now there stood one who gazed with looks intent,
And on that scene his knitted eyebrows bent ;
While quietly o'er his features stole a smile,
As he surveyed the seeming workman's guile.
Preeminently tall, he reared his head
Above his followers, whom he gaily led ;
And when he doffed his cap, ambrosial hair
Waved curling o'er a forehead smooth and fair.
The beauty of a long and regal race
Moulded his limbs with their ancestral grace ;
And careless though he was, confiding still,
He drew all hearts to his most princely will ;
Using no subtle wiles or court finesse,
But only native truth and gentleness.
He never was betrayed, though on his head
A kingly price was set,—alive or dead ;
And churls so base, that honour never knew,
Proved to that royal Prince both good and true.

And now there ran a rumour through the group,
That from the capital troop after troop
Were coming forth ; and some even now were
near,
Intending to attack them in the rear.
To baffle the pursuit, and not to risk
A battle, they determined on a brisk

And vigorous march, to reach the county town,
Disperse the garrison, and place their own.
Already from the main road they had turned
To seek repose, and all that might be learned
Of a more devious route; and so to rest
They hie, with all the ease of welcome guests.
Fast locked in slumbers, to recruit their strength
For the tomorrow's toil,—there rose at length
From his recumbent posture, one who crept
With noiseless tread, unheard by those who slept.
Threading his way as lightly as he might,
He oped the door, and stept into the night;
Where, 'neath the shadow of a neighbouring wall,
Trode stealthily that figure, straight and tall;
And near the barn door, at a quickened pace,
He met the squire, with lantern, face to face.
At first the other sought to pass, but still
Confronted found himself, against his will;
So making best of what appeared a plight,
He raised the lantern high, and laughed outright.
The Prince rejoined, and with a cordial tone
Explained, he came to seek for him alone;
Then with a bearing somewhat grave and high,
Professed himself a true man, and no spy.
With an expressive glance the squire replied,
And pointed to huge heaps on either side;

D

And to his stables, filled with horses strange,
And hall, now made the soldier's common range ;
Then with a gesture, speaking slight rebuke,
Turned, on his own strange garb, a furtive look.
Still both were silent—and a moment more,
In which the Prince appeared to ponder o'er
His strange position, which had given room
For all the squire deemed fitting to assume,—
While yet his flashing eye revealed full well,
What now his curling lip essayed to tell :—
“ A true and lawful prince I hither come,
To find in hearts, as well as halls, my home ;
And by just laws, to gain a rightful crown,
That all may seek redress, and have their own.
But here, I find that freeborn Britons cower
Before a strange usurper and his power ;
And strive, with dastard hands, to prop a throne,
Which has been reared by treachery alone !”

First as he spoke, the squire, with reverence due
To royalty, quietly his hat withdrew,
And stood before the Prince, erect and bare,
His clear voice piercing through the midnight air :—
“ We live in peaceful times, in which the laws
Are justly ministered, giving no cause
For discontent ; and all, with quiet mind,

May worship, as his conscience is inclined.
 If to secure your safety, in the war
 You vainly seek to wage, or in a far
 And distant country,—then command my purse ;
 But may I never see so dire a curse
 As civil war upon my native land,
 Where brother against brother lifts his hand !”

For a brief instant, o'er the Prince's brow
 Stern thoughts seemed crowding ; but dispersed,
 and now
 He gave the squire a kindly hand, which he
 Gravely received, and kissed on bended knee.
 “ Life without aim, and honour lying dead,
 Or basely yielded,—and my country fled,—
 Because that life to lose, I would not dare,
 Which is become my people's only care,—
 Better to die, with honour in its bloom,
 Than give my hated foe, and country room
 To say, ‘ he formed some great designs to win,
 But failed for lack of courage to begin.’
 Yet deem not, that these precious lives I stake
 For love of power, or even for honour's sake ;
 Vows had been passed, and schemes were ripe for
 war,
 Before I left my exiled home afar.”

Rather, as to himself, he seemed to speak,
And in his secret soul an answer seek ;
So sadly, in their cadence, seemed to flow
Those royal accents, murmuring deep and low,—
That in the squire, a predetermined will
Alone could keep him firm, and loyal still.
After a pause, he said, An hour ago
Intelligence had reached him that the foe
Was now within some miles ; and strongly urged
That to a different road his men diverged.
Yet even then the opposing troops might clash,
And prayed the Prince, that from a step so rash
He would himself refrain ; and with a guide,
Adventure by the mountain's pathless side ;
For right across the country, it would lead
Exactly to the point (if he agreed,)
As that his men should take ; and for the rest,
Give the command to him he trusted best.
A steady negative was the reply,
That with his friends he lived, to fight or die :
When one, that instant, at his side appeared,
Who through all change of fortune had adhered,—
And straightway his deliberate counsel gave,
That by this course himself and men might save ;
For, being in no condition for the field,
Their lives might forfeit, or be forced to yield.

Part the Third.

THE moon, above, displayed her crescent orb,
Save when the clouds in anger sought to absorb
Her gentle light ; and palely seemed to pine,
As though forbidden on the world to shine.
From lowland forest woods three forms emerged,
And by the upland road and glen they urged
Their steps for some two miles ; till, on the heath,
One of the trio turned, and paused to breathe.
In manhood's vigour, somewhat stout of form,
He must for sport have weathered many a storm
Upon those mountain hills : then of the two,
One tall firm figure to its full height drew,—
The other, slight and shorter, seemed the guide,
Shod in low leathern boots, and walked beside
The squire, with cloak and widely-slouching hat,
He might for a guerilla chief have sat.
Along a rugged path awhile they haste—
Then struck on what appeared a boundless waste ;
And then the moon burst forth, and brightly
glanced
Athwart the trackless heather ; and there danced
Innumerable stars, as in delight,
To hail again the stately queen of night.

The guide now stopped before a leafless tree,
Which pointed to the entrance ; and the three
Entered within the Ludite's silent fane,
Which dark and solemn, seemed to keep their reign
Inviolatè : there, in a niche they see
A lighted lantern, shining welcomingly.
Taking it for a guide, their pioneer,
With light and careless step, that knew no fear,
Advanced to where some heath and skins lay spread,
With awning, to protect them overhead ;
And here the squire besought his princely guest
To take an hour's uninterrupted rest,—
Whilst he himself soon sunk in deep repose,
Oblivious of all outward human woes.
So there he lay, that regal head discrowned,
His tartan for a pillow—on the ground ;
A fugitive on land where he was heir ;
On couch the meanest vassal would not share :
Certain but of the present—to endure,
Unknowing what the morrow might ensure ;—
And there that wearied frame lay down and slept,
Where many an ancient vigil had been kept,
When, persecuted by his royal race,
The Ludite sought it for his hiding-place.
Now sleep had set her strange mysterious seal
Upon that outer nature, did there steal

On his untrammelled soul, in crowdings fast,
The visions and the actings of the past !
Or it might be—the *life* he once had led,
Came blending with *this* life he had instead ;
And syren voices—once in palace hall—
Appeared to chant beneath a funeral pall !
Certain it was, sweet music strains did reach
Into his inmost soul, and to beseech
For him some sacred unction ; but his ear
Dreamy and dull, caught not their meaning clear.
He strove to waken up his heavy eye
From drowsy listlessness, and silently
(By the dim lantern's pale and flickering light,
Which seemed to make more visible the night,)
To see if yet some faint and shadowy thing
Might not a light unto his vision bring.
The wind swept through the stately corridor,
And, echoing wildly up the giant torr
In breezy whispers, heaving many a sigh—
In the far distance—went away to die.
His steady eye, accustomed to the dark,
Now through the misty gloom began to mark
What seemed a ghost-like phantom, there to hold
Its nightly watch ; and on its bosom fold
Two shadowy arms ;—the attitude so still,
As on his startled senses gave a thrill.

Gliding from that dark niche, it there sat down
Upon a mossy seat, of nature's own,
As if to rest,—and then the glimmering light
Fell on a gentle head, with tresses bright,
And half concealed, beneath a dark gray hood,
The pencilled features of sweet maidenhood !
He saw that she was fair, and when she turned,
Her full soft eye with mildest radiance burned ;
And brow, expressive of some mission high,
Bore the pure impress of its native sky.
Musing whence so much loveliness could come,
Intranced, he pierced with eagle eye the gloom
To take in that sweet beauty ; when his ear
Heard the loud crowing of a chanticleer.*
It seemed unearthly, for a sound so rife
With the concomitants of busy life,
To invade these sacred precincts—but a start
Warned him his visitant would now depart.
Away she glided, and instinctively
He stretched his arms to grasp, as she went by,
Her flowing drapery,—but she was gone,
And he was left in silence, and alone.
Those sounds had heralded the coming morn ;

* These sounds, it is said, are still, sometimes, heard here ; and also that, until a few years ago, the subterranean cavern which issues from Lud Church, was inhabited by a strange and distinct race of beings.

And of its fantasies the night was shorn
By day's realities : so up he rose
To greet the squire from his profound repose.
The night had left him worn and prostrate, yet
Without its wonted care ; and his regret
With truth was briefly uttered—not to be
In fitting guise, to bear him company.
They parted silently ; emotions strong
Are seldom, in expression, loud or long :
And, peering through the darkness to descry
If yet another form might meet his eye,—
He took a crust and draught of mountain dew,
Then with the trusty guide in haste withdrew ;
And, as he passed out to the open way,
Sighed one last look on that old cavern gray.

The morn lay in its shadow ; and the sky
Bespangled seemed, with many a diamond eye
Looking a bright and kindly benison,
Ere overshadowed by the brighter sun.
He pondered on, with arms across his breast,
How from his brief, and strange unquiet rest
He had awakened ; and his dark eye flashed,
As from the sparkling heath his footsteps dashed
The dew : and then the distant rays
Of gorgeous sun-rise met his ardent gaze.

Still lost in thought, he heeded not the guide,
Who sometimes walked in silence near his side ;
Sometimes advanced, but oftener fell behind,
As in its devious turns the road inclined.
Unfrequented it was, save that the game
Roamed there in perfect freedom, wild, yet tame ;
And those strange footsteps had no power to
scare

The gentle moor-fowl, or the timid hare.
For as they neared the Roches, one would fly
And rest upon a peak till they went by ;
And then, as if emboldened, fly before,
Ere circling round its native hills once more.
Bitter the thoughts his heaving bosom fills,
And takes him back unto the heathery hills ;
Where once, as ever, hunted for his life,
He seemed a beacon for perpetual strife.
And what the end would be, he could not know,
But Hope sat throned upon his youthful brow,
And pointed, like the spiral rocks he saw,
To *that*, which ruled above all human law.
At length the rocky defile they had passed,
And reached the summit of the hill at last ;
But tangled boughs and brushwood seemed to
bar
Their progress, to that shining line afar,

Which in the distance, gleaming in the sun,
Showed there his followers, bright with sword and
gun,

And glittering, like all else that met his view,
Waited at the appointed rendezvous.

Clear of the prostrate wood he well nigh got,
But speed and effort now availed him not ;
So with a careful hand, the guide essayed
To hold the boughs while he passed through the
glade :

Then his quick eye, that moment turned aside,
Saw from the slouching hat, bright ringlets glide ;—
Yet all else lay concealed, so as before,
They paced along the bare and rugged moor.
Now, 'twixt himself and followers only lay
A dell, through which a brooklet made its way ;
There pausing, as he turned his earnest eyes,
Transfixed, remained in wondering surprise,—
Be it an earthly form or elfin sprite,—
The guide had vanished from his eager sight !
Nor o'er that moorland's wide, uncultured space,
Vestige or distant shadow could he trace,
And, with a burst of passionate regret,
He saw himself the sport of fortune yet !
One other instance, in his wandering life,
That Prince had met with—far removed from strife

Or clash of arms, when some propitious tide
 Had brought a guardian angel to his side ;
 From earthly passion and self-interest free,
 Risking her life for him, devotedly.*
 When in his future, blended *both* the past,
 A cheering halo would their memory cast,
 Save that in ignorance must he ever be
 If *this* were vision, or reality !

* * * * *

A moment still we linger, mid the crowd,
 Whom busy thought has called from their dark
 shroud
 Of dull oblivion, and with reverent tread
 Pass lightly through these arches, stern and dread,
 Which on the sense in solemn grandeur steals,
 While strangely soothed the earth-worn spirit feels.
 The mighty things of earth seem little here !
 Its pleasure and its pomp,—its hope and fear,
 And the world's strife, borne here on spirit wings,
 In startling mockery, discordant rings ;
 How for an empty bubble, a vain breath
 We toil, and idly sport with life and death !

* Flora Macdonald. The rebel army, in 1745, staid at Swithamley on its route to Derby, and the Pretender himself passed a night in Lud Church on his way through the forest, to meet it at the nearest point beyond the Roches.

One parting glance we take at that small band,
Who, pale and shadowy, in relief, yet stand
Out from the lapse of years; and possibly
Here their pure spirits may communing be,—
Ministering to the weary pilgrim's way,
With gentle light, a benedictory ray;
And strengthened and braced, as by some hallowed
spell,—
We bid the Ludite's temple-haunt, farewell!

A

LEGEND OF LUD CHURCH.

AMONG the many natural curiosities which abound in Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and the adjacent counties, there is one, whose traditionary history cannot fail to interest the legend-hunter. This curiosity is a deep ravine or glen, situate in a large forest to the north-west of Staffordshire. It consists of a cleft in the earth, from thirty to forty feet deep : the walls in some parts have the appearance of masonry, the stones being in regular order. One legend, connected with the place, will be best told in the words of the good knight Sir William de Lacy, who visited the cavern in the reign of James the Second.

It was in the summer of the year 1683, that I left the hospitable mansion of my old friend Sir Roger Whycombe, and turned the head of my gallant steed towards the town of Stafford. Crossing the northern boundary of Staffordshire, I entered upon a rugged, and in some places, almost impassable path. Sometimes it wound along with dull, jading uniformity ; at others it would

skirt a lofty range of hills, where the bracing breeze, laden with the perfume of the heather, was wafted from the neighbouring moor. Descending from the hills, it dipped into a lovely valley, so completely enshrouded in trees, that notwithstanding the vivid heat of the sun, a delicious coolness was experienced on entering it. In the centre of the valley, gurgling and rippling with musical glee o'er the sparkling white pebbles, glided a clear limpid stream, the waters of which seemed so cool and refreshing, that I could not refrain from drinking of its crystal drops. O water! how sweet art thou! thought I. The road from this delightful valley skirted for some miles the base of a range of hills. On the right, and several feet below the path which I pursued, rolled the swift waters of the Dane. High, on the other side the river, arose another range of hills, their sides clad with dark heath. The day was extremely beautiful; the golden sun, in his glowing chariot, seemed to drive along heaven's blue vault with fierce impatient haste, dispersing the white clouds which, a few hours before, hung in graceful drapery about him. Notwithstanding the excessive and almost overpowering heat, I rode along, enjoying the scenic beauties displayed on every side of me. Far in the foreground stood an extensive and dense forest. The sight of this forest, with its waving foliage and dark arched recesses, suggested such an idea of coolness, repose, and quiet, as only he, who has been exposed for some time to the heat of a summer sun can

fully appreciate. As I drew nearer the forest, and began to experience its delicious coolness, my thoughts, which had been rather disturbed by the great heat, began to assume their usual equanimity, while my mind became more fully alive to the beauty of the landscape.

A narrow but well-beaten path wound along through the forest, which in some places was so extremely dense, that all view of the sky was precluded. The forest appeared to be several miles in extent, and abounded in fine and ancient trees. There was the elm, with its rich branches, bending down like clustering grapes; there was the ash, with its smooth bark and elegant leaf; and the silvery beech, and the gracile birch,—the dark fir, affording, with its rough foliage, a contrast to its more beautiful companions, whilst it shot far above their branches with the spirit of freedom worthy a child of the hills. But above all, there was the noble, stately, and wide-spread oak, of whose knarled and iron form Spenser so truthfully remarks—"The builder oak, sole king of forests all." I rode on for a time, sometimes impeded in my progress by overgrown underwood, or by the low branches of some dwarfish tree. At length I approached some comparatively open ground, where on one side the trees were much thinner, and I was then enabled to catch a view of the opposite hills, now bathed in the golden light of the sun. I had scarcely reined in my horse, to take a better survey, when I was startled by a loud noise. On turning round, I perceived a rather

strange and unusual occurrence. A large and powerful fox was engaged in desperate combat with a goat. The fox, with the natural ferocity of his nature, fixed his teeth in the neck of the goat, which, after vain attempts to disengage itself, began to drag him deeper into the forest. Dismounting, I set off in pursuit, to see the issue of this strange combat. The ground was overgrown with heather and low brambles, which much incommoded me, but at length I reached the mouth of a gloomy-looking glen, into which I entered. In breadth, the place was extremely narrow, with damp walls rising to a considerable height: the top was so overgrown with heath that little light could penetrate, consequently a deep gloom pervaded the place. This, and the extreme stillness, impressed me with a feeling of solemn awe. So as soon as my eyes had become a little accustomed to the darkness of the place, I perceived that the goat had been victorious. Reynard lay extended on the ground, gored to death, and the victor, on seeing me, scampered off as fast as possible. As I was returning, I saw, seated at the foot of a lofty oak, which grew near the glen, and whose knarled and iron trunk had probably witnessed the march of centuries, a neatly-dressed old man, engrossed in the perusal of a worn bible. He rose, and saluted me as I approached. "This is a very odd-looking cavern," I remarked. "True, my friend," he replied; "but the Almighty, whose power can exalt the humble, and lay low the high, has been pleased to make this cavern,

insignificant as it appears, the instrument of many righteous works." At my request we sat down, and the old man related to me the following legend :—

"The immediate followers of Wicklif—the dawning star of the Reformation, as he is called,—were denominated Wicklifites, or Lollards. This latter word is, by the best authorities, supposed to be derived from the German word *Lollen*, signifying to sing aloud, in allusion probably to the extreme fondness of this sect for vocal music. Walter de Lud-auk was one of the most zealous supporters of the Wicklifite doctrines; so that the ecclesiastical authorities sought every opportunity to criminate him. This cave was once much larger than at present, but one of those strong convulsions of nature, which undoubtedly formed the ravine at first, by a second stroke caused it to collapse into its present narrow condition; and perhaps," said the old man, "another stroke may close it for ever. However, Walter de Lud-auk was in the habit of repairing to this cavern during the summer months with several of his friends, where their devotional exercises might be conducted with safety. Sometimes they made this place their abode, while they spread themselves over the country, extending their doctrines among the peasantry. Many were the searches made for them; but at that time the forest was so large and dense, and the cavern so well concealed, that all search was bootless. On these occasions the Lollards kept close, while food was conveyed to them by Henrich Montair, the head forester, who was devoted to their interests.

“ It was a fine summer afternoon, when the Lollards assembled to perform divine service in the natural cavern of Lud Church. Upon an elevated mound in the upper part of the church, stood the good old minister. Walter de Lud-auk was about seventy years of age: his hair was bleached like the hoary top of Snowdon, yet his form was erect; and what was still more strange, his broad and massive brow was unclouded with a single wrinkle. Neither his voice nor his intellect had suffered from the iron and relentless hand of Time: the former was strong and melodious, and was equally fitted for vocal praise, or pious exhortation; the latter could, with the same ease, grapple with the keen and subtle arguments of the Romish champions. Walter de Lud-auk was a man eminently fitted for the post and faith which he had chosen: his strong mind and indomitable will were well calculated to brave the wrath of the Catholic Church; while his gentleness, exemplary piety, and the weight of learning and age, could not fail to make a favourable impression. The assembly, fourteen in number, was ranged in a circle, having their pastor at their head. On his right hand stood a beautiful girl, Alice de Lud-auk, his granddaughter, whose parents, dying when she was an infant, left her to the care of her grandfather, whom she generally accompanied in his journeys. She was about eighteen years of age, rather taller than the generality of women. Her form was light and sylph-like, with a head exquisitely shaped;

her brow, broad and fair like her grandfather's; indeed, her fine features and graceful form, made up a picture of loveliness which the stern old walls of Lud Church rarely viewed. Among the rare qualities with which she was endowed, was a matchless voice; indeed, all her family were blessed with this enviable gift, but she, like a diamond surrounded by less precious stones, surpassed them all. Separated from the rest of the congregation, and almost at the entrance of the cavern, stood, or rather leaned against the wall, the herculean form of the head forester. Henrich Montair was of gigantic stature and strength: his features were cast in that striking style, called the Roman,—large, dark, full eyes, keen as the falcon's; the aquiline nose, and curved and haughty mouth. The expression of his features was rendered still more striking by his bronzed complexion, and curling black beard. He was clad in a coarse dress of Lincoln green; his legs were protected by strong buskins of deer-skin. In his belt was a heavy broadsword, a huntsman's horn, and a long dagger. At his feet lay a cross bow and a sheaf of arrows. After a short, but earnest prayer from the pastor, the opening hymn began. How beautiful and solemn did that hymn sound, as every note and every voice rose in strict accordance and harmony with each other. The lofty and sweet tenor, with the deep and musical bass, mingled their dulcet notes together in fervent praise to the Most High. At a certain part of the hymn, the other singers

stopped, and the wild, bird-like strains of Alice de Ludauk warbled with an almost unearthly sound,—so remarkable was the compass of her voice,—through the vaulted chamber. And when her voice was at the highest pitch, and when all eyes and thoughts were engaged in devotional contemplation, a quick trampling of feet, and a ringing of arms, were heard. Before any movement could be made, a tall and powerful man, clad in steel, rushed in at the entrance, followed by others. The voices of the singers were hushed—the man stopped short, and, waving his sword, cried, “Yield, in the name of the blessed Church, and his most gracious Majesty King Henry the Fifth!” The Lollards seized their weapons, and prepared to stand on the defensive, but were commanded to desist by their pastor. All obeyed, except the forester, who darted forward, and seizing the officer in his iron grasp, dashed him with such force among his followers, that they were irresistibly borne back to the entrance of the cave; then drawing his sword, he called to the Lollards to escape through the other outlet, while he defended the pass. One of the men levelled his arquebus, and fired, as the forester pressed forward; the bullet whistled past his ear, but a loud shriek burst from behind. The forester turned hastily round, almost afraid to trust his eyes; his foreboding was but too true; he saw the beautiful Alice supported in the arms of her grandfather,—the fatal bullet was lodged in her bosom. Uttering a terrible cry, the forester sprang forward, and

flung himself, with the desperation of a wild beast, upon his foes. His great stature and strength, and the narrowness of the pass, were formidable obstacles to the assailants. Two had fallen, cleft to the teeth by the mighty arm of the forester, whilst all shrank from encountering those terrible death-dealing strokes.

“There was a pause. The men held back; and the giant forester leaned on his bloody sword, his dark eyes flashing fire from beneath his shaggy and lowering brows. A low sound now issued from the violated temple, like the plaintive sighing of the wind; it grew stronger and stronger; till at last the lofty and solemn death-chant of the persecuted Lollards could plainly be heard, swelling in rich, yet mournful strains, as it rolled forth from the cavern and floated on the breeze, then declining in cadences of touching tenderness and melancholy pathos, it ceased—and the songs of the Lollards never more issued from Lud Church. So solemn and wild was the place, so awful the event which had called forth the beautiful, yet unlooked-for hymn, that even the rough natures of the soldiers were touched, while the strong chest of the forester heaved with emotion. A few moments after the last sounds of the chant had passed away on the wind, Walter de Lud-auk, bearing the fair corse of his granddaughter, and followed by the Lollards in solemn procession (carrying with them pickaxes and spades), issued from the church. At a few yards from the entrance, the Lollards began to dig the last resting-

place of Alice de Lud-auk. The soldiers were grouped around in silence, for there is nothing which makes so great an impression on the mind, as a glimpse at that state, through which the perishable matter of all earthly things must pass. The grave was dug, the corpse lowered, and soon the earth covered the lamented remains of her, who, one short fleeting hour before, lived in the possession of youth and beauty. Thus do the temporal things of this world pass away, like morning dew before the mid-day sun. The good old pastor, upon whose countenance grief was strongly depicted, but who, with the Christian fortitude of all good men, bowed in submission to the will of his God, kneeled down, and signing to his companions in adversity to do the same, he offered up a short, but fervent prayer. Then rising with a dignity which no misfortune could overcome, he, with his friends (including the forester,) peaceably submitted to the soldiers. Little more of this melancholy legend remains to be told. On the way to London, the forester conceived a plan of escape for the whole party, but they refused to profit by it: De Lud-auk, however, aware of Montair's danger, for his imprudent resistance to the officers of justice, ordered him, on pain of his strict displeasure, to convey several papers of importance to France. After considerable resistance, Montair obeyed, made his escape, and embarked for France, where he resided until the invasion of the English, whom he joined. Of De Lud-auk's companions, some were

imprisoned for a short time, and the rest pardoned: the fate of De Lud-auk himself was never known, but it is supposed that he died in prison."

After the old man had concluded, he rose from his seat, and laying his hand impressively on my shoulder, said, "My son, if thou art of the Protestant religion, and art called upon, by the despotic rulers of this land (James the Second, &c.) to abjure thy faith, remember the Lollards of Lud Church, and stand firm." I thanked him for his advice, and desired him to shew me the grave of the unfortunate Alice. "Thou hast sat in the shadow of the tree which grows over it," he replied. I turned to the oak and broke off a leaf from its broad branches, which I deposited in my bosom, as a memento. Then, thanking the venerable old man again, I mounted my horse and rode away, my mind filled with sorrowful reflections.

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