

# The Master of Logan

By Allan Cunningham

Even in our ashes live our wonted fires.—Gray

One summer's eve, as I passed through a burial-ground on the banks of the Nith, I saw an old man resting on a broad flat stone which covered a grave. The church itself was gone and but a matter of memory: yet the church-yard was still reverentially preserved, and several families of name and standing continued to inter in the same place with their fathers. Some one had that day been buried, and less care than is usual had been taken in closing up the grave, for, as I went forward, my foot struck the fragment of a bone. I lifted it hastily, and was about to throw it away, when the old man said, 'Stay, thoughtless boy, that which you touch so carelessly was once part of a living creature, born in pain and nursed tenderly, was beloved, and had a body to rot in the grave, and a soui to ascend into heaven—touch not, therefore, the dust of thy brother rudely.' So he took the bone, and, lifting a portion of the green sod, which covered the grave, replaced it in the earth. I was very young, and maybe thoughtless, but I was touched with the patriarchal look of the man, and also by his scriptural mode of expressing himself. I remained by him, and was in no haste to be gone.

'My child,' he said, 'I have a melancholy kind of pleasure in wandering about this old burial-place. In my youth I have sat with hundreds of the old and young in the church to which this ground belonged—they are all lying here save one whom the sea drowned and two who perished in a foreign battle, and I am the last of the congregation who lives to say it. I am grown sapless, and I am become leafless. There is not one hair on a head ninety years old and odd—look, my child, it was once covered with locks as dark as the back of yon hooded-crow.' He removed his hat as he spoke, and his bald head shone, in the light of the sun, like that of an apostle in a religious painting. 'I love to converse,' he said, 'with children such as yourself. The young men of this generation mock the words of age; it would be well if they mocked nothing else; but what can we expect of those who doubt all and believe nothing? If you will sit down on this grave-stone and listen patiently, I shall relate a tradition, pertaining to this burial-ground, which has the merit of a beneficial moral:—A tale which you will remember at eighty, as well as I do now, and which will show what befalls those who meddle, unwisely, with the dust of poor mute human nature.' I sat down as he desired, and he told me the following story.

'In the summer of the last year of the reign of James Stuart, it happened that John Telfer was making a grave in this burial-ground. The church was standing then, and there were grave-stones in rank succeeding rank—for this is a place of old repute, and Douglasses and Maxwells and Morrisons and Logans lie round ye thick and threefold. John, as I said, was digging a grave, and as he shovelled out the black mould, mixed with bones, he muttered, "Ay! Ay! It was a sad and an eerie day when the earth was laid over the fair but sinful body which I put here last. The clouds lowered, the thunder-plump fell, and the fire flew, and heaven and earth seemed ready to come together. It's no' for nought that Nature expresses her wrath—the very gaping ground shuddered as if unwilling to take such sinful dust into its bosom." I remember the day well, though an old story now. He was a douce man, John Telfer, and had fought in the great battles which the people waged with the nobles, in the days of Montrose and David Lesley. He continued to dig till a skull appeared; he looked at it and said, "Thou empty tabernacle, sore art

thou changed since I saw thee amongst the splendid Madams of thy day! Where are thy bright eyes, thy long tresses, which even monarchs loved, and the lips which spoke so witchingly and sang so sweet? Thou art become hideous to behold!— How art thou fallen since the days of thy youth, and how ghastly thou art in the sunny air, amid the church-yard grass!” And he threw it with his shovel among the grass and daisies growing thick around.

‘Now there came to the kirk-yard a young man of an ancient kindred, who had blood in his veins of those who had wrought good deeds of old for Scotland. But he was a wild and a dissolute youth, who loved gay dresses and drunken companions: his blood was hot, his hand often on the sword-hilt, and his chief delight was in chambering<sup>1</sup> and in visits at midnight to the ladies’ bower. Your father and your mother have warned you to beware of the folly of the Master of Logan—his name hath become a proverb and a warning in the land. It is of him I speak.

‘And he came, as I said, into the kirk-yard, and as he came he whistled. He touched the fleshless skull with the toe of his Turkey shoe till the earth fell out of the eye-holes, and he said, “John, whose skull is this?”—“A woman’s Sir,” said John, and wrought away with his shovel; for he was a good man, and disliked to be questioned by one whom he hated. “A woman’s!” said the Master of Logan, “some presser of curd and creamer of milk! yet a dainty one in her day, I’ll warrant.”—“Deed, Sir,” answered John, “the woman was well to look at, and a dainty one was she. I have seen gowd and jewels aboon that brow, and such a pair of een beneath, as would have wiled the bird from the brier or the lark from the sky.”—“O, I can guess the rest,” said the Master of Logan—“an alluring damsel, with sinful black eyes—who excelled in the dance—could sing a merry ballad—had made no captious vow against the company of men—was sometimes visited by the minister, and came to the kirk when the Sessions sat. Am I right?”

‘John looked at him for half-a-minute’s space, and then answered, “Ay! right—wool sellers, ken wool buyers—wha would have thought, now, that the living could look on a sample of gross dust and claim relationship in spirit? It’s e’en a true tale, Master of Logan—so go home and repent. Dust is what ye maun come to; some unhallowed foot will yet kick your skull, and cry, ‘Here was a man who had wit in his day, but what is he now?’ ”—“Why, John, ye can preach nearly as well as the parson”—“Preach!” said John; “I have preached, Sir, in my day—it was during the times of the Godly Covenant, and I behoved to speak; for one of Cromwell’s troopers pulled that hen-hearted body, Bryce Bornagain, out of the pulpit, and set up his southern crest. I trow I sobered him—I trow I sobered him—what I couldna do with the word I accomplished with anither weapon,” and John threw the earth into the air, out of the bottom of a ten-foot deep grave, with an energy which those days of double controversy recalled.—“Ye would like to have those days back again, I think, John?” inquired the other. “Back again! na troth, no,” said he, “I would have nought back again that’s anes awa—the days of Cromwell are weel away, if they bide—and so is Phemie Morison there, whase skull ye’re handling—she’s well awa, too, if she bide.”—“Bonnie Phemie Morison!” replied the Master of Logan, “and is this her!—she seems fairly enough away. What should bring her back again?”—“Oh just love of evil,” said the conqueror of Cromwell’s preaching dragoon,—“to visit the haunts of early joys, maybe—or of unrepented sins. It’s said her spirit finds a pleasure of its own in coming back to the good green earth. We’re no dead when we are dust, Master of Logan.” And he laid his hand on the brink of the lowly dwelling he had prepared, and leaped out with an avidity which seemed to arise from an apprehension that the dust on which he trode was ready to be re-animated.

‘The Master of Logan placed the skull on the tomb-stone of one of his ancestors, and said, “Now, John, between you and me, do you really think that our fair friend, here, takes a walk in

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual indulgence.

the spirit occasionally—saunters, as she did of old, in the cool of the summer twilight—stalks round the grave of some unhappy youth, whom her charms consigned to early rest, and enjoys again, in idea, the love which she inspired?”—“Ha’ done,” said John, “ha’ done, Master of Logan, now but ye talk fearfully. Look an’ yere wild words be not inspiring that crumbling bone as if with life. I could maist take my oath that it looked at me.” John’s brow grew moist, and he said, “I wish the corpse would come, for this is an unsonsie<sup>2</sup> place.”—“Particularly,” said the other, “when Phemie Morison, here, walks about and pays visits.”—“O heart-hardened creature!” cried John, “yere folly will get a sobering.—I have kenned as bold lads as your honour made humble enough in spirit about the middle watches of the night. There was Frank Wamfray, a soldier, who neither feared God nor man. A spirit, in likeness of a woman, came to him in the dead hour of the night, and caroused with him out of his canteen, at the gates of Proud Preston—I could go blindfold to the spot—and what came of him? He lived and died demented—he was a humbling spectacle.” Loud laughed the Master of Logan, and cried “Here’s fair Phemie Morison. I wish she would come and sup with me to-night!” He was observed to change colour, he turned to walk away, and the old man exclaimed, “See! there is an unearthly light in the sockets. Sir, repent and pray, else ye will sup with an evil spirit.”

‘The Master went away, and as he spurred his horse he could not prevent his thoughts from returning to the scene which he had just witnessed. He imagined that he saw the old man, the open grave, and the mouldering skull placed on the tombstone. He slackened the rein of his horse, and after a fit of unusual moodiness, muttered, “I am as mad as Cromwell’s old adversary, John the Bedrell, himself—there can be no life in a rotten bone, nor light in the eyes of an empty skull”—he galloped away, and his mind was soon occupied with gayer subjects, and looks of another kind than those of death and the grave.

‘He had a cup of wine to drink with a companion, a fair dame to visit, and when he reached the gate of his own tower the clock was striking ten. He threw his rein to his servant and entered—rang his bell violently, as was his wont when angry, and said, “Lockerbie, how is this?—here is a table covered and dishes set for two—fool! I sup alone—how comes this?”—“Even so as was ordered,” replied Lockerbie; “between light and dark, a messenger rode to the gate, rang the porch bell, and said, ‘A lady sups with the Master to-night, so let a table be spread for two.’ This, as your honour knows, is a message neither sae startling nor uncommon, sae I gied orders, and moreover I said, ladies love music, nor do they hate wine, let both be had, and”—“Lockerbie,” said his young master, “what manner of person was this messenger?”—“Oh, a pleasant man, with a red face,” replied the servant, “but he merely delivered the message, and rode. I wish he had stopped, had it only been to eschew the thunder-plump which fell when the loud clap was. And that’s weel minded—there’s Dick Sorbie swears through the castle wa’, and yere honour kens it’s twelve feet thick, that the messenger was a braw bouncing lass, with a scarlet cloak on and een like elf candles—but I say a man, a pleasant man, with a ruddy countenance.”

‘The Master, when he heard this, wore a serious brow—he paced up and down the room—looked at the covered table—gazed out into the night—the moon was there with all her stars; the stream was running its course—the owl was hooting on the castle wall, and the relics of the thundercloud were melting slowly away on the hills of Tinwold. “A wild delusion!” he muttered to himself—“my ear was poisoned by weak old Martha who nursed me. See! nature continues her course—the moon shines—the stars are all abroad—the stream runs—and how can I imagine that a wild word, said in jest, should change the common course of nature. I cannot, shall not believe it!”

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<sup>2</sup> Luckless.

‘He threw himself on a settee of carved oak, and looked on the walls and on the ceiling of the apartment. On the former hung the arms and the portraits of his ancestors—and grim and stately they looked. On the latter was painted a rude representation of the Day of Judgment—from which this room had, in early days, acquired the name of the Judgment-hall. Graves were opening and giving up their dead, and some were ascending to a sad and some to a saving sentence. He had never looked seriously on this composition before—nor did he desire to peruse it now; but he could not keep his eyes off it. From one of the graves which opened on the left-hand of the Great Judge, he saw a skull ascend—and he thought there was a wild light in its eyeless sockets, resembling what he had seen that afternoon in the burial-ground.

‘The Master of Logan went to a cabinet of ebony and took out a Bible with clasps of gold—he touched it now for the second time, and opened it for the first—it had belonged to his mother—but of his mother he seldom thought, and if he remembered his fathers, it was but to recall their deeds in battle and dwell on those actions which had more affinity to violence than to virtue. He opened the Bible, but he did not read:—the sight of his mother’s writing, and the entry of his own birth and baptism, in her small and elegant hand, made his eyes moist, though no tears fell:—as he sat with it open on his knee, he thought there was more light in the chamber than the candles shed, and lifting his head, he imagined that a female form, shadowy and pure, dissolved away into air as he looked. “That was, at least, a real phantom of the imagination,” he said mentally—“the remembrance of my mother created her shape—and it is thus that our affections fool us.” He closed and clasped the Bible, and lifting a small silver bell from the table rang it twice. A venerable and gray-headed man came tottering in, saying, “What is your will?”

‘ “I rang for you, Rodan, to ask your advice,” said he,— “sit down and listen.”—“Alas! Sir, it’s lang lang now since ony body asked it,” said the other, with a shake of his silvery hairs, “though I have given advice, as your good and gallant father, rest his soul, experienced, both in the house and on the edge of battle.”—“But this,” said the Master, “is neither matters of worldly wisdom, nor pertaining to battle.”—“Then,” said the old man, rising, “it’s no’ for me, it’s no’ for me. If it’s a question of folly, ask yere sworn companion, young Darisdeer—if it be a matter of salvation, whilk I rather hope than expect, ask the minister, godly Gabriel Burgess—he’ll make darkness clear t’ ye, he’ll rid up the mystery of death and the grave, and for laying spirits!—but we’re no fashed<sup>3</sup> with spirits, I trow, and am no’ sure that I ever saw ane, unless I might call the corpse light of old Nanse Kennedy a spirit. I would rather trust my cause with Gabriel Burgess than with ony dozen divines of these dancing and fiddling days. —“Bid Sorbie saddle a horse, a quiet one and quick-footed,” said the Master, “and lead it over the hill, to Kirk-Logan, and bring the minister to me. He will show this Bible, and say the owner desires to see him as fast as speed can bring him.” The old man bowed, and retired.

‘ “I have often ridden on an errand to a lady,” said Sorbie, “and it seems natural that an errand to the parson should follow—though what my master can want with him is beyond my knowledge—he’s nane of the praying sort—as little is he of the marrying sort—and, I think he wadna send for a good divine, to make fun of him over the bottle with his wild comrades. He mauna try to crack his fun on godly Gabriel Burgess. I wad rather face the Master of Logan himself, when kindled with drink and inflamed with contradiction. The minister’s the man for handling a refractory sinner. I think I see him fit to spring out of the pulpit, like a fiery dragon—his hands held out, his eyes shining, his grey hair rising up like eagles’ wings, and his voice coming down among sinners like a thunder-clap. And then there is a power given him of combating the spirits of darkness—an open Bible, a drawn sword, a circle of chalk and some wise

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<sup>3</sup> Vexed or disturbed.

words—so Gabriel prevails. I wonder what puts spirits in my head in this lonesome place.” He spurred his horse, and looking right and left, before and behind, like one keeping watch in suspicious places, entered a wild ravine, partly occupied by a brook, and wound his way along the banks chanting the Gallant Graemes,<sup>4</sup> with all the courage he could muster; he pitched the tune low, for he desired to have the entire use of ear and eye in his ride down the Deadman’s Gill, for so the glen was called.

‘His horse snorted and snuffed, and Sorbie saw, to his infinite delight, that a lady riding on a little palfrey, and attended by a single servant, had entered the gorge of the glen, and was coming towards him. “Now, in the name of fun, what soft customer can this be?” said he to himself: “she’s mantled and veiled as if afraid of the night air. But what the fiend is the matter with the beasts?—softly, softly, Galloway Tam, else ye’ll tumble me and coup<sup>5</sup> the lady—damn the horses, that I should say sae, and me in a eerie place and in the way to the minister too—softly, softly.” The road luckily widened at the place where he met this wandering dame, else, such was the irritable temper of the horses which he rode and led, that he would have certainly lost his seat. He bowed as she came up, and said, “Good even, fair Mistress, ye ride late.”—“And good even to thee, good fellow,” said the lady, in a voice of great natural sweetness, “it is late, but I have not far to go, if the Master of Logan be at home?”—“He’s at home, and alone,” answered Dick, with a low bow, “and expecting some one, for I saw a table spread for two: I know not who is the invited guest.” The lady laughed, and lifting her veil, showed a youthful and lovely face, with bright eyes and flaxen ringlets—then dropped the veil, and continued her journey. “It’s a face I have never seen before,” said Sorbie to himself, “but such a face as that will aye be welcome to the Master of Logan. I maun spur on for the minister, since such a sweet dame as yon is on a visit. My master will scarcely wait for his coming to say grace afore meat—she’s a shiner.” And away rode the messenger at a round pace.

‘Just as he emerged from the glen, he saw a dark figure riding slowly towards him; and it seemed to his sight that horse and rider were one, for both were dark. “Now,” muttered he, “the auld saying’s come to pass,—’Meet wi’ a woman at night and then ye’re fit to meet with the Deil’—for here He comes—riding, I dare be sworn, on Andrew Johnston of Elfsfield.” The rider approached, and said, “Turn—turn—I am on my way to thy master.” “Be merciful, but this is wondrous!” exclaimed the other, in ecstasy. “Is this you, Minister? O, but ye are welcome!” and he took off his hat and shook back his hair, more to cool his burning brow, on which drops of terror had gathered, than out of respect to the clergyman. “Come, turn thy bridle back, Richard Sorbie,” said Gabriel,—“Thou hast seen something, such as human sight cannot behold without fear, which hath moved thee thus.”

‘Sorbie had, however, recovered all his ordinary audacity, and answered very gaily, “Indeed, Minister, to tell ye the truth, ye were the object of terror yourself; for seeing ye coming, riding along in this haunted place, all dark, horse and man, I e’en set ye down for the Enemy instead of the friend o’ mankind, and I’m free to own that I did na like to face ye. Faith, but my horses, poor things, were wiser than me; they took it calmly enough, and ye ken yourself a horse is no’ willing to ride up to an emissary of the other world, or emissaries of this world either, Minister, else Galloway Tam wouldna have made sic a work. He nearly laid me on the gowans,<sup>6</sup> when I met a wandering Queen of Sheba, in the Deadman’s Gill, some ten minutes since.” “A wandering lady, at this hour, in this wild glen!” said Gabriel: “and what manner of woman was

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<sup>4</sup> A traditional ballad.

<sup>5</sup> Tumble.

<sup>6</sup> Wild flowers usually daisies.

she?”—“Oh a lass wi’ manners enough, Minister,” said Sorbie; “and veiled, as ye may guess, with an armful of lint-white locks about her bonnie blue een. But ye’ll see her, Minister, ye’ll see her; she’s awa to sup with the Master of Logan, and if ye makena the mair speed, he’ll hae commenced the meat. I was sent off with such speed, to bring ye, as I never was sent afore—mair by token, there’s a memorial that the Master’s in earnest.” And he put the little clasped Bible into his hands. “Let us ride faster,” said the Minister, “I may be too late”; and they rode onward.

“It was here,” said Sorbie, pointing to a wider part of the way, “that I met the lady with the lint-white locks—and this too is the place, they say, Minister, where the Lords of Logan had a summer-bower of old, and where one of them had for his companion, one of the wanton lasses of Ae, a frail twig o’ the auld tree of the Morisons.” “Hush!” said Gabriel—“give not the thought utterance—such scenes should not be recalled. Bid what is good live again—let the memory of what is evil perish.”—“Aweel,” said Sorbie, “e’en let it be saebut such things canna aye be accomplished—an’ yonder’s the lights of Logan tower, a glad sight in such a lonesome place as this: but will ye tell me, Minister, how ye came to ken that the Master wanted ye?—I was sent to bring ye—and I’m sure the tower sent out no other messenger.”—“A blessed creature warned me,” said Gabriel—“yea, a blessed creature.” And he looked at the Bible as he spoke. “I would have gone to the uttermost ends of the earth to do her bidding, while she lived, and now shall I refuse her when she is a ministering spirit?”—“He’s got into one of his fits of communings with the invisible world,” thought Sorbie, “and it’s wisdom to let him alone, lest he should cause me to see something whilk I have no wish to see. Yet I marvel who this blessed creature could be who told him—he’s owre deep for me to deal with, this Minister of ours.”

While they were on their way down the Deadman’s Gill, the Master of Logan heard the neighing of a palfrey at his tower gate, and a bustle amongst his servants. He presently heard the sound of a woman’s voice—very low, very soft, and as liquid as music, giving some directions to the attendants; and soon a light foot, accompanied by the rustling of silks, approached his apartment. The door opened, and a young Lady, richly dressed and of great beauty, was ushered in—she lifted her veil from her person, threw it backwards over her shoulders, carrying with it a whole stream of ringlets, and occupying the settee of oak, to which she was conducted, said, “Master of Logan, I must be your guest for an hour. You have your table ready furnished—your silver censers burning, and the wine ready. Ah, Sir, was this feast spread for a lady?” And she gave her head, with its innumerable curls, a pleasant toss, and threw a comic archness into the glance of her eye, and waited for an answer. “Truly, Lady Anne,” said he, “I must not say that it was spread for you, since I did not expect this honour, but it could not be spread for any one more lovely or more welcome.”—“Master,” answered the young lady, with some dignity, “I am not now as I have been—I am now mistress of my own actions, with no guardian to control me. I go where I wish, and journey as I will—but I am not here altogether of my own choice—for, look out on the night—yon huge black cloud cannot choose but rain by pailfuls, and I would rather throw myself on your hospitality than trust the treacherous storm. It would have no mercy upon our female falderols and our round tires like the moon.”

“Dear Lady Anne,” replied the Master of Logan, “whatever be the cause of your coming, your presence here is most welcome—not the less so since the elements constrained a little that dear quick-silvering disposition of thine—which, now I think on’t, used to wrong me with suspicions and attack me with sarcasms. But all that only renders the present visit more welcome. Lay your veil aside, and allow those fair prisoners, those luxuriant tresses, a little liberty—the cloud, which you dreaded, grows darker and darker; and you may be thankful if you are released till

midnight." She unveiled, and removed a broad fillet which enclosed her tresses, allowing them to descend in abundance on her shoulders—then, raising her white arms, caught them up ringlet after ringlet, and confined them around her brows and beneath the fillet, only allowing a tress or two to scatter negligently down her long white neck. He knew enough of human nature to know that all this apparent care was but a stratagem to show her charms to advantage, and he looked at her with much earnestness and an encreasing regard, which he did not desire to conceal. It is true that once or twice he said, mentally, "What but admiration of me would have possessed this young and modest lady—she who always repelled, with cold tranquillity, the compliments and attentions I paid her,—what has happened to induce her to overstep the limits of maidenly discretion? But nature's nature, and I have often seen the will that was restrained by parents set itself free with a vengeance, and make ample amends for early constraint. I must comfort her as well as I can; I wish I had not sent for that severe divine— this will furnish a text for another lecture—he will make me the common speech of the pulpit—and, what is worse, this young lady too will be a sufferer." The Master seemed to have dismissed from his mind all the fears which lately distressed him; the intoxication of woman's beauty o'ermastered all other emotions.

The domestics of the Tower meanwhile indulged in abundance of wild speculations. "I marvel what will happen next?" said the first servant. "Our master has sent for a divine; and young Lady Anne Dalzel has come wandering hither under the cloud o'night, like an errant damsel in the auld ballads—it canna be for good that he's grown godly and she's grown daft."—"I wonder what puts it into your head," said the second servant, "that this young tramping lass, with the lint-white hair and licentious een, is Lady Anne Dalzel? Do you think that her douce mother's ae daughter would sae far forget rank and virtue, and e'en prudence, as to come cantering awa here in the dark hour o' the night? Na, na! the dove will never flee into the nest of the gore-falcon."—"Ye say true," said a third menial; "this quean, whoe'er she may be—and for looks, she might be an earl's daughter—savours nothing of the auld house of Dalzel. Why, man, there's a saucy sort of grace—a kind of John-come-woo-me-now kind of look about her, which never belonged to the name."—"And who, then, can she be?" inquired a dozen of domestics, gathering round the other speakers in a circle.

"I ken what I ken," said an old woman, who had charge of the poultry; "and I know what I know! Ay! ay! they're well guided whom God guides; and yet all that we see is not of his making. Ah, sirs, there's mony a queer thing permitted in the earth! and this cummer, for all so young and so rosie as she looks, has nae touch of natural flesh and blood. Wha has nae heard of fair May Morison, who erred wie one o'the auld Lords of Logan, and was a dweller in the summer bower down in the Deadman's Gill? I mind her weel when I was a gilpin<sup>7</sup> of a lassie, in the year saxteen hundred and fifty and sax—and wha was then like Madam? But she erred sair, and sank far, and died when she was in her prime, in unrepented sin, they say, for it's certain she came back and haunted the Deadman's Gill—and who would come back if they could bide away!"—"Hoot! hoot! Dame Clocken," said several tongues at once; "this is all wynted<sup>8</sup> milk, woman; ye set your imagination wi' rotten eggs, and canna bring out a wholesome brood."—"Troth, and it would have been well for me," said the old woman, "had the whole been a matter of fancy; but I saw her spirit, ye unbelievers—a sight I thought I sould never hae coost the cauld of. It was eleven at night—the place, the auld Bower—and I was on a tryste with Willie Gowdie of Gulliehill. Awa' I went, light o' heart and quick o' foot, and when I came to the appointed place, wha saw I but cummer! There she sat, wi' her lang links of flaxen hair flowing oure her

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<sup>7</sup> A young sturdy person.

<sup>8</sup> Spoiled.

shoulders like a deluge. I thought it was one of Willie's pranks, and up I went, but through God's strength refrained frae speaking. O, sirs, she looked up!—Its head was a skull, and the lights o' perdition in its eyne-holes! I shrieked, and dropped down; and when I came to myself, I thought there was some ane giving me queer grips. I looked and it was Willie Gowdie." To this interminable stream of wild story, the clatter of horses' hoofs first in the avenue, and then at the gate, brought a termination. Some hurried out with lights, and presently returned, showing in Gabriel Burgess, with more than a common proportion of solemnity on his brow.

'Old Rodan showed the preacher the way to the Chamber of Judgment; and as he stopped to set his hose and neckcloth in order at one of the mirrors, he heard a soft, mild voice say, "You are witty and you are pleasant, Master, and, like some of your ancestors, have little mercy on woman. So this is your kirk-yard legend; it explains why your looks are hollow and your manners austere—how unlike the gayest dancer at the assembly and the rashest rider in the chase. But why should such shallow imaginings disturb a mind so strong as your's?—Can the wisest or the wildest human word raise the dead—clothe their bones with beauty—fill their hollow eyes with the light of heaven, and put the breath o' God between their lips—give them a taste for table dainties, and a turn for conversation?" He held the wine-glass in his hand, when the steps of the preacher were heard in the passage and the door began to open. "Appear, in likeness of a priest!" exclaimed the young lady, laughing; and Gabriel Burgess entered, and took a seat between her and the Master of Logan.

' "I am glad to see you, Reverend Sir," said the Master. "I have sent for you on a matter which moved me much; but I am easier now."—"Indeed, my young friend," said the divine, no wonder that you wished for me; such a companion suggests thoughts of the altar, doubtless. And is this young lady to get command over the Tower? What fair name will she lose for the sake of the house of Logan?"—"A name of old repute," said the Master, "even Anne Dalzel."—"Ah! young lady," said the Preacher, "I reverence thee for thy mother's sake. But thou art of another Church, and I have not seen thee some years. Dalzel, a bold name and an old name; but I'm the man who changes the fair names of ladies—I hope I shall be permitted to find thee another name before we part?" The young lady looked down, the Master looked at the lady, and the Preacher at both, and then said, "More of this presently; but I hope Lady Anne will forgive me for appearing before her in these homely garments, unlike the splendid dresses of her favourite Church." And he sedulously smoothed up his hose, and seemed anxious to appear acceptable in the sight of a fastidious lady.

' "Truly, Parson," said the lady, laughing, "I am afraid you will think me vain and frivolous; these curled locks and jewelled clothes are not according to the precepts of your Church. Will you not hesitate to bind the foolish daughter of a laxer Church to one of the chosen of your own?"—"Ah! Madam," answered the Preacher, smiling, "your jewelled robes and curled locks become you; and I might as well quarrel with a rose because it blooms bonnie, or with a lily because it smells sweet, as with woman because of her loveliness. And as for marriage, some thirty score and three have I wedded in my day, and may do the good office to many yet."—"A laborious divine," said the young lady, "and I dare say one who makes durable work. This Scotland of ours is, indeed, a pleasant land for matrimonial inclinations. The Kirk, with reverence be it said, is at the head of the bridal establishment; but if the parson weds his thousands, the magistrate marries his tens of thousands; and those who are too bashful to reveal their loves to the whole congregation, or too poor to pay the fees of the Justice—why, they make an exchange of matrimonial missives and set up their household. We have no such indulgence in our Episcopal Church."



“Lady,” replied the Preacher, “ye have laid your delicate hand on one of the sore-places of our Zion. The carnal power of the State measures its strength too much with the spiritual power of the Church; and when we war with those self-seeking people, we are accused of desiring to engross the entire disposal of man’s body here and of his soul hereafter. Our Church is poor and humble; the lowliest roof in the land is that which covers the house of God, and the commonest vestments in Scotland are those which cover her clergy. Concerning this, I repine not; for there are powers which even our poverty and humility give us, which exalt and strengthen us. How could I war with the effeminacy of embroidered garments, and the monstrous lavishness of our nobles and our gentry, were I to be rolled up to the controversy in a cushioned coach, attended by footmen in laced jackets?”

“That is so well and so wisely said,” answered the young lady, “that I could wish the etiquette of the table admitted of our tasting of wine together before the bell rings for supper; but the Master is become abstemious of late, he passes the cup, and shuns pleasant converse.”—“Perchance he hath something on his mind, which weighs heavily,” replied the Preacher; “and wine to the sick of heart is an addition of heaviness. Is there aught in which the wisdom of the devout, or the kindness of the beautiful, can be of advantage unto thee? Here we are both,” he said, smiling,—“what hurteth my son? says the Church of Scotland; and what vexeth my brother? saith this fair vassal of a laxer kirk.”—“I say,” answered the lady, “that we are two oracles, infallible in our way, and that our son and brother cannot open his heart, or reveal his sorrows, to two more wise and sagacious people. In truth, in some sort, he was about the unburthening of his heart when he heard your footsteps, but he wisely reserved the marrow of his misery for one more ancient in knowledge, and more confirmed in understanding. Something hath happened in the burial-ground of Logan kirk to disquiet his mind.”—“Speak, my son,” said the Preacher; “there is healing for all sorrows, whether of mind or of body.” The Master of Logan, in a tone sometimes affectedly pleasant, related what had passed, and spake lightly of the gay invitation given to the dust of Phemie Morison.

The Preacher listened attentively, but like one who had heard the tale before. “My son,” said he, “the evils which beset thee arise from the living, and not from the dead, and you are more in jeopardy from one ripe and rosy madam in warm flesh and blood, than from all the bones of all the dames that ever graced the courts of the Stuarts. The words which you uttered were indeed unguarded, and must be repented of; but they were uttered in a dull ear—death and the grave listen to no voice, save that of the archangel. No, no, my son, imagine not that rash words can call dust into life; can summon the spirit from the realms of bliss or of woe, or that thou art so supremely blessed, or so splendidly wicked, as to have spirits of good, or of evil, for thy boon companions. In the blinded and melancholy days of Popery, when men made their own gods, then evil spirits were rife in the land; but since the pure light of Presbyterianism arose, they have been chased into their native darkness. Even I, weak and imperfect as I am, and unworthy of being named with some of the chosen sons of the sanctuary, have driven the children of perdition before me. So, my son, clear thy brow, say thy prayers, seek thy pillow, and thy rest shall be sound—I have said it.”

“Holy man,” said the young lady, “how fortunate was I in coming into this tower to-night; how much shall I profit by thy discourse! Ah, the professors of my Church are full fed, and of a slothful nature, and are not rigid in their visitations nor frequent in their admonitions. You have driven, you say, the children of darkness before you—excuse the forwardness of ignorance—may a daughter of a less gifted Church inquire how this miraculous undertaking was accomplished?”—“Oh, most willingly, Madam,” answered the Preacher—“there was no magic

in it, all was plain, and easily understood; but here comes supper, sending up a savour such as would waken hunger in an anchorite. I hope, Master, that you have not tempted me with superstitious meats or drinks—with pudding stuffed with blood, for that is unclean, or porridge made with plums, for that is Episcopalian.”

“The dishes were arranged on the table while the Preacher was still speaking; he stretched his hands over them, and over the wine, which was sparkling in silver flagons, and said, “God be present at this table to-night, and bless the meat and bless the drink, and let every mouthful of the one, and every drop of the other, be to thy glory alone.—Now, my fair foe,” said the Clergyman, “to what shall I help thee? A wing of this fowl, or a slice of this salmon?”— “Most reverend and learned Sir,” said she, with a smile, “I consider supper to be an undue indulgence, which inflames the blood, and makes the complexion coarse. As I desire to be loved, I avoid the vulgar practice, and am surprised to see it countenanced by a stickler for all manner of simple and plain things.”—“Madam,” replied the Preacher, “corrupt and craving nature must be relieved; to fast entirely is Popish, to have a meal of particular and stated dishes is Prelatical, but to take what comes is a trusting in Providence, and is Presbyterian. This wild-fowl, now,” he said, smiling, “has fattened itself on the heather top, and might supper a prophet; and this sauce is fit for the General Assembly, and ought to be restricted to divines.” He ate away with an excellent appetite, neither looking to the right nor to the left, till he had rendered the bones worthy of admission to a museum of anatomy.

“Most holy Preacher,” said the lady, “there is a fair fish before you and a flagon of wine; as they are both permitted by your Church, they will, no doubt, be agreeable to your stomach. While you are occupied silently and laboriously upon them, allow me, a daughter of self-denial, to touch this little musical instrument, and chaunt you a song; and as I make it while I sing it, it shall be measured by your meal.” The Preacher had helped himself to a weighty slice of salmon; had deluged it in sauce; had filled up his glass to the brim in a challenge from his entertainer—and giving an approving nod, fell anxiously on, lest the poetic resources of the lady should fail early. Thus permitted, she lifted a cittern, touched it with exquisite skill, and began to sing the following ballad, in a voice which could only be matched by the united notes of the blackbird and the thrush.

#### SANDY HARG

The night-star shines clearly,  
The tide’s in the bay,  
My boat, like the sea-mew,  
Takes wing and away.  
Though the pellock<sup>9</sup> rolls free  
Through the moon-lighted brine,  
The silver-finn’d salmon  
And herling are mine—  
My fair one shall taste them,  
May Morley of Larg,  
I’ve said and I’ve sworn it,  
Quoth young Sandy Harg.

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<sup>9</sup> Porpoise.

He spread his broad net  
Where, 'tis said, in the brine  
The mermaidens sport  
Mid the merry moonshine:  
He drew it and laugh'd,  
For he found 'mongst the meshes  
A fish and a maiden  
With silken eyelashes—  
And she sang with a voice,  
Like May Morley's of Larg,  
"A maid and a salmon  
For young Sandy Harg!"

Oh white were her arms,  
And far whiter her neck—  
Her long locks in armfuls  
Overflow'd all the deck:  
One hand on the rudder  
She pleasantly laid,  
Another on Sandy,  
And merrily said—  
"Thy halve-net has wrought thee  
A gallant day's darg"<sup>10</sup>  
Thou'rt monarch of Solway,  
My young Sandy Harg."

Oh loud laugh'd young Sandy,  
And swore by the mass,  
"I'll never reign king,  
But mid gowans and grass.  
Oh loud laugh'd young Sandy,  
And swore, "By thy hand,  
My May Morley, I'm thine,  
Both by water and land;  
'Twere marvel if mer-woman,  
Slimy and slarg,"<sup>11</sup>  
Could rival the true love  
Of young Sandy Harg."

She knotted one ringlet,  
Syne knotted she twain,  
And sang—lo! thick darkness  
Dropp'd down on the main—  
She knotted three ringlets,

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<sup>10</sup> Work.

<sup>11</sup> Dirty.

Syne knotted she nine,  
A tempest stoop'd sudden  
And sharp on the brine,  
And away flew the boat—  
There's a damsel in Larg  
Will wonder what's come of thee,  
Young Sandy Harg.

“The sky's spitting fire,”  
Cried Sandy—“and see  
Green Criffel<sup>12</sup> reels round  
And will choke up the sea;  
From their bottles of tempest  
The fiends draw the corks,  
Wide Solway is barmy,  
Like ale when it works;  
There sits Satan's daughter,  
Who works this dread darg,  
To mar my blythe bridal,”  
Quoth young Sandy Harg.

From his bosom a spell  
To work wonders he took,  
Thrice kiss'd it, and smiled,  
Then triumphantly shook  
The boat by the rudder,  
The maid by the hair,  
With wailings and shrieks  
She bewilder'd the air;  
He flung her far seaward—  
Then sailed off to Larg  
There was mirth at the bridal  
Of young Sandy Harg!

The Master of Logan was unable to resist the influence of this wild ballad, and the sweet and bewitching voice which embodied it. The supper table, the wines and fine dishes, were unregarded things: his hands, as the infection stole through him, kept temperate time, and his right foot beat, but not audibly, an accompaniment to the melody. Nor did the lady seem at all unconscious of her delicate witchery; she gradually silenced the cittern as the song proceeded, and before it ended, her voice, and her voice alone, was heard; and filled the chamber, and penetrated to the remotest rooms and galleries. The servants hung listening in a crowd over each other's shoulders at the door of the room. The Preacher alone seemed untouched by the song and the voice; his hand and mouth kept accurate time; with a knowing eye and a careful hand did he minister to his own necessities, giving no other indication of his sense of the accompaniment than an acquiescent nod, as much as to say, “Good, good!” At length he desisted; leaned back on

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<sup>12</sup> A prominent hill.

the chair, and reposed, thankful and appeased. The Master wondered to see a man, accounted austere and abstemious, yield so pleasantly to the temptations of carnal comforts; and the domestic who attended—a faithful follower of the Kirk—shook his head amongst his companions, and said, “There’s an awful meaning in the Minister’s way of eating this blessed night.” The young lady seemed to take much pleasure in what she called drawing the black snail out of its shell. No sooner had she finished her song—which concluded with the supper—than she took her seat at the table, and the conversation was resumed.

‘It was now nigh twelve o’clock; the night, which had hitherto been wild and gusty, refused to submit to the rule of morning without strife: the wind grew louder; the rain fell faster; the thunder of the augmenting streams increased; and now and then a flash of lightning rushed from a cloud in the east to one in the west, showing, by a momentary flame, the rustling agitation of the pines, and the foaming plunges which the mountain streams made from precipice to precipice. “The prince and power of the air is at work to-night,” said old Rodan, “and there will be sad news from the sea.”—“From the sea, said ye?” replied a matron, who presided over the duties of the dairy; “him whom ye speak of, and I mauna name, is none sae far off as the sea. I wouldna gang down the Deadman’s Gill this blessed night for the worth of Scotland’s crown.”—“Whisht, for God’s sake! whisht,” said the dame who ruled amongst the poultry; “the fiend has long lugs,<sup>13</sup> and is a sad listener; but, cummers, there’s something about to come to pass in this tower to-night, that will be tauld in tale and ballad when the youngest of us is stiff and streeket. But we’re safe—the buckler of the Gospel is extended before us, and the thick tempest will fall from us, like rain from a wild swan’s wings. Lord send that the auld Tower may haud aboon our heads!”

‘Never, from the time the Tower was founded, did it contain a more joyous party: the Master had drowned the memory of his fears in song and wine; the Preacher had, apparently, sweetened down the severity of his manners by converse with the young lady and by the social cup; and the lady herself gave a loose to her mirth and her eyes, and was willing to imagine that she had laid upon both the necks of her companions the pleasing yoke of her bondage. “Minister,” said she, “I have long mistaken your character. I thought you a melancholy, morose man, given to long preachments and much abstinence, and one who thought that a gladsome heart was an offence worthy of punishment hereafter. Come, now, let me ask you a question or two in your own vocation. What manner of woman was the Witch of Endor?”<sup>14</sup> There was a sparkling humour in the lady’s eye when she asked this—there was a still slyer humour in the Preacher’s when he answered it: “On her personal looks, scripture is silent; but I conceive her to have been a lovely young widow with a glorious jointure.”—“Well, now, Parson,” she said, “I like you for this; we must be better acquainted; you must come and visit me; I have heard that you are famous for discomfiting evil spirits, and for warring hand to hand with aërial enemies.”—“Ay, truly, young lady,” answered the Preacher; “but that was when this land was in the bonds of iniquity: with our Kirk establishment, a new dispensation hath come upon the land. Master, the wine tarries with you.”

‘“Well, now,” said the young lady, “there’s our friend of the Tower here—he imagined to-night that something evil would break right through all your new dispensations: he expected a visit from the grave—a social dame, in her winding-sheet, was invited to supper. Parson, are you man enough for her, should she come bounce in upon us? I am alarmed at the very image I have drawn.”—“And let her come,” said the Preacher, pouring out a brimming cup of wine—“e’en,

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<sup>13</sup> Ears.

<sup>14</sup> See 1 Samuel 28.

young lady, let her come—I trow I should soon sort her—this wine is exquisite now, and must be as old as the accession of the Stuarts—I trow I should sort her—I know the way, lady, how to send refractory spirits a-trooping—I have learned the art frae a sure hand. It would do your heart good, were a spirit to appear, to see how neatly I would go to work. Ah! the precious art will perish for want of subjects—witchcraft will die a natural death for lack of witches, and my art will perish from the same cause. I hope the art of making wine will be long remembered—for this is worthy of Calvin.”

“Minister,” said the young lady, looking slyly while she spoke at the Master, “let not such gifts perish. Suppose this chair, with the saint carved on the back, to be a spirit, and show us how you would deal with it.”—“Ye are a cunning dame,” said the Preacher; “d’ye think that I can make a timber utensil dissolve and depart like a spirit? Awa with your episcopal wit—and if you will grow daft, drink wine.” He took another sip.—“Thou art a most original parson,” said the young lady, laughing; “but I am desirous of becoming a disciple. Come! this chair is a spirit—take to your tools.”—“Weel, weel, lady,” said the Preacher, impatiently, “I shall e’en waste so much precious time for your amusement. But ye must not grow feared as I grow bold and serious.”—“Are you sure that you will not be afraid yourself?—such things have happened,” said the young lady. He only answered, “Verily, I have heard so,” and then began.

He took a sword from the wall, and described a circle, in the centre of which he stood himself. “Over a line drawn with an instrument on which the name of God is written, nought unholy can pass. Master, stand beside me, and bear ye the sword.” He next filled a cup with water, and said, “Emblem of purity, and resembling God, for he is pure, as nought unholy can pass over thee whilst thou runnest in thy native fountain, neither shall aught unholy abide thy touch, thus consecrated—as thou art the emblem of God, go and do his good work—Amen.” So saying, he turned suddenly round and dashed the cupful of water in the face and bosom of the young lady—fell on his knees, and bowed his head in prayer. She uttered scream upon scream; her complexion changed; her long locks twined and writhed like serpents; the flesh seemed to shrivel on her body; and a light shone in her eyes which the Master trembled to look upon. She tried to pass the circle towards him, but could not; a burning flame seemed to encompass and consume her; and as she dissolved away, he heard a voice saying, “But for that subtle priest, thou hadst supped with me in hell!”

“Young man,” said the Preacher, rising from his knees, “give praise to God, and not to me—we have vanquished, through him, one of the strongest and most subtle of Satan’s emissaries. Thy good angel, thy blessed mother, sent me to thee in thy need, and it behoved me to deal warily with the artificer of falsehood. Aid me in prayer, I beseech thee, for forgiveness for putting on the sinful man to-night—for swilling of wine and wallowing in creature-comforts, and for uttering profane speeches. Ah! the evil one thought he had put on a disguise through which even penetration could not penetrate; but I discerned him from the first, and could scarce forbear assailing him at once, so full was I of loathing. He was witty to his own confusion.” The Master knelt, and prayed loud and fervently; the domestics were called in, and the worship of God was, from that night, established in his household.

‘Look on me, my child,’ said the old man, when he had concluded his wild story; ‘I could have told this tale in a soberer fashion—yea, I could even have told it to thee in a merrier shape—nathless the end and upshot would have been the same. I tell it to thee now, lest its memory should perish on the earth and its moral warning cease. Tell it to thy children, and to thy children’s children, as I have told it, and do not lend an ear to the glozing<sup>15</sup> versions which the

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<sup>15</sup> Specious.

witty and profane relate. Hearken to them, and you will believe that this fair and evil spirit was a piece of lascivious flesh and blood, and that the power which the Preacher and the Master of Logan laboured to subdue was a batch of old wine, which proved the conqueror, and laid them in joy side by side, while the head domestic, a clever and a sagacious man, invented this wondrous tale to cover their infirmities. Nay, an thou smilest, even relate it as thou wilt. Laughter is happiness, and sorrow is admonition—and why should not a story have its merry side and its sad, as well as human life? Farewell, my son—when thou tellest this story, say it was related to thee by an old man with a grey head, whose left foot was in the grave and the right one breaking the brink—the last of the house of Logan.