

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

DORF JUYSTAIN.

In a little village, situated somewhere about the southern extremity of the range of the Erzeberg mountains, lived Dorf Juystain, the goat-herd. At an early hour of the morning on which our tale commences, he lifted the latch of his little cabin, and yawned sleepily and listlessly as he stretched himself before the door in the grey light of the morning; his slumber of the preceding night had evidently not been very refreshing. His dress betokened preparation for a journey. He was lightly and loosely arrayed; in his hand he carried a long thick staff, which he struck into the ground whilst he strapped more securely a leathern wallet, containing a little coarse bread and goat-milk cheese, which hung at his back. At the left side of his girdle was the large dagger-knife of the mountaineers, and in the other was stuck what seemed to be a whip made of a single thong of goat-skin fitted to a handle. 'A curse,' muttered Dorf, as he walked slowly away in the direction of the mountains; 'a curse on that infernal *saußgelug*—to make me so foolishly leave my goats out all night; I warrant I shall not find one of them between this and the Waldberg. I must have been drinking confoundedly deep too, for my head aches this morning as if the Grey Men had been playing football with it, as they did with neighbour Jarl's.' As he pronounced the name of the Grey Men, a sudden pang of fear took possession for a moment of his muscular frame; for now he remembered that, in the drunkenness of the preceding evening, he had spoken slightingly and with affected contempt of these mysterious beings and their strange deeds, and boasted that if ever he succeeded in meeting with one of them, he would let him know the strength of a goat-herd's arm. 'Fool, fool that I was!' again soliloquised Dorf; 'but they know that I was drunk, and will excuse me.' And with this consolatory reflection and lengthened steps he strode on his way. The sun had been blazing for a considerable time above the horizon, when Dorf Juystain found himself approaching a huge brown rock, which lay some ten miles from the Waldberg, the mountain about the base of which he expected to find his strayed goats. He was getting fatigued with his walk, and likewise hungry; so he sat himself down upon a sward of grass, which grew most invitingly at the foot and in the shadow of the rock, and unstrapping his leathern wallet, prepared to make a hearty repast on his frugal cheer. He had not sat long, when he observed an old man turning a corner of the rock, which had before concealed him. He was apparently carrying a pitcher of water, and as he came near, Dorf had an opportunity of viewing his appearance. He was a man perhaps about seventy, thin, and tall of stature, which, with long grey hair, and a beard as white as snow, gave him a venerable appearance. When he approached near enough, Dorf requested permission to drink from his pitcher, stating that he had walked from the village, and having forgotten his bottle, at setting out, he had not been able to enjoy his meal comfortably without it. The hermit—for such he appeared to be—without speaking, signified his assent by raising the pitcher that he might drink, which Dorf thankfully did and to excess. But, alas! he had speedy reason to repent of his rashness. Instead of quenching his thirst, as he had grounds for supposing it would, he had no sooner drank than he felt in his inside a burning heat, accompanied with a sensation of sickness, and a mist before his eyes which made every thing invisible. This lasted but for a moment; and when it cleared away, he saw that the hermit was (to him at least) gradually changing his appearance. The long white beard and grey hair curled up; and after having arranged itself into a single tuft, like a thin cloud upon a mountain top, gradually melted away. All this time the body, not wishing to remain inactive, and yet not being willing to follow the example set by the hair, began swelling and puffing out its sides—at the same time drawing in its length, till it assumed very nearly the dimensions and shape of an ordinary beer barrel; finally, a little comically-shaped hat popped itself down upon the heretofore uncovered head: and he who was but a few moments ago, a tall, lank hermit, now stood before the astonished eyes of Dorf, in shape and outward paraphernalia, a Dutch merchant of the sixteenth century.

After the change was completed, he did not allow Dorf long time to observe him, but fixing his eyes steadily on him for a moment, he then began to whirl and spin himself round on the grass; and, after performing sundry curious evolutions, he at last whirled himself with a jerk quite over the rock, turning round his head every moment as he was ascending, and grinning horribly on Dorf, and nodding and beckoning him to follow. Dorf, poor fellow, would very willingly have remained where he was; but, alas! he found that the spinning mania was seizing him—the evil eye was on

him—so go he must; and away he did go in grand style, whirling round and round, then heels over head and imitating, with no little expertness and celerity, the wonderful harlequinades of the little fat merchant.

Over hill and dale, over mountain, rock, and stream, over cragg and precipice—on, on, whirled the little fat man, and on, on, whirled Dorf, whom an unaccountable feeling compelled to follow at his heels, although he felt much in the same predicament as the novice on the ice, who cannot stop himself without running more hazard than if he were to keep gliding on, and yet feels certain that fall he must at last. The perpetual spinning round, round, round, was beginning to affect him in much the same way as the pitching of a vessel in a stiff breeze affects the landsmen; and, to make the simile still more applicable, he was just preparing to render himself fitter for his flight, by unburdening his stomach of the bread and cheese he had so shortly before stowed away in it, when, after a journey which in duration, to his frenzied imagination, seemed akin to the existence of the Wandering Jew, the little man stopped; and Dorf, with feelings nearly allied to those of a criminal relieved at the place of execution, found himself at liberty to follow his example.

When Dorf had so far recovered from the sickening stupor into which his aerial vagaries had thrown him, as to be able to look around, he perceived that the ground upon which he stood formed part of a small but deep valley, which lay stretched out for about a quarter of a mile before him, and was then abruptly terminated by a range of almost perpendicular mountains, whose tall, dark heads, stretching away into the scould, effectually excluded the rays of the hitherto oppressive sun, and imparted a degree of still and somewhat strange solemnity to the scene. Immediately behind him, and forming the opposite barrier of the valley, frowned an immense rocky precipice, over the summit of which he had so lately before been performing his magical gyrations.

These features in the appearance of the place were, however, imprinted on Dorf's remembrance more by the mere mechanical action of his visual organs, than by any attention which he paid to the study of them; for there was something in the valley, the observation of which was to him too absorbing to allow him to pay much attention to either rock or mountain. He had, in fact, scarcely raised his eyes, before he perceived that the little Dutchman and himself were not the only persons in the valley. Near the centre of it a group of five individuals were collected, and engaged apparently in some kind of game; they were all uniformly dressed in grey, their persons were tall and commanding, and their dark hair clustered round the high, pale forehead, which characterised the natives of ancient Germany. He was immediately observed, and welcomed to the circle by a fiendish 'Ha! ha! ha!' which, as it swelled through the vale, echoed from the cliffs, and finally died away on the summits of the mountains, sounded like a death-knell in the ear of the unhappy wight, who instinctively knew that he was in the presence of the Grey Men.

After the first burst of contemptuous laughter with which Dorf was received had passed away, they, as if by a common movement, turned round to pursue the game, without deigning to take any farther notice of the individual who had excited their risible faculties to such a degree. The game at which they were engaged bore much resemblance to the Scottish one of quoits, excepting that, instead of flat iron rings, they made use of large round stones, with straight wooden handles projecting from them. These they had thrown for a considerable time in perfect silence, when the little fat merchant, who, without putting himself to the trouble of again changing his appearance, had taken his share in the game, seized one of the stones, and approaching Dorf, while a sort of half malicious, half humorous smile played about the corners of his mouth, and lurked in the twinkle of his grey eye, desired him, by signs to try how far he could throw it. From the first moment of his entering the circle, Dorf had remained in a state of the most agonizing suspense, fearing the more intensely that he knew not what he had to fear. When, however, he saw by the movements of the little man, that something definite was to be enacted, and from his signs perceived the nature of it, a gleam of hope lightened the darkness of his despair, as he considered that, by an exhibition of unusual strength, he might perhaps win the pardon of those beings into whose power he had so unfortunately fallen; and it was with something like a smile of triumph on his features, as he thought of his own extraordinary muscular powers, that he took the ponderous stone which the little man tendered him, and prepared himself for the throw. Again the eyes of the whole were fixed upon Dorf, and for an instant he quailed beneath their gaze; but instantly rallying, he swung the stone to the stretch of his arm behind him, and as it recoiled, exerting his utmost strength, he threw it—three yards! The heart of Dorf died within him as the unearthly 'Ha! ha! ha!' again rose wildly upon the air, and broke

harshly on the reigning stillness of the scene: and he observed with renewed apprehension, that the little man was preparing for him another trial. On the ground, and at the distance of perhaps eighteen or twenty yards from each other, were two stones, which during the game, served as marks to throw at. To one of these the little man brought two of the throwing stones, and placing one on each side, he then removed the middle one, and directed Dorf to occupy its place, and endeavor with extended arms to raise the other two. Refusal or resistance his little remaining senses enabled him to perceive would be of no avail against the power of his demonical oppressors. So, with an almost despairing energy, he seized the handles of the heavy stones, and with a mighty effort gradually raised himself till he stood perfectly straight, holding out the two stones at the full extent of his arms. These he was now willing to drop, and tried to open his hands for that purpose; but by some hellish power they were glued to the handled, inseparably united, and all his efforts to loosen his hold were unavailing. He then tried to drop his arms—it was in vain; something held them extended, although at the same time he felt every moment as if the terrible weight of the stones would snap them through. He endeavoured to bend his body to the ground—he might as well have attempted to bend a bar of iron; every muscle of his frame was stiffened into perfect rigidity, and he felt that he had no more power of motion than a statue of stone. He tried to scream, but the power of articulation was denied; he would have groaned under the anguish of the enormous weight which he bore up, but he could not—he was incapable of nothing but feeling, and that sense was only exercised by the most agonising pain. While he continued standing with outstretched arms, motionless and statue-like, a victim to the influence of the dreadful and mystic power which these unearthly beings were thus exercising over him, one of them struck the ground with his foot, and immediately he found it receding from under him, and he sunk gradually down down, until his arms reached the level of the earth, and the stones rested upon the surface, when he stopped, and the ground closing in around him, held him with an iron grasp in his yawning jaws. Again the same terrific sound boomed through the valley and burst with an astounding fearfulness upon the nearly extinct faculties of Dorf. For a moment he stood the shock; but it was too overwhelming to enable him to continue to bear up against it, and with an inward groan he sunk into a state of insensibility. How long he remained in this state, he was not able to judge—probably not more than a few minutes. When he first languidly opened his eyes, he imagined that he was alone; but raising them, and looking about, he perceived that his tormentors were still there. They were grouped around the other stone in the position in which he had first seen them, and the little man was as usual bearing a conspicuous part in their proceedings. He stood somewhat in advance of the others. He was firmly planted upon his left leg, while his right was thrown out behind him; his body was slightly bent forward, his head eagerly stretched out in the direction of Dorf, and his arm was raised in the act of throwing the stone. God in heaven! at what was he going to throw? Dorf shut his eyes again;—the stone flew whirling from the hand that sent it, and with so true an aim, that it struck with a horrid crash against the head of the devoted victim. With the shock the spell was broken. Dorf found himself in an instant in utter darkness; the earth that held him so firmly before, was gone; he thought he was falling, and he grasped with his hands to save himself. He uttered a piercing cry, and as he did so, he again heard the laughing chorus of the Grey Men. This time, however, it was not so fiendish; and, as it continued, gradually changed, until it seemed to Dorf to assume the sound of the pleasant, hilarious laughter of a voice to which in happier hours he had often responded. 'You have had a long sleep, neighbour Dorf,' shouted a voice close to his ear, which bore a marvellous resemblance to that of his friend Jarl. 'Whe—what—what—where am I?' cried Dorf, as he opened his eyes, and raising himself up, observed his own little hut standing right before him, and bright with the rays of the setting sun—'what brought me here?' 'Why, as to where you are,' said Jarl—for it was indeed he who was standing beside the little cart in which Dorf lay—'I think I need scarcely tell you that; and as to what brought you here, that is easily explained. You may remember, unless you was so drunk as to forget, that I told you I was going to the hills early this morning, with Kasier and the *schleife*, (cart) and that I would bring home your goats. Very well; when we were coming home, goats and all, we saw you lying asleep at the foot of the rock; and gessing what brought you there, we lifted you gently into the *schleife*, and came off, intending to lay you in your own bed, and give you a surprise when you awakened. But when we had got the length of your door, the horse stopped so suddenly, that your head knocked against the top of the *schleife*, and awakened you before the