

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

DEPARTED YOUTH.

WHAT though the blighted leaves and faded flowers
Impart no fragrance to the passing gale?
Though o'er the hills and through the forest bowers,
The cold winds sweep, with wild and mournful wail?
Spring time will come in beauty well I know;
The wild bird builds its woodland nest again:
Green leaves will whisper where sweet waters flow,
And gentle flowers will drink the summer rain.

But in our hearts Spring will no more appear;
Life's faded bloom no time can e'er restore:
Like some celestial strain upon our ear,
The music of our youth shall fail no more:
For ever gone our childhood's peaceful rest,
Our radiant hopes, that rose so proud and high,
The happy thoughts that dwelt within the breast,
While rapture gushed from springs that now are dry.

Ay! Youth is past! Life can no more impart
The golden glory on its early beam,
Nor give us back the days when boyhood's heart
Leaped in its gladness, like the mountain stream,
Like visions raised by some magician, spell,
Our dreams have fled an unsubstantial throng;
Like music lost, when rising breezes swell,
Dies the last cadence of Life's morning song.

Henceforth our path lies desolate and drear;
The flowers of joy spring at our feet no more;
The perfumed groves behind us disappear;
The desert spreads its burning sands before.

Then on Life's summit let us thoughtful stand,
While in the distance fades the vale below;
Turn one fond gaze on Youth's enchanted land,
And sigh farewell to Youth's expiring glow.

A LEGEND OF FLODDEN FIELD.

"Mine is a tale of Flodden Field,
And not a history."—SCOTT.

AUTUMN had arrived; the sickle was already in the corn, and an abundant harvest promised, to amply recompense the peasant's labour, when even the remotest glens which border—"Tweed's fair river, broad and deep," were disturbed by alarming rumors, which, within a week, received a fatal confirmation. Influenced by French intrigue, it was reported that a rupture with England was contemplated by the Scottish king; and the concentration of the royal army in the immediate vicinity of the capital gave a fearful note of preparation. Still hostilities had not been yet declared. Henry was in France; but his queen, Catherine, had dispatched an embassy to the amorous monarch, to accommodate existing differences if it were possible, and prevent an unnecessary appeal to the sword. It was well known that many of the Scottish nobles were opposed to a war with England; and therefore, it was hoped, rather than expected, that the champion of the dames might yet be induced to sacrifice his gallantry to better sense, and to doubt whether a "torquois ring" was sufficient equivalent for plunging his country into a contest with a neighbouring kingdom, which, no matter how it might eventuate, must entail an enormous loss of life and property upon the victors and the vanquished. In a lonely strath, embosomed among the Cheviots, a gentleman of the house of Nithsdale resided in the same dwelling place where for three centuries his ancestors had lived and died. Probably, it would be more correct to say, where their funeral rights had been performed, for in a lawless and unsettled age (1513) more spirits passed in midnight raids or battle-fields than on the peaceful deathbed, where affection smoothed the pillow of the sufferer, and religion whispered to the departing soul that time was merging into eternity.

Hugh Maxwell traced his lineage to Ralph de Macuswell, one of the boldest of the Norman barons who followed the first William and founded the proudest families of Britain. The haughty earl, who ruled a clan then the most warlike and powerful on the borders, admitted his relationship, and termed Hugh 'his loving cousin'; and although many of the chiefs could bring one hundred retainers to the field when Lord Nithsdale unfurled his banner, a bolder band of daring horsemen never rode at a knight's back than the dozen moss-troopers who pricked at the command of Dark Hugh of Glensleath.

Enclosed by swelling heights, whose moorland surface was here and there interspersed

with patches of verdure, the strath, in which Dark Hugh and his bold retainers were domiciled, extended for a couple of miles. At its opening to the lowlands the valley was sufficiently broad to furnish a goodly range of arable land, stretching for its whole length on both banks of a mountain rivulet, that united itself with one of the many tributaries which lose their waters in the Tweed, gradually narrowing, as it crept upwards among the hills. The valley terminated in a deep ravine, into which the deep tarn (a Highland lough) vented itself over a dark ridge of granite, and formed the rivulet we have described.

Half way up the glen the flat ground expanded; and the stream, dividing for a few hundred yards, insulated a bold knoll, on which the dwelling of the lord of the valley was erected.

The buildings in construction and appearance was similar to the peel houses, then numerous on the border, but of which, 'few and far between,' a specimen may still be found by the tourist. It was a square tower, of commanding height, roofed with grey flags, and one corner ornamented by a bartizan. Comprising three stories, the lower which was vaulted, contained the storerooms of the establishment, and a most useful appendage for a beleaguered garrison—a well excavated in the rock, affording a never-failing supply of pure spring water. The second floor was occupied by a spacious hall, tolerably lighted on three sides by iron barred windows; and on the fourth, heated, when the season required it, by a chimney large enough to roast a sheep entire. The third floor was partitioned into chambers and tenanted by the owner of the mansion and the females of his family, while the servants, male and female, were quartered in a range of low offices attached to the town, and protected by an embattled wall. Within this fortified enclosure, there was space sufficient to contain fuel for the garrison, and the cattle of Hugh Maxwell and his retainers, when an expected raid obliged them to guard against a sudden onslaught of the enemy.

Crowded together, as if for mutual security, a dozen rudely built cottages lay within a bow-shot distance of the tower; and in these retainers of the Laird of Glensleath with their families were located. A croft of corn land, and right of pasturage attached to each, was held by military tenure, and as Maxwell was a kind and generous patron, in return he was bravely and faithfully served by his retainers. Generally the English riders confined their operations to the low country. Yet remote as the strath of Glensleath was, it did not escape an occasional visitation. But at that time reprisals were the order of the day; and if border rumour might be credited, 'for one hoof the Maxwells lost the Maxwells lifted three.' By this simple method, the running account between their borderers and the occupants of Glensleath was regularly balanced and we need scarcely add in favor of the latter.

Although a portentous cloud overhung the land, a traveller who might have visited the strath on the evening of the 27th of August 1513, could have seen nought there to have indicated alarm or apprehension. The summer had been unusually warm, and the harvest was early and abundant; every inhabitant of Glensleath, from childhood to old age, was busy in the rye and barley fields; and when the sun cast a parting smile on the lone but lovely valley, half the ripened grain which had waved in the morning breeze was prostrate before the sickle. Hugh Maxwell had given the signal for rustic toil to cease; the weary but happy community were already wending towards the town, where according to the custom of the times, a substantial meal had been prepared for all employed in the field. The laird of Glensleath had dropped to hold confidential conversation with a favourite kinsman, when the latter, turning a hasty glance towards the entrance of the valley, suddenly exclaimed,—

"A horseman Hugh! see how the sun glits upon spear and headpiece!"

"Ay," was the reply, "and doubtless a rider from Carlaverock. Hurry on Bob, and tell the good dame to mend our fare a bit. I will await the stranger here."

The young borderer hastened to the town, while Maxwell fixing his eyes upon the horse-path, muttered to himself,—

"'Tis hard! a brief week wedded, and the fairest Foster on the border mine. Wooed in sheer love, and won despite a wealthy suitor and the deadly enmity of a clan who loathe the very name of Maxwell. Ay, and how boldly was it done! all gathered for the next day's bridal—six score Fosters drinking to the bridegroom's health—and the old knight, tricked out in all the bravery a gallant lover should show before his mistress. Poor gentleman! they say he spent a hundred marks upon his doubtlet.—There, too, were the stoled priest and gaidressed bridesmaids; and Lady Margaret talking of the Douglas blood and boasting herself old Bell-the-cats poor cousin—much did she marvel, forsooth, that an offshoot of the Nithsdales should dare to look to one so much above him! Ha! ha! ha! I can fancy well how pleasantly the proud dame looked when the tire-cman announced that the bird was flown, and if the rite proceeded, that they must find the doughty knight a mate among the bridesmaids. And where was Mabel Foster? fairly

across the Tweed, mounted on her own brown jennet, her lover at her side, and a score of Maxwells at her back, who, man for man, would have ridden against the flower of the border."

So spoke Dark Hugh: and as the reader might have formed an unfavorable impression of the borderer's exterior from the soubriquet he had obtained to distinguish from others of the same time, we must hasten to undeceive him.

The Laird of Glensleath was scarcely twenty-five, his figure was tall, slight, and sinewy, uniting activity with strength. Nature had been liberal to the gallant borderer, and to personal grace her boon was not confined, for Hugh Maxwell's face might have been taken by an artist as a model of manly beauty. Every feature was well proportioned; and while pure white teeth and jet black eyes gave him the smile which woman loves to look on, the darkness of his hair, the deep brown with which sun and storm had bronzed his cheek—

"His square-turned joints and strength of limb
But in close fight a champion grim,
Shewed him no carpet-knight so trim,
and justified the martial reputation he had obtained in times so wild and chivalrous.

I have said that the times were wild, and wild, in sooth, they were. The doctrines of MEUM and TEUM were but imperfectly understood, and the successful raids and daring forays of Dark Hugh, so far from evoking reprobation, had raised him high in the estimation of the borderers. Still in an age, when the strong hand gave law, this offence against common honesty might have been accounted pardonable: and had he contented himself with appropriating the Foster's sheep, the delinquency might have been extenuated. But what apology could be made for bundling off 'the old man's daughter?' Strange as it may appear, even those who held in feudal hate the very name of Maxwell admired the sporting style in which the abduction had been achieved; and the prettiest bridesmaid among the lot, in her orisons, was overheard to supplicate the Virgin that, were it the will of heaven that she, too, should be run away with, why the sooner the trial was over, and she knew the worst, the better.

But a few minutes had elapsed before the strange horseman issued from the ravine that formed the opening of the glen, and at a glance, Dark Hugh recognized in the armed rider the youngest brother of the head of the Maxwells—'Young Ralph,' as he was termed, 'of Carlaverock.' On perceiving his kinsman the horseman spurred forward, and, with his escort, which consisted of half-a-dozen of light armed pikemen, was soon beside the laird of Glensleath. Dismounting, the youthful knight gave his charger to an attendant, and, while his small train respectfully fell back out of range of hearing, the kinsmen walked leisurely towards the town. A few words explained the unexpected visit; Ralph Maxwell brought a summons to the field.

War is the borderer's game, but need it be marvelled as if the tidings that the royal banner was unfurled fell heavily on the ear of him who had been married but a week? And when he mounted the tower stairs, introduced his youthful kinsman to the hall, and presented his blushing bride to receive a heavy sigh when the stout bridegroom remembered that he must soon tear himself away from her he had loved so long and won so gallantly. His melancholy did not escape the observation of the visitor, and when Mabel quitted the hall to hurry the evening meal, young Ralph passionately exclaimed, as he clasped his kinsman's hand,—

"By heaven, Hugh! I marvel not that thou listenest so coldly to the news I carried. Much as I love to see the old eagle flutter in the centre of four gallant Maxwells, were I in thy place—Saint Andrew judge me!—and I could tear myself from the arms of that peerless beauty. Nay, there are enough of the name to muster round the banner of Carlaverock; give the retainers to my leading. I could not, for the soul of me! ask thee to part from beauty like thy Mabel's, nor dim the lustrous eye of that fair Foster, by summoning her lover to the field."

While the young knight spake a glow of red crimsoned the brown cheek of his dark kinsman, and brows, overarching eyes, that brightened in love, and which darkened in war, contracted.

"Nay—nay, I cannot be angry," said Dark Hugh; "thou meanest kindly kinsman. What! Scotland in brave array, and Nithsdale's banner in the breeze, and a Maxwell wanting! God knows, Mabel, how fondly I adore, and men admit how boldly I won thee; yet, did I love thee dearer, a holier call must be obeyed. 'Thou, girl, a Foster—and, foemen though they be, right gallant is the name—what wouldst thou think were he, for whom thou left a father's hall, to dally in degrading safety in thy bower, when the best blood of two brave kingdoms met hand to hand? No, no, dear Ralph, more than one foray have we ridden side by side, and now by St. Andrew! we'll test the temper of English metal together upon a battle field. But here comes supper. One word before my lady bird returns. England comes on in strength, and none can tell the issue of the day—our

house will not be backward, should I fall—Mabel—will THOU protect her?"

Hugh Maxwell turned his face away, as if to look, from a narrow casement deeply imbedded in massive stonework, on the happy group of his retainers, who were feasting after a long day's harvesting. But, were the truth told, a tear was in his eye, and the dark borderer would have felt chame to betray that even on one point 'his heart was weak.' His kinsman took his hand.

"I have ridden in foray with thee, Hugh, and shoulder to shoulder we'll ride a field. Before I answer thy request, I'll name a half-forgotten circumstance—'tis but a fable after all. A boy, forsooth, would mate him with his Lord's retainers and take a moonlight ride across the border and peep into merrie England. The foray was successful, and a hundred head of kine and sheep came lowing to the Tweed as the bold lifters pricked them forward. The ford was distant but a mile; in another hour the spoil would be far beyond pursuot, and, in boisterous merriment, the border troopers laughed to think how the Fenwicks would rage and storm when morning disclosed a broken ford and empty byre. Their mirth was something premature, for suddenly, and round a shoulder of a hill that hitherto had concealed their advance, the knight of Coldstream and a band of strapping riders spurred on to gain the river bank before the foragers could reach it. In a moment the cattle were abandoned, and the Mersemen rode for life and death. Safety lay in flight: for what could a score of spears effect against a hundred? All galloped onward for the Tweed, while Red Musgrave dashed down to intercept them. A short but furious melee succeeded; the boy's steed was lanced, and, rearing over, the dying horse fell upon the rider, and, of course his death or captivity was certain. For who, in the face of fivefold numbers, would venture to turn to the rescue? One gallant kinsman, however, desperately essayed the almost hopeless effort, struck from his saddle the knight of Coldstream, and in the confusion among his immediate followers, in their anxiety to remount their leader, the boy was rescued from among the horses' feet, and, while his preserver dashed into the Tweed, the youth clung to his kinsman's stirrup, and was delivered from a fate that all believed inevitable. To whom did Ralph Maxwell owe a life? to the boldest rider on the borders—thyself dear Hugh."

"Tush! twas but what any kinsman would have done. But thou know'st my wishes, should Mabel need a brother?"

"She has him in Ralph Maxwell. See, she comes! Oh! that another border flower, as pure and peerless as thy Mabel, could be found, and would she but smile upon my suit, I would strive to win her, ay, though the headman's axe should requite the failure of the effort."

The evening meal passed heavily. Without the humbler revelry received a sudden check when the alarming news was conveyed to the retainers of Glensleath that at daylight all who could bear bow or brand must hurry to the gathering of Carlaverock. Within, even border hospitality, though taxed to its utmost, could not conceal the inward misery a summons to the field had brought. Foster though she were, and from childhood wont to listen all unmoved to deeds of raid and battle, the starting tear the stifled sigh, told how bitterly fair Mabel felt the misery of parting from the loved one. In vain the dark borderer essayed to drown his sorrow in the goblet: the effort, alas! was unsuccessful,—for one sad thought would still obtrude itself, the morrow's sun would light him to the saddle,

"And must the day, so blithe that rose,
And promised rapture in the close,
Before its setting hour divide
The bridegroom from the plighted bride?
O fatal doom! it must! it must!

At last grief, hardly controlled, could find an outbreak; the colour fled from young Mabel's cheeks, the sob which proclaims a bosom overcharged could be suppressed no longer—she strove to rise—her lover's anxious eyes saw that the effort was too much—he sprang from his seat, clasped his fainting mistress in his arms and bore her from the hall.

The sun had scarcely topped the high grounds which enclosed the valley of Glensleath, when its whole community, like bees disturbed, were seen in strange commotion from the bartizan of the tower, whither the kinsmen had repaired to hold some private converse while the morning meal was served in the hall below. It was well that this isolated place had been chosen for the interview; and feelings he would not have betrayed in presence to any but a favourite kinsman, here were freely vented, while Hugh Maxwell consigned his beautiful lady to his cousin's care. Not a word escaped the young knight's lips, but silently he wrung the borderer's hand, looked on a melting eye, which but a brief month before, would have kindled at a call to arms, then whispered in the bridegroom's ear,—

"Hugh, when I neglect the trust thou hast confided to me, may dishonour set upon my crest, and heaven reject the recreant!"

The last sad meal was over, the secret parting of two young hearts, whose dream of bliss had been almost too exquisite for mortals to imagine and the dispersion of which caused the poignant