

THE AVENGER.

A TRADITION OF CAITHNESS.

"I learned them in the glen,
The last abode of living men."—Hogg.

From our earliest infancy we have listened with delight to the tales and songs of our native land. We have sat for hours by the grey cairn on the lonely hill, where chiefs of other years lie interred, and in our lonely musings, have conjured up in our fancy the misty forms of our forefathers "rise on the night rolling breath of the gale." We have wandered among the hills "from morning sun 'till eve," "wooing" those spots, rendered sacred by the past, where our forefathers "fought and bled," and checked the incursions of their foes. To us these spots have a fascinating charm, and serve as links to connect the past with the present. We love the Highlands, for there the scenes of our rambles are laid, and every valley and hill and gurgling stream is associated with some tale of the past. We have spent many an hour on the mountain side gathering legendary lore from the aged Highlander, and our heart warms whenever we meet with a specimen of the old trusty Gael: and to be surrounded by a half dozen of the genuine sons of the glen, amidst song and tale, would be our highest enjoyment. Many of their songs and tales could we rehearse; and from a numberless variety of them, we content ourselves with the following one at present:—

The romantic valley of Langwell is not surpassed by any in the North, on account of its beauty; for, independent of its natural loveliness of situation, the hand of man has tended in no small degree to enhance the spot. The river flows along in the most majestic manner—hemmed on both sides by steep perpendicular braes, which are covered by wood, the creeping ivy, and the mantling honeysuckle.—To the north the scene is highly diversified by the Braemore hills, which rise in gigantic grandeur and magnificence—while the sheep and mountain goat may be seen climbing their steep sides and dizzy cliffs, and the lonely shepherd, attended by his faithful dog, following his flock. The passing traveller cannot fail to be struck by the romantic situation of the inn at Berrisdale, which is nestled in the bosom of a ravine, shaded by wood and brae. A short distance from the inn, the banks of the river assume a formidable height, while the waters dash below in boiling, whirling eddies. Standing musing at this spot, and listening to

the harmonious wood-notes wild of many a songster, I was awakened by a gruff voice which accosted me thus, at the same time touching his bonnet—"Fàille oirbshc."

"Fàille oirbshc fhein," responded I in his native dialect.

"Whence is the DHAOIN uasail—art thou a Sassenach." To which having replied in the negative, he shook me cordially by the hand. I soon perceived I was in company with an aged Highlander, a true specimen of the generations "gone beyond the flood." Having asked him a few preliminary questions, I requested him to walk with me the length of the inn, to which he complied, but refused to enter, 'till overcome by entreaty. Having placed before him some "mountain dew," it soon had the effect of kindling his spirits. "Slainte mha," (good health,) exclaimed he, swallowing his potation, while he continued, "The good old times are now no more; and the stranger may wander over our valley without being offered any refreshment. The door of hospitality is no longer open, and Alister Macmurrach is the last of his race, abandoned and forsaken by the world. This arm, which is weak and feeble, could once wield the claymore with skill, while for swiftness of foot I could cope with the red deer on the hill." He uttered these words with an emphasis, while his eye kindled with a fresher lustre, and a more youthful glow pervaded his countenance. "I have seen many a change in the world," resumed he, "and many a legend could Alister Macmurrach tell."

"I shall feel more than obliged to you for rehearsing some of them. Are there any traditions connected with this part of the country," asked I.

"Many," he replied. "A feat of no ordinary kind was performed at the spot where we met, but let us begin at the commencement of the tale.

"Young Sutherland of Forse was one of the most brave and promising youths in the country. His generous and frank manner endeared him to all, with the exception of Sinclair of —, who was his rival in an affair of gallantry. Both solicited the hand of a neighbouring lady of amiable qualities, and heiress of extensive property. Sutherland pursued his suit with an appearance of every success, while Sinclair, to his mortification, found his applications slighted and neglected. As may be conjectured, such treatment irritated Sinclair, and plunged him in the deepest agony and distress of mind; and he vowed revenge