

this. Three days before the bailiff's brother had been grievously hurt by some "limmer thieves," who had inflicted no less than nineteen bloody wounds upon him. Yet, brave man as he was, the bailiff himself did not shrink from his duty, but rode off at the head of his neighbours after the raiders. They were only between forty and fifty strong, whereas the thieves numbered five score, and these were the very pick and choice of the men of Thirlwall and Williehaver, masterful dare-devil desperadoes all.

The Weardale men overtook the spoilers at a place near Rookhope Head, called Nuneton Cleugh, and there a fierce engagement ensued. The fray lasted only about an hour, but long ere that space of time had elapsed the marauders had found, to their cost, that the Weardale men could hit hard when they had a mind. Four of them were slain—Henry Corbyl, Lennie Carrick, George Carrick, and Edie Carrick. A considerable number were wounded, and eleven were taken prisoners. One of the Weardale men fell in the "stour"—by name Rowland Emerson. His death was greatly lamented, for he was a right good fellow. The thieves returned again and again to the fight, saying they would not flinch so long as there was one of them left; but at length, when they came amongst the dead men, and found George Carrick slain, they lost heart and quitted the field.

On both sides the battle was bravely fought; and the ballad-maker—who seems to have been one of those wandering minstrels who made it their business, in the olden time, to go about town and country chanting their rude compositions to all who cared to listen—speaks of both parties in equally high terms. He says:—

Thir Weardale men they have good hearts,
They are as stiff as any tree;
For, if they'd every one been slain,
Never a foot back man would flee.

And in like manner—

Thir limmer thieves they have good hearts;
They never think to be o'erthrown;
Three banners 'gainst t' Weardale men they bare,
As if the world had been all their own.

But then—

Such a storm among them fell,
As I think you never heard the like;
For he that bears his head so high,
He oft time falls into the dyke.

Williehaver or Willeva, we may conclude by saying, is mentioned in the old Border ballad of "Hobbie Noble":—

Gae warn the bows o' Hartlie burn:
See they sharp their arrows on the wa';
Warn Willeva and Spear Edom,
And see the morn they meet me a'.

Two Northumbrian Highwaymen.



WE have before us a pamphlet entitled "A Brief Account of Wilkinson and Hetherington, Two Notorious Highwaymen, who were Executed at Morpeth, on Monday, Sept. 10, 1821, being Convicted of Various Highway Robberies in the Neighbourhood of Newcastle, including Anecdotes of their Lives, an Account of their Trials, and their Behaviour after Sentence and at the Place of Execution, with Introductory Remarks." It was printed and sold by John Marshall, in the Old Flesh Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. There is a frontispiece facing the title, containing the portraits of the two criminals, etched by H. P. Parker, from a sketch taken from life during the trial. The pamphlet seems to have been written by a Nonconformist Reformer of the time, as the introduction consists wholly of charges against the Government and clergy—against the Government for counteracting the benefits which the benevolent might be taught to expect from the great increase of schools for the gratuitous instruction of the poor, and against the clergy for having misused the "funds which the piety of our ancestors dedicated to the special benefit of the poor, for their education and relief in every exigency." Instead of cutting delinquents rudely off from society, as members wholly depraved and incorrigible, they should be put, says the writer, "under some salutary moral discipline, as in the prisons of Philadelphia, with a view to reclaim them, which is the only legitimate end of all just punishment."

After this introduction, worthy of a Bentham or a Romilly, the writer proceeds to tell us that "Wilkinson and Hetherington appear each of them to have been wholly neglected in their early years, both as respects school education, moral discipline, and religious instruction. Their untutored minds had been early contaminated by vicious example, and those evil communications which corrupt good manners; and they were finally reduced by the powerful force of habit into practices destructive of their own peace of mind and most injurious to the welfare of society, without their being able distinctly to perceive, at any stage of their progress in vice, either the evil tendencies of those actions or the fatal consequences which awaited themselves."

John Wilkinson, a native of Northumberland, was born about the year 1787. His father, being a pitman, took him down with him to the pit, when very young, to serve as a trapper boy. He afterwards worked at Walker, Delaval, Benwell, and several other collieries both on the Tyne and Wear. But when he was about thirty years of age, and employed in St. Hilda's pit, near South Shields, he was one pay-day entrusted with a parcel of bank notes, to the amount of twelve or thirteen pounds, for the pur-

pose of paying himself and some of the other workmen at the colliery. The temptation was too great for him, and he decamped with the treasure. The agent who entrusted him with the money was reprimanded for his want of due caution; eventually, we are told, the poor workmen were the sufferers by the fraud. Wilkinson kept out of the way for some time, and when he was at length arrested the attempt made to bring him to justice failed, owing to a defect in the evidence. Foiled in their endeavour to recover their loss, or to obtain redress by legal means, the aggrieved parties determined to punish the culprit themselves. For this purpose they stripped him of his garments, then tarred and feathered him, and finally threw him into a pond near the colliery. Shifting now to Sunderland, Wilkinson supported himself by doing odd jobs, such as sinking wells, working in quarries, and so forth. But, forming connexions with "lewd fellows of the baser sort," he went from bad to worse, until his conduct and character became quite notorious. Suspected of having been concerned in several robberies which had taken place in the neighbourhood, he was taken into custody by the Newcastle police on the evening of the 19th of May, 1821, together with an associate, Thomas Dodds, and charged with robbing an Irish labourer, named Paul Riggen, on the Ponteland road, that same evening, of a silver watch, key, and seals, and ten shillings in money. For this offence Wilkinson and Dodds were tried at the Northumberland Assizes, on the 25th of August following, and both were found guilty.

Three days afterwards (August 28th), William Surtees Hetherington, another of the gang which had for some time committed numerous depredations, was put on his trial for a highway robbery on the 7th of April preceding, together with Wilkinson and a man named Samuel Maddison, the latter of whom, though as bad as the rest, was admitted as evidence for the Crown. Hetherington, who commonly went by the name of Surtees, was the son of a pitman, and was born at Newburn, on the banks of the Tyne, a little to the westward of Newcastle, in the year 1789. He was quite illiterate, and his early years were spent in the pits. But he afterwards went to sea, and pursued that way of life for upwards of six years. Then, relinquishing the seafaring business, he began to lead a vagrant sort of life, taking occasionally any sort of labouring work in clay-yards, brick-kilns, tile-sheds, &c., abandoning himself at last altogether to vicious practices. Arrested on suspicion of being concerned, together with one Thomas Bell, in robbing the club-room of the Keelmen's Hospital, and taking away the box, containing £34 3s. 3½d., he and his associate were tried at the Newcastle Court at the same assizes, and acquitted, as the evidence rested entirely on men who had little or no claim to credence, from the circumstance of one of them being in the county gaol on a charge of highway robbery, and the other a man who had no visible means of obtaining a livelihood, except in ferreting out thieves, under

the agents of the Newcastle police. But though acquitted on this charge, Hetherington was detained on several others, particularly that of robbing Mr. William Nesbit, farmer, of Long Benton. This gentleman, it seems, had been at Newcastle market on the Saturday before Carling Sunday, and had left the town at about a quarter to nine. He had in a pocket-book two notes of £5 each of Ridley and Co.'s bank, and four of 20s. each. When he had got half-way up Benton Bank, three men suddenly sprang out from the side of a wall. Mr. Nesbit was dragged off his horse, robbed, and beaten so unmercifully that he was left insensible on the road. After committing the robbery, the three highwaymen—Wilkinson, Hetherington, and Maddison—went to the Grey Horse, on the Quayside, where they had some beer and examined the money they had stolen. The two £5 notes they managed to change in the Sandhill, buying with one of them a new hat, and with the other a bottle of rum. Next, going across to Gateshead, they went to a public-house which one Turnbull kept, and divided the money, Maddison getting 20s. less than the others, and the watch for the 20s. For this outrage Hetherington received sentence of death, like his two confederates, Wilkinson and Dodds. The latter, however, was afterwards respited.

Wilkinson, when committed to gaol, could neither read nor write; but he expressed an earnest desire to learn, and requested the use of a spelling book, which was kindly furnished him by a Catholic clergyman. "Being aided in his endeavours by the humane assistance of the gaoler, Mr. Blake, he soon acquired a knowledge of the alphabet, and could read the small words and some of the easy lessons in his book," with what spiritual benefit we shall not stop to inquire. Hetherington, too, was totally ignorant of letters. When asked what religion he was, he answered, "I do not know; I have been only once in a place of worship." On being questioned if he did not know there was a God, he replied, "I have heard folk speak of it." "Good-bye to you all, my lads!" exclaimed he, with much composure and seeming levity, on the Sunday before the execution, after the chaplain (the Rev. Mr. Nicholson) had preached before the prisoner and a numerous congregation, who had assembled, as was then the fashion, to gratify a prurient curiosity.

The two convicts awoke in the morning of the fatal day, evidently filled with the impression that the capital punishment would be commuted to transportation, because the priest, as they said, had hitherto visited them only once a day, whereas, had it been determined that they should die on the scaffold, his visits would surely have been more frequent. "However," said Hetherington, "Jack, we'll hev each a pint of beer this morning, and a quarter of cheese and cakes a-piece; this may be wor last day after aall."

After they had been put into the carriage which was to convey them to the place of execution, the Low Stanners, a little below the foot of the town of Morpeth, Wilkinson

coolly remarked to Hetherington, "Aa say, Bill, this just makes ma dream come true; for aa dreamed last night that thoo and me was riding in a coach tegethor." Mr. Thomas Carr, of the Newcastle police—the "slush Tom Carr" of the scurrilous ballad—endeavoured on the road to extract some information relative to their associates. When Wilkinson was asked if they were any way concerned in the robbery of a gentleman named Major, Hetherington quickly interposed, exclaiming, "Aa say, Jack, tell them nowt; it's ne matter noo; ye see they're gannen te de nowt for us." The executioner having finished his ugly task with great adroitness, the scaffold was drawn from under the unhappy men, and they were finally suspended between earth and heaven. Hetherington's mortal remains were next day interred at Newburn, and Wilkinson's at Jarrow.

It was afterwards stated by the police that they had got information of no fewer than eighteen robberies in which either one or other of this formidable gang had been engaged.

merit, the handling being poor, although this was due in some measure to his inferior materials.



More about the Skiddaw Hermit.

ABOUT fourteen or fifteen years ago I visited Keswick and painted many fine subjects near Skiddaw. I often saw George Smith, the Skiddaw Hermit, roaming about the hills, and I frequently conversed with him. He was a phrenologist, and at the fairs held at Keswick he used to "feel the bumps" of all the yokels. Sometimes he would take money, but oftener he would not. He was rather too fond of stimulants, and this brought him no end of trouble.

His nest, or home, or hermitage, was built amongst the crags on Skiddaw Dodd. A fair idea may be gained of this remarkable dwelling from the accompanying sketch, which I made about the time I have already mentioned. When Smith retired to rest, he lowered the top, and then the combination looked like a pie. It was a very curious object, and was plaited something like a basket. His arrangements for cooking food were very primitive. A piece of tallow in a can was lit, and by this means he prepared whatever victuals he might have. He lived in this peculiar manner during all seasons. As a rule, he came into Keswick every day; but if by chance he did not put in an appearance for a while, his numerous friends always looked after him, especially during winter.

The Skiddaw Hermit spoke the Scottish dialect. My impression of him at the time was that he was a religious monomaniac. I saw some of the portraits he painted. They were good likenesses, but of no artistic

Smith told me that he would not live in a house. He was a great lover of nature, and expressed the opinion that man should live in the open air.



The cause of his leaving Skiddaw was the annoyance he experienced from roystering excursionists. Some trippers who went to see "t' funny man on t' Dodd," not