

free from care; while the habitual melancholy of his handsome features had deepened.

Frequently he halted, looking round as one doubtful of his way, which hardly could have been the case, for it was plain enough: while, before he had proceeded a mile, he perceived in a hollow sheltered from the wind, and on the shores of one of the voes, the small town or hamlet of which he was in search.

Descending to it, he found himself soon an object of curiosity to the inmates, to whom a stranger arriving quietly, portmanteau in hand, was, to say the least, no common sight. His first thought was to find some inn or house of entertainment where to lodge; but he looked in vain, and was standing at a loss how to proceed, wondering if he should have to meet the storm with no roof above his head, when the small, quick pat of hoofs causing him to turn, he beheld two ladies advancing, mounted on those small horses which take their name from the neighbouring islands.

The elder—and their ages differed much—was apparently about five-and-forty, with a figure slim enough to escape angularity, and a face by no means ill-favoured, but marked by a somewhat masculine decision of character, the hardness of which was often negated by the glance of a pair of clear brown eyes. Her attire was a broad hat, minus all ornament save a simple ribbon, while a tightly-fitting dress of serge served as a riding-habit.

Her companion could not have been more than nineteen, and, Launce thought, one of the prettiest brunettes he had ever seen. Her figure, well-moulded, was set off by a short riding-habit; while her Spanish hat, trimmed with a black, red-tipped feather, rested on a silky mass of dark brown hair, from the shadow of which now shone a pair of dark, merry, roguish eyes, as they half shyly, half amusedly, were directed towards Launce.

He had evidently been the subject of their conversation, and hardly wondered.

"I must appear as great a gawk, standing staring here, to the inhabitants, as a countryman would be in Pall Mall. I suppose they fancy the tempest has whirled me here and I've dropped from the clouds. I feel rather like it myself."

At this moment the elder lady, with a tug at the reins more energetic than graceful, approached him, saying in a clear, incisive voice:

"I beg your pardon, young gentleman, but there are too few people in this part of the world for us not to see when one is a stranger; and if I am not mistaken, you are a stranger in need of some information. If I am mistaken, I ask your pardon again, and will just go on my way."

"But indeed you are not, madam," answered Launce, with difficulty repressing a smile. "I am a stranger, and in the greatest need of information. A friend landed me from his yacht here half an hour ago, and I am in search of an inn—"

"Or an hotel," smiled the lady, looking round. "You may search for ever, young gentleman, before you'll find the like here. Why, gracious me, where would they ever get their customers? All of us in this place have our own hearthstones, and change our quarters less frequently even than the limpets."

"In that case," remarked Launce, his eyes straying to the younger lady, who had brought her shaggy little Shetland nearer, "I suppose I must be content with the earth for my pillow and the heavens for my counterpane."

"Stuff and nonsense! You prove yourself a stranger, young gentleman, without need of confession. Here every door is on the latch, and one has but to raise it and seek the owner's hospitality to obtain it."

"It probably, then, is easier to give than to accept?" smiled Launce.

"I know what you mean, for I am English. You would not incur the greatest debt man can from strangers—gratitude. You wish to be independent?"

"From no false pride, I assure you," interposed the young fellow, quickly. "But my stay here may be weeks—possibly months. To accept any person's hospitality for that period would, however generously given, be too onerous a debt. If you could tell me where I might find board and lodging, for which my host would accept remuneration, I should be deeply obliged."

"Dear aunt," remarked the girl, speaking for the first time, "there are the Gillespies—they are worthy folk; and truly I do not fancy," a sparkle in her dark eyes, "it would take much pressing to get them to accept the gentleman's 'siller.' Indeed, if that were put in one scale and his thanks in the other, I fear the latter would strike the beam."

"Hist, hist, lassie!" exclaimed the elder, reprovingly, but a smile quivering among the crow's-feet on her temples. "Still, the Gillespies are clean and decent people, and if they won't give you a cheese-paring too much, they'll not give you it too little; so, sir, if you like we will direct you and speak for you?"

Laurence Campbell gratefully accepted the offer, and was soon inducted as a paying guest into the household of Archibald Gillespie, a somewhat gaunt, lean Scotsman, with high cheek-bones, an accent, and a shrewd mind.

"And now good-bye," remarked the lady, extending her hand. "Should your stay be of some weeks we shall be sure to meet again. This is a community, and one is never long a stranger. My name is

Janet Peirson—and this is my niece Barbara, a London importation."

"My name is Laurence Campbell," replied the young man, raising his hat. "A poor gentleman, or rather one who has considered himself so until this moment."

"A London poor man may find himself well to do here," remarked the lady. "Good day, sir—and good-day Archibald Gillespie."

Saying which she touched her pony with her whip and trotted off, her niece following after, inclining her head to the young stranger; for, to his regret, she did not adopt the more familiar parting of her relation.

Launce found his quarters by no means uncomfortable. Whatever they lacked in that way they made up in originality. His host and hostess, though humble people, were, according to their nation, not ill-educated nor ill-informed, which was an advantage, as, if the meals were not actually taken in common, they were served in the general sitting-room.

On this first evening, however, Launce insisted in putting them to no trouble, but took his place at the same board, having indeed reasons for so doing, namely, to obtain as much information about the place in which it was his purpose to reside for some while as he was able.

Neither master nor dame were reticent regarding their neighbours, and the young fellow listened with an eager interest he strove hard to conceal when they spoke of the inmates of the Craigs. He learned, however, little more than what the reader knows already; but what he did, only made him more interested, more anxious for further information. Indeed, though so brief the time, he could not conceal from himself that the slightest trifle concerning Katrine Fortescue had a charm for him.

A pause occurring in the conversation, he himself turned the subject of conversation.

"Hark to the storm hissing," had remarked the host, pausing in consuming a plate of smoked goose. "Hark till't. An' there be any fishers at sea, the gude wives will be straining their een for a glimpse of their sail," when Laurence Campbell, who had been thoughtfully regarding the piece of barley cake he was crumbling by his plate, said:

"Though myself a stranger, I have yet met those who have visited this part of the island before me."

"I reckon there's no mony who do that, young sir. They gae round the coast, and pet into Stromness and Kirkwall, but few come or bide here."

"Possibly; this time I mention was some years ago," rejoined the young man, quickly. "In their description of it, I remember they mentioned one place, a house of considerable size. Byer Magnus, I fancy was the name."

"Byer Magnus! Sure that's correct. There's na house grander here," replied the host.

"Who resides there now?" proceeded the guest.

"Resides there is it? Aweel, but just no one does, nor has for mony a year. There it rises up on the moor, solitary, soulless, and gloomy, fit to scour one in the misty nights."

"But why? What is in the place that it should be so deserted, if I may ask?"

"Weel, they do say that boggles and other uncanny folk play their pranks at night there; and often, when the storm rages, unearthly wails and shrieks are heard, which come fra' na human or bird's throat, but for mysel, I have not heard them; while there's a better reason than that for its having no tenant."

"May I know the reason?" questioned Launce.

"It's no secret. Byer Magnus belongs to the noble Scottish family of the Malcolms of Glenmoor—they who have the large estates in Sutherland. They'd come fra' there at times in their yacht wi' their friends for the wild-fowl and seal-shooting; then Byer Magnus would be all festivity. But during Sir Angus' time that has na' been—and Sir Angus was the last."

"The last?" exclaimed the listener, surprised.

"Weel, the last, for he who lives at Glenmoor now hauds it but in keeping."

"How is that?" asked the young man, clearing his throat.

"Just because Hew Malcolm, Sir Angus' nephew and heir, was guilty of some dark deed. I ken na' what exactly, but he fled, and wouldna' face the law, and therefore was outlawed. So when Sir Angus died, and left him everything, he dared na' come and take it, for the law would have given him a prison instead; therefore, after much ganging and ganging to law, Kenneth Malcolm, another nephew, was allowed to haud it in trust until he can prove the young Hew dead, leaving no heir."

"So," said the guest, thoughtfully, "that is the story of Byer Magnus?"

"A story that just is every word true, young sir, and is no auld wife's clavers."

Again it was Laurence Campbell who shifted the topic of conversation; then, the evening now advanced, rising, he expressed a wish to retire to his own room.

But it was not to rest. For long he paced the small apartment, or sat, his head on his hand, buried in reverie. His thoughts were various, and often they dwelt upon Katrine.

It was nearly midnight when, opening the casement, he looked forth. The tempest's worst fury was spent. The wind came now only in fitful, violent, or sobbing gusts; the thunder rolled at a greater dis-

tance, while at rare intervals the lightning, rending the clouds, illumined the land beneath. Every dwelling in the hamlet was wrapped in darkness, if not sleep.

While Laurence Campbell stood silent; then, having examined the window, and its distance from the ground, murmuring, "Why not? To rest at present is impossible," noiselessly lowered himself from the casement, and started across the wild, rugged land, often pausing for the now welcome lightning to show he had not strayed from the route Archibald Gillespie had directed him.

At the end of half an hour, reaching a high point of land, he waited the next flash. It came speedily, revealing to him for a brief space a huge, dark mass of building within fifty yards of where he stood.

"So," he reflected, "that is Byer Magnus!"

He paused, for suddenly there had arisen upon the midnight air a wild, prolonged, shrill sound, that, as Archibald Gillespie had said, certainly came from no human nor seabird's throat.

Launce hesitated one second, then swiftly proceeded towards the building. Just as he came beneath its walls the lightning again gleamed forth, and he leaped quickly back, for in front of him was a man!

The next moment impenetrable darkness enveloped all things; but out of it Launce heard these words issue, with a cry of dread:

"Gude save us, it's a ghaist!"

[To be continued.]

THE IMPERIAL CROWN OF ENGLAND.

The following description of the Imperial State Crown will be interesting to many of our readers. It was made by Messrs. Rundell and Bridge in the year 1838, with jewels taken from old crowns and others furnished by command of Her Majesty. It consists of diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, set in silver and gold; it has a crimson velvet cap, with ermine border, and is lined with white silk. Its gross weight is 39 oz. 5 dwts. troy. The lower part of the band, above the ermine border, consists of a row of 129 pearls, and the upper part of the band a row of 112 pearls, between which, in front of the crown, is a large sapphire (partly drilled), purchased for the crown by His Majesty King George IV. At the back is a sapphire of smaller size, and six other sapphires (three on each side), between which are eight emeralds. Above and below the seven sapphires are 14 diamonds, and around the eight emeralds 128 diamonds. Between the emeralds and sapphires are 16 trefoil ornaments, containing 160 diamonds. Above the band are eight sapphires surmounted by eight diamonds, between which are eight festoons consisting of 148 diamonds. In the front of the crown, and in the centre of a diamond Maltese cross, is the famous ruby said to have been given to Edward Prince of Wales, son of Edward III., called the Black Prince, by Don Pedro, King of Castile, after the battle of Najera, near Vittoria, A.D. 1367. This ruby was worn in the helmet of Henry V. at the battle of Agincourt, A.D. 1415. It is pierced quite through, after the Eastern custom, the upper part of the piercing being filled up by a small ruby. Around this ruby, to form the cross, are 75 brilliant diamonds. Three other Maltese crosses, forming the two sides and back of the crown, have emerald centres, and contain respectively 132, 124, and 130 brilliant diamonds. Between the four Maltese crosses are four ornaments in the form of the French fleur-de-lis, with four rubies in the centres, and surrounded by rose diamonds, containing respectively 85, 86, 86, and 87 rose diamonds. From the Maltese crosses issue four imperial arches composed of oak-leaves and acorns, the leaves containing 728 rose, table, and brilliant diamonds, 34 pearls forming the acorns, set in cups containing 52 rose diamonds and one table diamond. The total number of diamonds in the arches and acorns is 108 brilliants, 116 table, and 559 rose diamonds. From the upper part of the arches are suspended four large pendent pear-shaped pearls, with rose diamond caps, containing 12 rose diamonds, and stems containing 24 very small rose diamonds. Above the arch stands the mound, containing in the lower hemisphere 304 brilliants, and in the upper 244 brilliants; the zone and arc being composed of 33 rose diamonds. The cross on the summit has a rose-cut sapphire in the centre, surrounded by four large brilliants, and 108 smaller brilliants. Summary of jewels comprised in the crown—1 large ruby irregularly polished, 1 large broad-spread sapphire, 16 sapphires, 11 emeralds, 4 rubies, 1,363 brilliant diamonds, 1,273 rose diamonds, 147 table diamonds, 4 drop-shaped pearls, 273 pearls.

ETYMOLOGY OF "BRIC-A-BRAC."—The etymology of the name *bric-à-brac* is rather vague. It probably comes from the old French expression, *De bric et de broque*, which means "from right and from left—from hither and thither." The word *bric* signifies in old French an instrument used to shoot arrows at birds with, and some etymologists derive the word *brac* from the word "brocater," to sell or exchange, the root of which is Saxon, and also the origin of the word "broker." Its signification in pure English is "second-hand goods;" but it has of recent years been used to indicate objects of some artistic value made in olden times, and which are much esteemed by modern collectors. Under the name *bric-à-brac* are included articles of porcelain, glass, enamels, bronzes, wood-work, ivories, etc.