

## THE RAID OF THE RED SWIRE.

ON the 7th of June, 1575, a murderous riot occurred at a Border gathering on the Carter Mountain, on the extreme limits of the parish of Jedburgh and of the present boundaries of Scotland; and this was called the Raid of the Red Swire from the colour of the heath and the form of the hill at the place, the word "swire" denoting in Scottish topography the swelling descent of a hill or the neck of a mountain. Sir John Forster, governor of Berwick, was warden of the English middle march; and Sir John Carmichael, the ancestor of the Earls of Hyndford, was warden of the Scottish march; and these two functionaries, agreeably to a Border usage for the conservation of the public peace, were holding a meeting for hearing complaints and redressing wrongs. The gathering from both sides of the Border seems to have been numerous,—amounting to several thousands; but it was brought together entirely by affairs of business, and was conducted for a time with perfect good feeling, and even with accompanying merriment and games.

But in the course of the day, a hot and general misunderstanding suddenly arose in connection with the proof of an accusation of theft brought by a Scottish complainer against a notorious English freebooter of the name of Farnstein. Carmichael demanded, in terms of the laws of the marches, that the thief should be delivered prisoner to the owner of the stolen goods till satisfaction should be made for them; Forster alleged that the thief had fled from justice, and could not be found; Carmichael suspecting this to be a mere pretext to avoid making compensation for the felony, bade the English functionary 'play fair;' Forster answered haughtily and spitefully, uttered some injurious expressions respecting Carmichael's family, and made some open displays

of resentment; and Forster's retinue, principally men of Reesdale and Tynedale, the most ferocious of the English borderers, glad of any occasion for a quarrel, and fired sympathetically with the wrath of their chief, discharged a flight of arrows among the Scots. A warm and general skirmish ensued; several of the Scots fell, wounded or dead; Carmichael was beaten down, and made prisoner; and the general body of the Scots, more in consequence of their being taken by surprise, than on account of any great valour or skill in the assailants, were driven from the field. But the English counted too soon that they were victors, and threw themselves too soon and too greedily upon the plunder; and when they had ceased to pursue, and were busy gathering spoil, the Scots, reinforced by a number of Jedburgh-men whom they met coming to the tryst, turned back upon the English, assailed them with unexpected and furious vigour, drove them into instant and disorderly flight, chased them neck and heels over the mountain, and made their warden and a number of their petty chiefs prisoners. The facts of the skirmish are pretty accurately told in the following extracts from an old ballad, preserved in the Border Minstrelsy.

“ At first the meeting was meek eneugh  
 Begun wi' merriment and mowes,  
 And at the brae, aboon the heugh,  
 The clark sate down to call the rowes.\*

Some gaed to drink, and some stude still,  
 And some to cards and dice them sped;  
 Till on ane Farnstein they fyled a bill, †  
 And he was fugitive and fled.

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\* Rolls.

† Found a true bill.

Carmichael bade them speik out plainlie,  
 And cloke no cause for ill nor good;  
 The other, answering him as vainlie,  
 Began to reckon kin and blood;  
 He raise, and raxed\* him where he stood,  
 And bade him match him with his marrows,  
 Then Tindaill heard them reasun rude,  
 And they loot off a flight of arrows.

Then was there nought but bow and speir,  
 And every man pulled out a brand;  
 ' A Schaftan and a Fenwick ' thare:  
 Gude Symington was slain frae hand.  
 The Scotsmen cried on other to stand,  
 Frae time they saw John Robson slain—  
 What should they crie? the king's command  
 Could cause no cowards turn again.

Then raise † the Slogan with ane shout—  
 ' Fy Tindaill to it! Jedburgh's here!'  
 I trow he was not half sae stout,  
 But anis ‡ his stomach was asteir,  
 With gun and genzie, || bow and speir,  
 Men might see mony a cracked crown!  
 But up among the merchant geir,  
 They were as busy as we were down.

The swallow tail frae tackles flew,  
 Five hundredth flain § into a flight,  
 But we had pestelets anew,  
 And shot among them as we might.

\* Stretched himself up. † Rose.  
 ‡ Till once his anger was up. || Engine of war. § Arrows.

And surely then the game gaed right,  
Frae time the foremost of them fell ;  
Then ower the know without good night,  
They ran up with many a shout and yell.

Who did invent that day of play,  
We need not fear to find him soon ;  
For Sir John Forster, I dare well say,  
Made us this noisome afternoon.  
Not that I speak preceislie out,  
That he supposed it would be perril ;  
But pride, and breaking out of feuid,  
Garr'd Tindaill lads begin the quarrel."

Sir John Forster, Cuthbert Collingwood, James Ogle, Henry Fenwick, and Francis Russel, son-in-law of Forster, and son of the Earl of Bedford, and several other border chiefs whom the victors made prisoners, were carried to Dalkeith, and there delivered to the Earl of Morton, then Regent of Scotland. Morton treated them with great consideration and kindness; and detained them a few days, till their resentment should subside; and then required them to engage in writing to appear in Scotland at a certain day, and dismissed them with great expressions of regard. Queen Elizabeth, on hearing of the affair, was very much incensed; and sent instructions to her ambassador Killigrew, who had a little before gone to Scotland, to demand immediate satisfaction; and ordered him to intimate to Morton that she had commanded the Earl of Huntingdon, then president of the council at York, and lieutenant of the northern counties of England, to repair to the Border for the purpose of instituting an investigation, and that she expected that Morton would meet and confer with him in person. The two Earls accordingly met at Foulden, near the Berwick boundary, and held a series of conferences through suc-

cessive days ; and Morton made such concessions and agreed to such redresses as ensured a complete reconciliation. Carmichael, whom the English authorities regarded as the principal offender, was delivered up to them as a prisoner, and detained by them a few weeks at York ; but they began to see that Forster had been the aggressor at the beginning of the fray, and they soon tired of disgracing Carmichael, and even at length dismissed him with honour. Morton engaged that the spoils taken from the English borderers in the raid should be restored ; and he summoned an armed force to go out, with twenty days' provisions, to an expedition against the holders of the spoils, and their abettors ; but the offenders were so awed by the mere publication of his purpose, that they came forward of their own accord, and made the desired restitution. Thus occurred several remarkable things,—a mere casual riot involved the temporary captivity of great public functionaries, and evoked negotiations and conferences between the highest powers of the two kingdoms,—the kindlings of pride and resentment out of the sparks of the riot seriously threatened the conflagration of a national war between Scotland and England,—and this tremendous evil, which would have entailed incalculable bloodshed and misery upon both countries, was averted by the cheap and facile and most honourable means of a little good temper and hearty honest concession.