

THE MURDER OF CAIRN-O'-MOUNT.

A BALLAD.

Do you mind yon old and hoary man,
With the haggard cheek and eye,
Whose big broad breast was often heav'd
With a deep and smother'd sigh ?

Do you mind how he aye would quail and start,
As through some sudden fear,
And timidly over his shoulder look
Though there was no one near ?

And ever he muttered some secret words
The sighs and starts between ;
And we said, " What ails the aged man ?—
God grant his hands be clean ! "

It was a gloomy autumn day :
The sullen breezes sweeping,
A mournful mound of wither'd leaves
O'er the summer flowers were heaping.

And a Preacher came to our lonely glen,
A man of fame and power,
Who could stir men's hearts to their utmost depths,
Or sweeten the anguish'd hour.

And he bade us all with humble hearts
To the holy fane repair,
For he had a message direct from God
To tell the people there.

And soon from many a sylvan nook,
And many a moorland sheiling,
The young and old together met
In the house of prayer are kneeling.

And that strange old man met with the rest ;
 With them on his knees he fell,
 But whether he mutter'd his secret words
 Or pray'd, I cannot tell.

The Preacher chose a startling theme
 From the world's early day,
 When the first infuriate murderer rose
 And lifted his hand to slay.

And he told, in deep and thrilling tones,
 How Abel's blood was found
 To raise its cry, like an injured thing,
 For vengeance from the ground ;

And he said, "The avalanche may hide
 The vale in eternal snow,
 And the ocean roll till the day of doom
 O'er the secret deeps below ;

"But a deed of blood can never be hid ;
 For, though in darkness done,
 The torch of heaven will light it up
 Till it gleam like the mid-day sun."

And he said, "Last night, in a dream from God,
 I saw a recent tomb,
 Where a murder'd form was laid to sleep
 Till awak'd by the trump of doom.

"And I feel impell'd by the Spirit of Truth
 This judgment to declare—
 That the murderer hears my voice this day,
 And mingles with you in prayer.

"On earth's dark secrets heaven can pour
 The light in a streaming flood ;
 Eternal Justice thou can'st not foil—
 Stand forth, thou man of blood !"

There was silence deep in the house of prayer,
 Till a thrill through each chill heart ran,
 As the strange old man stood up and wept,
 Crying, "I am the guilty man !—

“ O heaven, have mercy upon my soul !
 And bless'd be this hour for aye !
 For it lifts a secret load from my heart
 That has crushed it for many a day ;

“ For since these hands were stain'd in blood,
 A spectre, day and night,
 Hath threaten'd to stab me with glittering blade,
 But I've pray'd in vain to smite.

“ Yet over my shoulder its red right hand
 Still lifted the brand on high,
 But never would plunge it in my heart,
 That I might bleed and die.

“ And O ! the agony, worse than death,
 To bear a blameless name,
 Yet ever to dread that the truth would be known,
 And cover me deep with shame ! ”

And he told how a trivial strife arose,
 That a word had power to quell,
 When he smote his fellow-labourer dead,
 And buried him where he fell !

“ And now ye may bind me, and hold me in ward ;
 I have nothing to hope or fear
 From the mercy or wrath of my fellow-man,
 For the finger of God is here.”

No solemn tribunal in judgment sat,
 No gibbet its victim displayed ;
 Yet long ere the last leaves of autumn were strewn
 In his grave was the murderer laid ;

And as that deed of blood was done
 Unseen by mortal eye,
 So none but the slumberless eye of heaven
 Beheld the murderer die.

And the lated traveller yet on the hill
 Hath an old man aye by his side,
 Whose ceaseless whisper at parting and hail
 Is, “ Murder ye cannot hide ! ”

The Cairn-o'-Mount is one of the Grampian Mountains, over which the public highway from Kincardineshire to Aberdeenshire passes. It lies some miles to the north of the picturesque little village of Fettercairn—in fact, the parish of Fettercairn is supposed to have derived its name from the *Mount*. The story of the murder will be found in one of the Maitland Club publications entitled “*Analecta; or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences, mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians.*” By the Rev. Robert Wodrow, Minister of the Gospel at Eastwood.”

Wodrow's account of “*The Murder of Cairn-o'-Mount*” is as follows:—

“November 9, A.D. 1729. Mr. William Brown tells me the following account he had, when last in Perth, from Mr. James Mercer, Minister at Aberdalgie, as to what was generally believed as to Dr. Rule, Principal of the College at Edinburgh from A.D. 1690 to A.D. 1703, and the thing was so notour that it could not miss to be observed. The Doctor, going to some church meeting in the north, could not obtain lodgings at a small change-house at the Cairn-o'-Mount, as the Sheriff and some other gentleman had engaged all the beds, even those of the landlord and family. Unwilling to encounter the hill at night, he was glad at last to put up in a deserted house, about a quarter of a mile from the inn, which the landlord endeavoured to make as comfortable for him as circumstances would admit of, but did not seek to conceal that the house was ‘haunted with an apparition.’ After commending himself to God, the Doctor went to bed, putting out the candles, but leaving the fire burning. ‘He had not been long in bed till the room dore is opened, and an apparition, in shape of a country tradesman, came in, and opened the curtains without speaking a word. Mr. Rule was resolved to do nothing till it should speak or attack him, but lay still with full composure, committing himself to the divine protection and conduct. The apparition went to the table, lighted the two candles, brought them to the bedside, and made some steps towards the dore, looking still to the bed, as if he would have had Mr. Rule rising and following. Mr. Rule still lay still till he should see his way further cleared. Then the apparition, who the whole time spoke none, took an effectuall way to raise the Doctor. He caryed back the candles to the table, and went to the fire and with the tongs took down the kindled coals, and laid them on the deal chamber floor. The Doctor then thought

it time to rise and put on his clothes; in the time of which the spectre laid up the coals again in the chimney; and going to the table, lifted the candles, and went to the dore, opened it, still looking to the Principal, as he would have him following the candles; which he now, thinking there was somewhat extraordinary in the case, after looking to God for direction, inclined to do. The apparition went down some steps with the candles, and caryed them in to a long trance, at the end of which there was a stair, which caryed down to a low room. This the spectre went down, and stooped and set down the lights on the lowest step of the stair, and straight disappeared. Mr. Rule, after a little waiting to see if anything further should cast up, lifted the candles, went up the way he came to his room, and went to his bed again, when he was no more disturbed.' The Doctor, thinking there must be some murder in the case, sent next morning for the Sheriff, and caused him to have the ground opened near the spot where the spectre disappeared, when 'the plain remains of a human body wer found, and bones, to the conviction of all.' The Doctor next entreated the Sheriff to call the country people together, 'and he would give them a sermon, and see if any hint could be had of the murder.'

"The Sheriff condescended—the people were convened; and the Doctor preached upon some subject suitable to the occasion, and told what had hapned, and earnestly dealt with the consciences of his hearers, if they knew anything of that murder, to acknowledge it, now that God in his providence had brought it to light. In the time of his sermon an old man, near eighty years, awakened and fell a-weeping, and, before all the company, acknowledged that at the building of that house he was the murderer. He and one of his fellow-masons fell into a debate, and came to high words, on a summer morning, when the rest of the workmen wer not come up to their work; and he killed the man with one stroak of a hammer, and buried him under the first step of the stair; and the matter was never known."

The bringing of a murderer to justice after the lapse of many years on the information imparted to some person by the spectre of the party murdered, seems, if we are to believe our ancient records, to have been very common in the olden time. James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd's works abound with such stories. One of the most romantic and wonderful is that of the Pedlar who was murdered "late, late, late on a Saturday night" by the Miller

of Thirlestane Mill. This fine ballad Hogg closes with the appropriate moral :—

“ The thief may escape the lash and the rape,
The liar and swearer their vile hides may save,
The wrecker of unity pass with impunity,
But when gat the murd'rer in peace to his grave ? ”

