

KYLOE-JOCK AND THE WEIRD OF WANTON-WALLS.

A LEGEND : IN SIX CHAPTERS.

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CHAPTER I.

OF THOSE WHOM IT CONCERNED, AND OF
THE FIRST LEADINGS THERETO.

WITH the ending of the harvest-work came also, for the boy, Hugh Rowland, an end to his attempts to forget his over-arduous destiny of learning, and be carelessly happy in his measured holiday. The harvest had now brought everything close in to home that had outlasted summer, to give his solitary boyish wanderings any pleasure. Bare now was every rural hollow and slope; every leafy covert or marshy secret of strange creatures, and hidden fruits, and unknown flowers, was now barer than the pastoral uplands seemed by contrast with them.

To early boyhood, indeed, those pastoral uplands had hitherto been like a dreamy sign of all things that oppressed or wearied. With faint paths that wound into the distant glimpse of roads, crossed by many a sombre fir-belt or moory ridge, the horizon of Kirkhill was secluded from others of that Scottish border region; except one notch-like cleft far eastward between the hills. Thither the boy could look freely each morning when he rose, now that his nursery time was past; and from his own new bedroom window he might see the distant

shining of some ancient castle, which was invisible save by the early sun; nay, if the air were clear, there was privately revealed to him an azure peak or two of mountains toward the south, that must be, as he guessed in secret, the very same which were told of in story—bounding a renowned and richer land, with all its endless wonders, from their own narrow region, so poor and wistful, so eager yet so barren. He had escaped, above all, from the thrall of Nurse Kirsty. That gaunt and stalwart virgin was still, indeed, invested with a might behind him, partaking of the Sybilline or Gorgonic; for she had swayed over him from of old that nameless tyranny within which were still firmly grasped the two younger subjects of her charge,—the little sister and tiny brother, sprightly Hannah and gravely-prattling Joey. Too long had Kirsty been settled in the household of Kirkhill Manse to be easily set aside or discredited: her domestic part was very necessary to the maternal tenderness in Mrs. Rowland; nay, in the Reverend Mr. Rowland's eyes, the tradition of Nurse Kirsty's inward piety still prevailed, outweighing far the wild words, if not the swell of bitter thoughts, with which Hugh had left her dominion.

For her power had been signally shown on that memorable occasion when the mother had entered amidst the rebellious scene caused by Hugh's scorn at those nursery lessons, which sufficed for little Hannah, and were quite august as yet for little Joey. Mrs. Rowland had said, with a vexed accent, that it was indeed time the boy should go to school. Then had Hugh affected to gloom and frown; though really rejoicing; for the mere name of any school, to which he could go, was well known to be a distant and glorious one, considering the rustic solitude of Kirkhill. But his inward triumph was very brief. At the open sound of their altercation, there had unclosed awfully, below stairs, the quiet door of the study-room; and, step by step deliberately ascending, Mr. Rowland had appeared. Before his grave front and lofty presence, the scene had fallen into the wonted order of such things when he directly beheld them. He had not seen the large head-dress of Kirsty flutter with anger, like the crest of a Medea, while she muttered syllables that were prophetic of evil to the boyish destinies; but saw only her attitude of uprising deference, with obsequious hands that smoothed her apron down, ere they were uplifted patiently, to testify against juvenile accusations, and show wonder at the mother's partial excuses. A boy's huge indignation had writhed through the form of Hugh Rowland, agitating his speech, burning in his face, convulsing him to the point of abusive epithets, gestures, and tears; wherewith he would have poured out the whole accumulated consciousness of Nurse Kirsty's crimes, and have exposed her and pointed her out for ever to disgrace; but that the method of this vast disclosure had failed him at the pinch. Then had his father pronounced his stern reproof, and straightway removed him along with his own solemn departure; thenceforward to be wholly under his own immediate charge, view, and superintendence, in those assiduous studies which were to prepare the boy for some other sphere. Whereat, clearly perceiving in his mind for the first time

a dire secret, he resolved to bury it, nevertheless, in his own youthful breast. For it had been on the sudden made manifest to him that injustice was seated in every one around him, even that the very fondest persons were insecure, and the wisest were tyrannical; the whole household and the time being out of joint to his disadvantage.

His father, who before had partly taught him what he required to learn for the expected school, now altogether became his tutor. It was in truth an arduous elevation to which the boy had been emancipated—to have the direct benefit turned upon himself alone, all the week long in the silent ministerial library, of that robust and solid intellect which there prepared its own graver lessons for the whole Sabbath assemblage at Kirkhill. His father devoted a resolute purpose to this minor duty, and sought due intervals for its performance, with a regularity which no slight occasion broke. Sometimes it was only by taking Hugh out along with him, on his walks of pastoral visitation, that their growing studies in Latin were carried on without stoppage. As this expedient was oftener resorted to, side by side, book in hand, traversing the thinly-peopled district farther each time, it entailed a prospect of erudition whose future vastness the boy did not at all relish. But there was a certain comfort in the change from in-door tasks. Then for the first time did he feel the delight of passing beyond the small home-bounds. New out-door sights arose before him. Now it was the merrily-racing Ether-burn, that wound its stony current from the great farmstead, past the village of huge cornstacks and the vast hayricks, before the humble wheelwright's shed and the winking, clanging smithy, under the simple kail-yards of the hinds' cottages—a feudal hamlet, where the gathered fruits of the soil and the stalls of beasts overshadowed the human signs. Now, it was the desolate traces of former peasant dwellings and yeoman farms, upon the lonely width of field which they had once peopled closer, and fenced with cheerier divisions. Out

of doors his father's leisure was ampler, so also more patient; and, as they walked, it was not forbidden to see these things. Nay, at moments, it seemed wellnigh forgotten that he was a boy. Even the verge of a dread confidence seemed then at hand, into which his father would have taken him forthwith—but looked on him and remembered, so that they both shrank into themselves again, with Latin words and English meanings safe between; of which Hugh was then truly glad. He could not tell whether it was possible to sustain such communion for a moment, so immense and incomprehensible appeared the opening favour.

Often, in these walks with his father, did Hugh silently wonder whether at last he should actually see that strange place, *Wanton-Walls*, known to be within the bounds of Kirkhill parish, but familiar to him yet only as a name of mysterious fascination. Sometimes in their longer expeditions they must have been in sight of it, on the upper farm-land of the hills; yet he never dared to ask which it was of the distant places in view. A farm near a ruined tower he knew it to be. But there were several such in that far-stretched parish of the old wild Border-Country. At length, indeed, their course was actually to one upland farmstead, where a roofless stronghold of forgotten moss-troopers hung shattered over a brook. Not far away was the usual row of thatch that covered the hinds and bondagers of the place. These Mr. Rowland visited, as he had designed; and, when the visit was over, Hugh turned to move homeward again. But his father took the path leading by the farmer's house, where he paid his visit also, a little way further from the tower; and left Hugh wondering silently outside. For Hugh himself had rather preferred to view the tower, and think if it could be indeed that very *Wanton-Walls*, so deeply curious in its interest to him. Then, while he yet looked, his father returned to him, smiling, from the farmer's hospitable convoyance, and the boy's surprise involuntarily broke out aloud, "Was it *not* *Wanton-Walls*?"

Indeed, it could not be—since, in the farmer's beaming visage and bald head, he had beheld those of a well-known elder, weekly seen at church in his right place.

A strange aspect did Mr. Rowland bend on his boy for an instant, at that betrayal of circuitous inquisitiveness. "Was there, then," he asked, in turn, —while he bent a severe regard upon his companion—"any special cause to be curious about *Wanton-Walls*, or any particular mark to know it by? For one, too, who had not heard the subject mentioned with his parents' knowledge, still less with their approval?"

Here might it have been possible for Hugh to have avenged himself on Nurse Kirsty, despite her pious air. She alone had known, and told him, that the minister never visited at the rich farm-house of *Wanton-Walls*, though he did not neglect its humble hinds; and that Mr. Murray, the farmer there, was no venerable character, no hospitable parishioner: though as to the ground of quarrel, if she indeed knew its true occasion, she had confined her story to mystic looks and wise shakings of the head. Nevertheless it would have been too much for the boy thus to drag down the pillars for their joint ruin, his own and Kirsty's. He hid the truth, while his eye sank and his cheek burned; his reply steadily deceiving the superior glance, that tried him less in suspicion, perhaps, than in dissatisfaction at the want of filial trust. Mr. Rowland turned away reassured in his own singlemindedness, and if there was any sternly-wistful light in his firm eye, as he gazed far forward over the solitary hills, it was not then known.

Again, one day of latest autumn, they took their path in quite another direction over the hills, still holding peripatetic school, on the way to fulfil some ordinary charge of the clerical office, ecclesiastical or pastoral. A spectacle to ploughing rustics, they passed up together to the curious niche that glimmered in the sombre wall of high-hung firwood, so long a mystery in the distance, out of which dropped from time to time all sorts of transient and separate figures

upon the lonely cart-road leading from it. They found it now no cavern of robbers, indeed, nor back-postern of a dark fortress, nor mine below a strange city of spired and pinnacled and fretted gloom; but only the entrance that let them in through the plantation, itself mysterious, towards a clearer road, like the highway of the world. They were passing amidst the ever-clothed barrier of serried pines, shaggy and sharply-tipped and bronze-coloured, along whose skirt the fires of gipsies had twinkled, down from which the fox had come, and where the black *kyloes*, wandering through, had at times clustered their huge white horns, before they fled back again at some mightier terror than they themselves aroused. There the chill air now struck less shrewdly than elsewhere—sifted into stillness behind, through the bearded caves that now seemed magically ever-green, hung with fruits of all seasons, from purple buds to a ripeness like the carved peg-top or the foreign shell of the sea-urchin. Within was a pillared shade, stretching endless to either hand, where birds were still happy above, and where, below, over the countless fallen cones, among unfathomable softness of the down-dropt spines, amphibious creatures vanished to remote silence through the stalks and sprays of the wan grasses, that shot high toward pendent tendrils of whitest moss, while uncouth fungus bloomed round like flowers. Much better to behold all this than to listen to Nurse Kirsty's vain attempts to wile or frighten by fables not half so wonderful—even although his father did not stop their task for it, except to open a cattle-gate, or let him mount the rude stile upon their way. Mr. Rowland had still in his hand the same familiar list of vocables, nouns substantive and adjective, relating to the commonest objects around, or often met with, which Hugh had been learning, for months before. The early colloquies of *Corderius*, sustained by boys of tranquil Latin mind and Latin habits, had for a time betrayed him into abstruser knowledge; and that day was but one of steady revisal, securing the

previous ground, repairing the decayed steps—as was that clear-minded teacher's wont, before he rose to the stage of some new enterprize. Hence the very keenness of the upper atmosphere had exhilaration in its breath for both; as, without a disturbing censure, they reached the shepherd's cottage, where other matters came in view; coming round also, on their homeward circuit, by the hedger and ditcher's, whose child was ill. Above them, as they turned from thence, bulged far and wide the upper hilly region; fenceless, grey, and mottled with dark furze, that swelled over in unknown wastes—whether to a wilderness beyond endurance, or to yet unconceived prospects of the great peopled world, whose chiefest road had seemed of late to tend that way. Yea, this same road was now palpably discovered to wind round the fir-plantation; to be a puzzle no longer, but to go on, a rutted cart-road still; and there only leave the eye behind it, because it narrowed in long perspective, steadily regardless of those upland solitudes. To complete the disenchantment, *there*, on his slow homeward circuit before them, was their own man Andrew on the cart, with the old grey mare, Beauty, sleepily nodding on the coals and market things he had fetched so far—having risen ere daybreak, as usual, to go to his boasted Abbey-town of Milsom, that source of marvel; which, for all he ever told at the kitchen fire, might have been a thousand miles away. Once for all detected at broad noon so stupidly returning, Andrew would not be able to make such a mystery of his journeys to Milsom after this. Hugh, crossing down the wood again with his father, would be home before him; and, by the time Andrew should issue from the stable, ready to shake his head wisely, with all his other dignities in mind, of bellman, bethral, sexton, and church-officer, officer to the kirk-session also—in one word, the Minister's Man—would not Hugh in private be able to nod wisely to Andrew in turn?

Speedily, therefore, they would have retraced their way through the fir-plantations

tions, losing sight of road or hills, but for Hugh's father, who had not noticed Andrew. It was the upper pasture that drew notice from Mr. Rowland as they crossed its edge again. This time he seemed to look on the scene with an amount of interest which he had not shown before, whether at the wild cry of the *peewit* flitting round, or the savage aspects of those wandering cattle—those long-horned *kyloes* from some mountain land of the fabled north, soot-black, or dun, or livid—which at this season made irruption there. Raising their shaggy fronts, these creatures still glared, as before, without fear at the intruders; they even trooped upward undaunted from the sheep-track and the farm-land, at the bidding of some higher power. The sight of them still stirred in Hugh a thrill of the boyish tremor felt at passing them the first time. This dread would have been even yet a panic flight, if the return had been alone; if it had been free from the same unquestionable paternal control, close at hand. And this time there rose a further need of the authoritative influence, for there were other objects in view than the *kyloes*. Shaggier than the *kyloes* themselves, an uncouth grizzled dog ran silently below, and warned the savage cattle as they trooped; above, there stood to view the *kyloe*-herd in his own person, uncouth, shaggier than them all, in his flying shepherd-*maud*, with his bare head, and in his hand his red-knobbed bonnet waving backward, as he looked and whooped to some other place to which his whole attention seemed to be directed. Still he came leaping down with his eye eager upon the distance, without sight of Mr. Rowland, without apparent heed to his own retreating droves of *kyloes*. At the sudden sight of Mr. Rowland, indeed, he stopped like one transfixed, and hung his head, and gaped, yet made rude efforts at respect: while Mr. Rowland spoke to him, stooping to him graciously, and using softened tones and kind relaxings of his mien and glance, which struck Hugh as something strange. Was such softness in his

father's manner reserved for strangers? Not even at church had Hugh seen this stranger before, that he remembered of—more like a great, large boy than man or lad; of speech so oddly broad, in the forbidden native tongue, that it made one tremble to be thought to understand it, and even Latin seemed scarce so different from the proper language required before the minister. Nor did he seem to have the power of hiding, if he tried, some side-long looks and leers of satisfaction, whether meant for the grave speaker before him, or for the youthful hearer's solemn eye beyond. Yet was the *kyloe*-herd asked about his health, and when the *kyloe* season would end, that he might go to school again, and come again to the church on Sabbaths: after which a penny was given him, and his shoulder also was patted kindly, ere they departed on their way! And he had been familiarly called "John:" appearing still to leave matter for silent thought in the mind of Mr. Rowland! Still, as Hugh noted, his father had not asked of this John at all, why he had whooped and waved to some distant place, or gazed towards it so eagerly; even as now, again, when released from his brief interview with Mr. Rowland, he ran up and jumped on tiptoe, to see and listen, straining eye and ear in the same direction, and heedless of his upward-tending *kyloes*.

All was yet apparently still through the keen autumn air above, and in the recesses of the firwood near them, when Mr. Rowland broke his reverie to remount the stile, resuming the Latin lesson ere they re-entered. The shadow on his brow had not been preceptorial this time, at all events. In truth, their mutual progress had all day been unusually successful. Without openly commending, he said that, if such progress lasted, and Hugh were diligent, in a week or two they might begin *Cornelius Nepos*. He was so speaking still—so taking it for granted that the prospect was a luxury for both—when a sound came clearly to the ears of both, that had once or twice been more faintly audible to the one of them; as if stirring the dis-

tance but in fancy, or only made at hand by some late wild-bee as it boomed upward, or some last survivor of the trumpeting gnats that might linger in the fragrant closeness of the fir-boughs. It was really, however, the huntsman's well-known horn, not seldom heard toward winter along the uplands of Kirkhill, when the fox was sought from Mellerstain, or driven to the Gordon moors. And in a minute after, far uphill, the fox himself shot out across a slope: while the cry of hounds was broken to querulous discord close by, in the deep plantation. But suddenly it streamed out with a fierce music over the nearest dyke, as they broke away in hot chase with one moment's piebald flash upon the moor into the clouds, many a scarlet-coated rider bursting forth to join their course, and whoop and hollo and gesture blending, as they vanished through the wind. Then for an instant had the boy's eye sparkled, all his veins tingling to run after and see farther, like that *kylloe*-herd. Close beside him, however, was that other eye—his father's—which had already uttered meanings understood too well. For, by *its* standard, no wrong to any inarticulate creature was venial; and once, when an earthworm had been wantonly cut through with a toy spade, before his study-window, he had chanced to observe it, and, raising the window awfully, had called the offender thither in the act, that one of the guilty fingers might there be cut, to feel and understand its sin—a penalty only relaxed on solemn promise of kindness for the future to everything alive, because the same Power had made and was supporting both them and the culprit. *Now* he spoke, though but a word or two, of the inhumanity in men, of the terror and pain in beasts; and would doubtless have left the subject willingly for their previous business, had not the very next occurrence kept it obvious before him. From the other side of the wood came hastening up two riders of the troop; from the foremost of whom, ere the trees disclosed them, there broke a loud imprecation while they looked about in their uncertainty. Then,

seeing Mr. Rowland all at once, the speaker reined back his horse upon its haunches; his hand was lifted toward his hunting-cap, and he muttered a confused greeting—his health-flushed visage colouring higher yet, and taking a sullen aspect, like some chidden boy, ere with an awkward laugh he collected himself, praised the weather, and asked, as his companion only wiped his moist brows, what way the hounds had gone. Meantime, with a surprise equal to his, and flushing deeper than he, Mr. Rowland had drawn himself erect to all the dignity of his stature; then, at that question, looking strangely on the questioner, with an effort at stern self-control that no visible circumstances demanded, he might have been thought to tremble and grow pale.

"It would not become me or my business, Mr. Murray," he said, "to direct you in such matters. But it may be," he added, as from a sudden afterthought, his voice hoarse—at the same time turning away—"it is indeed probable, sir, that the cattle-herd yonder could inform you. Yes, I recommend you to *him*. See! Good day." And, pointing backward, he strode on, almost rudely indifferent to their hurried thanks as they spurred away toward the knolls and dyke-tops: where that leaping *kylloe*-keeper again found various posts of vantage, successively to see or hear the upland chase. In utter silence did the boy hasten behind his father, unnoticed when at first he overtook him. Somewhat stern was the abrupt resumption of their task for the brief remainder of the way home.

It was only to Mrs. Rowland, when after dinner the minister lingered a little on his way to the study, that he calmly mentioned his having spoken that day, for the first time in several years, to one of his parishioners who had long ceased to be a hearer. *She* knew, of course, about the tenant of Wanton-Walls and his repute. Ever since that sermon which offended him, as well it should, his church-coming had ceased. He was but like others of his order in that region of great lordly farms with subject hinds,

and a few humbler neighbours almost equally scorned. Full-blown and prosperous, often,—like this *laird* of distant Edenside, and owner of lands elsewhere,—they claimed part among the gentry without their better tastes, and rode about boldly, like Colonel Monilaws or Maviswood of Maviswood himself, except to church or to any other place of benefit. What, indeed, did they leave behind to their farm-grievous, who managed their thousand-acred holdings, of the sordid grossness of the soil that clung to them? They could but keep each other in dull countenance; swollen and red-faced men, too often thus hoary in their indifference, belonging now to the past generation; chiefly revelling apart in their own appropriate company, with such orgies as those that had been rumoured from Wanton-Walls since Mr. Murray ceased to go to church at all. The more reckless he, perhaps, at first, on that very account: but he had at no time been regular, as Mrs. Rowland could well remember, from the date of her own coming to Kirkhill. These men were dying out now. At Wanton-Walls, if ever meeting now-a-days, their mirth must be comparatively tame, blank, and secret, so little was it heard of lately. Then their example had no danger in it now. The humbler people, always seeming to have held it in dread, were taught its horror; and the better class looked down with contempt. For how *just* had been that condemnation launched in the said sermon—as all others had acknowledged, but the offender, that it was loudly called for—against vices such as his! It had been couched generally; without a personal inference, on any other individual's part, from the text that had chanced to strike him so. And Mrs. Rowland was, indeed, disposed to resent the course he had taken, in absenting himself from church in consequence; because, by universal admission, as she rather simply remarked, Mr. Rowland's preaching had greatly improved since then; nay, there were reasons to think, that gifts and labours, too little appreciated hitherto, would ere long produce their due

result! The loss was the man's own, truly!

Her husband made little answer at that time, but leant his head forward on his hand, with an elbow on the table; his features working as if he took some blame to himself. He had been at that time offended in his turn, not condescending to go and visit Wanton-Walls for an unwilling hearer: and now there were years passed, so that it was more difficult to go than before. He rose at length, looking at her abstractedly, with some irrelevant reply, and went to study his weekly sermon.

CHAPTER II.

TOUCHING CERTAIN COINCIDENCES—ALSO THE NEW HORSE "RUTHERFORD."

Now, if there had been any reason as yet for piecing together various circumstances, or if the different members of this one household had but united their separate knowledge in a single thought, already might things that seemed unconnected have taken an intelligible shape.

Nurse Kirsty, brought up in her youth with the master's own family, could tell, perhaps, better than even he, of the beginnings of certain matters which occupied his thoughts. To her, too, the *Man* Andrew could have communicated divers parochial facts, and sundry records of that court yeleft the Kirk-session; which, if Hugh had now mentioned the kyloe-herd to her, or spoken of Murray of Wanton-Walls at the fox-hunt, might have shed a light for her devout reflection. But the boy was estranged from Kirsty, with a feeling that tended to hatred at times; and as for Andrew, his unexpected marriage had just then removed him from her circle. Not only was he removed from the evening fireside in the kitchen, and from the stable-loft where he shared his bed with the glebe cow-boy; he was out of Kirsty's austere good graces altogether, at a cottar's hearth of his own, under the same thatch with the few *hinds* of little Kirkhill Farm. He was daily at

hand, indeed; his business lying daily nearer home, each day that told more plainly of winter. His flail was loud in the barn, his pitchfork rustling in byre and stable; and, however solid those tufted towers of corn he had been helped to build, if he now fell on one of them, to thresh and take to the mill, it soon gave way before his unaided might. Once a week, with a weapon like a giant's sword, he stood on the great hay-rick that had seemed to mimic the church itself, and shored one gable down till it was liker still. For the small red church had at one end a smaller structure, flat upon the top, and roofless, called the *aisle*; and, when frosty sunsets came redder each night, sometimes they would throw a ruddy gleam upon the stack-yard, with that implement of Andrew's glittering silent in the hay-rick, although the church itself was then left pale and peaceful toward the leaden clouds, skirted by bare branches.

In himself, Andrew was not solemn on every-days; nor did he in his common clothes speak severely; nor was he to the young mind inseparably associated with the bell-chain and pulpit-books, and with the sessions of secret discipline. And, instead of Andrew's growing less indulgent to the children, as he left the circle of Nurse Kirsty under her incurred displeasure, he was now even more good-humoured at any faults, more easy to access and curiosity. Very readily had he explained why the lad with the kyloes had seemed a stranger to Hugh; though so well known, and belonging to the parish. It was no other than poor John Scott, to whom Andrew himself was as an official guardian; "the bit orphan lad," the kind of *natural*, as they said—the *callant* that was on the parish; a decent lad enough, though his honest calling held him mostly of late from the kirk or school: the very same who was known, all round about, by the name of *Kylloe-Jock*. So much Hugh could easily learn. If there had been further interest to satisfy, it seemed beyond the informant's own remotest guess; for, in the man Andrew, whatever might be oracular was chiefly silent.

Curiosity itself could have needed no information respecting the Murrays of Wanton-Walls; had that house possessed the remotest connexion with the matter. If Mr. Rowland, from his secluded study, had never seen Mr. Murray ride by the Manse of late years, on the quiet road which passed behind; yet, at the high nursery-window looking over that road, there had been no such ignorance. No question could have existed *there* as to his riding still that way, when occasion led: like any other of the passers-by; who were all so few, so far between, and so important, that every one had been as a painted frontispiece or quaint initial to some ample comment or plenteous recital by Nurse Kirsty's tongue. Superfluous now, however, her readiest flow of prate upon many things, seen for oneself outside; and most of all upon this. She could not have told Hugh, in her least capricious mood, things half so entertaining about Wanton-Walls, as would rise to his fancy of their own accord, when he remembered how the restless horses had been flecked with foam, and their sinews swollen, their wide nostrils sending out blasts of breath, so that they scarce had stayed for their masters, except to know the track of the hunt; and how those crimson stains were in the scarlet coats, but were less odd than the spots that had rushed out in Mr. Murray's red face, as if the sight of Hugh's father had cut the man somewhere, like that unforgotten penknife. Was it all because of the absence from church, or had he killed so many foxes? Why, too, was there no such surprise and annoyance on the other hunter's face, so eager, yet so old and fat; with its white hair, and purple pimples on the nose; and with a laugh, in spite of those bad words that had been said?

But, as to wondering who Mr. Murray was, that would have been strange indeed at the Manse of Kirkhill, close as it was to the very churchyard, where all parish pedigrees of any note lay open, as in books, for those who could read. *There* a whole family of Wanton-Walls, before or coeval with Mr. Murray, were

among the nearest neighbours to life. They did not dwell outside, indeed, in the open churchyard—that summer playground of early boyhood—where the dandelions and buttercups glowed in the grass, and merry insects buzzed, and every gravestone was familiar. Their abode was even in a house,—a house that was shared, with hereditary state apart, between the Murrays themselves and a select few besides. As Wanton-Walls had long been tenanted by the family while living, so did their final resting-place when dead lie within the small end-aisle of the little parish church. Older than the present creed was Kirkhill Church; older also than the time of ploughs and harrows was Wanton-Walls: at which farmstead there stood, close by, a square and roofless Bordertower; while here, close by, was the small square end-aisle, an inclosure that never had been roofed at all. The sunlight and sky still looked in freely, as from the first; though the very moss-trooper of old had gone to dust in it, and the particular earth that was here had been consecrated, by priestlier hands than Mr. Rowland claimed to use.

Although, in early boyhood, Hugh could not have climbed the aisle-wall to look in like the sunlight and sky, nevertheless, in days less subject to fear, he had found a new pleasure there. Under the broad noon, while the upper farmhouse windows were in sight close by, he had sometimes stolen to the old sunlit door, and risen on tiptoe from some gathered stones, to peep curiously through the keyhole. Within, truly, was stillness itself, that yet sent forth a thrill to make the heart quiver. No ripple of the summer wind on the grass outside passed in to stir the tall fibres shooting there right upward, a living hair; to move the outspread hands of hemlocks that bore up their seed on high; to rustle the harmless nettles, or shake the puff-ball of the dandelion in its refuge. But it was not dark; nay, a companion ray of light was ever peeping in with the looker through the keyhole; and this went in aslant before the eye, touching part into fairy hues, throwing most of it into a

green obscurity, making the rest rather marvellous than doleful. Under that built-up arch into the church-gable, where the ivy clung, one sparrow always made her inaccessible nest; on one corner of the open wall-copé, a single wallflower always seemed to thrive and grow golden in the sky: and if, below, there were old scattered fragments of things unspeakable,—mouldered pieces of broken deal, odd rusty handles, tarnished metal ornaments, scarce seen among the weeds; yet midway round—side facing side, front meeting *viewless* front more strangely,—what suspended variety of diverting image-work and lively enigma! The alphabet, made thus important, had been there; and spelling had then grown pleasant, even to the self-consciousness of a superior accuracy in the observer; while incipient arithmetic had practised itself with zeal, to compute those striking dates. *There* had been implied a kind of ethics and philosophy: they were so good, so exemplary for virtue, so sage, resigned, tranquil, and often pious, those records of Wanton-Walls, which stood for whole generations of parents, husbands, wives, or early-sainted children. And they had let dimly backward into history, by that ancient remnant of one heraldic tablet, which still bore the armed hand above the coat-of-arms—which still, with unobliterated Border wildness, silently cried the knightly war-cry, “*A moy, Ellyots.*” Modern allegory and poetry had been there, if but in embryo; where Time held his scythe, where cherubs and angels were rudely carved, or a later circlet of white marble was put in, to show a mourner by an urn, with lines of polite verse beneath. There, too, the preacher had uttered sermons to an attentive ear; for there were texts that needed long peering to decipher. Even there a teacher had propounded Latin lessons, that stirred the wish to understand them; for there was “*Resurgam*” and “*Sic itur ad astra;*” and one stone there was, only half seen from the keyhole, which began its legend with “*Memento!*”, but showed not what it would have one to Remem-

ber, ere it passed out of sight too near the doorway.

Thus was Wanton-Walls so familiar, though as yet unseen; standing as it did on the utmost bounds of Kirkhill parish. And thus was old Mr. Murray, however absent from church, or estranged from the minister, nevertheless the well-known single representative of the most intimately-acquainted family of near neighbours. On that very account, he gave but little interest to boyhood, and cost it no concern. Far from caring to dwell on him or his matters, there could have been nothing from which Hugh so pleasantly relieved himself when lesson-time was over. Much gladder was it *then*, as the long twilights deepened to early nights, to skirt off around the churchyard and reach new pleasures by a circuit. Happier the hours ever grew, that could be gained by stealth in visiting the dear old farmhouse kitchen, where Mistress Arnot baked or spun, knitted or mended, still with her old foster-motherly favour about her, still homely and kind, despite her Amazonian temper and her thrifty sharpness. Yet rather than reach it some minutes sooner, by the stile and footpath, so natural once, that traversed the churchyard, Hugh Rowland would have stayed at home and lost the whole. It was late in the year; the nights deepened; it should have been winter!

No great sacrifice of sociality was required, for all that. He did not need to lose his hidden indulgence in those fireside sports of Hallowe'en that make the dusk seem *eerier*; nor to give up hopes of witnessing the rustic masquerade of Hogmanay, when *guizards* would come rhyming in, to fight or die, to use mystic words, and usher the New Year with secular, profane, and superstitious mumming for pecuniary dole. Among the youthful neighbours it was rumoured—unknown to the parochial man—Andrew, still more deeply unknown to the minister—that of all the suspected *guizards*, or Christmas mummers of Kirkhill parish, the most skilful was *Kyloe-Jock*. Whether his charge upon the hill were

gone for the winter, or left there untended, Jock would doubtless head the band, and be the great Alexander or conquering St. George. Soon, indeed, after the frost began, when the farmyard was at the merriest in the dusk of a Saturday afternoon—because then the parish school-children joined the game at *Bogle-round-the-stacks* on their way past—there would be seen among them, oftener and oftener, grown lad as he was, with his old tail-coat and his charge of *kyloes*, and his dog—setting aside his serious relation to the Kirk-session and Andrew the *bethral*—*Kyloe-Jock* in person, playing like the very eagerest. Among the eagerest would have been Hugh Rowland, but for the whisper of so imposing a visitor. As it was, the knowledge of so important a presence as that of *Kyloe-Jock* made Hugh shy and awkward, until when the infection of the sport caught him. Then, whirled into its vortex on the sudden, he insensibly forgot his awe; and, once or twice, darting breathless through the giddy labyrinth from some unknown pursuer, or changed by a magic touch into the pursuer himself, he almost dreaded that he and Jock might come immediately into contact. Yet on these occasions did Jock only familiarize himself to the sight by momentary glimpses, with a swiftness and a skill that never failed. It was strange that a being so superior should condescend to *play*!

At such times the forbidden touch of vulgar boys did encompass Hugh, with their forbidden voices and company— forbidden by his father because they were unknown: the touch, too, and the voice, and the company of their own glebe cowherd, little Will, which above all were forbidden by his father, because known very well. But how different was *Kyloe-Jock*, whom Hugh's father both knew and cared for! A herd, indeed: yet on how mighty a scale; wildly superior, invested with the greatness of the hill, ruler of untamed cattle! Nay, there was no danger of his companionship, were it such as could be disapproved; and, if it had been

possible to partake it in reverential deference for a moment, one must have partaken it with his dog too. An uninviting beast to behold, though seeming wise with a sagacity beyond nature, it was as the shadow or the waiting familiar spirit of Jock, whose plaid it sat upon, or between whose heels it jealously looked up, with that one eye which was not white and horny. In outer aspect like the picture of Abyssinian hyænas—one ear torn to a rag, which had been healed by time—through its name of *Bauldy* it repelled the more. For it only waited or followed, very gravely, while its master took holiday; needing no play itself, appearing to have witnessed such things so long with patience that it could have slept, were there no kyloes on the hill. So long as they were there, in truth, neither Bauldy nor his master grew distincter than shadows—both coming and going with the dusk. It was even said that in the daytime they watched by turns all night, and relieved each other, sharing the same rude bothy of furze and fern; while, if the lad had ever forgotten his wild black charge too long, the dog would have reminded him or returned alone.

Therefore the boy Rowland looked upon them the while as halfseen novelties, requiring no mention at home, and stole back thither quietly himself, through the early dark, across the shades from the windows, ever in time for due assemblage round the decorous tea-table, as well as for the solemn privilege, extended to him now, when the nursery was safe in bed, of waiting up to join the early household prayers. There the faces of Andrew, and Nurse Kirsty, and the other servant, joined no less solemnly. Their scrutiny then, at least, was not perilous. Perilous, indeed, would *one* scrutiny have been: had *it* not been always so unsuspecting, though so severe, in its single-minded prohibition of all evil. Such was the terror for Hugh of rousing that authority into wrath that the very gloom of those wintry nights in the churchyard would have been trivial by comparison, if there had been need—as there was

not, save in an after-dream of remorse—to hurry backward through it, so as to be within doors in time. Such dreams there were that season. *Once* they took the form of an abhorred fascination to the deserted door of the end-aisle; which was suddenly flung open, and with horror did it seem as if straightway all the Murrays were bursting forth, to troop mounted, red-coated, with shout and tally-ho, to the hills above. But a relief of yet more sudden delight came in; for instead of them it was *Kyloe-Jock* without his Bauldy, though in knightly armour and a moss-trooper's helmet, riding gloriously on a headstone beside Hugh, as Hugh had often done alone. Then the kyloe-herd shouted angrily in his ear; and the shout was in Latin, as of the boys in Corderius; and he awoke rejoicing that it was not true.

Thus partly, perhaps, because about that time the old grey mare, Beauty, proved insufficient for the cart-work and winter ploughing; so that Andrew at length took her to Thirlstane Fair for sale; with money enough besides to buy another. He had come home successful with a younger horse, a stout brown nag; that had been most used, no doubt, to saddle and light harness, though sober enough now for other work. And when Andrew's master, the minister, saw it in the stable, he approved on the whole; for, as Andrew said gravely, on distant visitations and presbytery-days it was equally needful for them to have a good beast for their use, light of pace and pleasant to the eye, as to work the glebe well next spring—which said season was farther off besides than the dead of winter, now at hand, with its leisure for public duty, and its solemn calls that might not be put by.

Surely there must have risen in Andrew's shrewd eye, behind the minister's back, a curious twinkle; knowing something even then, as he must have done, of the new horse's previous ownership. He familiarly caressed it, and called it "Rutherford" by name; which to the children was a proof of his knowledge. For the rest, he had made

his purchase from a well-known dealer, whose final closure of the business might have involved some social refreshment, making Andrew more than ordinarily triumphant, candid, and well-nigh loquacious on the subject. Still, if he knew the fact, he did not then let it out, by the faintest allusion, that "Rutherford" had some time or other

been used as a hunter, and had actually once belonged to Mr. Murray of Wanton-Walls. It was a precarious and delicate subject as yet, at Kirkhill Manse, to speak of that person. And no hint of *this* could have pointed those coincidences of dreams, to which the mere changings of horses might have led.

To be continued.