CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Of seats they tell, where priests, 'mid tapers dim,
Breathed the warm prayer, or tuned the midnight hymn
To scenes like these the fainting soul retired;
Revenge and Anger in these cells expired:
By Pity soothed, Remorse lost half her fears,
And softened Pride dropped penitential tears.
Crabbe's Borough.

The morning of Friday was as serene and beautiful as if no pleasure party had been intended; and that is a rare event, whether in novel-writing or real life. Lovel, who felt the genial influence of the weather, and rejoiced at the prospect of once more meeting with Miss Wardour, trotted forward to the place of rendezvous with better spirits than he had for some time enjoyed. His prospects seemed in many respects to open and brighten before him--and hope, although breaking like the morning sun through clouds and showers, appeared now about to illuminate the path before him. He was, as might have been expected from this state of spirits, first at the place of meeting,--and, as might also have been anticipated, his looks were so intently directed towards the road from Knockwinnock Castles that he was only apprized of the arrival of the Monkbarns division by the gee-hupping of the postilion, as the post-chaise lumbered up behind him. In this vehicle were pent up, first, the stately figure of Mr. Oldbuck himself; secondly, the scarce less portly person of the Reverend Mr. Blattergowl, minister of Trotcosey, the parish in which Monkbarns and Knockwinnock were both situated. The reverend gentleman was equipped in a buzz wig, upon the top of which was an equilateral cocked hat. This was the paragon of the three yet remaining wigs of the parish, which differed, as Monkbarns used to remark, like the three degrees of comparison--Sir Arthur's rambles being the positive, his own bob-wig the comparative, and the overwhelming grizzle of the worthy clergyman figuring as the superlative. The superintendent of these antique garnitures, deeming, or affecting to deem, that he could not well be absent on an occasion which assembled all three together, had seated himself on the board behind the carriage, "just to be in the way in case they wanted a touch before the gentlemen sat down to dinner." Between the two massive figures of Monkbarns and the clergyman was stuck, by way of bodkin, the slim form of Mary M'Intyre, her aunt having preferred a visit to the manse, and a social chat with Miss Beckie Blattergowl, to investigating the ruins of the priory of Saint Ruth.

As greetings passed between the members of the Monkbarns party and Mr. Lovel, the Baronet's carriage, an open barouche, swept onward to the place of appointment, making, with its smoking bays, smart drivers, arms, blazoned panels, and a brace of outriders, a strong contrast with the battered vehicle and broken-winded backs which had brought thither the Antiquary and his followers. The principal seat of the carriage was occupied by Sir Arthur and his daughter. At the first glance which passed betwixt Miss Wardour and Lovel, her colour rose considerably;--but she had
apparently made up her mind to receive him as a friend, and only as such, and there was equal composure and courtesy in the mode of her reply to his fluttered salutation. Sir Arthur halted the barouche to shake his preserver kindly by the hand, and intimate the pleasure he had on this opportunity of returning him his personal thanks; then mentioned to him, in a tone of slight introduction, "Mr. Dousterswivel, Mr. Lovel."

Lovel took the necessary notice of the German adept, who occupied the front seat of the carriage, which is usually conferred upon dependants or inferiors. The ready grin and supple inclination with which his salutation, though slight, was answered by the foreigner, increased the internal dislike which Lovel had already conceived towards him; and it was plain, from the lower of the Antiquary's shaggy eye-brow, that he too looked with displeasure on this addition to the company. Little more than distant greeting passed among the members of the party, until, having rolled on for about three miles beyond the place at which they met, the carriages at length stopped at the sign of the Four Horse-shoes, a small hedge inn, where Caxon humbly opened the door, and let down the step of the hack-chaise, while the inmates of the barouche were, by their more courtly attendants, assisted to leave their equipage.

Here renewed greetings passed: the young ladies shook hands; and Oldbuck, completely in his element, placed himself as guide and cicerone at the head of the party, who were now to advance on foot towards the object of their curiosity. He took care to detain Lovel close beside him as the best listener of the party, and occasionally glanced a word of explanation and instruction to Miss Wardour and Mary M'Intyre, who followed next in order. The Baronet and the clergyman he rather avoided, as he was aware both of them conceived they understood such matters as well, or better than he did; and Dousterswivel, besides that he looked on him as a charlatan, was so nearly connected with his apprehended loss in the stock of the mining company, that he could not abide the sight of him. These two latter satellites, therefore, attended upon the orb of Sir Arthur, to whom, moreover, as the most important person of the society, they were naturally induced to attach themselves.

It frequently happens that the most beautiful points of Scottish scenery lie hidden in some sequestered dell, and that you may travel through the country in every direction without being aware of your vicinity to what is well worth seeing, unless intention or accident carry you to the very spot. This is particularly the case in the country around Fairport, which is, generally speaking, open, unenclosed, and bare. But here and there the progress of rills, or small rivers, has formed dells, glens, or as they are provincially termed, _dens, on whose high and rocky banks trees and shrubs of all kinds find a shelter, and grow with a luxuriant profusion, which is the more gratifying, as it forms an unexpected contrast with the general face of the country. This was eminently the case with the approach to the ruins of Saint Ruth, which was for some time merely a sheep-track, along the side of a steep and bare hill. By degrees, however, as this path descended, and winded round the hillside, trees began to appear, at first singly, stunted, and blighted, with locks of wool upon their trunks, and their roots hollowed out into recesses, in which the sheep love to repose themselves--a sight much more gratifying to the eye of an admirer of the picturesque than to that of a planter or forester. By and by the trees formed groups, fringed on the edges, and filled up in the middle, by thorns and hazel bushes; and at length these groups closed so much together, that although a broad glade opened here and there under their boughs, or a small patch of bog or heath occurred which had refused nourishment to the seed which they sprinkled round, and consequently remained open and waste, the scene might on the whole be termed decidedly woodland. The sides of the valley began to approach each other more closely; the rush of a brook was heard below, and between the intervals afforded by openings in the natural wood, its waters were seen hurling clear and rapid under their silvan canopy.

Oldbuck now took upon himself the full authority of cicerone, and anxiously directed the company not to go a foot-breadth off the track which he pointed out to them, if they wished to enjoy in full perfection what they came to see. "You are happy in me for a guide, Miss Wardour," exclaimed the veteran, waving his hand and head in cadence as he repeated with emphasis,

I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bower from side to side. *
Ah! deuce take it!--that spray of a bramble has demolished all Caxon's labours, and nearly canted my wig into the stream--so much for recitations, _hors de propos._"

"Never mind, my dear sir," said Miss Wardour; "you have your faithful attendant ready to repair such a disaster when it happens, and when you appear with it as restored to its original splendour, I will carry on the quotation:

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames on the forehead"—*

*(Lycidas._)

"O! enough, enough!" answered Oldbuck; "I ought to have known what it was to give you advantage over me--But here is what will stop your career of satire, for you are an admirer of nature, I know." In fact, when they had followed him through a breach in a low, ancient, and ruinous wall, they came suddenly upon a scene equally unexpected and interesting.

They stood pretty high upon the side of the glen, which had suddenly opened into a sort of amphitheatre to give room for a pure and profound lake of a few acres extent, and a space of level ground around it. The banks then arose everywhere steeply, and in some places were varied by rocks--in others covered with the copse, which run up, feathering their sides lightly and irregularly, and breaking the uniformity of the green pasture-ground--Beneath, the lake discharged itself into the huddling and tumultuous brook, which had been their companion since they had entered the glen. At the point at which it issued from "its parent lake," stood the ruins which they had come to visit. They were not of great extent; but the singular beauty, as well as the wild and sequestered character of the spot on which they were situated, gave them an interest and importance superior to that which attaches itself to architectural remains of greater consequence, but placed near to ordinary houses, and possessing less romantic accompaniments. The eastern window of the church remained entire, with all its ornaments and tracery work; and the sides, upheld by flying buttresses whose airy support, detached from the wall against which they were placed, and ornamented with pinnacles and carved work, gave a variety and lightness to the building. The roof and western end of the church were completely ruinous; but the latter appeared to have made one side of a square, of which the ruins of the conventual buildings formed other two, and the gardens a fourth. The side of these buildings which overhung the brook, was partly founded on a steep and precipitous rock; for the place had been occasionally turned to military purposes, and had been taken with great slaughter during Montrose's wars. The ground formerly occupied by the garden was still marked by a few orchard trees. At a greater distance from the buildings were detached oaks and elms and chestnuts, growing singly, which had attained great size. The rest of the space between the ruins and the hill was a close-cropt sward, which the daily pasture of the sheep kept in much finer order than if it had been subjected to the scythe and broom. The whole scene had a repose, which was still and affecting without being monotonous. The dark, deep basin, in which the clear blue lake reposed, reflecting the water lilies which grew on its surface, and the trees which here and there threw their arms from the banks, was finely contrasted with the haste and tumult of the brook which broke away from the outlet, as if escaping from confinement and hurried down the glen, wheeling around the base of the rock on which the ruins were situated, and brawling in foam and fury with every shelve and stone which obstructed its passage. A similar contrast was seen between the level green meadow, in which the ruins were situated, and the large timber-trees which were scattered over it, compared with the precipitous banks which arose at a short distance around, partly fringed with light and feathery underwood, partly rising in steeps clothed with purple heath, and partly more abruptly elevated into fronts of grey rock, chequered with lichen, and with those hardy plants which find root even in the most and crevices of the crags.

"There was the retreat of learning in the days of darkness, Mr. Lovel!" said Oldbuck,--around whom the company had
now grouped themselves while they admired the unexpected opening of a prospect so romantic;—"there reposed the sages who were aweary of the world, and devoted either to that which was to come, or to the service of the generations who should follow them in this. I will show you presently the library;—see that stretch of wall with square-shafted windows—there it existed, stored, as an old manuscript in my possession assures me, with five thousand volumes. And here I might well take up the lamentation of the learned Leland, who, regretting the downfall of the conventual libraries, exclaims, like Rachel weeping for her children, that if the Papal laws, decrees, decretals, clementines, and other such drugs of the devil—y.e., if Heytesburg's sophisms, Porphyry's universals, Aristotle's logic, and Dunse's divinity, with such other lousy legerdemains (begging your pardon, Miss Wardour) and fruits of the bottomless pit,—had leaped out of our libraries, for the accommodation of grocers, candlemakers, soapsellers, and other worldly occupiers, we might have been therewith contented. But to put our ancient chronicles, our noble histories, our learned commentaries, and national muniments, to such offices of contempt and subjection, has greatly degraded our nation, and showed ourselves dishonoured in the eyes of posterity to the utmost stretch of time—O negligence most unfriendly to our land!"

"And, O John Knox" said the Baronet, "through whose influence, and under whose auspices, the patriotic task was accomplished!"

The Antiquary, somewhat in the situation of a woodcock caught in his own springe, turned short round and coughed, to excuse a slight blush as he mustered his answer—"as to the Apostle of the Scottish Reformation"—

But Miss Wardour broke in to interrupt a conversation so dangerous. "Pray, who was the author you quoted, Mr. Oldbuck?"

"The learned Leland, Miss Wardour, who lost his senses on witnessing the destruction of the conventual libraries in England."

"Now, I think," replied the young lady, "his misfortune may have saved the rationality of some modern antiquaries, which would certainly have been drowned if so vast a lake of learning had not been diminished by draining."

"Well, thank Heaven, there is no danger now—they have hardly left us a spoonful in which to perform the dire feat."

So saying, Mr. Oldbuck led the way down the bank, by a steep but secure path, which soon placed them on the verdant meadow where the ruins stood. "There they lived," continued the Antiquary, "with nought to do but to spend their time in investigating points of remote antiquity, transcribing manuscripts, and composing new works for the information of posterity."

"And," added the Baronet, "in exercising the rites of devotion with a pomp and ceremonial worthy of the office of the priesthood."

"And if Sir Arthur's excellence will permit," said the German, with a low bow, "the monksh might also make de vary curious experiment in deir laboraties, both in chemistry and _magia naturalis._"

"I think," said the clergyman, "they would have enough to do in collecting the teinds of the parsonage and vicarage of three good parishes."

"And all," added Miss Wardour, nodding to the Antiquary, "without interruption from womankind."

"True, my fair foe," said Oldbuck; "this was a paradise where no Eve was admitted, and we may wonder the rather by what chance the good fathers came to lose it."

With such criticisms on the occupations of those by whom the ruins had been formerly possessed, they wandered for some time from one moss-grown shrine to another, under the guidance of Oldbuck, who explained, with much plausibility, the ground-plan of the edifice, and read and expounded to the company the various mouldering inscriptions which yet were to be traced upon the tombs of the dead, or under the vacant niches of the sainted images.
"What is the reason," at length Miss Wardour asked the Antiquary, "why tradition has preserved to us such meagre accounts of the inmates of these stately edifices, raised with such expense of labour and taste, and whose owners were in their times personages of such awful power and importance? The meanest tower of a freebooting baron or squire who lived by his lance and broadsword, is consecrated by its appropriate legend, and the shepherd will tell you with accuracy the names and feats of its inhabitants;--but ask a countryman concerning these beautiful and extensive remains--these towers, these arches, and buttresses, and shafted windows, reared at such cost,--three words fill up his answer --they were made up by the monks lang syne."

The question was somewhat puzzling. Sir Arthur looked upward, as if hoping to be inspired with an answer--Oldbuck shoved back his wig--the clergyman was of opinion that his parishioners were too deeply impressed with the true presbyterian doctrine to preserve any records concerning the papistical cumberers of the land, offshoots as they were of the great overshadowing tree of iniquity, whose roots are in the bowels of the seven hills of abomination--Lovel thought the question was best resolved by considering what are the events which leave the deepest impression on the minds of the common people--"These," he contended, "were not such as resemble the gradual progress of a fertilizing river, but the headlong and precipitous fury of some portentous flood. The eras by which the vulgar compute time, have always reference to some period of fear and tribulation, and they date by a tempest, an earthquake, or burst of civil commotion. When such are the facts most alive, in the memory of the common people, we cannot wonder," he concluded, "that the ferocious warrior is remembered, and the peaceful abbots are abandoned to forgetfulness and oblivion."

"If you pleashe, gentlemans and ladies, and ashking pardon of Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour, and this worthy clergymansh, and my goot friend Mr. Oldenbuck, who is my countrymansh, and of goot young Mr. Lofel also, I think it is all owing to de hand of glory."

"The hand of what?" exclaimed Oldbuck.

"De hand of glory, my goot Master Oldenbuck, which is a vary great and terrible secrets--which de monksh used to conceal their treasures when they were triven from their cloisters by what you call de Reform."

"Ay, indeed! tell us about that," said Oldbuck, "for these are secrets worth knowing."

"Why, my goot Master Oldenbuck, you will only laugh at me--But de hand of glory is vary well known in de countries where your worthy progenitors did live--and it is hand cut off from a dead man, as has been hanged for murther, and dried very nice in de shmoke of juniper wood; and if you put a little of what you call yew wid your juniper, it will not be any better--that is, it will not be no worse--then you do take something of de fatsh of de bear, and of de badger, and of de great eber, as you call de grand boar, and of de little sucking child as has not been christened (for dat is very essentials), and you do make a candle, and put it into de hand of glory at de proper hour and minute, with de proper ceremonish, and he who seeksh for treasuresh shall never find none at all,"

"I dare take my corporal oath of that conclusion," said the Antiquary. "And was it the custom, Mr. Dousterswivel, in Westphalia, to make use of this elegant candelabrum?"

"Alwaysh, Mr. Oldenbuck, when you did not want nobody to talk of nothing you wash doing about--And the monksh alwaysh did this when they did hide their church-plates, and their great chalices, and de rings, wid very preshious shtones and jewels."

"But, notwithstanding, you knights of the Rosy Cross have means, no doubt, of breaking the spell, and discovering what the poor monks have put themselves to so much trouble to conceal?"

"Ah! goot Mr. Oldenbuck," replied the adept, shaking his head mysteriously. "you was very hard to believe; but if you had seen de great huge pieces of de plate so massive, Sir Arthur,--so fine fashion, Miss Wardour--and de silver cross dat we did find (dat was Schroepfer and my ownself) for de Herr Freygraf, as you call de Baron Von Blunderhaus, I do believe you would have believed then."
"Seeing is believing indeed. But what was your art--what was your mystery, Mr. Dousterswivel?"

"Aha, Mr. Oldenbuck! dat is my little secret, mine goot sir--you sall forgif me that I not tell that. But I will tell you dere are various ways--yes, indeed, dere is de dream dat you dream tree times--dat is a vary goot way."

"I am glad of that," said Oldbuck; "I have a friend" (with a side-glance to Lovel) "who is peculiarly favoured by the visits of Queen Mab."

"Den dere is de sympathies, and de antipathies, and de strange properties and virtues natural of divers herb, and of de little divining-rod."

"I would gladly rather see some of these wonders than hear of them," said Miss Wardour.

"Ah, but, my much-honoured young lady, this is not de time or de way to do de great wonder of finding all de church's plate and treasure; but to oblige you, and Sir Arthur my patron, and de reverend clergymans, and goot Mr. Oldenbuck, and young Mr. Lofel, who is a very goot young gentleman also, I will show you dat it is possible, a vary possible, to discover de spring, of water, and de little fountain hidden in de ground, without any mattock, or spade, or dig at all."

"Umph!" quoth the Antiquary, "I have heard of that conundrum. That will be no very productive art in our country;--you should carry that property to Spain or Portugal, and turn it to good account."

"Ah! my goot Master Oldenbuck, dere is de Inquisition and de Auto-da-fe' --they would burn me, who am but a simple philosopher, for one great conjurer."

"They would cast away their coals then," said Oldbuck; "but," continued he, in a whisper to Lovel, "were they to pillory him for one of the most impudent rascals that ever wagged a tongue, they would square the punishment more accurately with his deserts. But let us see: I think he is about to show us some of his legerdemain."

In truth, the German was now got to a little copse-thicket at some distance from the ruins, where he affected busily to search for such a wand as would suit the purpose of his mystery: and after cutting and examining, and rejecting several, he at length provided himself with a small twig of hazel terminating in a forked end, which he pronounced to possess the virtue proper for the experiment that he was about to exhibit. Holding the forked ends of the wand, each between a finger and thumb, and thus keeping the rod upright, he proceeded to pace the ruined aisles and cloisters, followed by the rest of the company in admiring procession. "I believe dere was no waters here," said the adept, when he had made the round of several of the buildings, without perceiving any of those indications which he pretended to expect--"I believe those Scotch monksh did find de water too cool for de climate, and alwaysh drank de goot comfortable, Rhinewine. But, aha!--see there!" Accordingly, the assistants observed the rod to turn in his fingers, although he pretended to hold it very tight.--"Dere is water here about, sure enough," and, turning this way and that way, as the agitation of the divining-rod seemed to increase or diminish, he at length advanced into the midst of a vacant and roofless enclosure which had been the kitchen of the priory, when the rod twisted itself so as to point almost straight downwards. "Here is de place," said the adept, "and if you do not find de water here, I will give you all leave to call me an impudent knave."

"I shall take that license," whispered the Antiquary to Lovel, "whether the water is discovered or no."

A servant, who had come up with a basket of cold refreshments, was now despatched to a neighbouring forester's hut for a mattock and pick-axe. The loose stones and rubbish being removed from the spot indicated by the German, they soon came to the sides of a regularly-built well; and when a few feet of rubbish were cleared out by the assistance of the forester and his sons, the water began to rise rapidly, to the delight of the philosopher, the astonishment of the ladies, Mr. Blattergowl, and Sir Arthur, the surprise of Lovel, and the confusion of the incredulous Antiquary. He did not fail, however, to enter his protest in Lovers ear against the miracle. "This is a mere trick," he said; "the rascal had made himself sure of the existence of this old well, by some means or other, before he played off this mystical piece of jugglery. Mark what he talks of next. I am much mistaken if this is not intended as a prelude to some more serious
"You do see, my goot patron, you do see, my goot ladies, you do see, worthy Dr. Bladderhowl, and even Mr. Lofel and Mr. Oldenbuck may see, if they do will to see, how art has no enemy at all but ignorance. Look at this little slip of hazel nuts--it is fit for nothing at all but to whip de little child"--("I would choose a cat and nine tails for your occasions," whispered Oldbuck apart)--"and you put it in the hands of a philosopher--paf! it makes de grand discovery. But this is nothing, Sir Arthur,--nothing at all, worthy Dr. Botherhowl--nothing at all, ladies --nothing at all, young Mr. Lofel and goot Mr. Oldenbuck, to what art can do. Ah! if dere was any man that had de spirit and de courage, I would show him better things than de well of water--I would show him"--

"And a little money would be necessary also, would it not?" said the Antiquary.

"Bah! one trifle, not worth talking about, maight be necessaries," answered the adept.

"I thought as much," rejoined the Antiquary, drily; "and I, in the meanwhile, without any divining-rod, will show you an excellent venison pasty, and a bottle of London particular Madeira, and I think that will match all that Mr. Dousterswivel's art is like to exhibit."

The feast was spread _fronde super viridi, as Oldbuck expressed himself, under a huge old tree called the Prior's Oak, and the company, sitting down around it, did ample honour to the, contents of the basket.

By Sir Walter Scott