

H 76
H 67

TALES

ROUND

A WINTER HEARTH.

BY

JANE AND ANNA MARIA PORTER.

In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire
With good old folks; and let them tell thee tales.
SHAKSPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1826.

1914 1/2



1914 1/2

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

TO THE READER.

STORIES told in general society, may fairly be considered as public property ; or rather, as *wefts and strays*, which any one may appropriate, keep unaltered, mar, or mend, without dread of prosecution.

Three of the following tales ~~are~~ of this description. The first and second story were related to the writer, by a lady of high rank, distinguished for many accomplishments. The incidents of the first, this lady warranted as facts known to one of her own family. The absurd, yet somewhat affecting imagination of the second, she spoke of as a tradition still religiously believed in Ireland. It is

given here with much apprehension, yet, in the hope that it may not be without interest for persons fond of speculating upon national character.

The principal events of the third tale, were suggested by an anecdote in one of Bell's Weekly Messengers of last year, and there stated to have recently occurred in Scotland. For the phraseology of this little tale, the writer has to beg public indulgence, since it was difficult to give local effect to a history of obscure Scottish life, without attempting to make its humble personages speak the ordinary language of their country; and to do this, the writer knows herself imperfectly qualified, by having only the acquaintance of earliest childhood with that fondly-remembered, and most expressive dialect.

With regard to the two remaining narratives; that of the House of Huntercombe, is a little memorial of real incidents which occurred to the narrator there;

and, even in the midst of a dear domestic circle, such as described. The incidents are simple ; what may befall country visitants every day, in our beautiful English scenery, yet preserving the relics of an interesting past. But the regularity of forth-coming fact, stopped at the closet door ; and there, where disappointment met the explorer, imagination has supplied the “what might have been” in the lost record of Burnham Abbey. The story goes far into ages back. Hence, the actions, and converse of the personages, can only have reference to the limited circle of objects in those times of mingled piety, superstition, heroism, and barbarity. Extremes were then great. The moral chaos of paganism was just broken up ; light, divided from darkness ; Christianity, in the form of the Archangel Michael, it might be said, was then chaining the dragon. Therefore, of woman’s heart, pure, from being

kept unspotted from the world ; of man's spirit, ennobled, because to serve and protect were the proofs of a gentleman ; such are the exemplars of those days, and here the sketch is attempted, in the Record of Berenice.

Perhaps, the writer could not take a more opportune moment to express her admiration of a recent guide into similar noble paths, better adapted to the usages of our modern times ; and which invaluable little work, is called "The Broadstone of Honour, addressed to the Gentlemen of England."—No gentleman of England, or any other country, can read that book without feeling in his breast

"An echo to the seat, where Honour's throned !"

*Esher, Surry,
Feb. 1826.*

CONTENTS.

VOL. I.

	Page
GLENROWAN, A SCOTTISH TRADITION	3
LORD HOWTH, AN IRISH LEGEND	69
JEANNIE HALLIDAY, A TALE OF OUR OWN TIMES	132
MY CHAMBER IN THE OLD HOUSE OF HUN- TERCOMBE.....	317

VOL. II.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF BERENICE, A RECORD OF BURNHAM ABBEY.

TALES

ROUND A WINTER HEARTH.

It was at the domestic tea-table of a quiet family, far in the country, they were told. A few friends had met there ; and a sudden snow-storm beating up against the closed shutters of the parlour windows, where the social little groupe were assembled, seemed by its heavy continuance to give notice that the moon, at least, must rise, to track the several guests over the fastly shrouding moorland, ere they could venture to issue forth, and separate for their different homes. On this conviction, the comfortably seated inmates drew nearer the well-piled

2 TALES ROUND A WINTER HEARTH.

hearth, with countenances rather smiling than appalled at their threatened captivity; and one or other of them falling successively into little anecdotes of similar watchings, the discourse at last took the turn of passing away the remainder of the prolonged evening in the relation of various stories of a more general nature, founded on facts, or traditionally known to the parties who told them. Amongst the latter, the following are recollected by two of the auditors; and thus they repeat them, for a similar hour of amusement, in any similar world-excluded winter night.

GLENROWAN,

A SCOTTISH TRADITION.

All ruined and wild is their roofless abode,
And lonely the dark raven's sheltering tree ;
And travelled by few is the grass-covered road,
Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode,
To his hills that encircle the sea. CAMPBELL.

THERE is yet standing in one of the wildest and most sequestered parts of Argyleshire, in Scotland, the ruins of a castle which was habitable so late as the year 1790, though even at that period only one portion of it remained entire. At present it offers but some fragments of moss-grown towers, and of broken walls, between the gaps of which the wild plum and the elder wave their neglected boughs.

The ruin stands in a melancholy glen, nearly enclosed by high heathy hills, which in summer look beautiful with their purple blossoms brightening in the sun-

shine ; but in winter have a dark and desolate appearance, saddening to the spirits of those who live amongst them. Perhaps the melancholy and monotonous sound of the sea, washing the coast at no great distance, and heard through the openings of these hills, contributes to their depressing effect. Be this as it may, the effect is depressing, and the glen is rarely passed through, even by strangers, without exciting a disposition to sigh.

To this cheerless place of residence, its proprietor, a young Scotch laird, after attaining the rank of lieutenant-colonel in a foreign service, recalled by the death of an elder brother, returned to settle there in the year 1743. He brought with him an only sister, withdrawing her thus, equally from the amusements and the bustle of life. While this sister managed his household concerns, and beguiled her hours by the practice of elegant accom-

plishments, he devoted himself alternately to improving study and healthful field sports.

Colonel Ferguson was naturally of a cheerful, social humour, and for some time after their abode in Glenrowan, his sister found no reason to regret her exchange from a formal pension in France, to the hall of her fathers in her native hills. They had neighbours, though distant ones; and when these were assembled under their fragrant birches in summer, or round their bright ingle in winter, the light-hearted song, or the graver legend, beguiled and cheered the hours.

Both brother and sister were young and agreeable; Annie had her admirers, and the laird his pretty favourites; but neither of them felt any greater solicitude to please, than was just sufficient to give them a useful stimulus in society.

Nearly twelve months glided gently away in such habits : after that, an extraordinary change took place.

Colonel Ferguson's spirits suddenly clouded ; his habits of living altered ; he became silent and thoughtful : abstracted in the company which occasionally resorted to the castle, yet taking long and frequent journeys, professedly to visit absent friends, from whose society he returned quite as sad and serious as he went.

The laird frequently spent whole weeks far up in the Highlands, in solitary hunting, inhabiting a wretched Shealing, where the deer he killed, and the water fetched from a mountain spring, were his sole refreshments : of course he lost his good looks, while under the influence of this strange humour. Annie Ferguson marked the changes in him, and watched the increase of his melancholy, with a timid concern, which at first feared to express

itself: but at length, unable to control her feelings, she gave them way; pathetically beseeching him to tell her what lay heavy on his mind.

As her brother, so taxed, persisted in ascribing the change to her fancy, or, perhaps, to a little weariness in a course of life so different from the stir of camps to which he had been used, she tenderly persuaded him to let her invite a friend she highly valued, on a long visit to the castle; intimating, that such an inmate was now essential to her own distressed spirits. Colonel Ferguson, though with rather an ill grace, consented to this, and Miss Mackay was written to. Shortly afterwards she arrived in Glenrowan.

This young lady was an orphan, and being a few years older than Annie Ferguson, with a small fortune entirely in her own hands, was free to go whither she would.

Miss Mackay was not a beautiful woman ; but she had fine eyes, and a particularly graceful figure, and her face had an expression in it, which once looked on, the eye loved to return to : it was bright, intelligent, and gladdening ; her temper was actively, not passively amicable ; her habits of thought cheerful ; and her conversation had that perpetual playfulness which extends over serious subjects, without seeking to take from their importance.

Such qualities only, are precious in a home companion : but Miss Mackay had yet higher ones, fitting her for yet higher purposes.

She was endowed with peculiar strength of mind, clearness of judgment, and firmness of resolution. While she beheld her softer and less mentally gifted friend weep over the laird's altered spirits, this judicious young lady set herself to study