

ALEXIS WILLIBALD

WALLADMOR,
VOL. I (OF 2)

Willibald Alexis
Walladmor, Vol. I (of 2)

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*Walladmor: And Now Freely Translated from the German into English. In
Two Volumes. Vol. I.:*

Содержание

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| ADVERTISEMENT | 5 |
| DEDICATION | 8 |
| DEDICATION TO SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART | 14 |
| CHAPTER I | 19 |
| CHAPTER II | 31 |
| CHAPTER III | 45 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 46 |

**Thomas De Quincey
Walladmor: And Now
Freely Translated from
the German into English.
In Two Volumes. Vol. I**

My root is earthed; and I, a desolate branch,
Left scattered in the highway of the world,
Trod under foot, that might have been a column
Mainly supporting our demolished house.

-Massinger.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE READER

The following novel was originally produced in the German language, as a *soi disant* translation from Sir Walter Scott, to meet the demands of the last Easter fair at Leipsic.

In Germany, from the extreme difficulties and slowness of communication between remote parts of the country, it would be altogether impossible to effect the publication of books, upon the vast scale of the current German literature, without some such general rendezvous and place of depot and exchange as the Leipsic fair presents to the dispersed members of the publishing body. By means of this fair (which is held half-yearly-at Easter and Michaelmas) a connexion is established between the remotest points of the German continent-which, in a literary¹ sense, comprehends many parts of Europe that politically are wholly distinct from Germany. The publishers of Vienna, Trieste, and Munich, here meet with those of Hamburgh and Dresden, of Berlin and Königsburg: Copenhagen and Stockholm send their representatives: and the booksellers of

¹ Many literary men of Russia, Denmark, &c write indifferently in their native or the German languages.

Warsaw and even of Moscow are brought into direct contact with the agents of the foreign booksellers in London.

Hence, as may be supposed, it is an object of much importance that all books, which found any part of their interest upon their novelty, should be brought out at this time: and something or other is generally looked for from the pen of every popular writer as a means of giving zest and seasoning to the heavy Mess-Catalog. If it happens therefore upon any account that an author fails to meet these expectations of the Leipsic fair, – obliging persons are often at hand who step forward as his proxy by forging something in his name. This pleasant hoax it was at length judged convenient to practise upon the author of *Waverley*; the Easter fair offering a favourable opportunity for such an attempt, from the circumstance of there being just then no acknowledged novel in the market from the pen of that writer which was sufficiently recent to gratify the wishes of the fair or to throw suspicion upon the pretensions of the hoaxer. These pretensions, it is asserted, for some time passed unquestioned; and the good people of Germany, as we are assured, were universally duped. A work, produced to the German public and circulated with success under such assumptions, must naturally excite some curiosity in this country; to gratify which it has been judged proper to translate it.

It may be as well to add that the name "*Walladmor*" is accented upon the first syllable, and *not* upon the penultimate, by the German author; who may reasonably be allowed to dictate

the pronunciation of names invented by himself.

DEDICATION

TO

W-s, the German 'Translator' of Walladmor

SIR,

Having some intention of speaking rather freely of you and your German 'Translation' in a postscript to the second volume of my English one-I am shy of sending a presentation copy to Berlin: neither you, nor your publisher, Herr Herbig, might relish all that I may take it into my head to say. Yet, as books sometimes travel far, – if you should ever happen to meet with mine knocking about the world in Germany, I would wish you to know that I have endeavoured to make you what amends I could for any little affront which I meditate in that Postscript by dedicating my English translation to yourself.

You will be surprised to observe that your three corpulent German volumes have collapsed into two English ones of rather consumptive appearance. The English climate, you see, does not agree with them: and they have lost flesh as rapidly as Captain le Harnois in Chapter the Eighth. The truth is this: on examining

your ship, I found that the dry rot had got into her: she might answer the helm pretty well in your milder waters; but I was convinced that upon our stormy English seas she would founder, unless I flung overboard part of her heavy ballast, and cut away some of her middle timbers, which (I assure you) were mere touchwood. I did so; and she righted in a moment: and now, that I have driven a few new bolts into her-'calked' her-and 'payed' her, I am in hopes she will prove sea-worthy for a voyage or so.

We have a story in England, rather trite here, and a sort of philosophic common-place, like Buridan's 'Ass between two bundles of hay,' but possibly unknown in Germany: and, as it is pertinent to the case between ourselves, I will tell it: the more so, as it involves a metaphysical question; and such questions, you know, go up to you people in Germany from all parts of Europe as to "the courts above." – Sir John Cutler had a pair of silk stockings: which stockings his housekeeper Dolly continually darned for the term of three years with *worsted*: at the end of which term the last faint gleam of silk had finally vanished, and Sir John's *silk* stockings were found in their old age absolutely to have degenerated into *worsted* stockings. Now upon this a question arose among the metaphysicians-whether Sir John's stockings retained (or, if not, at what precise period they lost) their "personal identity." The moralists also were anxious to know whether Sir John's stockings could be considered the same "accountable" stockings from first to last. And the lawyers put the same question in another shape by asking-whether any felony,

which Sir John's stockings could be supposed to have committed in youth, might lawfully be the subject of an indictment against Sir John's stockings when superannuated: whether a legacy, left to the stockings in the second year, could be claimed by the stockings at the end of the third: and whether the worsted stockings could be sued for the debts of the silk stockings. – Some such question, I conceive, will arise upon your account of St. David's Day, as darned by myself.

But here, My good Sir, stop a moment: I must not have you interpret the precedent of Sir John and Dolly too strictly: Sir John's stockings were originally of silk, and darned with worsted: but don't conceit *that* to be the case here. No, no, my good Sir; – I flatter myself the case between us is just the other way: your *worsted* stockings it is that I have darned with silk: and the relations, which I and Dolly bear to you and Sir John, are precisely inverted.

What could induce you to dress good St. David in an old threadbare coat, it passes my skill to guess: it is enough that I am sure it would give general disgust; and therefore I have not only made him a present of a new coat, but have also put a little embroidery upon it. And I really think I shall astonish the good folks in Merionethshire by my account of that saint's festival. In my young days I wandered much in that beautiful shire and other shires which he contiguous: and many a kind thing was done to me in poor men's cottages which to my dying day I shall never be able to repay individually: hence, as occasions offer, I would

seek to make my acknowledgments generally to the county. Upon Penmorfa sands I once had an interesting adventure, and I have accordingly commemorated Penmorfa. To the little town of Machynleth I am indebted for various hospitalities: and I think they will acknowledge that they are indebted to me exclusively for their mayor and corporation. And there are others in that neighbourhood that, when they read of St. David's day, will hardly know whether they are standing on their head or their heels. As to the Bishop of Bangor of those days, I owed his lordship no particular favor: and I have here taken my vengeance on that see for ever by making it do suit and service to the house of Walladmor.

But enough of St. David's day. There are some other little changes which I have been obliged to make in deference to the taste of this country. In the case of Captain le Harnois it appears to me that, from imperfect knowledge of the English language, you have confounded the words 'sailor' and 'tailor'; for you make the Captain talk exactly like the latter. There is however a great deal of difference in the habits of the two animals according to our English natural histories: and I have therefore slightly retouched the Captain, and curled his whiskers. I have also taken the liberty, in the seventh chapter, of curing Miss Walladmor of an hysterical affection: what purpose it answered, I believe you would find it hard to say: and I am sure she has enough to bear without that.

Your geography, let me tell you, was none of the best: and I

have repaired it myself. It was in fact a damaged lot. Something the public will bear: topographical sins dwindle into peccadilloes in a romance; and no candid people look very sharply after the hydrography of a novel. But still it did strike me—that the case of a man's swimming on his back from Bristol to the Isle of Anglesea, was more than the most indulgent public would bear. They would not stand it, Sir, I was convinced. Besides, it would have exposed me to attacks from Mr. Barrow of the Admiralty, in the Quarterly Review: especially as I had taken liberties with Mr. Croker in a note. — Your chronology was almost equally out of order: but I put *that* into the hands of an eminent watchmaker; and he assures me that he has 'regulated' it, and will warrant its now going as true as the Horse Guards'.

Well, to conclude: I am not quite sure but we ought to be angry at your taking these sort of hoaxing liberties with our literati; and I don't know but some of us will be making reprisals. What should you say to it in Germany if one of these days for example you were to receive a large parcel by the '*post-wagen*' containing Posthumous Works of Mr. Kant. I won't swear but I shall make up such a parcel myself: and, if I should, I bet you any thing you choose that I hoax the great Bavarian professor² with a treatise on the "Categorical Imperative," and "The last words of Mr. Kant on Transcendental Apperception." — Look about you, therefore, my gay fellows in Germany: for, if I live, you shall not have all

² Mr. Schelling: for whom however, without any joke at all, I profess the very highest respect.

the hoaxing to yourselves.

Meantime, "mine dear Sare," could you not translate me back again into German; and darn me as I have darned you? But you must not "sweat" me down in the same ratio that I have "sweated" you: for, if you do that, I fear that my "dimensions will become invisible to any thick sight" in Germany; and I shall "present no mark" to the critical enemy. Darn me into two portly volumes: and then I give you my word of honor that I will again translate you into English, and darn you in such grand style that, if Dolly and Professor Kant were both to rise from the dead, Dolly should grow jealous of me-and Kant confess himself more puzzled on the matter of personal identity by the final Walladmor than ever he had been by the Cutlerian stockings.

Jusqu'au revoir! my dear principal: hoping that you will soon invest me with that character in relation to yourself; and sign, as it is now *my* turn to sign,

Your obedient

(but not quite faithful),

TRANSLATOR.

DEDICATION TO SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART

Sir, – Uncommon it may certainly be, but surely not a thing quite unheard of, that a translator should dedicate his translation to the author of the original work: and, the translation here offered to your notice-being, as the writer flatters himself, by no means a *common one*, – he is the more encouraged to take this very uncommon liberty.

Ah Sir Walter! – did you but know to what straits the poor German translator of Walter-Scottish novels is reduced, you would pardon greater liberties than this. *Ecoutez*. First of all, comes the bookseller and cheapens a translator in the very cheapest market of translation-jobbers that can be supposed likely to do any justice to the work. Next, – the sheets, dripping wet as they arrive by every post from the Edinburgh press, must be translated just as they stand with or without sense or connexion. Nay it happens not unfrequently that, if a sheet should chance to end with one or two syllables of an unfinished word, we are obliged to translate this first instalment of a future meaning; and, by the time the next sheet arrives with the syllables in arrear, we first learn into what confounded scrapes we have fallen by guessing and translating at hap-hazard. *Nomina sunt odiosa*: else-but I shall content myself with reminding

the public of the well-known and sad mishap that occurred in the translation of Kenilworth. In another instance the sheet unfortunately closed thus: – "*to save himself from these disasters, he became an agent of Smith-*;" and we all translated—"um sich aus diesen trübseligkeiten zu erretten, wurde er Agent bei einem Schmiedemeister;" that is, "*he became foreman to a blacksmith.*" Now sad it is to tell what followed: we had dashed at it, and waited in trembling hope for the result: next morning's post arrived, and showed that all Germany had been basely betrayed by a catch-word of Mr. Constable's. For the next sheet took up the imperfect and embryo catch-word thus: – "*field matches, or marriages contracted fur the sake of money,*" and the whole Gasman sentence should have been repaired and put to rights as follows: "Er negocirte, um sich aufzuhelfen, die sogenannten Smithfields heirathen oder Ehen, welche des Gewinnstes wegen geschlossen werden: " I say, it *should* have been: but woe is me! it was too late: the translated sheet had been already printed off with the blacksmith in it (lord confound him!); and the blacksmith is there to this day, and cannot be ejected.

You see, Sir Walter, into what "sloughs of despond" we German translators fall-with the sad necessity of dragging your honor after us. Yet this is but a part of the general woe. When you hear in every bookseller's shop throughout Germany one unanimous complaint of the non-purchasing public and of those great profit-absorbing whirlpools, the circulating libraries, – in short all possible causes of diminished sale on the one hand; and

on the other hand the forestalling spirit of competition among the translation-jobbers, bidding over each other's heads as at an auction, where the translation is knocked down to him that will contract for bringing his wares soonest to market; – hearing all this, Sir Walter, you will perceive that our old German proverb "*Eile mit Weile*," (i.e. *Festina lente*, or *the more haste, the less speed*) must in this case, where *haste* happens to be the one great qualification and *sine-quâ-non* of a translator, be thrown altogether into the shade by that other proverb—"Wer zuerst kommt mahlt zuerst" (*First come first served*).

I for my part, that I might not lie so wholly at the mercy of this tyrant-*Haste*, struck out a fresh path-in which you, Sir, were so obliging as to assist me. But see what new troubles arise out of this to the unhappy translator. The world pretends to doubt whether the novel is really yours:³ people actually begin to talk of your friend Washington Irving as the author, and God knows whom beside. As if any man, poets out of the question, could be

³ Oh! spirit of modern scepticism, to what shocking results art thou leading us! Already have Lycurgus, Romulus, Numa, &c. been resolved into mere allegorized ideas. And a learned friend has undertaken to prove, within the next 50 years, according to the best rules of modern *scepsis*, that no such banker as Mr. Rothschild ever existed; that the word *Rothschild* in fact was nothing more than a symbolic expression for a habit of advancing loans at the beginning of the 19th century: which indeed the word itself indicates, if reduced to its roots. I should not be surprized to hear that some man had undertaken to demonstrate the non-existence of Sir Walter Scott: already there are symptoms abroad: for the mysterious author of *Waverley* has in our own days been detected in the persons of so many poets and historians the most opposite to each other, that by this time his personality must have been evaporated and volatilized into a whole synod of men. -*Note of the Dedicator.*

supposed capable of an act of self-sacrifice so severe as that of writing a romance in 3 vols. under the name of a friend.

All this tends to drive us translators to utter despair. However I, in my garret, comfort myself by exclaiming "Odi profanum-," if I cannot altogether subjoin-"et arceo." From your obliging disposition, Sir Walter, I anticipate the gratification of a few lines by the next post establishing the authenticity of Walladmor. Should these lines even not be duly certified "coram notario duobusque testibus," yet if transmitted through the embassy-they will sufficiently attest their own legitimacy as well as that of your youngest child Walladmor.

Notwithstanding what I have said about *haste*, I fear that haste has played me a trick here and there. The fact is-we are in dread of three simultaneous translations of Walladmor from three different publishers: and you will hardly believe how much the anxiety lest another translation should get the start of us can shake the stoutest of translating hearts. The names of Lindau-Methusalem Müller-Dr. Spieker-Von Halem-and Loz⁴ sound awfully in the ears of us gentlemen of the trade. And now, alas! as many more are crowding into this Quinquvirate.

Should it happen that the recent versions of your works had not entirely satisfied your judgment, and that mine of Walladmor *had*, – I would in that case esteem myself greatly flattered by your *again* sending me through the house of B- a copy of the

⁴ Names of persons who have translated one or more of Sir Walter Scott's novels into German.

manuscript of your next romance; in provision for which case I do here by anticipation acknowledge my obligations to you; and in due form of law bind myself over:

1. To the making good all expenses of "copy," &c.;
2. To the translation of both prose and verse according to the best of my poor abilities; that your eminent name may not fall into discredit through the translator's incompetence;
3. To all possible affection, friendship, respect, &c. in so far as you yourself shall be pleased to accept of any or all of these from

The German Translator of Walladmor.

CHAPTER I

As when a dolphin and a sele are met
In the wide champion of the ocean plaine,
With cruell chaufe their courages they whet,
The maysterdome of each by force to gaine,
And dreadfull battaile twixt them do darraine;
They snuf, they snort, they bounce, they rage, they rore,
That all: the sea, disturbed with their traine,
Doth frie with fome above the surges hore:
Such was betwixt these two the troublesome uprore.

Faerie Queene. — B. v. C. ii.

Perhaps the reader may still remember the following article in the Times newspaper, which about a year or two ago raised a powerful interest on the Welch coast.

"Carnarvon. — Yesterday the inhabitants of this city were witnesses to a grand but afflicting spectacle from the highlands of the coast. The steam-vessel, Halcyon, from the Isle of Wight, and bound to the north coast of Wales, was suddenly in mid-channel-when not a breath of wind ruffled the surface of the sea-driven into our bay. Scarcely had she rounded the point of Harlech when we beheld a column of smoke rising; and in a moment after a dreadful report, echoing from the mountains, made known that the powder magazine was blown up, and the

ship shattered into fragments. The barks, which crowded to the spot from all quarters, found nothing but floating spars; and were soon compelled to return by the coming-on of a dreadful hurricane. Of the whole crew, and of sixty passengers (chiefly English people returning from France), not one is saved. It is said that a very atrocious criminal was on board the Halcyon. We look with the utmost anxiety for the details of this melancholy event."

To the grief of several noble families in England, this account was confirmed in its most dreadful circumstances. Some days after the bodies of Lord W-, and of Sir O- (that distinguished ornament for so long a period of the House of Commons), were found upon the rocks. So much were they disfigured, that it was with difficulty they were recognized.

On that day there stood upon the deck of the Halcyon a young man, who gazed on the distant coasts of Wales apparently with deep emotion. From this reverie he was suddenly roused as the ship whirled round with a hideous heaving. He turned, as did all the other passengers who had been attracted on deck by the beauty of the evening, to the man at the helm. He was in the act of stretching out his arms to the centre of the ship, whence a cloud of smoke was billowing upwards in voluminous surges: the passengers turned pale: the sailors began to swear: "It's all over!" they shouted: "old Davy has us. So huzza! let's have some sport as long as he leaves us any day-light." Amidst an uproar of voices the majority of the crew rushed below; stove in the brandy-casks; drank every thing they could find; and paid no sort of regard to

the clamorous outcries of the passengers for help! help! except that here and there a voice replied-Help? There *is* no help: Old Nick will swallow us all; so let *us* swallow a little comfort first.

The master of the vessel, who retained most presence of mind, hurried on deck. With his sabre he made a cut at the ropes which suspended the boat: and, as he passed Bertram, the young man already mentioned (who in preparation for the approaching catastrophe had buckled about his person a small portmanteau and stood ready to leap into the boat), with a blow of his fist he struck him overboard. All this was the work of a minute.

Scarcely had the young man been swept to a little distance by a wave, when the ship blew up with a tremendous crash. The shattered ruins were carried aloft to an immense elevation: Bertram was stunned by the explosion: and, upon recovering his senses, he saw no object upon the surface of the waters: the ship had vanished; and nothing remained but a few spars floating in the offing.

Urgent distress throws us back upon our real and unfanciful wants. In the peril of the moment Bertram forgot all the prospects, sad or gay-painful or flattering, which had occupied his thoughts on board the ship; and exerted his utmost force to swim through the tumbling billows to a barrel at a little distance which appeared and disappeared at intervals, sometimes riding aloft, and sometimes hidden by the waves. At the moment when his powers began to fail him, he succeeded in reaching the barrel. – But scarcely had he laid hold of the outermost rim with

both hands, when the barrel was swayed down from the opposite side. A shipwrecked man, whose long wet hair streamed down over his face, fixed his nails, as it were the talons of a vulture, on the hoops of the barrel; and by the energy of his gripe-it seemed as though he would have pressed them through the wood itself. – He was aware of his competitor: and he shook his head wildly to clear the hair out of his eyes-and opened his lips, which displayed his teeth pressed firmly together.

"No: though the d-l himself, – thou must down into the sea: for the barrel will not support both."

So speaking he shook the barrel with such force-that the young man, had he not been struggling with death, would have been pushed under water. Both pulled at the barrel for some minutes, without either succeeding in hoisting himself upon it. – In any further contest they seemed likely to endanger themselves or to sink together with the cask. They agreed therefore to an armistice. Each kept his hold by his right hand, – each raised his left aloft, and shouted for succour. But they shouted in vain; for the storm advanced, as if it heard and were summoned by the cry; the sky was black and portentously lurid; thunder now began to roll; and the waves, which had hardly moved before the explosion, raised their heads crested with foam more turbulently at every instant. "It is in vain," said the second man; "Heaven and Earth are against us: one or both must perish: Messmate, shall we go down together?"

At these words the wild devil all at once left loose of the

barrel; by which means the other, who had not anticipated this movement, lost his balance, and was sinking. His antagonist made use of his opportunity. He dashed at the sinking man's throat-in order to drag him entirely under the water; but he caught only his neck-handkerchief, which luckily gave way. The other thus murderously assaulted, on finding himself at liberty for an instant, used his time, and sprang upon the barrel; and just as his desperate enemy was hazarding a new attack, in a death struggle he struck him with his clenched fist upon the breast; the wild man threw up his arms; groaned; sank back; – and the waves swallowed him up.

In the moments of mortal agony and conflict human laws cease, for punishments have lost their terrors; even higher laws are then silent. But, in the pauses of the struggle, the voice of conscience resumes its power, – and the heart of man again relents. As Bertram went rocking over the waves numbed in body and exhausted in spirits, all about him hideous gloom, and the fitful flashes of lightning serving but to light up the great world of terrors-this inner voice was not so silenced but that he felt a pang of sorrow at the thought of having destroyed the partner of his misfortunes. A few minutes however had scarcely passed before he heard a groaning near him. Happily at this instant a flash of lightning illuminated the surrounding tract of water; and he descried his antagonist still fighting with the waves: he was holding by a spar too weak to support his weight, but capable of assisting him in swimming. His powers were apparently failing

him, as he looked up to his more fortunate enemy: He stretched out his hand to him, and said:

"Stranger! show me this pity. All is over with me; or in a moment will be: should you have a happier fate, take from my pocket-book this letter-and convey it to the lady. Oh! if thou hast ever loved, I beseech thee to do this: tell her that I never ceased to think of her-that I thought of her only when I was at the point of death: and, whatsoever I may have been to man, that to her I have been most faithful." With frantic efforts he strove to unclasp his pocket-book: but could not succeed. Bertram was deeply touched by the pallid and ghastly countenance of the man (in whose features however there was a wild and licentious expression which could not be mistaken); and he said to him:

"Friend below, if I should have better luck, I will endeavour to execute your commission. Meantime I can swim; and I have now rested myself. Give me your hand. You may come aloft; and I will take a turn in the waters until I am tired. In this way, by taking turn about, possibly both of us may be saved."

"What!" cried the other-"are you crazy? Or are there really men upon this earth such as books describe?"

"No matter: " said Bertram, "give me your hand; and spring up. I will catch at the barrel when I feel weak."

The other grasped the outstretched hand; and, supporting himself for a few moments upon his elbows, gradually ascended the barrel. Bertram, on his part, resigning the portmanteau to his companion, slipped off into the waves.

Meanwhile the storm continued, and the natural darkness of night was now blended with the darkness of tempest. After some minutes, the man, who was at present in possession of the barrel, began thus:

"You fool, below there, are you still alive?"

"Yes: but I am faint, and would wish to catch hold of the barrel again."

"Catch away then: – Do you know any thing of the sea hereabouts?"

"No: it was the first time in my life that I was ever on shipboard."

The other laughed. "You don't know it? Well! now I *do*: and I can tell you this: there's no manner of use in our plaguing ourselves, and spending the last strength we have in keeping ourselves afloat. I know this same sea as well as I know my own country: and I am satisfied that no deliverance is possible. There is not a spot of shore that we can reach—not a point of rock big enough for a sea-mew; and the only question for us is—whether we shall enter the fishes' maw alive or dead."

"It is still possible," said the other—"that some human brother may come to our assistance."

The other laughed again and said—"Human brother, eh? Methinks, my friend, you should be rather young in this world of ours—and have no great acquaintance with master *man*: I know the animal: and you may take my word for it, that, on such a night as this, no soul will venture out to sea. What man of sense indeed

would hazard his life—for a couple of ragamuffins like you and me? and suppose he would, who knows but that it might be worse to fall into the hands of some *men of sense* than into the tender mercies of the sea? But I know a trick worth two of that."

"Tell it then."

"Let us leave fooling: This cask, on which I sit, to my knowledge contains rum; or arrack; which is as good. We can easily knock a hole in it; then make ourselves happy and bouzy-fling our arms about each other like brothers, and go down together to the bottom: after *that*, I think we shall neither trouble nor be troubled; for we shall hardly come up again, if we go down groggy."

"Shocking? why that's suicide!"

"Well! is your conscience so delicate and scrupulous? However as *you* please: for any thing I care, and as you like it better, some dog of a fish may do for us what we might as well have done for ourselves. But now come aloft, my darling. I'll take my turn at swimming—as long as the state of things will allow it; and wait for you below." They changed situations. — But even upon the barrel, Bertram began to feel his powers sinking. He clung as firmly as he could. But the storm grew more and more terrific: and many times he felt faint in his wild descents from the summit of some mounting wave into the yawning chasm below: Nature is benign even in the midst of her terrors: and, when horrors have been accumulated till man can bear no more, then his sufferings are relieved for a time by insensibility. On

awakening it is true that the horrors will return; but the heart has gained fresh strength to support them.

So it fared with Bertram, who continued to grow fainter and fainter; until at length in the midst of silent prayer he finally lost all consciousness.

When Bertram next awoke from his fainting fit, he heard the sea no longer thundering about him, and no longer felt himself tossing upon its waves. There was darkness around him, but not the darkness of that mighty night which the elements in uproar form. What first met his eyes was the obscure outline of a rude hut. For a long time he stared without consciousness upon the rafters of the ceiling, on which fish and ragged aprons were hung up to dry, and swinging to and fro in the current of air. This monotonous motion, which under other circumstances might have lulled him to sleep like the ticking of a clock, gradually awoke him to entire consciousness. The awful scene, which had just passed over him, came up to his mind in sudden contrast with that bright moment on the deck of the *Halcyon* in which he had first beheld the coasts of Wales lying in sunshine before him; and his thoughts soon took a coherent arrangement; though he could not yet make out the connexion between the barrel on which he had navigated the ocean and his present bed, nor between that fearful night abroad and the dried herrings and patched aprons which now dangled above him. These thoughts however gave way at this moment to anxiety about his portmanteau. This to his great satisfaction he found beneath his head; and he now turned his

attention to the other objects about him.

The cottage was of that humble order which in this kingdom are found only at the extremities of the Scotch Highlands, and tenanted by a race of paupers who gain a scanty subsistence from the limpits and other marine products which they take at low water. The frame-work of the hovel was rudely put together of undressed pine-boughs: the walls were a mixed composition of clay, turf, sea-weed, muscle-shells, and flints: timbers had been laid for the main-beams of a ceiling; but they were not connected by joists, nor covered in; so that the view was left open to the summit of the roof, which being composed of sedge and moss allowed a passage to the wind and rain. In the little room were hanging all kinds of utensils, but in so confused an arrangement and in so dubious a light that Bertram could make out but little of what he saw. The sole light in the hut proceeded from a fire in the corner. But this fire was so sparingly fed, that it seldom blazed up or shot forth a tongue of flame except when a draught of wind swept through; which however happened pretty often. The smoke escaped much less through the chimney than through the chinks of the wall; enveloping every object in a dusky shade, and deepening the gloom. Perfect silence reigned in the house; and no living creature appeared to be present. But once, when the fire happened to shoot forth a livelier gleam, the clouds of smoke parted and discovered a female countenance-old, and with striking features, and fixing a pair of large dark-grey eyes upon a pan or cauldron which hung over the fire. Sometimes,

when a cloud of vapour arose from the pan, and collected in a corner into fantastic wreaths, she pursued it with her eyes, and a smile played over her withered cheeks: but, when it dispersed or escaped through the chinks, a low muttering and sometimes a moaning might be distinguished. She had, as Bertram observed, a spinning-wheel between her feet: but busy as her hands seemed, and mechanically in motion, it was evident that she did little or no work. At intervals she sang: but what she sang was more like a low muttered chaunt, than a regular song: at least Bertram understood not a word of it, if words they were that escaped her.

After one of these chaunts, the old woman rose suddenly from her seat, wrung her hands, seemed to trace strange circles in the air, and then scattered some substance into the fire which raised a sudden burst of flames that curled over the cauldron, lit up the house for a few moments, and then roaring up the chimney left all in greater darkness than before. During these few moments however Bertram had time to observe the whole appearance of the woman with some distinctness. She seemed to have the stature of a well-grown man; but her flesh had fallen away so remarkably that the red frieze gown which she wore hung in loose folds about her. Much as Bertram was shocked at first by the spectacle of her harsh bony lineaments, her fiery eye, and her grey disheveled hair, – he yet perceived in her face the traces of former beauty. She raised her bony arms, as if in supplication, to that quarter of the room where Bertram was lying: he perceived however that it was not himself, but some object near him which

drew her attention. To his great alarm he now discovered close to himself a chair—the only one in the room, — and sitting upon it some motionless figure in the attitude of a living man. The old woman stretched out her hands with more and more earnestness to this object, as though she looked for some sign from it: but, receiving none, she struck her hands violently together; in a transport of rage upset the spinning-wheel; and fell back into her seat. If Bertram had at first felt compassion on witnessing the expressions of her grief and the anguish of her expectation, this feeling was soon put to flight by the frantic explosion of anger which followed. So great was his consternation that he resolved to attempt escaping unobserved from the cottage; and he first hoped to recover his full self-possession when he should find himself at liberty and in the open air. With this intention, it may be readily imagined how much his consternation was increased on finding himself unable to stir either hand or foot. His head even moved with difficulty: and it seemed as though no faculty had been left unaffected but that of eye-sight, which served but to torment him by bringing before him this scene of terror. He could almost have wished to exchange his present situation for his recent exposure to the fury of the elements. He attempted to sleep; but found himself unable; and after the lapse of two long hours he heard a knocking at the door.

CHAPTER II

Tit. Fear her not, Lucius; somewhat doth she mean:
Canst thou not guess wherefore she plies thee thus?

Boy. My Lord, I know not, I; nor can I guess;
Unless some fit or frenzy do possess her:
For I have heard my grandsire say full often,
Extremity of griefs would make men mad:
And I have read that Hecuba of Troy
Ran mad through sorrow: that made me to fear.

Tit. Andron.-Act. iv.

The knocking grew louder and louder; but the old woman answered not a word; on the contrary she seemed only the more earnestly intent on her spinning. At length a little rustling was heard; by some artifice the door was unbolted from the outside; and somebody stepped in. Even then the old woman did not stir from her seat; and the man who had entered, flinging down a heap of old drift wood, opened the conversation himself:

"What's the matter now, mother, that you keep me so long waiting?"

"Waiting!" retorted the old woman without raising her eyes from her wheel, "*you* waiting! – Humph! A pretty waiting *I* should have, if I were to wait on every idle fellow that knocks."

"Aye, mother; but think of the weather and the frost that-

"The frost? I tell thee what-a bonnier lad than thou, and one that I loved better far, lies frozen in his grave."

"Well, here's a brave load of wood! I gathered it on the beach."

"Wood! aye, ragged fragments! There's many such drifting about in this world."

"Like enough, mother: and, ragged as they are, there's many a bold fellow with rags on his back that would be glad to warm his hands over them."

"There's one in his grave will never warm himself again." And here the old woman began to mutter her unintelligible songs.

"So! – the old crooning!" said the young man to himself: and, going up to the fire, he said-"Mother, you mind nothing: you've no thought for any of us; and one of these days you'll be doing something or other that will bring the police rats upon us: and then all's up; and we shall all go to the old tree."

"To the tree? go, and welcome! And I'll go with you. All the tribe of you is not worth a hair of *him* that I knew once. And when the day comes that some are outside and knocking at the door that *shall* knock (well I wot) one of these days, – and all you are hushed and trembling within, and the proudest of you shaking at the knees, – then comes my time for laughing: and I will open the door, and cry-Here they are!"

The young man muttered something to himself, pushed aside the cauldron, and laid on some faggots and dry wood, – so that the rude hovel was suddenly illuminated with splendour.

"Aye!" said the old woman, "best make a beacon-fire, and light all the constables up hither!"

"Well, better be hanged than freeze! – But, mother-mother, where's the warm broth for the poor perishing soul when he wakes?"

"What!" said the old woman angrily, "shall I go down on my knees, and tend him like a son of my own? Well I remember the day (woe is me!) that they all scoffed at me when I moaned for one that was *not* a stranger: as God's my help, I'll be no laughing-stock again: it's my turn to laugh next."

"But Nicholas, mother-it's Nicholas that bids us tend him; and our souls are pledged for the stranger's."

"Nicholas! eh? Oh! yes, bonny Nicholas! And *his* soul is in pledge too. The old one has had him once by the head: and for that time he let him go: but he *has* him for all that: the noose is fast; and there's no sheers will ever cut *that* noose."

Without paying any further regard to her words, the young man filled a kettle with water and placed it on the fire: then, shaking the old woman's arm-as if to rouse her (like a child) into some attention to his words-he said to her earnestly:

"Mother Gillie, now boil the sea-man's drink of thyme, ground-ivy, pepper, ginger, honey, brandy, and all that belongs to it-you know how: make it, as you make it for ship-wrecked folk; and give it every hour to the poor soul there: and remember this-mother Gillie's life answers for his."

Like a child that has been told to do something under pain of

punishment, the old woman answered-"Aye, aye; thyme, ground-ivy, pepper, ginger" – and went about her work. The young man then came up to the bed; and, laying his hands on Bertram, said-

"Ah, poor soul! he'll never be warm again: the sea has broke over him too roughly; but no matter: mother Gillie must brew the drink, if the man were a corpse; for Nicholas has said it. – Well, mother, God bless you! and another time when a Christian and one of us knocks at the door on a winter's night, sing out-*Come in!* and, if he should chance to be cold and thirsty, give him a glass of brandy; and think now and then that a living man is made of flesh as well as bones."

"Whither away then, Tom? To Grace, I'll warrant-the wench that has snared thee, and carries thee away from all thy kinsfolk."

"No: I must be gone to the castle; for Sir Morgan hunts in the morning."

"Ah! *that* Sir Morgan! *that* Sir Morgan! He wheedles thee, Tom; and to serve him thou leavest thy old mother. He and the young lady, and that lass Grace build houses for thee; but a mother's curse will pull them down."

"Mother, the baronet is my good friend: his father gave mine the oat-field by the shore: his grandfather saved mine from death in Canada: and the Walladmors have still been good masters; and we have still been faithful servants: and, let the white hats say what they will, – them that the quality calls radicals, – my notion is that people should stick to their old masters, and be true to them; and that's best for both sides."

"Go, get thee gone to thy boat, – falsehearted lad; snakes will rear their heads out of the water, and seize on him that honoureth not his parents and that forgetteth his brother!"

Without shewing the least displeasure at these angry words, Tom took his leave; and the old woman now addressed herself in good earnest to the task of preparing the cordial for the young stranger. He meantime had gradually recovered his entire self-possession; and from the conversation between mother and son, most of which he understood, he had drawn conclusions which tended more and more to alarm him at his total loss of power over his limbs. From the expressions of the old woman, which marked an entire indifference about him, he anticipated that she would be apt to mistake his apparent want of animation for a real one; and busied himself with all the horrors which such an error might occasion. But he was mistaken. The old woman followed the directions of her son to the letter. When her preparations were finished, a pleasant odour began to diffuse itself over the house; she drew near to the sick stranger; and rubbed his breast with a handful of the liquor. Almost immediately he felt the genial effects: the muscles of his face relaxed; he breathed more freely; his lips opened; and she poured a few spoonfuls of the cordial down his throat. Then wrapping him up in blankets, she raised him with a strength like that of a stout man rather than of an aged woman, and laid him down by the fire-side. Here the cordial, combined with previous exhaustion and agitation, and the genial warmth of the fire, soon threw him into a profound

sleep. He slept as powerless as a child that is rocked by its nurse, lulled by the unintelligible songs which the old woman continued to murmur to her spinning-wheel-and which still echoed through his dreams, though they had lost their power to alarm him.

Some hours he had slumbered, when he suddenly awoke to perfect consciousness and (what gave him still greater satisfaction) to the entire command of his limbs. He unswathed himself from his blankets; stood upright on his feet; and felt a lively sense of power and freedom as he was once more able to stretch out his arms and legs. In the house all was silent. The fire upon the hearth was glimmering with a sullen glow of red light; and it appeared to be about day-break; window there was none; but through a sort of narrow loop-hole penetrated a grey beam of early light. This however lent no aspect of cheerfulness to the hut. On the contrary, the ruddy blaze of a fire had given a more human and habitable (though at the same time more picturesque) air to a dwelling which seemed expressly contrived to shut out the sun and the revelations of day light. – Looking round, he observed that the old woman was asleep: he drew near and touched her: she did not however awaken under the firmest pressure of his hand; but still in dreams continued at intervals to mutter, and to croon snatches of old songs.

An instinctive feeling convinced Bertram that he was a prisoner, and that it would be advisable for him to quit the hut clandestinely: this purpose he prepared to execute as speedily as possible. Without delay he caught up his portmanteau and

advanced to the door. It cost him no great trouble to find the bolts, and to draw them without noise. But, on opening the door and shutting it behind him, he found himself in fresh perplexity; for on all sides he was surrounded by precipitous banks of earth, and the faint light of early dawn descended as into a vault through a perforated ceiling. However he discovered in one corner a rude ladder, by means of which he mounted aloft, and now found that the roof of this vault consisted of overarching eglantine, thorn bushes, furze, and a thick growth of weeds and tangled underwood. From this he soon disengaged himself: turning round and finding that the hut had totally disappeared from sight, he now perceived that the main body of the building was concealed in a sort of cleft or small deserted quarry, whilst its roof, irregularly covered over with mosses and wild plants, was sufficiently harmonized with the surrounding brakes, and in some places actually interlaced with them, effectually to prevent all suspicion of human neighbourhood. At this moment a slight covering of snow assisted the disguise: and in summer time a thicket of wild cherry trees, woven into a sort of fortification by an undergrowth of nettles, brambles, and thorns, sufficiently protected the spot from the scrutiny of the curious.

Having wound his way through these perplexities, he found his labour rewarded; for at a little distance before him lay the main ocean. He stood upon the summit of a shingly declivity which was slippery from the recent storm, and intersected by numerous channels; so that he was obliged in his descent to catch

hold of the bushes to save himself from falling. The sea was still agitated; the sky was covered with scattered clouds; and in the eastern quarter the sun was just in the act of rising, – not however in majestic serenity, but blood-red and invested with a pomp of clouds, which reflected from their iron-grey the dull ruddy colors of the sun.

"When the sun rises red," said Bertram, "it foreshows stormy weather. Have I then not had storms enough in this life?" – He looked down upon the sea, and saw the waves as they rolled to shore bringing with them spars, sails, cordage, &c., which either dashed to pieces against the rocks, or by the reflux of the waves were carried back into the sea.

"Strange!" said he, "what has with difficulty escaped the sea-after struggling fruitlessly for preservation-is destroyed in a moment or carried back into the scene of its conflicts. Is not this the image of my own lot? With what mysterious yearning did I long for England! All the difficulties which threatened me on the Continent I surmounted-only to struggle for my life as I came within view of the English shores, to witness the barbarizing effects upon human kindness of death approaching in its terrors, and at last perhaps to find myself a helpless outcast summoned again to face some new perils."

He still felt the effects of his late exhaustion; and, sitting down upon a large stone, he threw his eyes over the steely surface of the sea. Looking upwards again, – he was shocked at beholding a few paces from him the tall erect person of his hostess. She stood

upon a point of rock with her back to the sun, and intercepting his orb from Bertram, so that her grey hair streaming upon the wind, her red cloak which seemed to be *set* as it were in the solar radiance, and the lower part of her figure, which was strongly relieved upon the tremulous surface of the sea, gave to her a more than usually wild and unearthly appearance. Bertram shuddered as before a fiend; whilst the old woman, by whose side crept a large wolf-dog, said with an air of authority:

"So then I see the old proverb is true—*Save a drowning man, and beware of an adders sting*. But I have power: and can punish the thankless heart. So rise, traitor, and back to the house."

Bertram felt himself too much reduced in spirits, and too little acquainted with the neighbourhood, to contest the point at present: he considered besides that he was really indebted to her for attentions and hospitality; and was unwilling to appear in the light of a thankless guest. In this feeling he surrendered himself to her guidance; but to gratify his curiosity he said—

"Good mother, I owe you much for my recovery: but who is it that I must thank for my deliverance from the water? I was lying upon a barrel, at the mercy of the waves. I lost my senses; and on recovering I find myself with you, and know not how, or by whose compassion."

"What then? You'll never be a hair the drier for knowing *that*."

"But, mother, I had a companion in my misfortunes; was he saved along with me; or have the waves parted us for ever?"

"Never trouble yourself about that: *you* are saved; that's news

enough for one day: – if the other fellow is drowned all the better for him; he'll not need hanging." Here the old woman laughed scornfully, and sang a song of which the burthen was

High is the gallows, the ocean is deep;
One aloft, one below: how sound is their sleep!

Bertram now descended again into the hovel: and, finding that the old woman would answer no more questions, he stretched himself upon his bed; and throughout the day resigned himself to the rest which his late exhaustion had rendered necessary.

From a slumber, into which he had fallen towards evening, he was awaked by a gentle pressure upon his arm. He unclosed his eyes for one moment, but shut them again immediately under the dazzling glare of a resinous torch which the old woman held. In his present situation he thought it best to dissemble; and therefore kept his eyes half closed, peering at the same time from beneath his eye-lids and watching the old woman's motions. She was kneeling by the side of his bed: with her left hand she raised aloft a torch; with her right she had raised a corner of the blanket and was in the act of examining his left arm, having stripped his shirt sleeve above his elbow, and appearing at this moment to be in anxious search of some spot or mark of recognition. Her whole attitude and action betrayed a feverish agitation: her dark eyes flashed with savage fire and seemed as though straining out of their sockets: and Bertram observed that she trembled-

a circumstance which strikingly contrasted with the whole of her former deportment, which had discovered a firmness and intrepidity very alien to her sex and age. Presuming that her guest was asleep, the old woman now transferred her examination to his right arm, which lay doubled beneath his body, and which she endeavoured gently to draw out. Not succeeding in this, she made an effort to turn him completely over. To this effort however, without exactly knowing why, Bertram opposed all the resistance which he could without discovering that he was awake: and the old woman, unless she would rouse him up-which probably was not within her intention, found herself obliged to desist. Her failure however seemed but to increase the fiendish delirium which possessed her. She snatched a blazing pine-bough from the fire; stepped into the centre of the room; and, waving her torch in fantastic circles about her head, began a solemn chaunt in a language unknown to Bertram-at first low and deep-but gradually swelling into bolder intonations. Towards the end the song became more rapid and impetuous; and at last it terminated in a sort of wild shriek. Keeping her eyes fixed upon Bertram, as if to remark the effect of her song upon him, the old woman prepared to repeat it: but just at this moment was heard the sound of voices approaching. A wild hubbub succeeded of wrangling, laughing, swearing, from the side on which Bertram had ascended the ladder; and directly after a clamorous summons of knocking, pushing, drumming, kicking, at the door. The aged hostess, faithful to her custom, laid down her pine-brand on the

hearth; arranged the blanket again; and seated herself quietly without taking any notice of the noise. Only, whilst she turned her spinning-wheel, she sang in an under voice-

He, that knocks so loud, must knock once and again:
Knock soft and low, or ye knock in vain.

Mean time the clamorers without contrived to admit themselves, as the young man had done before, but did not take the delay so patiently. It was a company of five or six stout men, any of whom (to judge by their appearance) a traveller would not have been ambitious of meeting in a lonely situation. The general air of their costume was that of sea-faring men; close, short jackets; long, roomy, slops; and coloured handkerchiefs tied loosely about the neck, and depending in long flaps below the breast. A fisherman's hat, with large slouched brim, was drawn down so as nearly to conceal the face; all wore side-arms; and some had pistols in their belts. In colours their dress presented no air of national distinction: for the most part it seemed to be composed of a coarse sacking-originally gray, but disfigured by every variety of stains blended and mottled by rain and salt water.

Bertram could discover no marks of rank or precedency amongst these men, as they passed him one by one, each turning aside to throw a searching glance on the apparently sleeping stranger. As they advanced to the old woman, they began to scold her: so at least Bertram gathered from their looks, gestures,

and angry tones; for they spoke in a language with which he was wholly unacquainted. She, whom they addressed, however seemed tolerably familiarized to this mode of salutation; for she neither betrayed any discomposure in her answers, nor ever honoured them by raising her eyes to their faces, but tranquilly pursued her labours at the spinning-wheel. It was pretty evident that the aged woman exercised a very remarkable influence and some degree of authority over these rough seamen. She allowed them to run on with their peal of angry complaint; and, as soon as the volley was over, she started up to her feet with an authoritative air-and uttered a few words which, interpreted by such gestures as hers, would have been understood by a deaf man as words of command that looked for no disobedience.

The men muttered, swore a little, and cursed a little; and then sitting down in any order and place, just as every man happened to find a seat, made preparations for a meal such as circumstances allowed. Broth was simmering on the fire: from various baskets were produced bread-ship-biscuit-and brandy; dried haddock and sprats were taken down from the chimney; fresh herrings were boiling; and in no long space of time the whole wealth of the hut, together with no small addition imported by the new-comers, seemed in a fair way of extinction. Bertram felt violently irritated by appetite to jump up and join the banqueters: for this was the second night since his shipwreck, and he was beginning to recover from his fatigues. But doubts and irresolution checked him; and a misgiving that this was not the most favourable

moment for such an experiment; especially as he perceived that he himself was the subject of general conversation. Without relaxing in their genial labours, the men showed sufficiently by their looks and gestures that they were deliberating on some question connected with himself. The old woman now and then interposed a word; and the name of Nicholas, as Bertram remarked, was often repeated by all parties. Some person of this name continued to occupy the conversation an hour longer. Frequently it happened that one or other of the company uttered an oath in English or Dutch, and seemed disposed to pursue the conversation in one of those languages; but in such cases the old woman never failed to check him either by signs or in her own language which was wholly unintelligible to Bertram: so that of the entire conversation he could make out nothing more than that it related to himself. After the lapse of about an hour, the whole party retired; and the hut was again restored to its former solitude and quiet.

CHAPTER III

This loller here wol prechen us somewhat.
"Nay by my father's soule, that shal be nat,"
Saydé the Shipman, "here shal be nat preche;
He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche:
We leven all in the gret God, quod he.
He woldé sowen som difficultee,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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