

and elfins has had its source among the grey boulders of a bare moor.<sup>1</sup> 'Giant's Stone,' 'Giant's Grave,' 'Auld Wives' Lift,' 'Witches' Stepping Stanes,' 'Warlock's Burdens,' 'Hell Stanes,' and similar epithets, are common all over the Lowland counties, and mark where, to the people of an older time, the singularity of these blocks proved them to be the handiwork, not of any mere natural agent, but of the active and sometimes malevolent spirits of another world. Nor need this popular belief be in any measure a matter of surprise. For truly, even to a geological eye, which has been looking at the same phenomenon for years, each fresh

<sup>1</sup> In wandering over the south of Scotland I have met with some curious traditions and beliefs of this kind. The following was told me on the spot by an intelligent native of the village of Carnwath. Before farming operations were there carried to the extent to which they have now arrived, large boulders, now mostly removed, were scattered so abundantly over the mossy tract between the river Clyde and the Yelping Craig, about two miles to the east, that one place was known familiarly as 'Hell Stanes Gate' [road], and another 'Hell Stanes Loan.' The traditional story runs that the stones were brought by supernatural agency from the Yelping Craigs. Michael Scott and the Devil, it appears, had entered into a compact with a band of witches to dam back the Clyde. It was one of the conditions of such agreements that the name of the Supreme Being should never on any account be mentioned. All went well for a while, some of the stronger spirits having brought their burden of boulders to within a few yards from the river, when one of the younger members of the company, staggering under the weight of a huge block of greenstone, exclaimed, 'O Lord! but I'm tired.' Instantly every boulder tumbled to the ground, nor could witch, warlock, or devil move a single stone one yard farther. And there the blocks lay for many a long century, until the rapacious farmers quarried them away for dykes and road-metal.

Another explanation of a somewhat different kind was given by a stonemason among the Garrick Hills, who, on being asked how he imagined that the hundreds of granite boulders in that district came to lie where they do, took a little time to reply, and at last gravely remarked that he 'fancied when the Almichty flang the warld out, He maun hae putten thae stanes upon her to keep her steady.'