

placency than humiliation. One of the last pieces of work upon which he was engaged was a gorgeously painted ceiling in the palace of some Irish bishop, which he had been sent all the way from Glasgow to finish.

Every society, however homely, has its picturesque points, nor did even that of the rather commonplace hamlet in which I resided at this time wholly want them. There was a decaying cottage a few doors away, that had for its inmate a cross-tempered old crone, who strove hard to set up as a witch, but broke down from sheer want of the necessary capital. She had been one of the underground workers of Niddry in her time; and, being as little intelligent as most of the other collier-women of the neighborhood, she had not the necessary witch-lore to adapt her pretensions to the capacity of belief which obtained in the district. And so the general estimate formed regarding her was that to which our landlady occasionally gave expression. "Donnart auld bodie," Peggy used to say; "though she threaps hersel' a witch, she's nae mair witch than I am; she's only just trying, in her feckless auld age, to make folk stand in her reverence." Old Alie was, however, a curiosity in her way,—quite malignant enough to be a real witch, and fitted, if, with a few more advantages of acquirement, she had been antedated an age or two, to become as hopeful a candidate for a tar-barrel as most of her class. Her next door neighbor was also an old woman, and well-nigh as poor as the crone; but she was an easy-tempered, genial sort of person, who wished harm to no one; and the expression of content that dwelt on her round fresh face, which, after the wear of more than seventy winters, still retained its modicum of color, contrasted strongly with the fierce wretchedness that gleamed from the sharp and sallow features of the witch. It was evident that the two old women, though placed externally in almost the same circumstances, had essentially a very different lot assigned to them, and enjoyed existence in a very unequal degree. The placid old woman kept a solitary lodger,—“Davie the apprentice,”—a wayward, eccentric lad, much about my own age, though in