

“What hae ye done to Jock Watson, Donald?” was the eager query put to him, on his coming up, by half a dozen voices at once.

“Ask Tam Polson there,” said the old man. “I tapped at Jock’s window as I passed, and found he had set out wi’ Tam half an hour afore daybreak.”

“Oh,” said Tam, “it was poor murdered Jock Watson’s ghaist we saw; it was Jock’s ghaist.” And so he divulged the whole story.

The British Linen Company had been established in Edinburgh about the year 1746, chiefly with a view, as the name implies, of forwarding the interests of the linen trade; and in a few years after, Mr. Forsyth, whose character as an active and successful man of business was beginning to be appreciated in more than the north of Scotland, was chosen as the Company’s agent for that extensive tract of country which intervenes between the Pentland Frith and the Frith of Beauly. The linen trade was better suited at this time to the state of the country and the previously-acquired habits of the people than any other could have been. All the linens worn in Scotland, with the exception, perhaps, of some French cambrics, were of home manufacture. Every female was skilled in spinning, and every little hamlet had its weaver, who, if less a master of his profession than some of the weavers of our manufacturing towns in the present day, was as decidedly superior to our provincial weavers. A knowledge of what may be termed the higher departments of the craft was spread more equally over the country than now; and, as is always the case before the minuter subdivisions of labor take place, if less could be produced by the trade as a body, the average ability ranked higher in individuals. In establishing the linen trade, therefore, as the skill essential to carrying it on