

## V.

# THE LYKEWAKE.

### CHAPTER I.

Why start at Death? Where is he?

Death arrived, is past; not come or gone, he's never here.

YOUNG.

I KNOW no place where one may be brought acquainted with the more credulous beliefs of our forefathers at a less expense of inquiry and exertion than in a country lykewake. The house of mourning is naturally a place of sombre thoughts and ghostly associations. There is something, too, in the very presence and appearance of death that leads one to think of the place and state of the dead. Cowper has finely said that the man and the beast who stand together side by side on the same hill-top, are, notwithstanding their proximity, the denizens of very different worlds. And I have felt the remark to apply still more strongly when sitting beside the dead. The world of intellect and feeling in which we ourselves are, and of which the lower propensities of our nature form a province, may be regarded as including, in part at least, that world of passion and instinct in which the brute lives; and we have but to analyze and abstract a little, to form for ourselves ideas of this latter world from even our own experi-