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IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.



The land of Lorne

Sturla Pórdáronson



THE LAND OF LORNE.





ARTORNISH CASTLE.

THE LAND OF LORNE,

INCLUDING THE CRUISE OF THE "*TERN*"
TO THE OUTER HEBRIDES.

BY
ROBERT BUCHANAN.



IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.



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TO
Her Royal Highness
THE PRINCESS LOUISE
THESE PICTURES OF HER FUTURE HOME
IN THE HEBRIDES
ARE
(WITH HER ROYAL HIGHNESS'S EXPRESS PERMISSION)
INSCRIBED,
ON THE OCCASION OF HER MARRIAGE,
BY THE AUTHOR.

January, 1871.

PREFATORY NOTE.



A SMALL portion of the 'Cruise of the *Tern*' has appeared in print before, though in a very imperfect shape; all the rest of the present work is now published for the first time. The pictures of life and scenery, such as they are, speak for themselves and appeal more or less to everybody; but the narrative of the *Tern's* cruise may have a special interest for yachtsmen, as showing what a very small craft can do with proper management. The *Tern*, I believe, was the smallest craft of the kind that ever ventured round the point of Ardnamurchan and thence to Ultima Thule, or the Outer Hebrides; but there is no reason whatever why other tiny yachts should

not follow suit, and venture out to the wilds. To any sportsman desirous of such an expedition, and able to stand rough accommodation and wild weather, I can promise glorious amusement, just faintly spiced with a delightful sense of danger, sometimes more fanciful than real, frequently much more real than fanciful.

R. B.

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THE LAND OF LORNE.

“ A Land of Rainbows spanning glens whose walls,
Rock-built, are hung with many-coloured mists ;
Of far-stretched Meres whose salt flood never rests—
Of tuneful Caves and playful Waterfalls—
Of Mountains varying momentarily their crests.
Proud be this Land ! whose poorest huts are halls
Where Fancy entertains becoming guests ;
While native song the heroic past recalls.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE LAND OF LORNE.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE TO PRINCESS LOUISE.

The Author's Wedding Gift—The present Work—Sentiment and its Uses—The Highland Population—Sketch of the Land Question — Tacksmen — Crofters — Emigration—Evictions—Remedies proposed—Present Destitution—Character of the Hebrideans—Nature of the present Work—The Land of Lorne.

AT a time when the air is full of rejoicings and congratulations, when gift after gift is brought to the palace by great and small, when England is preparing for one of her best beloved daughters a Golden Slipper instead of the conventional Old Shoe, may one who never touched the robe of royalty before, and who prefers the free air of the moor and hillside to all the splendours of courts and brilliant cities,

may I, a semi-barbarian, the half-civilized striker of a Celtic harp, offer to Your Royal Highness *my* little wedding present—"a poor thing, but mine own"—a bit of artistic work, wrought slowly and patiently, summer and winter, indoors and out of doors, amid the wildly beautiful landscape which lies on the very threshold of your future Home? Turning over its leaves, you will find dimly foreshadowed there, as in a set of painted pictures, scenes and faces with which you will doubtless soon be familiar—glimpses of a beauty which will speedily expand around you in its full natural glory and incommunicable mystery—forms of life which will pass before you in all their quaint tenderness, till you learn to esteem them, and to hold human nature dearer for their sake. True, there is much in these pages which a Princess may find wearisome; for I cannot expect Your Royal Highness to be interested in our mere personal adventures by flood and field, our so-called "hair-breadth escapes," our sporting raids and wanderings. I have worked in my own fashion, following the moods of my own mind; and it is my fond hope that the affection I bear for what I paint may communi-

cate itself to Your Royal Highness, as well as to the public at large. If I might choose a motto of my own for the gift, it would be this—"How little do mortals know of the wonders lying at their own thresholds!"—so true is it that travellers and tourists, all sorts of Englishmen, are better acquainted with Teneriffe or Patagonia than they are with our own Hebrides. This year, at any rate, Lorne and the Isles will be popular, much frequented, and fashionable; and even that is something, though not much. I myself had visited them again and again as a mere tourist, long before I dwelt in their midst, and learnt to know and love them. That Your Royal Highness will love them too, and quite as passionately, I do not doubt; for if you stay among them, and see them in the quiet daily light of their own loveliness, as I have seen them, love is inevitable. The wondrous landscape is there: the consecration and the gleam will come.

Day after day, as you sit in your Highland home, the Sea will be near you, with a voice like the Voice of God, saying audibly,

"The One remains, the Many change and pass."

Even in the short and sunny experience of Your

Royal Highness, crowns have fallen, dynasties have perished, the mighty have been hurled to the earth, the lowly exalted to heaven ; and day after day you have been taught to believe that there is only One True King, before whom all human princes are as the mere creatures of a dream. There are some souls whom all such admonition cannot move, and who can sit by the Ocean unconscious of its great voices. There are some souls who would willingly persuade Your Royal Highness that life is a brilliant picture, and that to be æsthetic is to fulfil all human obligations. There are some souls who, when I speak to you of human beings hungering at your feet, and of waste wildernesses consecrated to the beasts, will tell Your Royal Highness that I am talking "sentiment." But let me conjure you, in your dawn of life, to rise superior to the tone of English aristocracy, and dare to be emotional, now and always. Some years ago a leading English peer, a man of great ability and generosity, said to me, "Do you think the English public *care* for sentiment?" and I knew that, like others of his class, he was distinguishing between sentiment and passion.

May I say to Your Royal Highness, as I said to that peer, that the English public, so far from neglecting sentiment, were only just beginning to recognise its practical uses; that they already desiderated it as a necessary ingredient in all their leading politicians; that Mr. Gladstone was full of it, and used it as an agent, precisely as a man of science uses his imagination; that sentiment created the Irish Church Bill, and Mr. Forster's Education Bill; that, in a word, sentiment, though called by a thousand other names—sentiment, the emotional perception of the rights of others, the tender recognition of the divine law of human relationship—is fast being recognised as a moral obligation, and the time is not far distant when ethics will be openly acknowledged as a distinct branch of political economy? But sentiment is not enough. The man of science imagines; but verification must follow. The man of sentiment feels; but he also must verify. Many wrongs are imaginary, and many sufferings; but because we are deceived, because there are false sores in the world, and treacherous grievances, and lying miseries, let us never be foolish enough to condemn sentiment on that

account. As well might a man of science cease to imagine, because in six cases out of twelve he failed to verify. May Your Royal Highness never forget for a moment, whatever disappointments may come to you, whatever reason you seem to have for distrusting human nature, that the heart, not the intellect, is the lord of life, and that the sufferings of humanity are a great fact.

Having said so much, need I fear to say that this book is full of sentiment? It is not my place—I am not qualified—to enter into an elaborate examination of the state of the Highland population. While I believe this people to be sorely wronged, I admit that it would be difficult to save them from their inevitable fate. It is the old story—absenteeism, overseerism, all the other “isms,” all the other evils which the interested classes cloak in vain, and which venal or purblind writers vainly deny. What good of raising my weak voice against the iniquity and torpor of generations—of crying the truth aloud, and being howled down by every soul that power can intimidate or money can buy? But I will say to Your Royal Highness, because you are humane,

that things take place daily in these islands pitiful as the state of things in Kentucky, ere yet the black curse of slavery was taken from that great land of the future across the Atlantic—that there exists here, if not the name and law of slavery, at least slavery itself—that the home is laid waste here, the poor family driven to all the corners of the earth, the children starved, the ignorant man cheated out of the very crust he is raising to his lips. These people are called lazy and unenterprising; so they may be, for they know too well that, with their system of land tenure, no amount of exertion would much ameliorate their condition—that, let them improve their little scrap of land as they may, they are liable to be ejected at any moment to serve the interest or caprice of their landlord or his agents—that 50 per cent. has been sometimes realised on kelp paid by them as equivalent for rent—that, in short, they are entirely at the mercy of the great owners of the soil. I do not say that this is a complete statement of the difficulty, and that the great landlords could heal the old sore, even if they pleased; but I assert that not half is done

that might be done, and that famine, disease, and death are the daily consequence.

A short sketch of the state of the Hebrides, founded solely on the official reports, may be acceptable to Your Royal Highness. The inhabitants are chiefly persons who hold land directly from the proprietor, and they may be divided into three classes: (1) "Crofters," constituting the great majority of the population, and holding land without lease, at rents not exceeding £20 a year; (2) "Tacksmen," holding land under tacks or leases, at rents generally exceeding £50, and sometimes several hundreds a year; (3) "Tenants," a class intermediate between the "crofters" and "tacksmen," holding land without leases at rents of from £20 to £50 a year. There is, besides these classes who hold land directly of the owner, a fourth class, called "cottars," numerous in some parishes and districts, who either hold no land or hold it from year to year as sub-tenants. These, with the "crofters," are the great mass of people. The number of persons not in some way connected with the cultivation of land is small, consisting of proprietors, clergy, professional men, innkeepers,

shopkeepers, and tradesmen. There are no manufactures, except a little knitting, nor have any ever been, except that of kelp, which for some years has been almost entirely abandoned. The cottar, unless he be a tradesman, which is seldom the case, is wholly dependent on the wages of labour or the profits of fishing.

Until after the middle of the last century the land appears to have been occupied exclusively by tacksmen, generally the kinsmen or dependents of the proprietor, with sub-tenants holding of the tacksmen, and joint tenants holding farms in common, each with a defined share. About that date, many of the farms held by tacksmen seem to have been taken directly from the proprietor by joint tenants, who grazed their stock upon the pasture in common, and tilled the arable land in "run-rig," that is, in alternate "rigs" or ridges, distributed annually. Since the commencement of this century the arable land has, in most cases, been divided among the joint tenants or crofters, in separate portions, the pasture remaining as formerly in common. The first effect of this division into sepa-

rate crofts was a great increase of produce, so that districts which had formerly imported food now became self-supporting. But evils followed which had not been foreseen. So long as the farms were held in joint tenancy, there was a barrier to their farther subdivision which could rarely be overcome. But when each joint tenant received his own separate croft, this restraint for the most part ceased. The crofters, who had lived in hamlets or clusters of cottages, now generally established themselves on their crofts. "Their houses," says Sir John McNeill, who specially surveyed the Northern districts for Government in 1850, "erected by themselves, are of stone and earth, or clay. The only materials they purchase are the doors, and in most cases the rafters of the roof, on which are laid thin turf covered with thatch. The crofter's furniture consists of some rude bedsteads, a table, some stools, chests, and a few cooking utensils. At one end of the house, often entering by the same door, is the byre for his cattle; at the other, the barn for his crop. His fuel is the peat he cuts in the neighbouring moss, of which an allotted portion

is often attached to each croft. His capital consists of his cattle, his sheep, and perhaps one or more horses or ponies; of his crop, that is to feed him till next harvest, provide seed and winter provender for his animals; of his furniture, his implements, the rafters of his house, and generally a boat or share of a boat, nets, or other fishing gear, with some barrels of salt herrings, or bundles of dried cod or ling for winter use." As originally portioned out, at least in the islands, the crofts appear to have been quite sufficient to maintain the crofter's family and yield to the landlord his yearly rent. But when kelp was largely and profitably manufactured, when potatoes were extensively and successfully cultivated, when the fishings were good, and the prices of cattle were high, the crofter found that his croft was more than sufficient for his wants; and when a son or a daughter married he divided it with the young couple, who built themselves another house upon the ground, sharing the produce and contributing to the rent. Thus, many crofts which are entered on the landlord's rent-roll as in the hands of one man, are in fact occupied by two, three, or even in some cases

four families. On some estates, efforts were made to prevent this subdivision, but without much success. If the erection of a second house on the croft was forbidden, the married son or daughter was taken into the existing house; and though the land might not be formally divided, it was still required to support one or more additional families. It appears that attempts were made in some cases to put an end to this practice; "but it was found to involve so much apparent cruelty and injustice, and it was so revolting to the feelings of all concerned that children should be expelled from the houses of their parents, that the evil was submitted to, and still continues to exist." The population thus progressively increasing, received a still further stimulus from the kelp manufacture. This pursuit, which at one time yielded to the landlords as great a rent as they derived from the soil, required the labour of a great number of people for about six weeks or two months in each year; and as it was necessary to provide them with the means of living during the whole year, small crofts were assigned to many persons in situations favourable for the manufacture,

which, though not alone able to maintain a family, might, with the wages of the manufacturer, suffice for that end. When a change in the fiscal regulations destroyed this manufacture, the people engaged in it were thrown out of employment, and had they not been separated by habits and language from the majority of the population of the kingdom, they would no doubt have gradually dispersed and sought other occupations ; but having little intercourse with other districts, which were to them a foreign country, they clung to their native soil after the manufacture in which they had been engaged was abandoned. Their crops were then insufficient to afford them subsistence. Emigration somewhat retarded the increase of numbers, but the emigrants were the more prosperous of the "tenants" and "crofters," not the persons who had difficulty in supporting themselves at home. The proprietors, anxious to check the redundant population and to increase their rents, so materially reduced by the decay of the kelp manufacture, let the lands vacated by the emigrants to tacksmen, who were able, by their large capital and the new system of sheep-farming

to pay higher rents than the crofters could offer. These increased rents were at the same time collected at less cost, with less trouble, and with more certainty. The proprietors were thus led to take every opportunity of converting lands held by crofters into large farms for tacksmen, planting the displaced crofters on fishing crofts, and crofts on waste land.*

Now, according to a certain school of economists, of whom Your Royal Highness has doubtless heard, this growth of the sheep-farm at the expense of the croft has been an unmixed benefit; but I wish to assert firmly that that school is wrong. In the first place, the great sheep-farm system has by no means succeeded so well as was anticipated, and quite recently many Highland proprietors, notably the Duke of Sutherland, have been compelled to divide their land into smaller holdings. In the second place, the army of Great Britain has suffered incalculable loss through the change of the once thickly populated Highlands into a barren wilderness, well described by the poet:

* 'New Statistical Account of Scotland.'

“From Loch Hourne to Glenfinnan, the gray mountains ranging,
Nought falls on the eye but the changed and the changing!
From the hut by the loch-side, the farm by the river,
Macdonells and Camerons pass—and for ever.

“The flocks of a stranger the long glens are roaming,
Where a thousand fair homesteads smoked bonnie at gloaming;
Our wee crofts run wild wi’ the bracken and heather,
And our gables stand ruinous, bare to the weather!”

For generation after generation, the Highlands of Scotland have sent forth into the battle-field the finest soldiers in the world. The Celt wields a sword as naturally now as he did in the '45; and I am sure Your Royal Highness remembers how the pibroch brought joy to the ears of those who languished in Lucknow, and how the “thin red line” of Celts drove the Russians back at Balaclava. In these stormy days, when there may be need for fiery blood and strong arms at any moment, when no man knows to-day what thunderbolt may impend over this realm to-morrow, our hope, our strength, our very salvation, lie in the ranks of the peasantry—such a peasantry as should be this day thronging yonder hills, and looking for the Bridal.* Ah! Your Royal Highness

* The Island of Skye alone has sent forth, since the beginning of the last wars of the French Revolution, 21 lieutenant-generals

will not miss a welcome, be sure of that; but those who give it will be the small remnant of a race who have been almost exterminated, that London may get juicier mutton, and the wealthy shopkeeper butcher his fifty brace of grouse on the 12th of August.

So far, it may be urged, I am merely stating a grievance with which every one is acquainted, and suggesting no remedy. There is, indeed, no lack of remedies on paper; the great evil is that they are seldom or never put in practice. Let me briefly refer to a few of the suggestions that have been made. To begin with, the most important desideratum of all is, that leases should become general. At present very few of the small farmers of Scotland have leases. What is the consequence? As has been found to be the case in Ireland, so it is in the North. The uncertainty of tenure begets, in many instances, a sad

and major-generals, 48 lieutenant-colonels, 600 commissioned officers, 10,000 soldiers, 4 governors of colonies, 1 governor-general, 1 adjutant-general, 1 chief baron of England, and 1 judge of the Supreme Court of Scotland. I state this on the authority of Dr. Norman Macleod.

want of enterprise. Holdings are neglected, no permanent improvements, such as draining, fencing, and subsoiling, are entered upon ; and only those alterations are made which will at once repay the tenant for the time and money bestowed on them. A good authority has assured us that there are very few farms in the Highlands which have not more or less waste land attached to them ; it is but seldom, however, that this is brought under the plough. Disheartened and discouraged, the cottar is generally content to lead a hand-to-mouth existence ; and he exhausts the land in his endeavours to get the most from it with the least possible outlay. The granting of leases alone, however, is perhaps not enough to do away with this lamentable state of things. A fresh impetus would be given to the energy of the crofter if rewards were held out to encourage improvements. The Earl of Seafield has, I believe, taken a wise step in this direction, in offering to his tenants five pounds for every acre of waste land brought under cultivation during their lease. But the proprietor of an estate might even go further than this. He might, for example, with considerable advantage to

himself, advance money for the carrying out of improvements. If he were to do this, he would find that in most cases the tenant would be willing to give his labour for nothing, the materials being supplied. And even supposing that the land proprietor had not the capital at his disposal, and would have to borrow, it would still be good policy on his part to obtain it; for any Lands Improvements Company would lend him the required amount for twenty-five years, and the tenant would be always willing to pay almost an equal percentage with the borrower for the accommodation. Thus, therefore, the proprietor would obtain, for next to nothing, improvements which would permanently enhance the value of his estate. Such remedies as these are easily carried out, and the objections to them are soon answered. The assertion, for instance, so often made, that if leases were the rule, and not the exception, the occupiers of the soil would become more lazy and indolent than ever, knowing that they could evince these failings with impunity, can be met in a few words. Great care should be taken in the selection of tenants, and they should be forced, by strict

rules in their leases, to work their holdings properly, on pain of ejection.*

Because poverty and misery prevail to a large extent amongst the people, it has therefore been

* To discuss this question adequately would take a volume. As illustrating one of the great misfortunes of the Hebrides, I quote the following remarks by an excellent living authority :—

“In connection with Highland property, there exists a great evil, which lies at the root of many others—viz., the thirst in our landed aristocracy for the possession of a large extent of territory. They would seem to congratulate themselves upon being possessed of so many square miles of land, rather than the number of pounds sterling of revenue. The proprietor of an improvable Highland estate of £1000 a-year, has, perhaps, £30,000 in cash besides. Instead of laying out his money in improving this property, to yield a return of from five to seven per cent., he buys another estate, yielding at the most three per cent.; and of course, having exhausted his capital, he leaves both estates *in statu quo*. He thus loses half the revenue he might have, by his preference in this instance. The evils attending the prevailing disposition are not confined to the owners of the land, but extend to their tenants and dependents, and to the whole community. To this source may be traced much of the poverty and distress, and the heartrending ejections, of which we have seen and heard so much of late years in the Highlands. The recent alteration in the entail laws has already done much, and will yet do much more, by enabling embarrassed proprietors to dispose of part of their property, to their own relief and that of their dependents; and, at the same time, tending to remove the ‘dog in the manger’ system that has

assumed by some that the Highlands are overpopulated. No statement could be farther from the truth: the fact being, that considerably less than one-sixth of the country is under cultivation, and that the

existed, whereby a man could not himself turn his property to any account, neither was it in his power to hand it over to another who would.

“As a first principle in the management of land, the owner should have sufficient capital to work it, so to speak. We would esteem a man mad if he were to purchase a cotton-mill with all the capital of which he was possessed, having neither money nor credit with which to carry on the operations. But it is quite a common thing for a man to purchase an estate, although, instead of having surplus capital, he has even to borrow half the purchase price, at a considerably higher percentage than the property yields. It is no wonder then, that, where such a practice is prevalent, tales of distress and misery should occasionally reach our ears. When these things are heard of, it is loudly declared that the Highlands are unfit for cultivation, from the barrenness of the soil and the unfavourable climate—that the people should emigrate, and the country be turned into sheep-walks or deer-forests. These are the panaceas so often held out for the Highlands by professed friends of the people. Where, we would ask, is there destitution to be found on the estate of an intelligent, solvent, *resident* proprietor? We have no hesitation in saying that, if the land were treated like any other raw material, we could, by increasing the arable land, and improving its culture, double our present produce, and maintain a much larger population, and in greater comfort too.”

best muscle and sinew of the Isles continue to be expatriated while "howling wildernesses" in their fatherland are vainly calling for hands to come and till them. Certain it is that if the condition of the Scotch peasantry is to be improved, no barriers must be placed in the way of their acquiring land; their desire for it must be fostered and encouraged; they must be taught to grow corn where no corn grew before—in short, to reclaim the thousands and thousands of miles of waste territory in the Highlands. Emigration is unnecessary. Here at home the spade and plough are as sorely needed as in Canada, and there is no reason why immigrants should be better situated in that colony than they might be in the mother-country. There the land is not more easily worked; wages are practically no higher; the climate is not so good. If the landed gentry were not blind to their own interests, there would be "room and verge enough" for all, and longer rent-rolls and increased prosperity of the whole nation would be the result.

But the discussion of this question involves that of the whole enormous LAND QUESTION; and any

modern politician will tell Your Royal Highness how his confrères differ about that. The Duke of Argyll, for example, who will speak to Your Royal Highness with paternal authority, has done as much to depopulate the Highlands as any man living, and it would be false delicacy to conceal my impression that he, at least, is hopelessly and wilfully wrong, simply because he is too interested for dispassionate judgment. In a clever defence of the land-holders' policy, read before the Statistical Society, in reply to the (as many think) unanswerable criticism of Professor Leone Levi, the Duke argued—and it is the only one of his arguments worth quoting—that the great increase of rent in recent years proved increase of produce in proportion, and therefore increased prosperity. Now, the best way to test the noble Duke's assertion is, when Your Royal Highness goes to Inveraray, to inquire closely into the statistics of Argyll. Meantime let me observe, (1) that the population of Argyll is now considerably less than seventy years ago; (2) that the rent-roll of Argyll is two-thirds greater than either densely populated Ross or Inverness, and (3) that statistics

show Argyll to be the most miserable and pauperised county in all Scotland. In the face of this, the Duke recommends further depopulation, and doubtless, as a consequence, further pauperism. The truth is—and Your Royal Highness will soon know it as a truth—that the curse of the Highlands may be summed up in two words—“territorial monopoly.” Those counties which are under the few great proprietors and divided into great farms, those counties which are *not* divided into small holdings, are the most pauperised of all, Argyll heading the list of wretchedness, and Haddington making a close second. In simple truth, I cannot forbear expressing a wish that the Duke of Argyll, besides spending his leisure time in expounding to the literary world the wonders of Law in Nature (a task of beautiful exposition for which we all thank him), would ascertain more of the real state of the country to which he is bound by all ties of birth and affection. At present, he perhaps knows less of the real Scottish Highlands—of the country at his own threshold—than many other living Highlandmen. It is with pain indeed that I find him adding, as a secret pendant to his

most ambitious work, his belief that territorial monopoly is one of Nature's most wonderful and beautiful contrivances, and that there is no better example of the blessedness of the 'Reign of Law'—in other words, of the Divine fitness of things as primarily constituted by God—than the large rent-roll of the Duke of Argyll and the crying pauperism of the depopulated county of which he is the lord!

I need detain Your Royal Highness little longer save to say that, as may be guessed, destitution and pauperism prevail to a frightful extent everywhere. Doubtless you will soon become personally acquainted with the daily miseries of the islanders—cold, hunger, thirst, all the wretched accompaniments of poverty. Their food, when they get it, is unwholesome, and fearful diseases are the consequence. What, for example, does Your Royal Highness say to a daily diet of mussels and cockles, with no other variety than an occasional drink of milk from the ewe? But for the shellfish, hundreds in the remote islands would starve. When they do purchase oatmeal, or receive it in charity, it is generally the coarsest and foulest meal procurable in the market—the *best*

material used in its adulteration being Indian corn. Anything will do to export to the Hebrides — mildewed meal, rancid cheese, weevilled biscuits. You will hear the Highlanders called drunken ; but inquire of your informant how they manage to get the whisky. Heaven help them ! they would be healthier, in that terrible climate of theirs, if spirits were a little more common. Look at their feeble bodies, their emaciated and hungry faces, their skins cut by cold and pinched by disease. And yet, though all the powers of earth seem leagued against them, these people are as fresh and wholesome-hearted, as generous and guileless, as any men or women you will meet with in your earthly pilgrimage. They bear their great sufferings in patience, with scarcely a bitter word for any one. If they can just support life in themselves and their children, they are content—loving their neighbour, welcoming the stranger, praising God. Take the testimony of Mr. J. F. Campbell, who has known them all his life, but who is to be trusted less on that account than because he seems to possess rare patience and insight. “There are few peasants that

I think so highly of," he says; "none that I like so well. Scotch Highlanders have faults in plenty, but they have the bearing of Nature's own gentlemen—the delicate, natural tact which discovers, and the good taste which avoids, all that would hurt or offend a guest. The poorest is ever the readiest to share the best he has with the stranger. A kind word kindly meant is never thrown away; and whatever may be the faults of this people, I have never found a boor or a churl in a Highland bothy." To the same purpose writes Dr. Norman Macleod, in his large-hearted and beautiful book entitled 'A Highland Parish,' adding, moreover, that "the real Highland peasantry are, I hesitate not to affirm, the most intelligent in the world." To this testimony I add my own, and proof after proof will be adduced in the following pages. Of their deep spiritual life, too, I shall say something—something of the quaint thoughts and dreams with which they cheer their otherwise melancholy firesides. They are a race apart.

And now, after all this dismal recital, so necessary to my purpose, yet almost ungracious on a bridal

morning, will Your Royal Highness let me add one or two words about the present book—my little wedding present?

Your Royal Highness will speedily discover for yourself the fact, which I need scarcely explain, and for which I need not apologize, that I have not aimed in any way at the compilation of a guide-book, at cramming into small space either a great deal of useful information, or stale legendary matter, or topography. Whenever such matter is essential, I have given it in a note, to avoid padding the body of the text. To make a guide-book, I should have had to cover a great deal of ground rapidly, hurrying at express speed from one point of vantage to another. Such a task did not suit me. When a place pleases me, I like to linger in it till I have learnt to love it thoroughly; and love does not come in a day. Then again, I have carefully avoided, as far as possible, the route of ordinary tourists*—not

* Highland tourists usually follow the royal route of the inland chain of lakes, going by Glasgow through the Crinan Canal to Oban, and thence to Bannavie and Fort William. Many take the day's sail to Staffa and Iona, but few indeed think of going round Ardnamurchan to Skye and Stornoway. The ordi-

because I think their route less beautiful, but because I think my own route most new. I confess that I

nary route is very beautiful, the fleet of boats upon it magnificent in all respects; but the most wondrous scenery of the Hebrides remains a *terra incognita*. Many of the scenes described in our yachting cruise to the outer Isles might easily be reached from the ports touched at by the deep-sea steamers, which are splendid vessels, furnished with every comfort. Let me trust that every tourist who reads this book will at least visit Loch Corruisk, and cross the Minch to Stornoway. Corruisk, though so accessible, is comparatively neglected; it is nevertheless the most marvellous picture in the British Islands, and one of the scenic wonders of the world.

A word or two concerning the deep-sea steamers may be of service. The largest in the fleet are the *Clansman* and *Clydesdale*. These are strongly built for sea, broad in the beam, and with powerful engines. Both are fitted for carrying goods and passengers; and they can each make up fifty sleeping berths in separate cabins and on sofas. One of them, leaving Glasgow every Monday and Thursday, proceeds round the Mull of Cantyre, calls at Oban, Tobermory, Portree, and other places, their regular destination being Stornoway in the distant Lewis. They, however, make more extended calls beyond Stornoway; as, for example, Lochinver on the mainland, likewise Ullapool, and Gairloch in the western part of Ross-shire. Over this wide range they ply unitedly from March till November, and one alone plies once a week in winter. Twice a year, for the special accommodation of herring-fishers, they go round the north of Scotland to Thurso. Unless one were to visit the strangely indented west coast and islands, he could scarcely realise the

have aimed at novelty. Where I am descriptive I have unconsciously been poetical—indeed, any description of landscape that is not poetical must, for artistic reasons, be worthless and untrue; nor does poetical description interdict the most minute and loving observation of details. The whole work, indeed, may be relied on, so far as truth to Nature is concerned. There has been no “composing.”

The short tales and episodes speak for themselves. If they at all realise my own wishes, one of them should throw on the daily life, spiritual and temporal, of the islanders as much light as a volume of mere notes and descriptions. Your Royal Highness will like them in so far as they are true. You will like them none the less if you are already familiar with Mr. J. F. Campbell’s exquisite

importance of these voyages of the *Clansman* and *Clydesdale*, which, after passing Islay and Jura, pursue first a sinuous course through the Sound of Mull; then rounding the extremity of Ardnamurchan, enter that narrow and intricate channel between the mainland and Skye called the Sound of Sleat; lastly, issuing into the more open Minch, they take a route direct for Stornoway—throughout their long and devious course among the islands landing and taking in passengers and goods both day and night.

collection of 'West Highland Tales,' all taken verbatim from the mouths of the peasantry. Mr. Campbell throws real light on folk and fairy lore, while I try to throw the far less trustworthy light of imagination on the heart and its affections.

The Isles play a certain part in Scottish history, from the period of the Norwegian occupation down to that of the last wandering Stuart; but all these matters have been chronicled in bigger books than mine, and I shall scarcely touch upon them. I shall relate, however, for the sake of poetry and picture, the story of the Norwegian King Haco's great and last invasion—the one momentous historical event separable from the ordinary history of the Isles.

I have called my book 'The Land of Lorne,' including under that head not only the sea-board parishes of Lorne proper, but the outlying isles, from Mull to the Long Island. Lorne itself is, as it were, a little garden attached to the Castle of Inveraray, and the Hebrides are the surrounding domains. The Lord of the Isles and the Lord of Lorne were originally one, who held free sway over the whole tract of sea and land covered in Scott's 'Lord of

the Isles,' north to Skye, south to Loch Ranza; and the Campbell, in his turn, has held the soil of many of the Isles. In a word, the future home of Your Royal Highness is the Scottish Hebrides, every feature of which I am sure you will soon know by heart, instead of confining your vision to the view of Loch Fyne and a distant peep of the "Shepherds of Loch Etive;" and the future people of Your Royal Highness are the Hebrideans, not one of whom but will welcome you, whether it be his daily task to sow golden grain in the red furrows of Kilbride, or to herd cattle on the lonely heights of Mull, or to fish for cod and ling on the stormy bank between Canna and Rum. Everywhere you will send a gleam of hope, and in time, perhaps, the great owners of the soil will be reminded of their duty; we shall hear less sheep bleating and more human voices calling; the poor peasant will not be suffered to starve, with his eyes on the waste that might feed a thousand such as he; and there may rise up around you, in those same Hebrides, a race of men who, if ever dark times should come, will be as ready as in the old days to strike and die for the House of Lorne. How

much any one human soul, however feeble, can do to help his fellow-souls, if he only tries his best ! How much more can one do who is by birth a Princess, by nature a lady, and by education a Christian ! There is mode in all things, even in morality. If, in coming to your new home, Your Royal Highness make justice fashionable, it will not be long ere a psalm of joy will go up in your ears, and you will see the whole wilderness brighten with the happy faces of virtuous women and brave men.

CHAPTER II.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF LORNE.

The White House on the Hill—The Land of Lorne—First Impressions of Oban—The Celtic Workmen—Maclean, Mactavish, and Duncan of the Pipes—The Lords of Lorne and their Descendants—Battle between Bruce and John of Lorne—Dunollie Castle—Glorification of Mist and Rain—An Autumn Afternoon—Old Castles—Dunstaffnage.

WHEN he first came to dwell in Lorne, and roamed as is his wont up hill and down dale from dawn to sunset, the Wanderer (as the writer purposes to call himself in these pages, in order to get rid of the perkish and impertinent first person singular) soon grew weary of a landscape which seemed tame and colourless, of hills that, with one or two magnificent exceptions, seemed cold and unpicturesque. It was the spring-time moreover, and such a spring-time! Day after day the rain descended, sometimes

in a dreary "smurr," at others in a moaning torrent, and when the clouds did part the sun looked through with a dismal and fitful stare, like a face swollen with weeping. The conies were frisking everywhere, fancying it always twilight. The mountain loch overflowed its banks, while far beneath the surface the buds of the yellow lily were wildly struggling upward, and the over-fed burns roared day and night. Wherever one went, the farmer scowled, and the gamekeeper shook his head. Lorne seemed as weary as the Uists, *weary* but not *eerie*, and so without fascination. In a kind of dovecot perched on a hill, far from human habitation, the Wanderer dwelt and watched, while the gloomy gillie came and went, and the dogs howled from the rain-drenched kennel. The weasel bred at the very door, in some obscure corner of a drain, and the young weasels used to come fearlessly out on Sunday morning and play in the rain. Two hundred yards above the house was a mountain tarn, on the shores of which a desolate couple of teal were trying hard to hatch a brood; and all around the miserable grouse and grayhens were sitting like stones, drenched on their eggs,

hoping against hope. In the far distance, over a dreary sweep of marshes and pools, lay the little town of Oban, looking, when the mists cleared away a little, exactly like the woodcuts of the City of Destruction in popular editions of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Now and then, too, the figure of a certain genial Edinburgh Professor, with long white hair and flowing plaid, might be seen toiling upward to Doubting Castle, exactly like Christian on his pilgrimage, but carrying, instead of a bundle on his back, the whole of Homer's hexameters in his brain, set to such popular tunes as 'John Brown,' and 'Are ye sleepin', Maggie?' Few others had courage to climb so high, in weather so inclement; and wonderful to add, the Professor did not in the least share the newcomer's melancholy, but roundly vowed in good Doric that there was no sweeter spot in all the world than the "bonnie Land of Lorne."

The Wanderer was for a time sceptical, but as the days lengthened, and his eyes accommodated themselves to the new prospect, his scepticism changed into faith, his faith into enthusiasm, his enthusiasm into perfect love and passionate enjoyment.

The truth is that Lorne, even in the summer season, does not captivate at first sight, does not galvanise the senses with beauty and brightly stimulate the imagination. Glencoe lies beyond it, and Morven just skirts it, and the only great mountain is Cruachan. There is no portion of the landscape which may be described as "grand," in the same sense that Glen Sligachan and Glencoe are grand; no sheet of water solemnly beautiful as Corruisk; no strange lagoons like those of sea-surrounded Uist and Benbecula: for Lorne is fair and gentle, a green pastoral land, where the sheep bleat from a thousand hills, and the gray homestead stands in the midst of its own green fields, and the snug macadamised roads ramify in all directions to and from the tiny capital on the seaside, with the country carts bearing produce, the drouthy farmer trotting home at all hours on his sure-footed nag, and the stage-coach, swift and gay, wakening up the echoes in summer-time with the guard's cheery horn. There is greenness everywhere, even where the scenery is most wild—fine slopes of pasture alternating with the heather; and though want and squalor and uncleanness are to be found here

as in all other parts of the Highlands, comfortable homes abound. Standing on one of the high hills above Oban you see unfolded before you, as in a map, the whole of Lorne proper, with Ben Cruachan in the far distance closing the scene to the eastward, towering over the whole prospect in supreme height and beauty, and cutting the gray sky with his two red and rocky cones. At his feet, but invisible to you, sleeps Loch Awe, a mighty fresh-water lake, communicating through a turbulent river with the sea. Looking northward, taking the beautifully-wooded promontory of Dunollie for a foreground, you behold the great Firth of Lorne, with the green flat island of Lismore extended at the feet of the mountain region of Morven, and the waters creeping inland, southward of the Glencoe range, to form, first, the long narrow arm of Loch Etive, which stretches many miles inland close past the base of Cruachan, and, second, the winding basin of Loch Creran, which separates Lorne from Glencoe. Yonder to the west, straight across the Firth, lies Mull, separated from Morven by its gloomy Sound. Southward, the view is closed by a range of unshapely

hills, very green in colour and unpicturesque in form, at the feet of which, but invisible, is Loch Feochan, another arm of the sea, and beyond the mouth of this loch stretches the seaboard, with numberless outlying islets, as far as the lighthouse of Easdale and the island of Scarba. Between the landmarks thus slightly indicated stretches the district of Lorne, some forty miles in length and fifteen in breadth ; and, seen in clear bright weather, free from the shadow of the rain-cloud, its innumerable green slopes and cultivated hollows betoken at a glance its peaceful character. There is, we repeat, greenness everywhere, save on the tops of the highest hills—greenness in the valleys and on the hillsides, greenness of emerald brightness on the edges of the sea, greenness on the misty marshes. The purple heather is plentiful, too, its deep tints glorifying the scene from its pastoral monotony, but seldom tyrannising over the landscape. Abundant also are the signs of temporal prosperity—the wreaths of smoke arising everywhere from humble dwellings, the sheep and cattle crying on the hills, the fishing boats and trading vessels scattered on the

firth, the flocks of cattle and horses being driven on set days to the grass-market at Oban.

This same town of Oban, prettily situated along the skirts of a pleasant bay, and boasting a resident population of some two thousand inhabitants, has been fitly enough designated the "key of the Highlands;" since from its quaint quay, composed of the hulk of an old wreck, the splendid fleet of Highland steamers start for all parts of the western coast and adjacent islands. In summer-time a few visitors occupy the neat villas which ornament the western slopes above the town, and innumerable tourists, ever coming and going to the sharp ringing of the steamboat bell, lend quite a festive appearance to the little main street. As a tourist, the Wanderer first made the acquaintance of Oban and its people, and resided among them for some weeks, during which time there was a general conspiracy on the part of everybody to reduce him to bankruptcy: extortionate boatmen, grasping small tradesmen, greedy car-drivers, all regarding him as a lawful victim. He was lonely, and the gentle people took him in; he was helpless, and they did for him; until

at last he fled, vowing never to visit the place again. Fate, stronger than human will, interposed, and he became the tenant of the White House on the Hill. He arrived in the fallow season, before the swift boats begin to bring their stock of festive travellers, and found Oban plunged in funereal gloom—the tradesmen melancholy, the boatmen sad and unsuspecting, the hotel waiters depressed and servile instead of brisk and patronising. The grand waiter at the Great Western Hotel, one whom to see was to reverence, whose faintest smile was an honour, and who conferred a life-long obligation when he condescended to pour out your champagne, still lingered in the south, and the lesser waiters of the lesser hotels lingered afar with the great man. All was sad and weary, and at first, all looks were cold. But speedily the Wanderer discovered that the people of Oban regarded him with grateful affection. He was the first man who for no other reason than sheer love of silence and picturesqueness had come to reside among them “out of the season.” In a few weeks, he not only discovered that the extortioners of his former visit were no such harpies after all, but

poor devils anxious to get hay while the sun shone ; he found that these same extortioners were the merest scum of the town, the veriest froth, underneath which there existed the sediment of the real population, which for many mysterious reasons no mere tourist is ever suffered to behold. He found around him most of the Highland virtues—gentleness, hospitality, spirituality. No hand was stretched out to rob him now. Wherever he went there was a kind word from the men, and a courtesy from the women. The poor pale faces brightened, and he saw the sweet spirit looking forth, with that deep inner hunger which is ever marked on the Celtic physiognomy. Every day deepened his interest and increased his satisfaction. He knew now that he had come to a place where life ran fresh, and simple, and to a great extent unpolluted.

Not to make the picture too tender, let him add that he soon discovered for himself—what every one else discovers, sooner or later—that the majority of the town population was hopelessly lazy. There was no surplus energy anywhere, but there were some individuals who for sheer unhesitating, unblushing,

wholesale indolence, were certainly unapproachable on this side of Jamaica. It so happened that the Wanderer wanted a new wing added to the White House, and it was arranged with a "contractor," one Angus Maclean, that it should be erected at a trifling expense within three weeks. A week passed, during which Angus Maclean occupied himself in abstruse meditation, coming two or three times to the spot, dreamily chewing stalks of grass, and measuring imaginary walls with a rule. Then, all of a sudden one morning, a load of stones was deposited at the door, and the workmen arrived, men of all ages and all temperaments, from the clean methodic mason to the wild hirsute hodsman. In other parts of the world houses are built silently, not so in Lorne: the babble of Gaelic was incessant. The work crept on, surely if slowly, relieved by intervals of Gaelic melody and political debate, during which all labour ceased. Angus Maclean came and went, and of course it was sometimes necessary to advise with him as to details; and great was his delight whenever he could beguile the Wanderer into a discussion as to the shape of a window or the size of

a door, for the conversation was sure to drift into general topics, such as the Irish Land question or the literature of the Highlands, and the labourers would suspend their toil and cluster round to listen while Angus explained his "views." In a little more than a month, the masonry was completed, and the carpenter's assistance necessary. A week passed, and no carpenter came. Summoned to council, Angus Maclean explained that the carpenter would be up "the first thing in the morning." Two days afterwards, he did appear, and it was at once apparent that, compared with him all the other inhabitants of Oban were models of human energy. With him came a lazy boy, with sleep-dust in his round blobs of eyes. The carpenter's name was Donald Mac-tavish—"a fine man," as the contractor explained, "tho' he takes a drap." The first day, Donald Mac-tavish smoked half a dozen pipes, and sawed a board. The next day, he didn't appear—"it was that showery, and he was afraid of catching the cold;" but the lazy boy came up, and went to sleep in the unfinished wing. The third day, Donald appeared at noon, looking very pale and shaky. Thus matters

proceeded. Sometimes a fair day's work was secured, and Donald was so triumphant at his own energy that he disappeared the following morning altogether. Sometimes Donald was unwell; sometimes it was "o'er showery." Tears and entreaties made no impression on Mactavish, and he took his own time. Then the slater appeared, with a somewhat brisker style of workmanship. Finally, a moody plasterer strolled that way, and promised to whitewash the walls "when he came back frae Mull," whither he was going on business. To cut a long story short, the new wing to the White House was complete in three months, whereas the same number of hands might have finished it with perfect ease in a fortnight.

Thus far, we have given only the dark side of the picture. Turning to the bright side, we herewith record our vow, that whenever we build again we will seek the aid of those same workmen from Lorne. Why, the Wanderer has all his life lived among wise men, or men who deemed themselves wise, among great book-makers, among brilliant minstrels, but for sheer unmitigated enjoyment, give him the talk of

those Celts—flaming radicals every one of them, so radical forsooth, as to have about equal belief in Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli. They had their own notions of freedom, political and social. “Sell my vote?” quoth Angus; “to be sure I’d sell my vote!” and he would thereupon most fiercely expound his convictions, and give as good a reason for not voting at all as the best of those clever gentlemen who laugh at political representation. At heart, too, Angus was a Fenian, though not in the bad and bloodthirsty sense. Donald Mactavish, on the other hand, was of a gentle nature, inclined to acquiesce in all human arrangement, so long as he got his pipe and his glass, and was not hurried about his work. With playful humour, he would “draw out” the fiery Angus for the Wanderer’s benefit. Then the two would come suddenly to war about the relative merits of certain obscure Gaelic poets, and would rain quotations at each other until they grew hoarse. They had both the profoundest contempt for English literature and the English language, as compared with their beloved Gaelic. They were both full of old legends and quaint Highland stories.

The workmen, too, were in their own way as interesting—fine natural bits of humanity, full of intelligence and quiet affection. Noteworthy among them was old Duncan Campbell, who had in his younger days been piper in a Highland regiment, and who now, advanced in years, worked hard all day as a hodsman, and nightly—clean, washed and shaven—played to himself on the beloved pipes, till overpowered with sleep. Duncan was simply delicious. More than once he brought up the pipes, and played on the hillsides, while the workmen danced. These pipes were more to him than bread and meat. As he played them, his face became glorified. His skill was not great, and his tunes had a strange monotony about them, but they gave to his soul a joy passing the glory of battle or the love of women. He was never too weary for them in the evening, though the day's work had been ever so hard and long. Great was his pride and joy that day, when the house was finished, and with pipes playing and ribbons flying, he headed the gleeful workmen as they marched away to the town.

From that day forward, the White House on the

Hill remained silent in the solitude. Though the summer season came, and with it the stream of tourists and visitors, the Wanderer abode undisturbed. Far off he saw the white gleam of the little Town across the long stretch of field and marsh, but he seldom bent his footsteps thither, save when constrained by urgent business. Nevertheless, faces came and went, and bright scenic glimpses rose and passed, while day after day he found his love deepening for the Land of Lorne.

In a certain sense, the whole Hebrides are the Land of Lorne, Skye as much so as Kerrera, Coll and Tiree and Rum as much as Appin and Awe, Loch Scavaig and Loch Eishart as much so as Lochs Feochan and Etive. The family house of Lorne began with a son of Somerled, Thane of Argyll and Lord of the Isles, who worried and bullied the Scottish king, Malcolm, until slain in battle at Renfrew. By a daughter of Olaus, King of Man, Somerled had two sons, Ronald and Dougal, the first of whom was the ancestor of the Lords of the Isles, or Macronalds, and the second of whom bequeathed his surname to the Lords of Lorne, or Macdougalls.

Dougall got for his birthright certain mainland territories in Argyllshire, now known as the three districts of Lorne, but his name and fame stretched far further and embraced many of the isles. He resided in the stronghold of Dunstaffnage, with all the power and more than the glory of a petty prince. Thenceforward, the Macdougalls of Lorne increased and multiplied. At the time when Haco invaded the west (1263) they were great and prosperous, and fierce in forays against the Cailean Mòr, or Knight of Loch Awe, from whom comes the ducal house of Argyll. For year after year the Macdougall of Lorne fought against the dominion of Bruce, who had slain the Red Comyn, Lorne's father-in-law, in the Dominican church at Dumfries; wherefore Bruce, when his power rose in Scotland, marched into Argyllshire to lay waste the country. John of Lorne, son of the chieftain, was posted with his clansmen in the Pass of Awe, a wild and narrow pathway, passing on below the verge of Ben Cruachan, and surrounded by precipices to all appearance inaccessible. The military skill of Bruce, however, enabled him to obtain possession of the heights above, whence his archers

discharged a fatal volley of arrows on the discomfited men of Argyll, who were routed with great slaughter — John, their leader, just managing to escape by means of his boats on the lake. After this victory, Bruce “harried” Argyllshire, and besieging Dunstaffnage Castle, on the west shore of Lorne, reduced it by fire and sword, and placed in it a garrison and governor of his own. Alaster, the chieftain, at last submitted, but John, still rebellious, escaped to England. When the wars between the Bruce and Baliol factions again broke out in the reign of David II., the Macdougalls, with their hereditary enmity to the house of Bruce, were again upon the losing side. David II., and his successor, stripped them of the greater part of their territories, and in 1434 one Robert Stuart was appointed to administer their lands under the title of Seneschall of Lorne.* In spite of all this terrible adversity, the

* The fortunes of this new house of Lorne, until its amalgamation with the ducal house of Argyll, may be followed in the following extract from a sketch by Mr. Smith, schoolmaster of Inveraray, contributed to ‘Macmillan’s Magazine.’ The narrative presents a certain interest at the present moment :—

According to one authority—who refers for proof to “Inventory of Argyle Writs, title Lorne”—Robert Stewart of Rosyth

Macdougalls still continued to exist, even to flourish, in a private way. They retained the Castle of

married the daughter of John of Lorne (Macdougall), and afterwards sold the chieftainship he had thus obtained to his own brother, John Stewart of Innermeath. Others affirm positively that it was the latter himself who married the heiress, and thus got the lands and title; others still—and this is the view upheld by local tradition—that the marriage did not take place till after he had been put in possession by the Crown. This transaction, whatever may have been its real nature, must have taken place either late in the fourteenth or early in the fifteenth century. Taken in connection with the result of the previous dynastic struggles, it had, as we shall presently see, an important bearing on the future fortune of the house.

On the opposite shore of Loch Awe, as already noted, dwelt the Campbells, the hereditary foes of the Macdougalls. Down to the time of Bruce, ages of deadly strife and bloodshed had only served to deepen the feud between the two clans, the Macdougalls having been so far able to hold their own against their troublesome neighbours. But now, while the Macdougalls lost alike lands and position, the Campbells, having been fortunate enough or shrewd enough to range themselves on the winning side, were steadily advancing in wealth and influence. For his great services to the royal cause, Sir Neil of Lochow not only was rewarded with extensive grants from the forfeited estates of the Macdougalls, Comyns, and others, but also received at the same time the hand of the king's sister, the Lady Mary Bruce, in marriage; thus in effect mounting to the very steps of the throne.

There is no reason to suppose that the relations of the new chiefs of Lorne with the neighbouring clan were otherwise than friendly; for, both families being devoted supporters of the Stewart dynasty, their interests would be so far identical. John

Dunollie, with the titles of chieftainship over the clan. But in the year 1715, the irrepressible blood

Stewart, son and successor of the last-mentioned chieftain of the same name, was created a Lord of Parliament by James II., in the year 1445, that is, exactly seven years before the like dignity was conferred on the chief of the Campbells; the barony of Lorne being in fact one of the very first by creation in the peerage of Scotland. This Lord of Lorne had married a daughter of his royal kinsman Robert, Duke of Albany; while Archibald, the son and heir of Sir Duncan Campbell of Lochow (first Lord Campbell), referred to at the beginning of our narrative, had obtained the hand of this lady's sister, Margery Stewart. The two families had thus been brought into close relationship. They were destined to be still more closely allied. To the House of Lorne were born of the above marriage three daughters; the fruit of the other union was that Colin Campbell, to whom reference has also been made. For him it was reserved, by securing the hand of his Cousin Isabel, the eldest of the three daughters of Lorne (a match arranged by the young chief's uncle and guardian, Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchie), to pave the way for his securing likewise the immediate transfer of the barony of Lorne along with the chieftainship of Argyll to himself and his family.¹ Shortly after succeeding his grandfather (his father having pre-deceased), the young baron was raised to the Earldom of Argyll (1457).

And now we come to the transactions by which more immediately these bright jewels were added to the coronet of the present House of Argyll. John of Lorne, some years before his death, had executed a deed of settlement in favour of his

¹ It is noteworthy, too, that the other two heiresses of Lorne were married to cadets of the Campbell family; one of these being the knight of Glenorchie, the founder of the noble house of Breadalbane.

burst forth again, and the Macdougall of the period, having joined the insurrection, found himself mulcted

own brothers, the Stewarts of Innermeath, as next male heirs. This deed was confirmed by charter under the Great Seal in 1452. Walter Stewart, the eldest surviving brother, claimed and succeeded to the estate and dignity; the lands of the barony, however, being now much curtailed by the marriage portions given away with the old chief's daughters. The new lord—whether from a dislike to residing in the far west, or from a wish to have his estates within easier distance of each other—before he had been a year in possession, was induced to take a most important step as regards the destiny of the lordship. This was nothing less than the granting of an indenture (1469), binding himself to resign the lordship of Lorne in favour of Colin, Earl of Argyll, in exchange for the lands of Kildonning, Baldonning, and Innerdonning, in Perthshire; the lands of Culrain, in Fife, and Culkerry, in Kinross: the Earl on his part binding himself to use his influence (which, as shall be seen immediately, was very great) to procure for him the title of Lord Innermeath: all which was done. These agreements and transfers are noticed in the public records of the day, and by various writers. How the last transaction was regarded by the collateral heirs does not appear. Clearly, it was an infringement of the deed of settlement, but that seems to have been got over in some way.

Thus, then, after being held by the Macdougalls for upwards of 200 years, and by the Stewart family for about 60 more, the Lordship of Lorne, the cradle of Scottish monarchy, with the conjunct chieftainship of Argyll, passed to the great family of the Campbells, and MacCailean Mor, the first Earl of Argyll, as the heraldic phrase is, added the galley of Lorne to his paternal achievement (the Boar's-head). The title was confirmed to the Earl and his heirs by charter dated 1470.

of his estate. Thirty years afterwards, however, it was restored to the family, whom sad experience had rendered quiescent during the rebellion of that period. The present representative, a quiet major in the army, eats the Queen's bread, and preserves the family glory in a modest unassuming way. . He has a modern house and farm close to the ruins of Dunollie, the ancient stronghold of his race.

These same ruins of Dunollie stand on the very point of the promontory to the north-west of Oban, and form one of the finest foregrounds possible for all the scenery of the Frith. There is no old castle in Scotland quite so beautifully situated. On days of glassy calm, every feature of it is mirrored in the sea, with browns and grays that ravish the artistic eye. There is not too much of it left : just a wall or two, lichen-covered and finely broken. . Seen from a distance, it is always a perfect piece of colour, in fit keeping with the dim and doubtful sky ; but in late autumn, when the woods of the promontory have all their glory—fir-trees of deep black green, intermixed with russet and golden birches—Dunollie is something to watch for hours and wonder at.

The day is dark, but a strong silvern light is in the air, a light in which all the blue shadows deepen, while far off in the west, over green Kerrera, is one long streak of faint violet, above which gather strongly defined clouds in a brooding slate-coloured mass. On such a day—and such days are numberless in the Highland autumn—the silvern light strikes strong on Dunollie, bringing out every line and tint of the noble ruin, while the sea beneath, with the merest shadow of the cold faint wind upon it, shifts its tints like a sword-blade in the light, from soft steel-gray to deep slumbrous blue. It only wants Morven in the background, dimly purple with dark plum-coloured stains, and the swathes of white mist folded round the high peaks, to complete the perfect picture.

The visitor to the west coast of Scotland is doubtless often disappointed by the absence of bright colours and brilliant contrasts, such as he has been accustomed to in Italy and in Switzerland, and he goes away too often with a malediction on the mist and the rain, and an under-murmur of contempt for Scottish scenery, such as poor Montalembert

sadly expressed in his life of the Saint of Iona. But what many chance visitors despise, becomes to the living resident a constant source of joy. Those infinitely varied grays—those melting, melodious, dimmest of browns—those silvery gleams through the fine neutral tint of cloud ! One gets to like strong sunlight least ; it dwarfs the mountains so, and destroys the beautiful distance. Dark, dreamy days, with the clouds clear and high and the wind hushed ; or wild days, with the dark heavens blowing past like the rush of a sea, and the shadows driving like mad things over the long grass and the marshy pool ; or sad days of rain, with dim pathetic glimpses of the white and weeping orb ; or nights of the round moon, when the air throbs with strange electric light, and the hill is mirrored dark as ebony in the glittering sheet of the loch ; or nights of the Aurora and the lunar rainbow : on days and nights like those is the Land of Lorne beheld in its glory. Even during those superb sunsets, for which its coasts are famed—sunsets of fire divine, with all the tints of the prism—only west and east kindle to great brightness ; while the landscape between reflects the glorious

light dimly and gently, interposing mists and vapours, with dreamy shadows of the hills. These bright moments are exceptional ; yet is it quite fair to say so when, a dozen times during the rainy day, the heart of the grayness bursts open, and the Rainbow issues forth in complete semicircle, glittering in glorious evanescence, with its dim ghost fluttering faintly above it on the dark heaven :

“My heart leaps up when I behold
A Rainbow in the sky!”

The Iris comes and goes, and is, indeed, like the sunlight, “a glorious birth” wherever it appears ; but for rainbows of all degrees of beauty, from the superb arch of delicately defined hues that spans a complete landscape for minutes together, to the delicate dying thing that flutters for a moment on the skirt of the storm-cloud and dies to the sudden sob of the rain, the Wanderer knows no corner of the earth to equal Lorne and the adjacent Isles.

Two qualities are necessary to the enjoyment of these things. The first quality is quiescence, or brooding power—the patient faculty of waiting while images are impressing themselves upon you,

of relinquishing your energetic identity and becoming a sort of human tarn or mirror. If you want to be "shocked," galvanised, so to speak, you must go elsewhere, say to Chimborazo or the North Pole. The second quality necessary is (to be Hibernian) not altogether a quality, but the acquired conviction that Rain is beautiful and Mist poetical, and that to be wet through twice or thrice a day is not undesirable. In point of fact, for actual "downpours" of water, the Highlands are not much worse than the rest of Great Britain, but the changes are more sudden and incalculable. To abide indoors on account of wet or lowering weather may do very well in Surrey, but it will not do in Lorne; for if you want to see the finest natural effects—if you want to get the best sport on land and water—if you want to do in Lorne as Lorne does—you must think no more of rain there than you do of dust in the city. Abolish waterproofs, which were invented by the Devil; away with umbrellas, which were devised for old women, and are only tolerable when Leech's pretty girls are smiling under them; don a suit of thick tweed, such as any cottar weaves, cut a stick from

the nearest blackthorn bush, and sally forth in all weathers. Let your boots be just easy enough to let the water "out" when it has managed to get "in," and you will be quite comfortable. Those who tell you that a damp coat and a wet shoe mean danger to your health, are only talking nonsense. Tight waterproof boots and macintoshes are more fatal things than cold and rain.

Let it not be gathered from what we have said that the climate of Lorne is bad, and the rain unceasing. On the contrary, there are nearly every year long intervals of drought, glaring summer days when the landscape "winks through the heat" and the sea is like molten gold. What we mean to convey is, that some of the finest natural effects are vaporous, and occur only when rain is falling or impending; and that it is pitiful, in a strong man, to miss these from fear of a wet skin. As we write, in the late autumn season, there is little to complain of on the score of wet. We have not had a drop of rain for a fortnight. The days have been bright and short, and the nights starry and bright, with frequent flashes of the Aurora. It is the gloaming of the year—

“ ——— To russet brown
The heather fadeth. On the treeless hill,
O'er-rusted with the red decaying bracken,
The sheep crawl slow.”

This is the brooding hush that precedes the stormy wintry season, and all is inexpressibly beautiful. The wind blows chill and keen from the north, breaking the steel-gray waters of the Firth into crisp-white waves; and though it is late afternoon, the western sky hangs dark and chill over the mountains of Mull, while the east is softly bright, with clouds tinted to a faint crimson. There is no brightness on any of the hills save to the east, where, suffused with a roseate flush, stands Ben Cruachan, surrounded by those lesser heights, beautifully christened the “Shepherds of Loch Etive,” a space of daffodil sky just above him and them, and then, a mile higher, like a dome, one magnificent rose-coloured cloud. Thus much, it is possible to describe, but not so the strange vividness of the green tints everywhere, and the overpowering sense of height and distance. Though every fissure and cranny of Cruachan seems distinct in the red light, the whole moun-

tain seems great, dreamy, and glorified. Walking on one of the neighbouring hills, the Wanderer seems lifted far up into the air, into a still world, where the heart beats wildly and the eyes grow dizzy looking downward on the mother-planet.

In autumn, and even in winter, stillness like this, dead brooding calm, sometimes steals over Lorne for weeks together, and all the colours deepen and brighten ; but at such times as at all others, the finest effects are those of the rain-cloud and the vapour, and no overpowering sense of sunlight comes to trouble the vision.

Standing on the high hill behind his house, the Wanderer commands a wondrous view of the whole Firth of Lorne, and not least noticeable in the prospect is the number of ancient ruins. There, to begin with, is Dunollie, a fine foreground to Morven. Farther north, close at the mouth of Loch Etive, Dunstaffnage stands on its promontory, a ruin on a larger scale, but on the whole less picturesque. Far across the Firth, on the southern promontory of Mull, looking darkly on the waters of the gloomy sound—

“Where thwarting tides with mingled roar
Part the swart hills from Morven’s shore,”

looms Duart, the ancient stronghold of the Macleans;* and farther still, scarcely distinguishable in the dim distance,

“Ardtornish, on her frowning steep
”Twixt earth and heaven hung,”

* How a Maclean of Duart left his wife to die on the Lady’s Rock is a story told in every guide-book and versified in Miss Baillie’s ‘Family Legend;’ but the best story connected with the name is very obscure, and may be added in this note, as illustrative of old highland customs:—“A Maclean of Duart expecting to take the Laird of Coll by surprise, invaded his island and made considerable progress towards his castle at Breachdacha, before he was discovered. On being informed of the invasion, Coll lost no time in gathering what of his clan he could, and marching to meet him. They met him about a mile from Breachdacha Castle, on the farm of Totrouald. Preparing for the combat, Coll discovered that in the hurry his banner had been forgotten, which he seemed to regret. ‘Heed it not,’ said a stout old carle, stepping in front, throwing away his bonnet, and showing a very bald head, on which, laying his hands and addressing his laird,—‘Heed it not! here is a banner which will not yield one foot till night; follow it.’ It is needless to say they all caught the spirit of the old man, rushed on their foes, and, after a bloody contest, completely routed them. The name of the bald old soldier, which ought to be handed to posterity, was Donald Mugach; and the place where the combat took place is marked by a spring-well, since called *Sru tha nam leon*.”

overlooks the same Sound. Others there are, shut out from view by intervening hills and headlands : indeed, wherever a bold promontory juts out into the water, there has been a castle, and more or less of the ruins remain. What light and meaning they lend to the prospect ! What a fine appeal they have to the human sentiment, quite apart from their æsthetic beauty, their delicious colouring ! To call them Castles is perhaps less correct than to describe them as private mansions of castellated form, with certain provisions against sudden assault. In each of them, of old, dwelt some petty chief with his family and retainers ; and at intervals, for some great end, these chiefs could flock together, as they did on the occasion of the betrothal of the Maid of Lorne—

“ Brave Torquil from Dunvegan high,
Lord of the misty hills of Skye,
Macneil, wild Barra’s ancient thane,
Duart, of bold Clan-Gillian’s strain,
Fergus, of Canna’s castled bay,
Macduffith, Lord of Colonsay,”

and any number of others—sea-eagles building their nests on the ocean headland, and flitting from bay to bay by night to plunder and to avenge. They

seem to have chosen the sites of their wild dwellings quite as much for convenience in embarking and for fishing purposes as for strategical reasons. Few of the old castles gain any strength from their situation. There are some, of course, not situated close to the water—such as Finlagan, in Isla, which was placed on an inland lake, and others on the islands of Loch Dochart and Loch Lomond. Stalker Castle stood on an island not much bigger than itself; so did Chisamil. None of these are protected against military attack, many of them being commanded by rising ground, a few volleys from which would have made short work of the defenders. Most of them, like Duart yonder, stand on rocks accessible only on one side, so that they are well protected against personal assault. One thing was never forgotten—the dungeon for the captive foe.

Dunollie shows to most advantage at a distance, as a part of the landscape. The ruins consist only of a portion of the keep, which is overgrown with ivy. But the view from the promontory is very grand, and close at hand there is the Dog-Stone (*Clach-a'-choin*), a huge mass of conglomerate rock

rising up from the shore, and identified as the stake to which the great Fenian king (*Rígh na Feinne*) used to tie his dog Bran. Bran! Fingal! At the very names, how the whole prospect changes! The ruins on each headland grow poor and insignificant, and in the large shadows of the older heroes the small chieftains disappear. The eyes turn to Morven and the "sounding halls of Selma," and, for the moment, all other associations are forgotten.*

From Dunollie to Dunstaffnage is only a few miles' walk, and it is one to be undertaken by all visitors to Oban. The road winds through low hills of thyme and heather, past green slopes where sheep bleat and cattle low, skirting pleasant belts of woodland and occasionally fields of waving corn, and passes on by the side of Loch Etive to the Pass of Awe; but leaving it some distance before it reaches the loch, you must strike along the seashore to the promontory, or isthmus, on which stands Dunstaffnage—a large square ruin, not very picturesque when so approached, though commanding a magnificent

* For remarks on the Ossianic poetry, see Vol. II., the chapter on Glen Sligachan.

view. The custodian, who shows visitors over the castle, is a solemn young Celt, a gardener, who has quite a pretty little orchard adjoining his cottage. If you press him, he will give you the history of Dunstaffnage in a narrative fully as interesting, and nearly as reliable, as any tale of fairy land, but distrust him, and turn to the guide-book, an extract from which we give below.* Perhaps, instead of

* According to the Pictish chronicles, Kenneth MacAlpine transferred the seat of government from Dunstaffnage to Forteviot in Perthshire, in 843. As the Norwegians began to make inroads upon the western coast of Scotland about this time, Dr. Jamieson thinks it highly probable that, on being deserted by its royal possessors, Dunstaffnage became a stronghold of the Norse invaders. For several centuries the place is lost sight of in the national annals, and only reappears during the eventful reign of Robert Bruce, who took possession of it after his victory over the Lord of Lorne in the Pass of Awe. At that time it belonged to Alexander of Argyll, father of John, Lord of Lorne. Old charters show that the castle and lands of Dunstaffnage were in 1436 granted to Dugald, son of Colin, Knight of Loch Awe, the ancestor of the family in whose possession, as "Captains of Dunstaffnage," it has remained to the present day. The existing representative of the family is Sir Donald Campbell, Bart., of Dunstaffnage. As a stronghold of the clan Campbell, Dunstaffnage was maintained down to the rebellions in 1715 and 1745, when it was garrisoned by the royal forces. The old castle is said to have been dismantled by fire in 1715. The nominal hereditary keeper of the castle is the Duke of Argyll.

engaging the faculties with doubtful tradition, it is wise to reserve the guide-book till you reach your home or inn, and to spend the whole time of your visit in looking at the surrounding prospect. Round the isles beneath the promontory, the tide boils ominously, setting in towards Connel Ferry, a mile distant, where Loch Etive suddenly narrows itself from the breadth of a mile to that of two hundred yards, causing the waters to rush in or out, at flood or ebb, with the velocity of a torrent shooting to the fall. If the wind is down, you can hear a deep sound, just as Sir Walter describes it—

“The raging
Of Connel, with his rocks engaging;”

for the narrow passage is blocked by a ledge of rock,

The castle is built in a quadrangular form, 87 feet square within the walls, with round towers at three of the angles. The height of the walls is 66 feet, and their thickness 9 feet. The walls outside measure 270 feet; and the circumference of the rock on which the castle stands is 300 feet. The entrance seaward is by a staircase, but it is probable that in ancient times it was by a drawbridge. A brass gun is preserved on the battlements, bearing the date of 1700, showing that it is not a wrecked trophy of a ship of the Spanish Armada (1588), as is usually reported.

“awash” at half tide, causing a tremendous overfall, the roaring surge of which is audible for miles. Seen from here, Cruachan seems to have quite altered his position—surrounded by the great Shepherds, he casts his gigantic shadow over the head of Loch Etive, and seems in close proximity to the Glencoe range. Turning westward, you look right across the great waters of Loch Linnhe, and see the long green island of Lismore, or the Great Garden, stretching snake-like at the feet of the mountains of Morven; and, following the chain of these mountains northward, where they begin to grow dim in height and distance, tracing the mighty outlines of Kingairloch and Ardgower, you may catch a glimpse, dim to very dreaminess, a vague momentary glimpse which leaves you doubtful if you look on hill or cloud, of the monarch of Scottish mountains—Ben Nevis.

CHAPTER III.

PICTURES INLAND.

The Seasons — Cuckoos — Summer Days — Autumn — Winter —
Moorland Lochs — The Fir Wood — The Moors and the Sea —
Farm-houses and Crofters' Huts — Traces of former Cultivation
on the Hills — The Ruined Saeters — Graveyard at Dunstaffnage
— The Island of Inishail.

THIS is a marvellous land, a scene of beauty ever changing, and giving fresh cause for joy and wonder. Every year deepens the charm. One never tires of Cruachan and the "Shepherds," or of Dunollie and Morven, or of the far-off glimpses of the sea. There are no two days alike. Last year it seemed that every possible effect of sun and shadow had presented itself; and now not a week passes without producing some scenic loveliness which comes like a revelation. But the charm is moral as well as æsthetic. The landscape would be nothing without

its human faces. Humanity does not obtrude itself in this solitude, but it is none the less present, consecrating the whole scene with its mysterious and spiritual associations.

As the year passes there is always something new to attract one who loves Nature. When the winds of March have blown themselves faint, and the April heaven has ceased weeping, there comes a rich sunny day, and all at once the cuckoo is heard telling his name to all the hills. Never was such a place for cuckoos in the world. The cry comes from every tuft of wood, from every hillside, from every projecting crag. The bird himself, so far from courting retirement, flutters across your path at every step, attended invariably by half a dozen excited small birds; alighting a few yards off, crouches down for a moment between his slate-coloured wings; and finally, rising again, crosses your path with his sovereign cry—

“O blithe new-comer, I have heard,
I hear thee, and rejoice!”

Then, as if at a given signal, the trout leaps a foot into the air from the glassy loch, the buds of the

water-lily float to the surface, the lambs bleat from the green and heathery slopes; the rooks caw from the distant rookery; the cock grouse screams from the distant hill-top; and the blackthorn begins to blossom over the nut-brown pools of the burn. Pleasant days follow, days of high white clouds and fresh winds whose wings are full of warm dew. Wherever you wander over the hills, you see the lambs leaping, and again and again it is your lot to rescue a poor little one from the deep pool, or steep ditch, which he has vainly sought to leap in following his mother. If you are a sportsman, you rejoice, for there is not a hawk to be seen anywhere, and the weasel and founmart have not yet begun to promenade the mountains. About this time more rain falls, preliminary to a burst of fine summer weather, and innumerable glow-worms light their lamps in the marshes. At last, the golden days come, and all things are busy with their young. Frequently, in the midsummer, there is drought for weeks together. Day after day the sky is cloudless and blue; the mountain lake sinks lower and lower, till it seems about to dry up entirely; the moun-

tain brooks dwindle to mere silver threads for the water-ousel to fly by, and the young game often die for lack of water; while afar off, with every red vein distinct in the burning light, without a drop of vapour to moisten his scorching crags, stands Ben Cruachan. By this time the hills are assuming their glory:—the mysterious bracken has shot up all in a night, to cover them with a green carpet between the knolls of heather, the lichen is pencilling the crags with most delicate silver, purple, and gold, and in all the valleys there are stretches of light yellow corn and deep green patches of foliage. The corn-crake has come, and his cry fills the valleys. Walking on the edge of the corn-field, you put up the partridges—fourteen cheepers the size of a thrush, and the old pair to lead them. From the edge of the peat-bog the old cock grouse rises, and if you are sharp you may see the young following the old hen through the deep heather close by. The snipe drums in the marsh. The hawk, having brought out his young among the crags of Kerrera, is hovering still as stone over the edge of the hill. Then perchance, just at the end of July, there is a gale from the south, blowing for two

days black as Erebus with cloud and rain ; then going up into the north-west and blowing for one day with little or no rain ; and dying away at last with a cold puff from the north. All at once, as it were, the sharp sound of firing is echoed from hill to hill ; and on every mountain you see the sportsman climbing, with his dog ranging above and before him, the keeper following, and the gillie lagging far behind. It is the twelfth of August. Thenceforth, for two months at least, there are broiling days, interspersed with storms and showers, and the firing continues more or less from dawn to sunset.

Day after day, as the autumn advances, the tint of the hills is getting deeper and richer, and by October, when the beech leaf yellows and the oak leaf reddens, the dim purples and deep greens of the heather are perfect. Of all seasons in Lorne the late autumn is perhaps the most beautiful. The sea has a deeper hue, the sky a mellower light. There are long days of northerly wind, when every crag looks perfect, wrought in gray and gold and silvered with moss, when the high clouds turn luminous at the edges, when a thin film of hoar-

frost gleams over the grass and heather, when the light burns rosy and faint over all the hills, from Morven to Cruachan, for hours before the sun goes down. Out of the ditch at the roadside flaps the mallard, as you pass in the gloaming, and, standing by the side of the small mountain loch, you see the flock of teal rise, wheel thrice, and settle. The hills are desolate, for the sheep are being smeared. There is a feeling of frost in the air, and Ben Cruachan has a crown of snow.

When dead of winter comes, how wondrous look the hills in their white robes! The round red ball of the sun looks through the frosty steam. The far-off firth gleams strange and ghostly, with a sense of mysterious distance. The mountain loch is a sheet of blue, on which you may disport in perfect solitude from morn to night, with the hills white on all sides, save where the broken snow shows the red-rusted leaves of the withered bracken. A deathly stillness and a death-like beauty reign everywhere, and few living things are discernible, save the hare plunging heavily out of her form in the snow, or the rabbit scuttling off in a snowy spray, or the small

birds piping disconsolate on the trees and dykes. Then Peter, the tame rook, brings three or four of his wild relations to the back door of the White House, and they stand aloof with their heads cocked on one side, while he explains their position, and suggests that they, being hard-working rooks who never stooped to beg when a living could be got in the fields, well deserve to be assisted. Then comes the thaw. As the sun rises, the sunny sides of the hills are seen marked with great black stains and winding veins, and there is a sound in the air as of many waters. The mountain brook leaps, swollen, over the still clinging ice, the loch rises a foot above its still frozen crust, and a damp steam rises into the air. The wind goes round into the west, great vapours blow over from the Atlantic, and there are violent storms.

Such is a mere glimpse of the seasons, as they pass in this pastoral land of Lorne; but what pen or pencil could do justice to their ever-changing wonders? Wherever one wanders, on hill or in valley, there is something to fascinate and delight. Those moorland lochs, for example! Those deep

pure pools of dew distilled from the very heart of the mountains—changing as the season changes—lying blue as steel in the bright clear light, or turning to rich mellow brown in the times of flood. On all of them the water-lily blows, creeping up magically from the under-world, and covering the whole surface with white, green, and gold—its broad and well-oiled leaves floating dry in delicious softness in the summer sun, and its milk-white cups opening wider and wider, while the dragon-fly settles and sucks honey from their golden hearts. How exquisitely the hills are mirrored, the images only a shade darker than the heights above! Perhaps there is a faint breeze blowing, leaving here and there large flakes of glassy calm, which it refuses to touch for some mysterious reason, and the edges of which—just where wind and calm meet—gleam the colour of golden fringe. Often in midsummer, however, the loch almost dries up in its bed; and innumerable flies—veritable gad-flies with stings—make the brink of the water unpleasant, and chase one over the hills. In such weather, there is nothing for it but to make off to the fir-woods,

and there to dream away the summer's day, with the bell-shaped flowers around you in one gleaming sheet—

“Blue as a little patch of fallen sky,”

and the primroses fringing the tree-roots with pallid beauty that whitens in the shadow. The wood is delicious; not too dark and cold, but fresh and scented, with open spaces of green sward and level sunshine. The fir predominates, dark and enduring in its loveliness; but there are dwarf oaks, too, with twisted limbs and thick branches, and the mountain ash is there with its innumerable beads of crimson coral, and the fluttering aspen, and the birch, whose stem is pencilled with threads of frosty silver, and the thorns snowed over with delicate blossoms.

But, of course, the great glory of Lorne is the open Moor, where the heather blows from one end of the year to the other. There is something sea-like in the moor, with its long free stretch for miles and miles, its great rolling hills, its lovely solitude, broken only by the cry of sheep and the scream of birds. Lakes and water-lilies are to be found far south. There are richer woods in Kent than any in

the Highlands. But the moors of the western coast of Scotland stand alone, and the moors of Lorne are finest of all. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, does nature present a scene of greater beauty than that you may behold, with the smell of thyme about your feet, and the mountain bee humming in your ears, from any of the sea-commanding heights of Lorne. Turn which way you will, the glorious moors stretch before you; wave after wave of purple heather, broken only by the white farm with its golden fields, and the mountain loch high up among the hills; while the arms of the sea steal winding, now visible, now invisible, on every side, and the far-off Firth, with its gleaming sail, stretches from the white lighthouse of Lismore far south to Isla and its purple caves. Then the clouds! White and high, they drift overhead,

“Slow traversing the blue ethereal field,”

and you can watch their shadows moving on the moor for miles and miles, just as if it were the sea! Nor is the scene barren of such little touches as make English landscape sweet. There are bees humming everywhere, and skylarks singing, and

the blackbird whistling wherever there is a bush, and the swift wren darting in and out of the stone dykes, like a swift-winged insect. There are flowers too—little unobtrusive things, flowers of the heath—primroses, tormentil, bog-asphodel, and many others. But nothing is purchased at the expense of freedom. All is fresh and free as the sea. After familiarity with the moor you turn from the macadamised road with disgust, and will not even visit the woods till the fear of a sun-stroke compels you. Did we compare the moor to the sea? Yes; but you yourself are like an inhabitant thereof; not a mere sailor on the surface, but a real haunter of the deep. What hours of indolence in the deep heather, so long as the golden weather lasts!

The white farm-house in the centre of its yellow glebe does not altogether suit the great free landscape, but from a distance it serves as a foil to bring out the rocks and heather. Sweeter far is the crofter's little hut, so like the moor itself that you only recognise it by the blue wreath of peat-smoke issuing from its rude chimney. It is built of rough stones and clods, thatched with straw and heather,

and paven with clay. Over its outer walls crawls a gorgeous trellis-work of moss and lichen, richer than all the carpets of Persia; and its roof is purple, green, and gold, such as no king ever saw in the tapestry of his chamber. This may seem a wild description of what tourists would regard as a wretched hut, fit only for a pig to live in; but find a painter with a soul for colour, and ask *him*. Why, the very dirty children who stand at the door, shading their sunburnt faces to look at the passer-by, have tints in their naked skins and on their ragged kilts such as would fill a Titian's heart with joy. Here and there the hut is displaced, to give place to a priggish cottage, with whitewashed walls and slate roofs; but the crofters, to do them justice, rather shun the kind innovation, and prefer their old tenements. Step into the hut for a light to your pipe, and look around you. The place is full of delicious peat-smoke, which at first blinds you, and then, as your eyes accustom themselves to it, clears away, to show you the old grandfather bending over the flame, the wife stirring the great black pot, and the cocks and hens perched all around on the beams

and rafters. He who fears foul smells need not be afraid to venture here. Peat-smoke is the great purifier. It makes all smell sweet, and warms every cranny of the poor place with its genial breath.

The pieces of arable land are few, compared to the long stretches of moorland. The large farms have many acres of growing grain, and most of the little crofts have a tiny patch attached to them, from which they manage to grow a little corn and a few turnips and potatoes.

But wherever you wander over the moors, you will see piteous little glimpses of former cultivation—the furrow-marks which have existed for generations. Wherever there is a bit of likely ground on the hillside, be sure that it has been ploughed, or rather dug with the spade. Standing on any one of the great heights, you see on every side of you the green slopes marked with the old ridges; and you remember that Lorne in former days was a thickly populated district. We have heard it stated, and even by so high an authority as the Duke of Argyll, that these marks do not necessarily indicate a higher degree of prosperity

than exists in the same district at present. We are not so sure of that. Nor may the husbandry have been so rude : since the spade must have gone deep to leave its traces so long ; and busy hands can do much even to supply the want of irrigation. Attached to some of the existing crofts, which work entirely by hand-labour and till the most unlikely ground, we have seen some of the best bits of crop in the district. Be that as it may, the fact remains that once upon a time these hills of heather swarmed with crofts, and were covered with little fields of grain.

Remote, too, among the hills, in the most lonely situations, distant by long stretches of bog and moorland from any habitation, you will find here and there, if you wander so far, a Ruin in the midst of green slopes and heathery bournes. This is the ruin of the old Shieling, which in former days so resounded with mirth and song.

“O sad is the shieling,
Gone are its joys!”

as Robb Dunn sings in the Gaelic. Hither, ere sheep-farming was invented, came the household of

the peasant in the summer-time, with sheep and cattle; and here, while the men returned to look after matters at home, the women and young people abode for weeks, tending the young lambs and kids, watching the milch-cow, and making butter and cheese that were rich with the succulent juices of the surrounding herbage. Then the milk-pan foamed, the distaff went, the children leaped for joy with the lambs; and in the evening, the girls tried charms, and learned love-songs, and listened to the tales of their elders, with dreamy eyes. Better still, there was real love-making to be had; for some of the men remained, generally unmarried ones, and others came and went; and somehow, in those long summer nights, it was pleasant to sit out in the flood of moonlight, and whisper, and perhaps kiss, while the lambs bleated from the pens, and the silent hills slept shadowy in the mystic light. No wonder that Gaelic literature abounds in "shieling songs," and that most of these are ditties of love! The shieling was rudely built, as a mere temporary residence, but it was snug enough when the peat-bog was handy. In the wilds of the Long Island it is still used in

the old manner, and the Wanderer has many a time crept into it for shelter when shooting wild-fowl. The Norwegian saeter is precisely the same as the Scottish shieling, and still, as every traveller knows, flourishes in all its glory.

We are no melancholy mourner of the past, rather a sanguine believer in progress and the future; but alas! whenever we look on the lonely ruins among the hills, we feel inclined to sing a Dirge. The "Big Bed in the Wilderness," as the Gaelic bard named the saeter and pasture, is empty now, empty and silent, and the children that shouted in it are buried in all quarters of the earth; ay—and many had reason to curse the cruelty of man ere they died, for they were driven forth across the waters from all that they loved. Some lived on, to see the change darker and darker, and then were carried on hand-spokes, in the old Scottish fashion, to the grave. Many a long summer day could we spend in meditation over the places where they sleep.

Highland churchyards are invariably beautiful and pathetic, but there are two in Lorne of perfect and supreme loveliness.

Adjoining the ancient stronghold of Dunstaffnage, which we have described in a former chapter, there is a fir-plantation fringing the promontory and overlooking the boiling tides at the mouth of Loch Etive; and in the heart of the plantation are the ruins of an old chapel, the four roofless walls of which still stand.* The ivy clings round the mouldering walls, and the square space is filled with tombs and graves, long grass and weeds. Many dead lie there, dead that are now literally dust, and dead that only fell to sleep during the last generation. The old flat tombs, with their quaint-carved figures and worn-out inscriptions, were originally used to mark the graves of ancient chiefs and their families; but now they do duty as the gravestones of fishermen and herdsmen. Whole families of poor folk, who lived and died with the wash of the sea in their ears, rest together here with

* The original building, measuring only 24 yards by 8, is deformed by a modern addition at the east end, obscuring the altar window, which appears to have been very graceful, being in the early English style, with banded shafts and the dog-tooth ornament. Under the window a triple tablet extends round the chapel.

the sea-spray on their graves. At all seasons, even on the hottest summer day, there is a chill exhalation here, a feeling as of the touch of damp marble. The trees around snare the golden light, and twine it in and out of their dark branches till it is turned to faint silver threads. Flowers grow at the tree-roots, even in the grassy interstices between the graves: and fresh flowers are thrown regularly on the large marble tomb closed in at the eastern side of the ruin, the last meeting-place of the Campbells of Dunstaffnage.

Still more lovely is Inishail. It is a little island in the centre of Loch Awe—the great fresh-water lake stretching for miles at the base of Ben Cruachan. At one extremity there is the ruins of a convent of Cistercian nuns; at the other, the old burial-place whither the dead are brought over water to this day. Low and silent, the isle floats upon the mighty loch, with its little load of dead. Once in a year, in the summer-time, the sky falls, and lies in one sheet of delicious blue-bells over the island, so that it looks a blest place indeed: one soft azure stain on the loch, in the long dreamy days when the

water is a glassy mirror; and the adjoining Black Isles cast their wooded reflections deep, deep down, into the crystal gulf on which they swim. In the old days the dead-boat would move slowly hither, to the melancholy music of the bagpipes, echoing faint and far over the water; and still, at long intervals, it comes, but without the old weird music.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEART OF LORNE.

Loch Awe and its Ancient Legend—Summer Days on the Lake—The Legend of Fracch Eilan—Kilchurn Castle—Effects of Moonlight and of Storm—View from Glenara—The Pools of Cladich—Duncan Bàn of the Songs—His Coire Cheathaich—His Mairi Bàn Og, and last Adieu to the Hills—Songs of the Children of the Mist—The Pass of Awe—The Ascent of Ben Cruachan.

STANDING on the island of Inishail, you see outstretched before you one of the loveliest scenes in the world—the whole glorious expanse of Loch Awe, with its wooded and castled isles, the dark mouth of the Pass of Awe, and the towering heights of Ben Cruachan. This, indeed, may well be named the Heart of Lorne; for out of the mighty sheet of water innumerable brooks and rivulets stretch like veins to nourish all the land. The great mountain towers above, “varying momentarily his crest,” and

surveying the outstretched map of the Hebrides as far north as Canna, and as far south as the headland of Cantyre.

The ancient legend of Loch Awe is preserved in the beautiful tale of Bera. In the old dark days, far, far back in time, when there were great heroes on the earth, and great sages to guide their arms, Cruachan stood yonder, as he stands now—

“Struggling with the darkness all day long,
And visited all night by troops of stars;”

and his scarce accessible heights were covered with great deer. All went well till there arose on Cruachan a fatal Well, fulfilling certain melancholy prophecy. Bera the beautiful, daughter of Grinan the last of the Sages of old, was charged to keep watch, and daily, as the last rays of the sun sank behind the mountain, to cover the mouth of the Well with a mystic stone, marked with the strange runes of the Sages. But Bera was a great huntress, and one day, after wandering far in pursuit of a mighty herd of deer, she returned to her seat so tired out that she fell to sleep beside the Well. The sun sank, but

Bera slept on, and the fatal Well remained uncovered. At last, a thunderclap awoke her, and, springing up, she saw the raging of a fearful storm ; and, behold ! the fertile valley beneath her feet was flooded with a great water, stretching far out of sight in all directions, lashed to fury by the wild wind, and illumed by the lightning. The fatal deed once done, there was no remedy, and Loch Awe remains to this day, mystically fed and feeding, the veritable Heart of Lorne.

The coach from Inveraray to Oban dashes along the shores of the lake, waters at Dalmally, and so on through the Pass of Awe ; and the drive is a glorious one ; but he who would see Loch Awe indeed must live on its banks for weeks, watch it under all aspects of wind and cloud, and navigate its endless creeks and bays in an open boat. Few tourists do linger, save of course anglers, who come in spring after the ordinary loch-trout, and in autumn after the *salmo ferox* ; but the great lake is full of interest for everybody, with its gorgeous and unapproachable effects for the painter, its wild old stories for the poet, its castles and graveyards for

the antiquarian, and its general air of fascination for the idler and lover of beauty.

During the summer drought, Loch Awe is the hottest place in Lorne. The lake sinks in its bed, day after day, till numberless hidden rocks begin to jut through the blistering water: no stream breaks the dead silence with its joyous voice, for every stream is dry; and Ben Cruachan is a sheet of red-fire, sharply defined at the edges against a sky insufferably blue. At such times a fresh breeze often blows on the sea-board a few miles away, but without creeping inland to the great lake, over and around which buzz innumerable flies of a venomous species, hovering in thousands round the cattle and driving the bare-legged herd-boy nearly mad. On the sides of Cruachan the adders swarm, though they are never found elsewhere in Lorne. But the scene is one of intoxicating beauty, calling up dreams of far-off Syria and its great lakes closed in by similar hills of stone, that scorch in the sunlight. For days together Loch Awe is a mirror without one speck or flaw, reflecting in its deep bosom the great clear mountains, the wooded

islets, the gray castles mouldering on their promontories: every shape and tint of the glorious scene, amid which you wander quietly, or rather, being wise, lie quiescent, just sheltered by the green bough of a tree, hovering

“Between the dome above and the dome under,
The hills above thee and their ghosts beneath thee!”

till life becomes so flooded with drowsy light that consciousness fades into a mere vacant dream, and all you behold appears beautifully unreal. Delicious it is in such weather to drift from place to place in a boat, slowly pulled by some swarthy Highlandman, on whose bare head the scorching beams fall harmless, and who, if he knows you well, may now and then break silence with some old tale or snatch of song. Just then the legend of Fraoch Eilan will be most acceptable, for you will have no difficulty in believing that Loch Awe is a veritable garden of the Hesperides; and the boatman will tell you, as he rows round the little island of Fraoch, how there was once on that island an enchanted garden, watched by a dragon; how the fair Mego longed

for the fruit that grew there; how Fraoch, her lover, vainly endeavouring to gratify the longing of his beloved one, swam the lake and fought the dragon; and how, alas! when both Fraoch and the monster fell dead in fight, fair Mego died of unutterable grief. It is a story for the bright days, when the dog-star foams, and up above you the very hills seem to move in great glorified throbs. In your drowsy, semi-conscious state, you fully believe it, and see before you the golden apples dangling, and the golden dragon glaring—all a glitter of gold; and you dip your kerchief in the water and bind it round your brows, and dangle your arm up to the shoulder in the cool water, as the boat glides on, suspended above a fathomless abyss of gold and blue.

But if Loch Awe can be hot and still, it can also be cold and wild. In windy weather its enormous expanse is as furious as a great arm of the sea, and the squalls plough the water into furrows of snow-white foam. On a dark day it is the blackest of all lochs—a very Acheron. But in any and every weather it preserves some kind of beauty, and has

ever-varying attractions for the lover of Nature; for every man, indeed, who is moved at all by the great forces of the world.

Perhaps the finest point of vantage in the whole loch is Kilchurn Castle; and Kilchurn, though beautiful exceedingly in dead-still summer weather, appears to most advantage when the wind is high and the waters wild. The ruin stands at the upper end of the lake, on a rock which was originally an island, but is now a sort of peninsula, connected by a flat alluvial meadow with the higher shore; and though its stones have been outrageously plundered to supply materials for a church and an inn at Dalmally, though every scrap of wood it ever contained has been pilfered and burnt, enough of the old place still remains to spiritualise the whole landscape: a few crumbling walls being enough for the purpose in all such cases. Built originally at the time of the Crusades, in 1440, and occupied by a British garrison as late as 1745, Kilchurn still abides, and will abide for many a year to come, if not altogether demolished by the hand of man. Time has dealt gently with it, merely pencilling the walls with

soft lichens and golden moss ; and so far as time is concerned, it may be a ghost in the moonlight for a thousand years to come.

Of course, Kilchurn is beautiful in moonlight—all old castles are, especially when they stand close upon the water ; but the effects of moonlight, although doubtless far more defined than is generally supposed by people who do not study Nature for themselves, belong more to the imagination than the eye ; if, indeed, we are not continually moved by moonlight for peculiar physiological reasons, just as lunatics are moved, though in less measure. Fault has been found by Mr. Philip Hamerton with poets in general, and Sir Walter Scott in particular, because they seem to think that the moon “does not respect local colour, but translates everything into black and white ;”^{*} and the same writer describes

^{*} See some remarks on this subject in Mr. Hamerton’s ‘Painter’s Camp,’ an admirable book, in which the attempts to describe natural effects, from a painter’s point of view, are almost painfully honest and faithful : painfully so, because betraying the dissatisfaction of an æsthetic mind almost convulsed by the tremendous truths of Nature, driven again and again to the despairing fear that absolute faithfulness to Nature is impossible, and trying, amidst its despair, to be rational at all hazards, rather

very amusingly how he, after reading Scott's lines about Melrose, and getting into the ruins furtively, his head full of melodious rhyme, discovered that the "ruins gray" were red; and was afterwards informed "that the Minstrel was so little in earnest on the subject as never to have taken the trouble to drive over from Abbotsford and see Melrose for himself, as he had so warmly recommended everybody else to see it." Still, Scott was right, and Hamerton is wrong, in spite of the false epithet "gray;" for what Scott meant to imply was simply that moonlight supplied a certain imaginative mystery: a weird, silvern glamour, in which all old ruins become most impressive. For the same reason,

"He who would see Kilchurn aright,
Must visit it by pale moonlight;"

not on account of the effects of colour, though many of these, as Mr. Hamerton has finely shown, are

than sentimental over the inadequacy of human effort. The result is a style curiously blending profound artistic feeling with enormous self-consciousness, and betraying an alarming leaven of technicality, even in the sphere of ideas.

most delicately defined and beautiful, but simply because moonlight is *in esse* a more emotional light than sunlight.

But on some dark day, when Cruachan is black with shadow and the rain-cloud driving past, when the loch is broken into great waves with crestlike head and hollows as black as ink, and when the wild lines of the rain shoot down in light over the old ruin, Kilchurn becomes a spirit; indeed, the almost human centre of the scene. Look which way you will, it is the cynosure. Wild mists cloud the gorges of the Pass of Awe, the wind moans in the blackness of Cruachan; and Kilchurn, with the waves lashing at its feet, stares through the air like a human face, strangely relieved against the dazzling greenness of the meadow which links it to the land. What, indeed, are all the effects of moonlight to that desolate look of loneliness and woe, mingled with secret strength to resist the elemental strife?

“ But a mere footstool to yon sovereign lord,
Huge Cruachan (a thing that meaner hills
Might crush, nor know that it had suffered harm);
Yet he, not loth, in favour of thy claim

To reverence, suspends his own ; submitting
All that the God of Nature hath conferred,
All that he holds in common with the stars,
To the memorial majesty of Time
Impersonated in thy calm decay !” *

Truly does the old ruin remain paramount, while mountains, torrents, lakes, and woods unite to pay it homage. It is the most perfect foreground possible for a mountain picture, forming not only a poetic centre of human interest, but a fine scale wherewith to measure the mighty proportions of the hills and the wild expanse of troubled water.

The distance from Inveraray to the banks of Loch Awe is about sixteen miles, the first fourteen of which are chiefly pleasant because every one of

* “From the top of the hill,” writes Miss Wordsworth, in her Journal, kept during the tour of 1803, “a most impressive scene opened upon our view, a ruined castle on an island (for an island the flood has made it) at some distance from the shore, backed by a cove of the mountain Cruachan, down which came a foaming stream. The castle occupied every foot of the island that was visible to us, appearing to rise out of the water. Mists rested upon the mountainside, with spots of sunshine; there was a wild desolation in the low grounds, a solemn grandeur in the mountains, and the castle was wild yet stately—not dismantled of turrets, nor the walls broken down, though obviously a ruin.”

them removes you a little farther from Inveraray, that most depressing of fish-smelling Highland towns; but about two miles from that lake there is a wretched hut, the owner of which sells—or used to sell until very recently—a very good “dram” to the pedestrian, inspired with which fine spirit he is ready to look with treble rapture on the magnificent view from the top of the hill above Cladich. Ben Cruachan towers to the heavens in all his gigantic beauty, with dark heather-clad flanks and red-tinted crags, and at his feet the great lake stretches broad and deep: studded with grassy and woody islets, which are green as emerald in summer-time, and in the winter season dark-red with the withered bracken and fern. In the time of snow this scene becomes strange and impressing in the extreme. The spectator from the hill has a feeling of being suspended up in the air, and the sense of height and distance conveyed by the great white mountain is almost painful. From the far-off cone of Cruachan a white smoke of drift-snow rises with the wind and blows away against the pale green of the cloudless sky. The dark-wooded flanks of the mountain contrast with the white

snows and dim azure shadows of the bare crags and precipices. If the lake is a dead calm, as is usually the case at such times, the effect is still more mysterious, as every feature of the spectral scene is repeated in a fathomless gulf of crystal clearness.

At the foot of the hill is the little inn of Cladich, a cosy nest for anglers and all such peace-loving men; and close to the inn there is a burn, shaded with trees and ferns, and fringed in spring-time with primroses and blue-bells. O! the pools of Cladich! the nut-brown pools, clear as amber, fed by little falls foaming as white as snow, and full of tiny trout that dart hither and thither, with dark shadows on the bottom of polished rock! Many a bath have we taken there of yore, lying for hours like a very fresh-water Triton, clad as Adam, pipe in mouth; and the friend of our boyhood in the next "bath," limbed like a young fawn, and little thinking of the terrible City by whose breath he died! To us, as we write, Cladich seemed the sweetest spot in the world, and we could linger on, describing its loveliness, page after page, calling up memories of long summer days on the lake, dreamy musings on the wooded Black

Isles, and walks by moonlight among the woods and falls behind the little inn—an inn with linen milky white, and the scent of heather in every room, and sometimes a plate of pansies in fresh water on the table. But to brood over these happy times would be to weary the reader. Away from Cladich! Away by the road that winds northward along the shores of the lake, and, after affording a magnificent view of Kilchurn, reaches the village of Dalmally, a pleasant little place, with a good inn, a church, a picturesque bridge, and, best of all, a solid stone monument to Duncan Bàn.

What Burns is to the Lowlands of Scotland, Duncan Bàn is to the Highlands ; and more : for Duncan never made a poem, long or short, which was not set to a tune, and he first sang them himself as he wandered like a veritable bard of old. Duncan MacIntyre, better known as Donacha Bàn, or Fair-haired Duncan, was born here in Glenorchay in 1724, and he died at Edinburgh in 1812, in the golden days of the ‘Edinburgh Review.’ His had been a long life, if not an eventful one. For about forty-five years he dwelt among these hills, haunting “Coire Chea-

thaich" at all hours, and composing his mountain music; and sometimes travelling about the country to collect subscriptions to his poems, dressed in the Highland garb, with a checked bonnet, over which hung a large bushy tail of a wild animal; a badger's skin, fastened by a belt, in front; a hanger by his side, and a soldier's wallet strapped to his shoulders. During these expeditions he was recognised wherever he went by his peculiar appearance. On one occasion, a forward young man asked him, "If it was he that made Ben Dourain?" "No," replied the old man, "Ben Dourain was made before you or I was born; but I made a poem in praise of Ben Dourain." "He spoke slowly," writes the recorder of the circumstance, "and seemed to have no high opinion of his own poems, and said little of Gaelic poetry; but said that officers in the army told him about the Greek poets, and Pindar was chiefly admired by him."*

When Duncan Bàn was forty-four years of age, he dictated his poems to a clergyman, who wrote them down for publication. For years they had been

* Mackenzie's 'Beauties of Gaelic Poetry.'

floating in the poet's mind to music of their own, and many had been carried from mouth to mouth across the Hebrides. They are simple in form as the hills, as sweet and gentle in sound as the mountain brooks, and many are most lengthy and elaborate, just like Highland tales, not because the subject is great in itself, but because the singer is so in love with it that he could sing about it for ever. 'Coire Cheathaich, or the Misty Corri,' is the masterpiece, being the description of the great corri in Glenorchay, where Duncan loved to roam. Here it is in English. Not a word is lost, but any Highlandman will tell you that no English could convey the unutterable tenderness and rich music of the original:—

COIRE CHEATHAICH; OR, THE GLEN OF THE MIST.

My beauteous corri! where cattle wander—
My misty corri! my darling dell!
Mighty, verdant, and cover'd over
With wild flowers tender of the sweetest smell;
Dark is the green of thy grassy clothing,
Soft swell thy hillocks most green and deep,
The cannach blowing, the darnel growing,
While the deer troop pass to the misty steep.

Fine for wear is thy beauteous mantle,
Strongly woven, and ever-new,
With rough grass o'er it, and, brightly gleaming,
The grass all spangled with diamond dew :
It's round my corri, my lovely corri,
Where rushes thicken and long reeds blow :
Fine were the harvest to any reaper
Who through the marsh and the bog could go.
Ah, that's fine clothing !—a great robe stretching,
A grassy carpet most smooth and green,
Painted and fed by the rain from heaven
In hues the bravest that man has seen—
'Twixt here and Paris, I do not fancy
A finer raiment can ever be—
May it grow for ever !—and, late and early,
May I be here on the knolls to see !
Around Ruadh Awridh what ringlets cluster !
Fair, long, and crested, and closely twined,
This way and that they are lightly waving,
At every breath of the mountain wind.
The twisted hemlock, the slanted rye-grass,
The juicy moor-grass, can all be found,
And the close-set groundsel is greenly growing
By the wood where heroes are sleeping sound.
In yonder ruin once dwelt Mac Bhaidi,
'Tis now a desert where winds are shrill ;
Yet the well-shaped brown ox is feeding by it
Among the stones that bestrew the hill.
How fine to see, both in light and gloaming,
The smooth Clach Fionn so still and deep,
And the houseless cattle and calves most peaceful
Group'd on the brow of the lonely steep.

In every nook of the mountain pathway
The garlic-flower may be thickly found—
And out on the sunny slopes around it
Hang berries juicy and red and round—
The penny-royal and dandelion,
The downy cannach together lie—
Thickly they grow from the base of the mountain
To the topmost crag of his crest so high.

And not a crag but is clad most richly,
For rich and silvern the soft moss clings,
Fine is the moss, most clean and stainless,
Hiding the look of unlovely things;
Down in the hollows beneath the summit
Where the verdure is growing most rich and deep,
The little daisies are looking upwards,
And the yellow primroses often peep.

Round every well and every fountain
An eyebrow dark of the cress doth cling,
And the sorrel sour gathers in clusters
Around the stones whence the waters spring;
With a splash and a plunge and a mountain murmur
The gurgling waters from earth upleap,
And pause and hasten, and whirl in circles,
And rush and loiter, and whirl and creep!

Out of the ocean comes the salmon,
Steering with crookèd nose he hies,
Hither he darts where the waves are boiling—
Out he springs at the glistening flies!
How he leaps in the whirling eddies!
With back blue-black, and fins that shine,
Spangled with silver, and speckled over,
With white tail tipping his frame so fine!

Gladsome and grand is the misty corri,
And there the hunter hath noble cheer;
The powder blazes, the black lead rattles
Into the heart of the dun-brown deer;
And there the hunter's hound so bloody
Around the hunter doth leap and play,
And madly rushing, most fierce and fearless,
Springs at the throat of the stricken prey.

O 'twas gladsome to go a hunting
Out in the dew of the sunny morn!
For the great red stag was never wanting,
Nor the fawn, nor the doe with never a horn.
And when rain fell and the night was coming,
From the open heath we could swiftly fly,
And, finding the shelter of some deep grotto,
Couch at ease till the night went by.

And sweet it was when the white sun glimmered,
Listening under the crag to stand—
And hear the moorhen so hoarsely croaking,
And the red cock murmuring close at hand;
While the little wren blew his tiny trumpet,
And threw his steam off blithe and strong,
While the speckled thrush and the redbreast gaily
Lilted together a pleasant song!

Not a singer but join'd the chorus,
Not a bird in the leaves was still:
First the laverock, that famous singer,
Led the music with throat so shrill;
From tall tree-branches the blackbird whistled,
And the gray bird joined with his sweet "coo-coo:"
Everywhere was the blithesome chorus,
Till the glen was murmuring thro' and thro'.

Then out of the shelter of every corri
Came forth the creature whose home is there ;
First, proudly stepping, with branching antlers,
The snorting red-deer forsook his lair ;
Through the sparkling fen he rush'd rejoicing,
Or gently played by his heart's delight—
The hind of the mountain, the sweet brown princess,
So fine, so dainty, so staid, so slight !

Under the light green branches creeping
The brown doe cropt the leaves unseen,
While the proud buck gravely stared around him
And stamp'd his feet on his couch of green ;
Smooth and speckled, with soft pink nostrils,
With beauteous head lay the tiny kid ;
All apart in the dewy rushes,
Sleeping unseen in its nest, 'twas hid.

My beauteous corri ! my misty corri !
What light feet trod thee in joy and pride,
What strong hands gathered thy precious treasures,
What great hearts leapt on thy craggy side !
Soft and round was the nest they plundered,
Where the brindled bee his honey hath—
The speckled bee that flies, softly humming,
From flower to flower of the lonely strath.

There, thin-skinn'd, smooth, in clustering bunches,
With sweetest kernels as white as cream,
From branches green the sweet juice drawing,
The nuts were growing beside the stream—
And the stream went dancing merrily onward,
And the ripe red rowan was on its brim,
And gently there in the wind of morning
The new-leaved sapling waved soft and slim.

And all around the lovely corri
The wild birds sat on their nests so neat,
In deep warm nooks and tufts of heather,
Sheltered by knolls from the wind and sleet;
And there from their beds, in the dew of the morning,
Uprose the doe and the stag of ten,
And the tall cliffs gleamed, and the morning reddened
The Coire Cheathaich—the Misty Glen!

One such poem conveys, even in a translation, a better idea of the writer's mind than whole chapters of expository criticism. How the Highlandman broods over every feature of the darling scene, from the weird "mountain ruin, where a family once dwelt," down to the little wren "flinging off his steam" (a queer and very favourite Gaelic expression) in the sunshine! Was a brook ever described better, as it

"Pauses and hastens, whirls in circles,
Rushes and loiters, and whirls and creeps!"

To Duncan the Corri is a perpetual feast. With a painter's eye he hungers over the tints of the moss on the crags, the blue-black back and silver spangles of the trout, the thin-skinned, smooth-clustered nuts on the green branches, the dark-green eyebrow of cresses round the mountain

well; and to him also all the sounds have maddening sweetness:—the moorhen croaking, the thrushes and redbreasts warbling, the whole glen “breathing a choral strain;” till at last, in one supreme poetic flash, he sees the dun doe and great stag springing up in the dew of a May morning, and the “red light” flaming on every crag of the Corri. His was no mere song for beauty’s sake; there was love at the heart of it. To him the Corri meant life and freedom, and the fresh air of the world—it meant youth and its memories, passion and its dreams, deep-seated religion and its mystery. The love he put into ‘Coire Cheathaich’ took another form in Mairi Bàn Og, which is esteemed the finest love-song in the Gaelic language, and is addressed, not to his sweetheart—not to a passing mistress, such as Burns immortalised—but to his wife;—is, in a word, the epithalamium of Duncan, the Highland forester, on his marriage with Mary “of the alehouse.” Every word is warm as sunshine, but holy and pure. He broods over his bride’s beauty as he broods over nature, missing no detail, blessing the “clerk-given right” which makes the beauty all his own. He

describes the "soft and round maiden, with curly hair;" her "breath sweet as apples growing;" her "smooth-lidded" blue eye; her body "as pure and white as cannach;" her warm hand, like a lady's; her little foot in its tight-fitting shoe;—he tells us how "Mairi" milks the cattle by the river, with the calves leaping round her; how she wanders light-footed to the lone mountain shieling; how she sits "sewing bands and plain seams," or "working embroidery," in the candle-light of the cottage at night; and he adds, with true Highland pride, how she bears in her veins the "blood of the King and MacCailean," and of the Macdonald "who was chief in Sleat." No love is too deep for her, no gift too great; and he will kill for her "swans, seals, wild geese, and all birds"—nay, she has but to give the word, and she shall have the antlers of the best deer in the forest. Nothing is more remarkable in this love-song than the sacredness of its passion; in it Duncan Bàn has correctly represented, not only his own feelings, but the popular Highland sentiment about marriage. In Lorne and the Western Hebrides, the purity of the popular mind on this subject is most remarkable. The High-

lander may sometimes err through excess of animal passion, but he is never consciously indecent, and he is utterly innocent of the “gaudriole.”

Happy years had Duncan Bàn in Glenorchay, drinking into his soul every tint of the glorious landscape, and loving the more the longer he looked. For six years he was sergeant in the Breadalbane Fencibles, and when that regiment was disbanded in 1799, he procured, by the influence of the Earl of Breadalbane, a place in the City Guard of Edinburgh, those poor old veterans so savagely described by Ferguson in ‘Leith Races’:

“Their stumps, erst used to filabegs,
Are dight in spatterdashes,
Whase bailant hides scarce fend their legs
Frae weet and weary splashes
O’ dirt that day!”

He was then seventy-five years of age. About this time he composed a quaint, long rhyme, in praise of Dunedin, or Edinburgh; and the poem, although not one of his inspired productions, is deeply interesting from its quaint touches of wondering realism. The old man, with his sharp hunter’s eye, missed nothing, as he wandered in the strange streets. He describes

the castle, the battery, the abbey, the houses “wealthy and great;” the building of the parliament, where “reasonable gentlemen” administer justice, with free power to “hang the offender up high;” the swells in the street, with powder in their curled hair and a “bunch like silk on the top;” the pretty ladies, with stays to keep them straight and thin, beauty spots on their faces, strong, tight, and pointed shoes, with (adds the poet) “heels much too high;” the coaches and the hard-hoofed horses frisking and prancing, so much finer than any reared on Highland pastures. All this was pleasing for a time, while it had the charm of novelty; but doubtless the heart of the old bard wearied for the hills. Some years after, on the 19th of September, 1802, he visited his home, and wandered a long day among the scenes he loved so well, and then and there composed the most beautiful of all his poems—‘The Last Farewell to the Hills.’ He was then seventy-eight years old.

THE LAST ADIEU TO THE HILLS.

Yestreen I stood on Ben Dorain, and paced its dark gray path ;
Was there a hill I did not know ?—a glen or grassy strath ?
Oh ! gladly in the times of old I trod that glorious ground,
And the white dawn melted in the sun, and the red-deer cried
around.

How finely swept the noble deer across the morning hill,
While fearless played the fawn and doe beside the running rill ;
I heard the black and red cock crow, and the bellowing of the
deer—
I think those are the sweetest sounds that man at dawn may
hear.

Oh ! wildly as the bright day gleamed I climbed the mountain's
breast,
And when I to my home returned the sun was in the west ;—
'Twas health and strength, 'twas life and joy to wander freely
there,
To drink at the fresh mountain stream, to breathe the mountain
air.

And oft I'd shelter for a time within some shieling low,
And gladly sport in woman's smile, and woman's kindness
know.

Ah ! 'twas not likely one could feel for long a joy so gay !
The hour of parting came full soon—I sighed and went away.

And now the canker'd withering wind has struck my limbs at
last ;
My teeth are rotten and decayed, my sight is failing fast ;
If hither now the chase should come, 'tis little I could do,
Though I were hungering for food, I could not now pursue.

But though my locks are hoar and thin, my beard and whiskers
white,
How often have I chased the stag with dogs full swift of flight !
And yet although I could not join the chase if here it came,
The thought of it is charming still, and sets my heart in flame..

Ah ! much as I have done of old, how ill could I wend now,
By glen and strath, and rocky path, up to the mountain's brow !
How ill could I the merry cup quaff deep in social cheer !
How ill now could I sing a song in the gloaming of the year !

Those were the merry days of spring, the thoughtless times of
youth ;
'Tis Fortune watches over us, and helps our need, forsooth ;
Believing that, though poor enough, contentedly I live,
For George's daughter every day my meat and drink doth give.*

Yestreen I wandered in the glen ; what thoughts were in my
head !
There had I walked with friends of yore—where are those dear
ones fled ?
I looked and looked ; where'er I looked was nought but sheep !
sheep ! sheep !
A woeful change was in the hill ! World, thy deceit was deep !

From side to side I turn'd mine eyes—alas ! my soul was sore—
The mountain bloom, the forest's pride, the old men were no
more ;—
Nay, not one antler'd stag was there, nor doe so soft and slight,
No bird to fill the hunter's bag—all, all, were fled from sight !

* "George's daughter" was the musket carried by him as a
member of the City Guard, and servant of King George. The
value of his "meat and drink" was fivepence or sixpence a day.

Farewell, ye forests of the heath ! hills where the bright day
gleams !

Farewell, ye grassy dells ! farewell, ye springs and leaping
streams !

Farewell, ye mighty solitudes, where once I loved to dwell—
Scenes of my spring-time and its joys—for ever fare you well !

After that, Duncan Bàn returned to Edinburgh, and remained in the City Guard till about 1806, when, having saved a few pounds from his wages and the profits of his published poems, he was enabled to retire and spend his remaining years without toil of any kind. He was eighty-eight years old when he died. On the 19th of May, 1812, he was buried in the Greyfriars' Burying Ground, Edinburgh ; and a few years ago the monument was raised to his memory in Glenorchay. His fame endures wherever the Gaelic language is spoken, and his songs are sung all over the civilised world. Without the bitterness and intellectual power of Burns, he possessed much of his sentiment, and all of his personal tenderness ; and as a literary prodigy, who could not even write, he is still more remarkable than Burns. Moreover, the old, simple-hearted forester, with his fresh love of Nature, his shrewd insight, and his impassioned speech,

seems a far completer human figure than the Ayrshire ploughman, who was doubtless a glorious creature, but most obtrusive in his independence. Poor old Duncan was never bitter. The world was wonderful, and he was content to fill his humble place in it. He had "an independent mind," but was quite friendly to rank and power wherever he saw them; for, after all, what were they to Coire Cheathaich, with its natural splendours? What was the finest robe in Dunedin to the gay clothing on the side of Ben Dorain? Burns never saw Nature as Duncan Bàn saw her; was never merged into her, so to speak, never became a part of flying cloud and brooding shadows;—rather petted and fondled her like a mistress, with most unutterable tenderness but no awe. Burns was the intellectual being, man, lord of the earth and all its creatures, their lover till the end, but always their lord; bitter with the world, bitter with his own sins; too proud to gauge ale-barrels, but not too proud to get dead drunk or to debauch women; hurled down like a torrent by his own sheer force and strength; a divine singer, a shameless satirist, the lover of

“Mary in heaven” and the undoubted author of some of the filthiest “suppressed poems” in the ‘Merry Muses.’* Duncan Bàn “of the Songs” was a silent man, not specially intellectual, content to hawk his poems about the country and sing them at the fireside; with scarce a touch of satire in his whole nature; with a heart quite pure and fresh to the end, when, as an old man, he bade the hills “farewell for ever.” In the life of Burns we see the light striking through the storm-cloud, lurid, terrific, yet always light from heaven. In the life of Duncan Bàn there is nothing but a gray light of peace and purity, such as broods over the mountains when the winds are laid. Burns was the mightier poet, the grander human soul; but many who love him best, and cherish his memory most tenderly, can find a place in their hearts for Duncan Bàn as well.

As we quit the Highland poet’s grave, and follow the highway to the Pass of Awe, there is other music in our ears besides that of ‘Coire Cheathaich’ and

* The woofullest picture in the world is the last portrait of Burns, which we regret to see inserted in Dr. P. H. Waddell’s otherwise invaluable edition of the poet’s works. This portrait, once seen, haunts the beholder for ever.

the 'Last Farewell;' for did not the 'Children of the Mist,' haunting like mountain deer the secret gorges of Cruachan, utter many a lyrical plaint full of music and heart's agony? Readers of the 'Legend of Montrose' and the 'Lady of the Lake' know now by heart the wrongs of the Macgregors, the "clan that was nameless by day;" and Gaelic literature abounds with songs recording the sufferings and threats of the bloody outlawed clans—songs most weird and terrible, with frequent glimpses of wild tenderness. One of the best of these is the 'Hills of the Mist,' the tradition concerning which states that the singer, after having hidden her hunted kinsmen in a bed within the mountain shieling, sat down on the floor and crooned to herself a song bewailing their non-appearance :

"Oh, where are my kinsmen? O where do they wander?
I watch for them lonely; I wait, and I ponder."

And the pursuers, listening outside and noting the terrible agony of her voice (no counterfeit that, for might not the butchers enter at any moment and detect her ruse?), passed on in the darkness without searching the shieling.

The Pass of Awe is very beautiful, the road winding high up among the crags and woods and overlooking the wild waters of the river. Close to the bridge which spans the stream took place the famous fight between Bruce's followers and those of John of Lorne, when the bodies of the latter, miserably overthrown, choked and rendered bloody the impetuous flood. Along this path walked Mrs. Bethune Baliol, escorted by the exuberant Donald Macleish, on that memorable occasion when she saw the tree, the waterfall, and the solitary human figure—"a female form seated by the stem of the oak, with her head drooping, her hands clasped, and a dark-coloured mantle drawn over her head, exactly as Judith is represented in the Syrian medals as seated under her palm-tree."* The form of the miserable woman, still as a corpse or a marble statue, haunts the eye of the traveller at every step; rock, tree, and falling water assume her likeness; and the ear is filled with her memorable words of grief—

"My beautiful! my brave!"

* Scott's 'Highland Widow.'

There is no shape of fiction so closely wedded to an actual scene. The Pass of Awe and the Highland Widow are inseparable. The one solitary human soul, in its unutterable dolour, surrounded by sombre crags and corries and water plunging from pool to pool with sullen roar, is more truly regent of the place than all the traditional figures of clansmen and Children of the Mist.

Following the road along the Pass of Awe, you reach Tyanuilt, whence the ascent of Ben Cruachan is tolerably easy. Mountain climbing is always glorious, be the view obtained at the highest point ever so unsatisfactory; for do not pictures arise at every step, beautiful exceedingly, even if no more complex than a silver-lichened boulder half buried in purple heather and resting against the light blue mountain air; or a mountain pool fringed with golden mosses and green cresses, with blue sky in it and a small white cloud like a lamb; or a rowan tree with berries red as coral, sheltering the mossy bank where the robin sits in his nest? He who climbs Cruachan will see not only these small things, but he will behold a series of crag-pictures of un-

approachable magnificence—corries red and rugged, in the dark fissures of which snow lingers even as late as June, pyramids and minarets of granite glistening in the sunshine through the moisture of their own dew, stained by rain and light into darkly beautiful hues, and speckled by innumerable shadows from the passing clouds. There is a certain danger in roaming among the precipices near the summit, as the hill is subject to sudden mists, sometimes so dense that the pedestrian can scarcely see a foot before him; but in summer-time, when the heights are clear as amber for days together, the peril is not worth calculating. On a fine clear day, the view from the summit—which is a veritable red ridge or cone, not a flat table-land like that of some mountains—is very peculiar. It can scarcely be called picturesque, for there is no power in the eye to fix on any one picture; and on the other hand, to liken it to a map of many colours would be conveying a false impression. The effect is more that of a map than of a picture, and more like the sea than either. The spectator loses the delicate æsthetic sense, and feels his whole vision

swallowed up in immensity. The mighty waters of Awe brood sheer below him, under the dark abysses of the hill, with the islands like dark spots upon the surface. Away to the eastward rise peaks innumerable, mountain beyond mountain, from the moor of Rannoch to Ben Lomond, some dark as night with shadow, others dim as dawn from sheer distance, all floating limitless against a pink horizon and brooded over by a heaven of most delicate blue, fading away into miraculous tints, and filling the spirit with intensest awe; while in the west is visible the great ocean, stretching arms of shining sheen into the wildly broken coast, brightening around the isles that sleep upon its breast—Tiree, Coll, Rum, Canna, Skye—and fading into the long vaporous line where the setting sun sinks into the underworld. Turn where it may, the eye is satisfied, overcharged. Such another panorama of lake, mountain, and ocean is not to be found in the Highlands. As for Lorne, you may now behold it indeed, gleaming with estuaries and lakes:—Loch Linnhe, the Bay of Oban, and the mighty Firth as far south as Jura, and, northward over the moors, a

divine glimpse of the head of Loch Etive, blue and dreamy as a maiden's eyes. The head swims, the eyes dazzle. Are you a god, that you should survey these wonders in such supremacy? Look which way you will, you behold immensity—measureless ranges of mountains, measureless tracts of inland water, the measureless ocean, lighted here and there by humanity in the shape of some passing sail smaller to view than a sea-bird's wing. For some little time at least the spectator feels that spiritual exaltation which excludes perfect human perception; he yields to a wave of awful emotion, and bows before it as before God. He can be æsthetic again when he once more descends to the valleys.

CHAPTER V.

SPORT ON THE MOORS AND LOCHS.

Grouse and Black-game Shooting—A September Day on the Moors—The Grouse-shooter—Peat Bogs—Arrival of Snipe and Woodcock—Mountain Lochs and other Haunts of Wild-fowl—False and True Sportsmen.

SPORT on the moors of Lorne is what sport should be—a great deal more like wild-shooting than is generally the case on the great moors of the north. The game is not numerous, but strong, wary, full of health and strength. There is no overcrowding, as on the Perthshire and Aberdeenshire moors. In addition to the Argyllshire grouse, bright, rufous-breasted, full-chested, altogether the finest bird to be found in this country, and beyond all measure superior to the smaller-sized and darker-plumaged bird of the eastern moors, there are black-game in

abundance, a few partridges, brown and blue hares, a sprinkling of snipe, and a large number of wild-fowl. Roe-deers are plentiful in some districts, but the red-deer is seldom found. The *salmo ferox* abounds in Loch Awe, and all the rivers afford more or less salmon angling, while many of the small mountain lochs are as full of excellent trout as a pond in Surrey is full of sticklebacks. We have heard greedy sportsmen, used to wholesale butchery of bird and beast, complain of the barrenness of Lorne, and certainly Lorne is barren as compared with the great moors farther north; though it has this one great advantage, that it affords excellent sport long after the birds have packed elsewhere, and not a shot is to be had except by driving. In Lorne, moreover, the game in no way injures the population, is not numerous enough to ruin the farmer and poor crofter, is not valuable enough to be preserved at the cost of human lives. Any true sportsman will find his appetite fully gratified, though not by enormous "bags." All his skill will come into requisition—all his faculties will be duly tested.

Yearly, when the 12th of August dawns, the sound of shooting echoes from hill to hill, over the purple sea of moorland that surrounds the White House on the Hill; and the dogs leap eagerly in the kennel whenever their master passes; and overhead, on the top of the knoll, a cock-grouse crows cheerily in the sunshine. But the Wanderer is not to be tempted. The 20th of August is time enough to touch grouse in most seasons; and the black-game should invariably be left in peace till the 1st of September. Of course, where the object is merely to secure a large number of birds, the earlier in the season one commences the better; but it is scarcely conceivable how any rational being can find pleasure in butchering a poor bird when it is no bigger than a chicken and a great deal stupider, and when it is as easily hit as a target at thirty yards. Grouse-shooting is poor sport till the birds run well, instead of lying like stones at the mere sound of a distant footstep, and till they rise on the wing, swift and strong as an old cock, directly after the dog has fairly caused them to draw together and crouch. Black-game shooting on the

moors is unmanly sport. The birds won't get up, and are again and again collared by the over-eager dog, and when they do rise, early in the season, why, a boy might hit them with a pea-shooter as they dash clumsily away. But black-game shooting at evening flight, when the birds are wild beyond measure, and come down in hundreds to feed on the corn sheaves, is quite another sort of sport, worthy of any man with a clear eye and steady nerves. By this time the young cock is getting something like his adult plumage, and is a fair prize both as an edible and for the sake of his feathers. He is wonderfully wary and keen-sighted when feeding on the ground, but will seldom break his flight. Often on the moors, while lunching in the shade of some woody knoll, we have been disturbed by a flock of black-game whizzing past, one after another, a few yards distant, and not altering their course by an inch, even when they perceived their danger and saw some of the advance guard dropping stone-dead to the flash and report of the gun.

On some morning in the month of September, the

moor is in all its glory, stretching its mighty billows in all directions in one streak of luxurious purple and glittering green, broken up here and there by great rocks and lichened crags, and all flooded with the light of the sun. The sportsman sweats and pants, the dogs hang out their tongues and work heavily, unguided by a breath of wind; the gillie lies on his stomach and dips his heated face in every burn; and by midday you have killed perhaps a couple of brace of birds. Then comes the long delicious siesta by the brink of some crystal pool of the stream, and (after the lightest possible lunch) the pipe or cigar, in the enjoyment of which you lie on your side in the dry old heather, and watch the small shadows, cast by clouds as white as wool, moving noiselessly and sleepily over the free expanse of the heath—brooding at times as still as stones—at times hastening together like a flock of sheep, with the golden gleam on every side of them. If you are fortunate, about this time there comes a shower; just a sprinkling for a few minutes, soft as dew on the grass at dawn, scented as a maiden's breath. The moor sparkles, the air feels fresh and

free, and when you loosen the dogs, they no longer toil wearily with lolling tongues, but work in narrowing runs up the faintest possible breath of wind, draw swift and steady to the deep patch whither the pack have run, and become all in a moment rigid, with fixed eyes and dilating nostrils. Now and again, in such weather, the best dog in the world will miss his game, or, running unaware into the thick of them, scatter them like chaff. Of course, as is well known, each member of the broken pack will, at the beginning of the season, lie like a stone, wherever you mark it down, and sometimes almost suffer you to seize it with your hand. As the day advances, and the heat lessens, the bag increases; and about sunset, when the birds have left the springy bogs and betaken themselves to the dry knolls of young heather to feed, you will have sport in perfection.

The signs of a good grouse-shooter are few and unmistakable. He must be a steady walker, not so swift as to weary the dogs, not slow enough to spoil them, and not given to puffing like a porpoise when climbing the hillside. He must be a good snap

shot, ready at any moment to take a chance when it comes, with or without a point; he must account for two birds out of every pack that rises; and he should kill his birds, dead. He must be silent, for talking above all things spoils sport; sober, for dram-drinking endangers both himself and his companions; good-humoured, or the keepers and gillies will hate him and spoil his chance whenever they can; and, above all, humane, never shooting at a bird with the faintest chance of merely wounding it and letting it get away to die. In addition to all this, he must be a man to whom the moor is familiar at all seasons, who knows the haunts of birds in all sorts of weathers, who understands the whole theory of heather-burning, who is as well acquainted with every natural sign as the mountain-shepherd himself. Most men, of course, leave all things to their keepers, come to their moor on the 12th, and are taken about in due course at the beck and nod of "Donald." Some of these men shoot well; few of them are worthy of the name of sportsmen. Merely to be able to present a gun and knock down a mark is a feat that any "hedge-popper" can attain. Prac-

tical knowledge, loving observation of nature, power of silence, take time to grow, but they are essential. In addition to them may be mentioned a certain capacity of enduring physical discomfort, without which the grouse-shooter is no better than any pigeon-killer in the suburbs of London.

There are no very bad bogs in Lorne, though occasionally, while grouse-shooting, we have seen a brother sportsman disappear almost up to the armpits, and dragged him with some difficulty out of the oozy earth and green, slimy, subterranean pools. In hot weather, the grouse frequent the parts where the peat is cut and piled, and drink at the black pools in the hollows. At this time, the black-game come there also for the same purpose. In a "peat-bog" not fifty yards square, we have put up from twenty to thirty black-game singly, each crouching unseen till fairly run upon by the dog, and consisting of several old hens and their packs of young. They will lie, too, in the queerest holes imaginable, on the sides of ditches. We have seen our setter rigid and moveless over a hole where only a water-rat might be expected to dwell, and where a gray hen was

huddled up for the sake of the coolness and shade. The old cock is never to be found in such places. He broods alone and sulky, in some spot where he can have a free flight out of the way of danger. The most favourite of all places for young black-game in the heat of the day are the deep patches of bracken and fern on the moor, where they can run about with a very forest of greenness above their heads; but they soon learn to prefer the corn-fields, from the fact that the latter combine both food and shelter. Many sportsmen greatly annoy the farmer by covertly sending their dogs into the standing corn, and shooting the startled birds from the edges. This practice is most reprehensible, and should be discountenanced by all true sportsmen. Anything that interferes, however slightly, with the rights of others, should be abandoned; and the farmer's crop is of infinitely more importance to the world than the shooter's game-bag.

But we are being betrayed into a treatise on grouse-shooting; whereas it is merely our intention to sketch in a general way the possibilities of sport in Lorne.

As the season advances, the birds grow scarcer and scarcer—less and less approachable. A white frost sometimes tames the red grouse, never the black ; and both sooner or later form into great packs, which pass away like a cloud long ere the sportsman gets within gun-range. A little may be done by driving, but not much. Instead of harassing the grouse late in the season, it is better to turn one's attention to other game. Hares and rabbits abound in many districts, especially the blue hare, which goes to earth like a cony. About November the local snipe, reinforced by legions from the north, swarm in all the bogs and marshes, unless it is very wet, when they scatter in every direction over the damp hillsides. One fine night the little "jacks" arrive, sprinkling themselves all over the country, and offering chance after chance, in their peculiar fashion, to blundering sportsmen. Last of all come the woodcocks, two or three at a time—first taking to the deep clumps on the hillside, and afterwards selecting winter quarters by the side of the runlets that water the hazel-woods. Many of them, however, only rest a few days in Lorne, and then disappear, in all pro-

bability winging farther south. Those which linger through the whole winter often remain to breed in the spring.

The lochs among the hills abound in wild fowl, many of which breed there. There is one small mere, not a mile distant from the White House on the Hill, which we have seen as thickly covered with teal and widgeon as a duckpond in the Zoological Gardens. At such times, however, it is exceedingly difficult to get a shot; so numerous are the eyes watching, and so easily do the birds take the alarm, that "sitting shots" are out of the question. The best plan is for the sportsman to place himself in ambush, at one end of the water, send his man to disturb the birds at the other, and trust to chance for a shot flying. If the affair is properly managed, he may fire five or six times as fast as he can load; and perhaps the teal, less wary than the larger duck, may alight on the water within a few yards of his ambush. Directly frost comes, the small lochs are abandoned, and the wild-fowl betake themselves to the arms of the sea. In a severe season, when all the fresh-water meres are

frozen over, the salt-water lochs afford excellent sport ; the better, in our opinion, because the birds are wild beyond measure, and will test all the shooter's powers of skill and patience.

We will not detain the reader by any further enumeration of the sports of Lorne, particularly as our notion of sport is peculiar, and has nothing in common with the ideas of men who delight in slaughter. To us, sport is only desirable in so far as it develops all that is best and strongest in a man's physical nature, tries his powers of self-patience and endurance, quickens his senses, and increases his knowledge of and reverence for created things. In so far as it renders him callous to suffering and selfish in his enjoyments, sport is detestable. There are yearly let loose upon the moors of Scotland a set of men who are infinitely less noble than the beasts and birds they murder, who are brutal without courage and conceited without dignity, who degrade all manly sports by their abominable indifference to the rights alike of fellow-men and dumb creatures. Fortunately, all sportsmen in Scotland are not men of this sort ; a few fine-souled gentlemen

are sprinkled here and there; but there is far too much brutal murder on all hands, by beings who take a savage pleasure in the mere slaughter of things as tame as hens and sheep. The true test of a day's sport is not the number of head secured, but the amount of skill and pluck requisite to secure it. Depend upon it, also, the man who recklessly and wantonly takes away the lives of dumb things merely for the sake of killing, would, if his wretched neck was as secure in one case as in the other, assist with equal pleasure at the massacre of his fellow-men. Many of the men who joined in the infernal carnival of murder in India some years ago, and in so doing left on this nation a taint which God will sooner or later avenge on our boasted civilization, had first developed the taste for blood in the pheasant coverts of England and the swarming moors of the north.

Wild-fowl shooting on the sea-fjörds, otter-hunting on Kerrera, salmon-angling in Loch Awe, sea-fishing on the firth—any of these might supply matter for a separate chapter, if we were to chronicle one tithe of our experience; but we are compelled to pass on

to more moving matter, only remarking in conclusion that, although the lover of battues and wholesale slaughter may find himself better served elsewhere, the true sportsman will never regret a season spent with rod and gun, afloat and ashore, on the lochs and moors of Lorne.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRTH OF LORNE.

The *Ocean Queen*, or *Coffin*—Shon Macnab's race with the Barber—Lachlan Finlay—From Crinan to the Dorus Mhor—Hebridean Tides—Scarba—The Gulf of Corryvreckan—Its Horrors and Perils—Luing and the Small Isles—The Open Firth—Easdale and its Quarriers—Tombs at the Door—Miseries of Calm—Gylen Castle and the Island of Kerrera—King Haco's Invasion of the Hebrides—A Puff from the South-East—The Island of Mull—Johnson and Boswell in the Hebrides—A Run to Tobermory—Loch Sunart—A Rainy Day—Ardtornish Castle—Anchored between Wind and Tide—Night on the Firth—Troubles of Darkness—Farewell to the *Ocean Queen*—Arrival of the *Tern*.

THE Firth of Lorne stretches from Loch Crinan (a spot familiar to every Highland tourist) as far as the entrance to the Sound of Mull; after passing which, it changes its name to Loch Linnhe, and creeps northward, ever narrowing till it reaches Bannavie and forms the narrow estuary of Loch Eil.

Strictly speaking, only the mainland coast as far as Loch Crinan appertains to Lorne, but in old times Mull was included, as well as many of the far-off islands. Be that as it may, the Firth of Lorne is a glorious sheet of salt water, fed by the mighty tides of the Atlantic, and forming, both on the islands and on the mainland, a line of sea-coast not easily matched for loneliness and beauty. Numerous islands, large and small, stud the waters, forming narrow passages through which the tide boils with terrific fury. Great heights, grassy and rocky, rise everywhere out of the sea, casting dark shadows. Everywhere the black teeth of the reef threaten the seaman. Innumerable bays and land-locked lakes lie close in the shelter of the coast; but the anchorages are nearly all bad and dangerous, on account of the submerged rocks and the foul bottom.

To see this Firth aright, to enjoy its wondrous scenery in a way quite impossible to the ordinary tourist, the Wanderer secured the *Ocean Queen*, a small yacht of nine tons, thirty-four feet long, seven and a half feet beam, and drawing precisely six feet of water aft. She was the crankest vessel ever built

by the hand of man, and was speedily known by the nickname of the *Coffin*. Her mainsail was an enormous sheet of canvas, though luckily somewhat old and tearable; and she carried also a gaff-topsail. Her speed, running before the wind, was very great; and beating to windward, she managed finely as long as she could carry canvas. She was quite unfit for a dangerous coast like that of Lorne, where the storms are sudden and the squalls terrific; but she had a neat little cabin and snug fore-castle, so that she made a tolerable floating-home. Many a fright did the Wanderer get in her. Latterly, he managed to render her pretty snug by running in the bowsprit, and sailing her with the foresail only and single-reefed mainsail; but, from first to last, she was as fickle as an unbroken filly: her vilest quality of all being her awkwardness in "coming about," even under the most experienced management.

Having secured this noble vessel, the Wanderer had to look about for a suitable person to assist him in managing her: no difficult task, it may be imagined, on a fishing-coast and close to a fishing-town; but in good truth, he was doomed to a bitter ex-

perience. After trying several impostors, who betrayed themselves in a day, he secured the services of Shon Macnab, a gigantic Gael, six feet three in his shoes, and about twenty years of age. A fine specimen of the sailor was Shon, with his great red face, flaming whiskers, and huge hands; and he knew how to move about the boat as well as an east-country fisherman, and was altogether smart at his work, from taking in a reef to climbing up the rigging to set the gaff-topsail. But Shon had two most inveterate faults: he was inordinately vain and utterly untruthful. No man knew how to handle a boat but Shon Macnab; all his townsmen were poor pretenders. No one could pilot a boat on the west coast but Shon; he knew every rock and shallow, and every sideways, from the Mull of Cantyre to Cape Wrath. Unfortunately, however, Shon had never been farther from Oban than Ardnamurchan, and his knowledge of the coast consisted of a sort of second-sight—very gratifying to the possessor, but liable to get the confiding owner of a boat into serious trouble. All went well with Shon for a time; but at last, mad with success, he

secretly wagered "the Barber" to race the latter's vessel, an open fore-and-aft boat, very superior in seaworthiness, from Oban round the Lady's Rock and back round Kerrera, a distance of about forty miles. So one day the *Wanderer* came down to the shore just in time to see the *Ocean Queen* rounding the Maiden Island on her way to the Lady's Rock, and side-by-side with her the Barber's boat. It was blowing half a gale of wind, and the Barber soon turned back to the bay; but Shon, with a picked crew of Gaels, all wild with whiskey, doubtless, still held on his wild career; while the *Wanderer*, climbing the heights above the town, watched his vessel, and expected every minute to see it submerged. A big sea was rolling in the Firth, and the little boat, too sorely pressed under canvas, was sadly knocked about. She reached Oban in the afternoon, with only a tear in the mainsail; but her planks were slightly strained, and she was never as tight after that day. Although Shon begged wildly for pardon, the *Wanderer* was inexorable, and sent him about his business.

For some little time it seemed as if no fit person

would appear to take Shon's place. Several candidates appeared, but were rejected on various scores—greediness, dirtiness, stupidity, or old age. At last the Wanderer discerned a small tradesman in the village, who had been a herring-fisher, and whose only present occupation was to sit on a sack and whittle wood with a knife, while his wife managed the shop. Lachlan Finlay was from the "high-hill country," on the skirts of Morven, and was a true Celt of the quieter kind—very cold and distant on first acquaintance, but affectionate in the extreme. Every day that the Wanderer sailed with Lachlan he liked him better. He was tolerably good at his work—he was thoroughly truthful, and as simple-hearted as a child. He had the "boating mind" of a boy, and was never happy without his pocket-knife to work with. His "pouches" were full of nails, bits of string, and other odds and ends. He was as clean as an infant, mind and body, while having a keen perception of the value of money.

As Lachlan knew nothing of the coast, the Wanderer had to work his way about by the government charts, picking his steps, so to speak, from place to

place with extreme caution, and ever dreading the hidden dangers of the Firth. Many a narrow escape had the *Ocean Queen* in those days: at one time swinging to her doom on the fierce tide of Dunstaffnage, and only being saved by superhuman endeavours to tow her out of the tideway with the punt; at another, bumping and scratching on the submerged rocks to the north of the Maiden Island; sometimes caught in the open, and having to run for life; at others drifting in the darkness on some unknown and dangerous portion of the coast. One adventure of this sort is as good as another, and as in the course of a certain cruise we had an opportunity of seeing the whole scenery of the Firth, let us here chronicle our experience.

We had run up to Crinan to meet a friend from the south. Having taken him on board, we slipped out of the basin at daybreak, with all canvas set save the gaff-topsail, and ran with the light breeze on our quarter across to the Dorus Mhor, or Big Gate, a narrow passage formed by the peninsula and islands of Loch Craignish. At spring-tides, the tide in the Dorus runs five miles an hour, and when there

is a breeze, the cross seas are terrific. Running with wind and tide, the *Ocean Queen* actually flew; but while she was shooting through the Dorus the waves broke fiercely over her counter, and as the boiling tide dragged at her this way and that, it was a task of no ordinary skill to keep her steady with the helm. The steamship ploughs her way through the passage, though sometimes with difficulty, and those who stand on her deck look down on the boiling gulf in safety; but it is different with those who sit in a tiny craft, with the water lapping around and over them, and the bubbling roar painfully audible. These tideways are ugly indeed to the seaman's eye. How the water hisses and swirls, now like green glass with its own motion, now broken into foam, now rushing to the overfall and plunging down! How the cross-currents tug at the little craft, as if seeking to drag her to her doom! Sometimes a huge coil of seaweed marks the hidden rock, a floating tangle gives a false alarm, whirling on the surface of the waters ahead. The tides of the Dorus Mhor and the adjoining Sound of Scarba are only equalled by the tides of the Kyles of Skye.

On the present occasion there was no danger, and as the dawn blossomed into full bright day, we left the Dorus Mhor behind, and keeping close along the mainland, which stretched far along to the right, we followed the inner channel of the Firth of Lorne. We were soon abreast of Scarba, a single conical mountain, rising abruptly out of the sea and fashioning itself into an island about three miles long, very precipitous and rocky, but having on the eastern side a series of thinly-wooded declivities, which, in the gentle light of the summer morning, were touched with tints of quite ethereal beauty. Between Scarba and Jura, which stretches far to the southward, is a narrow sound opening on the great dim ocean, and, looking through the passage, we ever and anon caught a white gleam as of great waves breaking in the distance. Yonder lay the far-famed Gulf of Corryvreckan, and it was to escape the force of the tide which sets for miles towards the dreaded passage that we were keeping so close to the mainland shore. Corryvreckan is the Hebridean *Mahlström*, ever regarded with fearful eyes by the most daring sailors of the inland deep. Poets may be

allowed to sing, like Campbell, of “the distant isles that hear the loud Corbrechtan roar;” or, like Scott, of

“Scarba’s isle, whose tortured shore
Still rings to Corryvreckan’s roar;”

but it is no mere poetical dread that fills our Lachlan’s heart as he leans against the mast and searches the distance. From infancy upward, the name of yonder gulf has been to him a word of awe and terror. He has heard of great ships being swallowed up whole, torn into pieces by the teeth of hidden reefs, and vomited out in fragments miles away on the Islay shore. He has seen old men turn pale by the very fireside at the mention of Corryvreckan. He believes that the ebb tide in Corryvreckan, “when the wind is from the west, would drown a man-of-war as easily as the shell of a nut.” He has, nevertheless, heard stories of vessels that have passed safely through the terrific place; but these, to him, were no less than miracles, brought about by a special Providence.

The Wanderer used to smile at the yarns of sailors and fishermen, with their dark accumulation of mystic terrors; but the more he navigated the

waters in his unprofessional way the less sceptical he grew. In good truth, familiarity with the sea, instead of breeding contempt, only strengthens the sense of awe. Its dangers are not for ever on the surface; they present themselves slowly and upon occasion. When the Wanderer first began to sail small craft, he saw little or no peril; now, every day afloat increases his caution and respect for the elements; and if he goes on in the same ratio for a few years longer, he will be afraid to venture on the water at all. In seafaring matters, distrust the man who seems stupidly indifferent to danger and overconfident. Choose the man who has his eye cast for ever to windward, with that hungry watchfulness so peculiar to the skilled fisher. Never forgive him if in sailing an open boat you catch him fastening the sheet, though only with a half hitch; for be certain the man who does that is irreclaimable, and will drown you some day.

Of course, the accounts of Corryvreckan are exaggerated: the danger consisting, not in the whirlpools, but in the terrific sea raised by the wind when contending with the tidal wave and the long Atlantic

swell in the narrow passage of the sound. In times of storm the place is indeed perilous, and verily capable of drowning a large vessel. Caught in the numberless currents, a ship becomes at once unmanageable, and must drive whither Fate directs—either to strike on some corner of the coast, or to spring her planks and sink to the bottom, or perhaps—as happened on one traditional occasion—to be swept in safety out of the tide along the Jura shore. In the most dangerous part of the gulf, where it is a hundred fathoms deep, there is a submerged pyramidal rock, rising precipitously to within fifteen fathoms of the surface, and the result is a subaqueous overfall, causing in its turn infinite gyrations, eddies, and counter-currents. There is most danger at the flood-tide, which sets from the eastward through the gulf at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, and encounters the whole swell of the Western Atlantic rolling into the narrow sound. At turn of tide there is a brief lull, during which in calm weather boats have passed through; but the attempt is at all times to be avoided, as the slightest miscalculation as to the tides, or the sudden rising of the wind, would

render escape impossible. At all times Corryvreckan "roars," the sound being audible even close to the mainland shore. The poet Campbell heard it at a distance of many leagues, at Downie House, close to Loch Crinan. He compares its effect in calm weather, when all the surrounding seas are still, to the sound of innumerable chariot-wheels.

Quitting the peninsula of Craignish, we had reached the shores of the Island of Luing, which, with Seil, Shuna, and small isles innumerable, lies so close to the mainland as almost to form a portion of the coast of Nether Lorne. Seil is separated from the mainland by a channel of only a few yards, forming a rapid river-like sound two miles in length. Low and undulating, these isles present few points of beauty, but up behind them lies Loch Melfort, a salt-water lake of rare loveliness, surrounded by magnificent cliffs of ivy-clad gneiss. Out beyond them, to the west, and lying close to and due north of Scarba, are Lunga and the Black Isles. Closed in on each side, we were running before the wind up the broad passage known as the Sound of Scarba, and were soon struggling in the tideway opposite the

Black Isles, on the largest of which a lighthouse is situated. A few minutes later, however, we were clear of all the isles, and saw before us the glories of the great Firth stretched out in the golden light of a summer day.

Due west of our little vessel stretched the open Atlantic, growing dimmer and dimmer in distance, with a ghostly ship afar, beating southward under full sail; but down to the north-west, fifteen miles away, rose the gigantic mountains of Mull, their deep purple hues mingling with mist upon the peaks; while farther north yet, the white lighthouse of Lismore gleamed with the gleam of breaking waves at its base—and above and beyond mountains innumerable darkened the distance. Straight before the yacht's bow the Firth sparkled, its waters visible for many a mile, and a whole fleet of fishing-boats, large and small, white-sailed and red-sailed, were drifting in the slack tide over a broad patch of dead calm off the great cliffs of the Island of Kerrera, which mingled with the mainland on the starboard bow. The breeze that had brought us thus far was dying fast, and scarcely had we run three miles ahead, and

got abreast of the little island of Easdale, when it died away altogether, suddenly as breath from a mirror, and left us rolling about most uncomfortably on the smooth sea. It is ever thus in summer; no wind can be relied on for many hours together; and hence the great danger of navigating the inland channels with their fierce tides.

The boat which conveys the ordinary tourist to Oban calls at Easdale, but few strangers pay any attention to the unpicturesque little island. Easdale is, nevertheless, worth a visit, for the sake of its slate quarries, which are perhaps the finest in Scotland;*

* "The first visitors to Easdale found the shores strewn with slates quarried and split by the action of the waves, and from the supply thus provided was taken all that was required for many years. By the time the shores were cleared of the loose stones, the value of the slate had come to be fully realised, and, to meet the demand which had arisen, quarrying was resorted to. The exposed strata on the seashore were first worked, and the process of quarrying, as handed down by tradition, was this. At low-water, wedges of seasoned oak were driven into the cleavage seams, and when the tide flowed the wedges expanded and detached the superincumbent rock. That was a slow and uncertain process, and in course of time was abandoned for blasting by gunpowder. When the seams of slate had been worked down as far as the tide would allow, the persons engaged in quarrying began to look upon their occupation as in danger of

still more for the sake of its population, all dependent on the quarries, all born in the locality, and living quite isolated there, summer and winter.

extinction, and some of them actually left the island. The trap dykes which occur in the seams, and divide them into compartments, had, when reached, evidently led the quarrymen to conclude that they had got to the limits of the slate deposits. Those of the workmen who remained on the island 'explored' the ground, and opened a quarry a little distance from the shore. Hydraulic engineering was but little understood by them, and they were again cast into a state of despair by an accumulation of surface water in the quarry. In order to get rid of this they cut a trench down to the sea on the level of the low-water line, and by means of that ran off the water that accumulated between the ebbs, the rising tide being prevented from getting into the works by a sluice fixed in the channel. The men never dreamed of being able to carry on their work at a lower point than that which their drain enabled them to reach; and it is related that on the occasion of an unusually low tide one of the workmen fired a blast which he boastfully exclaimed was 'the lowest that ever would be got off in Easdale.' How much this prediction has come short of verification will be seen farther on. In those early days of the quarries the men were assisted by their wives and families—the slates being carried from place to place in 'creels on the backs of the women.

"The mode of working the quarries was revolutionised some time in the course of last century by the introduction of a pump which was obtained from the wreck of a castaway ship. As the pumps enabled the workmen to keep down the accumulations of surface water, the quarries were sunk beneath the sea-level

Many old superstitions that have died their lingering death elsewhere still flourish here, together with many primitive manners and customs. The men of

and thus the beds of slate which had been abandoned for ever, as the quarriers thought, were got out. Finding that the employment of the old pump gave them such a great advantage, the men next obtained a crank-pump, fitted with a fly-wheel--a machine which was regarded with admiration by the islanders. The slate strata in the interior of the island were next broken into, and a number of quarries were opened, for which pumping machinery of an improved kind was introduced. Among the new appliances was one of Newcome's atmospheric engines, which, when it was set to work, excited much wonder among the workpeople. The engine would appear to have been of a very rude construction. The boiler consisted of a square box of cast iron one inch in thickness, and the piston was 'packed' with leather. As the engine could not be worked profitably, horse-power was substituted in the beginning of this century, and the introduction of horses for that purpose suggested the substitute of carts for wheelbarrows in drawing the slates out of the quarries. About the year 1807 a windmill was erected to work the pump of the principal quarry, and gave great satisfaction. With a moderate breeze it worked very effectively, raising the water through a seven-inch pipe from a depth of fifty feet. The windmill continued in use for twenty years, and the part of the work with which it was connected still bears the name of the Windmill Quarry. In 1866 a powerful steam-engine was erected in such a position as to be available for pumping three quarries. About the same time wharves were erected for loading ships, and these were found to be a great convenience,

Easdale are true Celts—daring boatmen and intense dreamers—speaking the fine tongue that many southerners deem nearly extinct, but which still remains the common and cherished speech of Lorne and the Hebrides. He who walks among their houses will note, here and there, large slabs of stone set up on end. These have been purchased and preserved—does the reader guess for what purpose? For gravestones; reserved by the owners to mark their own places of rest. Here and elsewhere in the Hebrides, one not only finds the islander preparing his own shroud, but buying his own tombstone. There they stand, daily monitors of the Inevitable, with the great Ocean murmuring for ever close to them—a daily preacher of the Eternal.

It is always weary work, waiting for the wind: to look this way and that, in dim hope and expectation, despairingly whistling according to the

the practice previously being to anchor the vessels in the Sound, and carry the slates to them in boats. Railway inclines were subsequently constructed in all the quarries. These were at first worked by horses, but for a number of years past steam power has been employed.”—From *Sketches of Scotch Slate Quarries*, published in the *Weekly Scotsman*.

sailors' superstition ; to see the water darken miles off, and the shadow creeping nearer and nearer, and then, just as you expect your sails to fill, miserably dying ; or worse still, as on the present occasion, to watch with fierce chagrin the breeze at your back, which for hours together blows pleasantly a hundred yards behind you, and there, for some mysterious reason, pauses, and won't come a single inch nearer ; or, worst of all, to drift on the swift current, in spite of all your efforts, towards some dreaded danger, from which only a smart "puff" could bear you away in safety. He who uses a sailing-boat* must recommend to his spirit many hard virtues, foremost among which is patience. The wind is ever perverse, and will serve no man's will. It is most perverse of all on an island coast like that of the Hebrides. Breezes of all sorts are bred among the clouds of the

* A good story is told of the old Clyde bargeman who, sailing slowly on the Firth, and finding himself passed by the first steamboat, watched the latter till almost out of earshot, and then, unable to keep silence any longer, bawled out : " Ay ! get awa' wi' your *Deil's reek*" (Devil's smoke) ; " I'm just sailing as it pleases the *breath o' God* ! " And there is something in this idea of the "breath of God," after all, apart from the comic connection in the anecdote.

hill-tops, and they are ever rushing down when least expected. An experienced eye can see them coming, but that is all. Even in summer, it is impossible to predict the weather with much certainty.

For hours we drifted on a glassy sea, beguiling part of the time by popping unsuccessfully at a shoal of porpoises, which tumbled for some minutes about a hundred yards from the vessel, in pursuit of the herring, doubtless, for numberless gulls and terns screamed in the air or floated like ourselves on the water. The tide still took us in the right direction, and we grew nearer and nearer to the fleet of fish-boats becalmed off Kerrera; until at last, to our disgust, a nice puff of wind struck them ahead, and, beating slowly northward, they drew one by one towards the opposite shores of Mull.

It was now afternoon, a dimly-bright spring afternoon, and we were floating off Gylen Castle, the shadow of which was clearly visible in the smooth sea. Gylen, like Dunollie, was an old stronghold of the Lords of Lorne. Its gray tower stands on a precipice overlooking the ocean, in the centre of a desolate bay, which has been washed and torn

into the wildest forms of crag and scaur by the roll of the western sea. . It commands a full view of the boundless Atlantic. The heights of Kerrera above it are dark and verdureless, and deepen its look of loneliness and desolation. Even on this summer day it appears pitiful and lonely; but in darker days, when it looms through the sad mist like a ghost, it seems to have a look of almost human sorrow. Many a wild scene of life and revel has it beheld. Now, its only inhabitants are the owl and the wild rock-pigeon, the latter of which builds in great numbers among the rocky cliffs of the island.

This said island of Kerrera, although not strikingly picturesque in form, possesses such peculiar fascinations as grow upon the imagination. It is separated from the mainland by a narrow strait or sound, half a mile wide, at the northern extremity of which lies the beautiful Bay of Oban; is four miles long and two miles broad; and presents an irregular surface of hill and dale, on which can be had a harder day's walking than anywhere else in Lorne. It is a great haunt of the

otter, and its crags shelter birds of prey of all descriptions, from the hooded crow to the peregrine falcon. But its chief attractions are on the coast, and the way to behold them is to spend the long day in rowing right round its shores. The cliffs and outlying islets form themselves into pictures of rare beauty, shifting with the lights and shadows of heaven and ocean. The waters on both sides are dangerous for sailing vessels, being sown everywhere with reefs and shallows; studded on the outer coast with many small black islands, in the neighbourhood of which are all sorts of submerged dangers; and most unpleasant of all is the narrow inner sound, which is full of rocks not all marked in the charts. Beating to windward up the Sound of Kerrera is disagreeable work; the short tacks are so wearisome, besides being full of danger to one not well acquainted with the coast. The squalls off the cliffs of the mainland, when the south-east wind blows, are sharp and sudden, often striking you straight from the heights without ruffling an inch of the sound to windward. Woe betide the helmsman who fails to "luff" skilfully at such times.

On certain days, no skill is of much avail. The puffs come and go, with intervals of calm; and just as the vessel has lost all way in the latter, and is lying dead still, the squall leaps upon her like a tiger, and she staggers on half drowned, happy to escape with her mast above water.

One never stands on Kerrera without thinking of King Haco's memorable invasion of Lorne and the Isles, which is recorded in our second volume. Here, in Kerrera, King Alexander II. had that weird dream, when St. Olaf, St. Magnus, and St. Columba appeared to him and warned him to return home to Scotland; and here the King, having disregarded the warning, died of a mysterious distemper.* Hither, to the same anchorage doubtless (Horse-shoe Bay?) came the Norwegian monarch, and found King Dugal and other Hebrideans waiting to receive him. From the Kyles of Skye to Loch Ranza and Loch Long, there is scarcely a portion of the coast that the great invasion does not render

* "Konungur sagði draumin; ok fysto flestir at hann skyldi afto snúa. Enn hann villdi þat egi; litlu síðarr tók hann sótt ok andadiz." See Vol. II. the 'Saga of Haco the King.'

memorable. Nothing has changed since then. Tobermory and Kerrera, and Loch Ranza, and the other places where the Norwegian vessels lay, are our anchorages to this hour. Standing on the high cliffs of Kerrera, and gazing across the Firth of Lorne to the opening of the Sound of Mull, we have often pictured the quaint Norwegian vessels issuing one by one out of the distance, with "Haco the aged" in the largest—"built wholly of oak, containing twenty-seven banks of oars, and adorned with heads and necks of dragons overwrought with gold." There is no finer figure in history than that of Haco the King, with his stately generosity, his deep piety.

"The actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust!"

He was a prince indeed, sowing thought and order wherever he stepped, and when the end was near bearing his lingering illness with holy calm. "He desired Norwegian books might be read to him day and night: first, the 'Lives of Saints,' and when they were ended, the 'Chronicles of our Kings from Haldan the Black,' and so of all Norway's Kings, one after another." Nor did he forget his followers,

great or small, but bequeathed them loving gifts; and with his dying breath he left orders for the guidance of Magnus his son, in dealing with the people and the army. Finally, surrounded by the Wise Men of his kingdom, he passed "from this home's life," leaving a name and fame that smell sweet to the present day.

The summer calm did not last long, and it was broken with ominous suddenness. All at once, a low faint moan was heard, the water darkened in Kerrera Sound, and the great boom swung over with a violent tug at the mast as the sail filled. "Take in a reef, Lachlan, for we're going to have as much as we can carry!" Lachlan laughed and hesitated, but the Wanderer, whose experience told him what was coming, brought the boat up to the wind, handed the helm to his southern friend, and sprang at the reef-points—Lachlan assisting vigorously, though with a very sceptical air. The wind *did* come, blowing on our quarter with considerable force, and it soon became necessary to take off the foresail and lower the peak of the mainsail. Thus eased, the *Ocean Queen* bowled round the southern point of Kerrera and out

into the dancing waters of the open Firth. As she ran between Kerrera and the islands at its extremity, we saw the great cormorants sitting bolt upright in a long row on one of the isles, with their dirty white patch at the throat like a street-preacher's neck-cloth. We passed just out of gunshot, and fired a salute into the air above their heads. A few plunged into the sea, dived, and emerged a hundred yards away; the greater number took wing and went flapping across the Firth slowly close to the sea; but a few great fellows, swollen with fish, merely rolled their knowing heads from side to side, and sat still on their thrones.

The wind was now so strong that it would have been impossible to carry canvas beating to windward; flying with the wind on our quarter and occasionally lowering the peak to the puffs, we got along capitally, at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour. How the bright waves danced and sparkled!

“Merrily, merrily bounds the bark,
On a breeze from the southward free,
So shoots thro' the morning sky the lark,
Or the swan thro' the summer sea.”

The sky brightened, partaking of the wind's gladness. The fleet of fishing-boats were now running swiftly toward the Sound of Mull, at the mouth of which the lighthouse of Lismore, with the wild ebb-tide foaming at its base, stood in bright relief against the great Morven mountains. Every boat there, big or small, was bound for the Long Island or Outer Hebrides, along the wild shores of which the herring were flashing, and one and all, after a month's fishing, would follow the mysterious flight of the fish southward. Noticeable among them was an Isle of Man "jigger," running neck and neck with a double lug-sailed boat from Newhaven, while west-country smacks innumerable lagged behind. There was more pluck and spirit, more calm resolution to fight with the great forces of the world, more gentleness of heart and strength combined, on board that little fleet, than could readily be found in any camp of war. There they flew, going "as it pleased the breath of God!" They passed the dark shores of Mull, they shot one by one round the base of the dark castle of Duart, and they faded, with a last ghostly gleam, in the dark shadows that slept

then, and sleep almost always, on the Sound of Mull.

It had been an original intention to make Oban that night, but to do so we should have had to beat considerably to windward, and the breeze was too strong. We were compelled, in despite of our inclination, to run right after the fishing-boats into the Sound of Mull. The wind had already raised a considerable sea, and we surged forward with the waves dashing in white foam behind us, sometimes almost breaking into the cockpit where we sat. We were soon close under the shadow of Mull, with Kerrera far away on our weather quarter, and Duart Castle drawing every moment nearer and nearer on the port bow. There was no prospect of any first-rate anchorage, short of Tobermory, which was thirty miles away up the Sound. True, there were three lochs with tolerable shelter and holding-ground along the coast of Mull which we were skirting, but the entrances were all more or less dangerous—Loch Buy being not only perilous, but quite unknown to us, Loch Spelve partly known but

always perilous on account of submerged rocks in a passage only a few yards wide, and Loch Don exposed to the full force of the sea when the wind blew as it was then blowing. In the Sound of Mull itself, it was not much better. Duart Bay and Craignure were far too open, Loch Aline could not be well entered against the ebb-tide, and Scallastle had one great disadvantage, owing to our ignorance of the rock-sown waters which surround it. However, if the wind continued to blow at that rate, we should be snug in Tobermory in less than three hours.

As we flew through the water towards Duart, we had a fine view of Mull and its mountains, on the peaks of which the sun was now pouring soft purple light. The coasts of the great island, particularly to the southward, where they are washed by the Atlantic, are wild and precipitous, and assume forms only less beautiful than the basaltic crags on the north-east coast of Skye. Inland, all is dreary and unpicturesque as compared with other surrounding islands. Of course, where there are great hills, with occasional moorland lochs and frequent glimpses

of the sea-arm winding far into the land, there must be beauty, abiding and ever-varying; where there is heather, there must be glorious colour; but taken comparatively, Mull is uninviting and wearisome, save only to the sportsman, who will find its moors tolerably abundant in wild fowl of all kinds and its high corries frequented by the red deer.

To our mind, by far the pleasantest picture connected with Mull is that of good old Doctor Johnson traversing its weary wilds on horseback in company with Boswell. "Mr. Boswell thought no part of the Highlands equally terrific;" but the Doctor was lion-hearted. If any final proof were wanted that Johnson had in him the soul of a hero, it is to be found in the chronicle of his northern tour. In the autumn of 1773 (after trying in the summer "to learn *Dutch*," and being "interrupted by inflammation of the eyes") he set out, an old man of sixty-four, for the Hebrides, then deemed almost inaccessible. For week after week he faced hardships and dangers unexampled in his honest experience: trudged footsore on endless moors, lay half-drowned

in the bottom of leaky Highland boats, faced the fury of real Highland storms, got drunk with mad Highland lairds, and showed at every step the patience of a martyr and the pluck of a soldier. His journal is delicious reading, with its solemn indifference to barbaric "scenery," its quaint pedantic love for antiquities, its calm tone of intellectuality, its deep and fervent piety. Boswell's journal is still more delightful, full of life and unconscious humour, abounding in delicious touches. The glimpses of the oracular conduct and conversation are superb. How Johnson stood out in the dusky moor at Glenelg, and abused his faithful follower in such terms that "Bozzy" could sleep little the night after—"Dr. Johnson's anger had affected me much." How Johnson drank whisky-toddy in Skye and gave his ideas about a seraglio;* and how, when a pretty

* "Thursday, Sept. 16.—After the ladies were gone from table, we talked of the Highlanders not having sheets; and this led us to consider the advantage of wearing linen."

"*Johnson*.—All animal substances are less cleanly than vegetable. Wool, of which flannel is made, is an animal substance; flannel, therefore, is not so cleanly as linen. I remember I used to think tar dirty; but when I knew it to be only a preparation of the juice of the pine, I thought so no longer. It is not disagree-

little lady sat on his knee and kissed him, the old boy "kept her on his knee and kissed *her*, while he and she drank tea," all the company being much "entertained to see him so grave and pleasant." How he had honour everywhere, and won love to crown it. How nightly he turned his dear, purblind, gentle face to God, and communed with his

able to have the gum that oozes from a plum-tree upon your fingers, because it is vegetable; but if you have any candle-grease, any tallow upon your fingers, you are uneasy till you rub it off. I have often thought that if I kept a seraglio the ladies should all wear linen gowns, or cotton—I mean stuffs made of vegetable substances. I would have no silk; you cannot tell when it is clean; it will be very nasty before it is perceived to be so. Linen detects its own dirtiness."

"To hear the grave Dr. Samuel Johnson, 'that majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom,' while sitting solemn in an arm-chair in the Isle of Skye, talk *ex cathedra* of his keeping a seraglio, and acknowledge that the supposition had *often* been in his thoughts, struck me so forcibly with ludicrous contrast that I could not but laugh immoderately. He was too proud to submit, even for a moment, to be the object of ridicule, and instantly retaliated with such keen sarcastic wit, and such a variety of degrading images, of every one of which I was the object, that though I can bear such attacks as well as most men, I yet found myself so much the sport of all the company, that I would gladly expunge from my mind every trace of this severe retort."—"Boswell's Tour to the Hebrides."

own soul, as it was his wont to do, especially on his birthday.* There are no sweeter bits of literature in the world than these few notes of a 'Tour to the

* The following is among Dr. Johnson's 'Prayers and Meditations':—

"Talisker, in Skye, Sept. 24, 1773.

"On last Saturday was my sixty-fourth birthday. I might, perhaps, have forgotten it, had not Boswell told me of it; and, what pleased me less, told the family at Dunvegan. The last year is added to those of which little use has been made; I tried in the summer to learn Dutch, and was interrupted by an inflammation in my eye. I set out in August on this journey to Skye. I find my memory uncertain, but hope it is only by a life unmethodical and scattered. Of my body I do not perceive that exercise or change of air has yet either increased the strength or activity. My nights are still disturbed by flatulences. My hope is, for resolution I dare no longer call it, to divide my time regularly, and to keep such a journal of my time as may give me comfort on reviewing it. But when I consider my age, and the broken state of my body, I have great reason to fear lest death should lay hold upon me while I am only yet designing to live. But I have yet hope.

"Almighty God, most merciful Father, look down upon me with pity! Thou hast protected me in childhood and youth; support me, Lord, in my declining years. Preserve me from the dangers of sinful presumption. Give me, if it be best for me, stability of purposes and tranquillity of mind. Let the year which I have now began be spent to thy glory, and to the furtherance of my salvation. Take not from me thy Holy Spirit, but as death approaches prepare me to appear joyfully in thy presence, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Hebrides,' made in the wild autumn season by Boswell and Johnson.

It was at Loch Buy, the mouth of which we had just passed in the *Ocean Queen*, that Johnson met "a true Highland laird, rough and haughty, and tenacious of his dignity, who, hearing my name, inquired whether I was of the Johnstons of Glencoe or the Johnstons of Ardnamurchan." Johnson and Boswell both record the fact, but the former is silent about a still more amusing subject. On the morning after their arrival, Lady Lochbuy proposed that he (the Doctor) should have some cold "sheep's head" for breakfast. Sir Allan "seemed surprised at his sister's vulgarity;" but, says Boswell, "from a mischievous love of sport, I took her part, and very gravely said, 'I think it is but fair to give him an offer of it, and if he does not choose it, he may let it alone.' So, when Johnson entered the room, Lady Lochbuy said to him, 'Do you take any cold sheep's head, sir?' 'NO, MADAM!' he thundered, in a tone of surprise and anger." The sequel is perfect, in Boswell's own words. "'It is here, sir,' said she, supposing he had refused it to save the trouble of

bringing it in. Thus they went on at cross purposes, till he confirmed his refusal in a manner not to be misunderstood; while I sat quietly by, and enjoyed my success." Why the good Doctor should have refused a capital dish, in such a way, is quite beyond the question.

We were soon rounding Duart Point, with the Lady's Isle and Lismore Lighthouse on our quarter. The ordinary Highland tourist has an opportunity of seeing this part of the Firth upon the deck of his steamer, and it is at all times a sight worth seeing—the tides between the Lady's Rock and the Lighthouse causing innumerable whirls, eddies, and counter currents, very similar to those of the Dorus Mhor, and of course in rough weather raising a very heavy sea. As we passed, all around rock and lighthouse was white with foam, save where the eddies whirled the surface smooth. Leaving the boiling sheet behind us, we ran into the Sound of Mull; past Duart Castle and Duart Bay; past the little village of Craignure and the wood-fringed hills of Scallastle; past the great Highlands of Morven, which rose to the right, with bluff, red-tinted crags

descending sheer into the sea; past Ardtornish Castle on its promontory, and the tiny entrance to "green Loch Aline's land-loch'd bay;"—and ere long we were abreast of the outlying rocks and isles of Salen, with Aros Castle looming distinct against the sunset, and saw Ben More and Bentalloch, the monarchs of Mull, rise up suddenly behind us, darkening as the sunlight faded. Still the wind blew on our quarter, and, now in smooth water, we rushed along, leaving on our right the parish of Morven with its fine stretches of green land and bushy wood, and on our left the land of Mull seeming wilder and more precipitous the nearer we drew to Tobermory. It was a glorious race. Ere dark we had passed several of the fishing fleet, and were fast gaining on some of the others; and still the breeze kept just steady and strong enough for us to carry canvas. Old castles and fantastic headlands faded and darkened as we sailed. Picture after picture grew and changed. The moon rose as we passed Calve Island and swept round to Tobermory Bay; and here, as it was necessary to come close up to the wind, the little vessel half-drowned

herself in lying over under her great sail. Five minutes after, however, the anchor was down in the bay, and all parties on board the little yacht turned in, thoroughly exhausted with the pleasure and excitement of the day.

It is not our purpose to describe Tobermory. To our mind, putting aside the excellence of its bay as an anchorage, it is simply the ugliest and dreariest place in the islands. The climate is detestable, the rainfall unceasing, the inns vile, all things abominable. Yet this is an ungenerous description; since Tobermory commands a fine view of the mouth of that most delightful of Highland lakes, Loch Sunart, and of the adjoining mountains of Ardnamurchan. On the present occasion we were anxious to get back to Lorne as soon as possible. When day broke it was raining hard, but to our joy the little wind there was came from the west. As we ran out of the bay, the dim lights of dawn were dappling the base of the hills of Ardnamurchan, and the waters of Sunart loomed dark below, with a still gleam of silvery calm stretching across the mouth in the neighbourhood of the black Stirks—

two small rocky isles. Mighty veils of gray vapour covered the distant mountains, save in one distant place to the north, where the darkness was rent by a moist gleam of light and showed the livid peak of some great hill. Behind us, as we ran east, the great Ocean loomed with the slant shadows of the rain drawn in long streaks between water and cloud, and the sea glittering below like dark blue steel misted with breath. All the heavens was clouded, but, in Lachlan's parlance, "she was going to be a good day."

It was a good day, and a long one. The wind came and went, shifting between west and west-by-south, often failing altogether; and the rain fell, more or less, constantly. We made slow work of it, though we carried our gaff-topsail, and though now and then we got a squall which shook and buried the boat. By three in the afternoon we were only off the mouth of Loch Aline, fifteen miles from our starting-place, floating on the slack tide, and hardly making an inch of way. But, nevertheless, it was a day to be remembered. Never did the Wanderer feast his

vision on finer effects of vapour and cloud; never did he see the hills possessed with such mystic power and meaning. The "grays" were everywhere, of all depths, from the dark slumberous gray of the unbroken cloud-mass on the hill-top to the silvery gray of the innumerable spears of the rain; and there were bits of brown, too, when the light broke out, which would have gladdened the inmost soul of a painter. One little picture, all in a sort of neutral tint, abides in his memory as he writes. It was formed by the dark silhouette of Ardtornish Castle and promontory, with the winter sky rent above it; and a flood of white light behind it just reaching the stretch of sea at the extremity of the point, and turning it to the colour of glistening white-lead. That was all; and the words convey little or nothing of what the Wanderer saw. But the effect was ethereal in the extreme, finer by far than that of any moonlight.

After we had been becalmed for an hour off the Sheep Islands, which lie between Loch Aline and Scallasdale, we saw the water blacken far behind us, and Lachlan began to whistle up the wind; but it

was eight miles off and travelling very slowly, though there seemed plenty of it. It was quite another hour before it reached us, and then it seemed very undecided whether to blow on or die; gaining in vigour, however, it took us by fits and starts to within a mile of the lighthouse of Lismore; grew still stronger, and took us another half mile nearer; and finally, for no reason that we could discover, refused to go with us an inch farther. We were now in the midst of the fierce ebb-tide setting from the Lady's Rock, with the waves leaping round us and the eddies whirling, and a roar like thunder in our ears. Then occurred a succession of Tantalus-tricks of the most aggravating sort. Where the tide boiled there was not a breath of wind, and we were whirled backward, this way and that, till we again reached the black shadow where the wind was blowing. Then the wind, which was really strong, drove us again into the tide—which in its turn again drove us backward. This occurred again and again, in spite of all our skill. The breeze came on only by inches, though our superstitious Lachlan whistled madly. By-and-by we began drifting rapidly up

the broad arm of the Firth, which runs northward between Morven and the long green island of Lismore, and only by frantic pulling with the long oars did we get out of the way of an ugly rock lying half a mile out from the island. By this time we were miserably wet and cold,—and hungry too, for we had fared scantily. At last, to our joy, a breeze came off the Morven shore to reinforce the lazy breeze from the Sound, and we ran on bravely till we got into the full strength of the tide-way just abreast of the lighthouse. Here, though the breeze continued, we stuck, fairly anchored between wind and tide, and, in spite of all the efforts of the helmsman, whirling about at the mercy of the elements, with the waves leaping round us and the foam leaping over us, and the savage water roaring as if to swallow the little boat. “Up with the top-sail, Lachlan!” It was done, and the yacht dived forward a few yards, with her bowsprit submerged, and the green waves rolling off her bows. But the wind was yet no match for the tide. Now we got forward a short distance; then we swept back in an eddy. An hour passed thus. More than once we

were swept so uncomfortably near to the lighthouse that we had to beat up to windward with the tide—and then we should have foundered indeed, if Lachlan had not been smart in hauling down the gaff-topsail. Not for another half hour, when the tide began to slacken, did we get through the narrow passage, and by that time all on board were dripping from head to foot; and the little yacht, hull and sail, was bathed in salt water. Do you wonder that our first act, on reaching the smooth water of the Firth, was to get out the whiskey-bottle and serve round the glorious spirit with no niggard hand?

Out in the open Firth the breeze was slack and fitful, but we crept slowly over towards Oban, the white smoke of which was visible seven miles away between the north end of Kerrera and the woody promontory of Dunollie. Northward, we saw the long dark arm of Loch Linnhe—here and there dotted with isles and rocks—closed in suddenly where the house of Airds gleamed like a wreath of snow in the midst of its woody bay, and surrounded on all sides by mountains slowly darkening in twilight. Dim and melancholy loomed Dunstaffnage to the

east, with Ben Cruachan and the Shepherds of Loch Etive blackening behind her. Far southward, off Kerrera, there was already a ghostly gleam on the ocean, cast by the invisible moon.

But if we looked for moonlight, we were doomed to disappointment. When we had reached the centre of the Firth it was quite dark ; and, to add to our troubles, the wind had died entirely away, as is its wont on many summer nights, when dead calm lasts from evening to dawn. There was nothing for it but to put out the long oars, and pull the little yacht towards the anchorage, five miles distant. Lachlan worked one oar manfully, singing a monotonous Gaelic chant peculiar to him, while the Wanderer laboured at the other. As the mist and darkness deepened, it became impossible to tell what progress was being made. Gradually, moreover, the whole land changed its form, and it became uncertain where lay the narrow entrance to Oban Bay. He who has never been afloat on such a night off such a coast as that of Lorne, can scarcely conceive how mysteriously it seems to change, eluding the knowledge of the most ex-

perienced pilot. Clouds seem mountains; shadows, islands; islands, shadows: all is ghostly and confused. For a long time we were steering by what seemed the Maiden Island, which lies at the mouth of the entrance to Oban, but we found presently that we had been looking at a solid bank of mist sleeping in the silent sea. At last, we found ourselves in the shadow of Kerrera, but Kerrera is six miles long, and we knew not what part of the island we were approaching; so that at any moment we might strike one of those rocks and reefs with which its shores are sown. It therefore became expedient to let the yacht lie off, while the Wanderer rowed in the punt towards the land and tried to make out the bearings of the coast. A few strokes of the paddles, and he was alone in the solid black shadow—literally “darkness visible”—of the island. He rowed on for some minutes, and then leant on his oars to reconnoitre. The darkness was awful, the stillness was deathlike, broken only by the wash of the fathomless water, and the dreary moan of the sea-birds roosting on the isles. Once or twice the curlew uttered, far off in the night, his weird melancholy whistle, as he

flew from one ghostly bay to another ; but neither by sight nor sound could the Wanderer discover his precise whereabouts. The more he rowed, the more the land changed shape and receded. All was mysterious darkness. In sheer despair, he turned back towards the yacht, which was lost in the gloom. He shouted. The cliffs moaned an answer ; and a sea-gull screamed. He shouted again and again. At last, faint and far away, he heard another voice crying ; and so guided, he at last got on board the yacht.

Not for hours after, when the atmosphere became somewhat clearer, did we succeed in making out the shape of the land, and when we did so, we found we had drifted far down Kerrera, and were not a hundred yards from one of the worst outlying reefs. It was weary work pulling along the dark coast of the island. By the time we got to our anchorage dawn was breaking ; and just as we hauled down our sails, a fresh morning breeze sprang up and whistled merrily in the rigging.

During the little voyage that has just been recorded, the *Ocean Queen* had behaved tolerably, for

the simple reason that she had no chance of showing her worst qualities,—namely, crankness under canvas and awkwardness in “coming round.” On other occasions she fully justified her sobriquet of the *Coffin*. Whenever the wind blew hard, she could not carry a rag of canvas “beating;” and when squalls came, it was a miracle she floated at all, so wildly did she heel over and ship the green water. She was certainly a prize for any used-up person in search of a new sensation. Then, again, her clumsiness occasioned other perils. Twice, in the tideway off the mouth of Loch Etive, she was nearly swept to destruction, because she would not answer the helm. Once, she was driven like a straw past the great rock at the mouth of Loch Aline, actually scraping the weeds thereon, and only escaping by an inch.* In short, she supplied the

* The worst of these sharp boats is this: if they *do* take the ground, whether running on a sandbank or striking on a reef, they heel over and fill at once, in spite of all your efforts to save them; and, in nine cases out of ten, “legs” (or wooden props for the sides) are quite useless. Now, a broad-bottomed fishing-boat sits on a rock or mudbank as snugly as a bird, provided she does not fill, and can wait for the next tide to float her off into deep water.

owner's system with a series of gratuitous galvanic shocks, which a very daring person might have deemed pleasant excitement, but which to the Wanderer's mind were anything but delightful. Even a soldier in war-time is not always under fire, or he would soon sicken and grow weary; but in the *Ocean Queen* we were ever more or less in peril, all the ferocious elements being leagued against a cockleshell.

Not without great reluctance, however, did the Wanderer part with the *Ocean Queen*. Crank and fitful as she was, frequently as she had put his life in danger, he had learned to regard her with affection. How many a glorious scene he had beheld from that little cockpit! how many a golden day had he wasted, stretched full length on that narrow deck! With all her faults, the little yacht was beautiful to look upon, and very snug for her tonnage.

But when the little *Tern* came in her place, the fickleness of man's heart was proven, for the old love was gone in a moment, and the new love took its place. The *Tern* was two tons smaller, and belonged to the same family—being a racer which

had won several prizes; but she had far better "bearings," being much shorter in proportion to her beam. She, too, was of course a toy: a mere little wind-straw of a boat, though destined to weather many a storm that tried bigger vessels. In her tiny cabin, where it was impossible to sit upright, we were to sleep for many months, while exploring the strange shores of the Hebrides, from Lorne to the Long Island. Lachlan Finlay went back to his shop, there to resume his old occupation of sitting on a sack and whittling sticks; and in his place, when the little *Tern* was ready for sailing, her tiny cabin well stocked with all necessities for a long cruise, Hamish Shaw, the pilot, came from his fishing in the Firth of Clyde and swung up his hammock in the forecastle, just as the cuckoos were swarming over every hill in Lorne.

CHAPTER VII.

THE *TERN'S* FIRST FLIGHT.

The *Tern* Afloat—Off Ardnamurchan—First Glimpses of the Isles—The Cuchullin Hills—General Reflections—Flashing Forward—The Party on Board—The Scaur of Eig—Rum—Birds of the Ocean—Muck—Sunset on the Waters—Loch Scresort, Rum—The Gaelic Skipper—The Widow—A Climb among the Peaks—View of the Western Ocean from Rum—The *Tern* weighing Anchor—Kilmory Bay—First View of Canna—At Anchor.

WHEN the little cutter *Tern*, agile and beautiful as the sea-swallow from which she takes her name, weighed anchor in Tobermory Harbour, and began to work westward through the Sound of Mull towards Ardnamurchan, the long swell coming in from the Atlantic was beginning to whiten under a stiff breeze from the north-west; and it became a question whether or not she should fold down her wings and run back to her nest in the bay.

We looked wistfully to windward, and began to

doubt our wisdom in venturing so far on board so tiny a craft—seven tons register, open “aft,” and rigged with a heavy boom and racing mainsail sure to bring her on her broadside in stormy weather. The gloomy prognostics of both fair-weather yachtsmen and hard-weather seamen were sharply remembered, as the big rollers began to break wildly over our weather-bow, and the strong wind to lay the decks under to the very edge of the cockpit “combing.” But the Viking in the blood prevailed. A third reef was taken in the mainsail, and the little craft was urged on ; and scarcely had she beaten two miles and a half to windward, when the breeze died suddenly away, and the waters, washing troublously, grew weaker and weaker, till the tops of the long heaving rollers were almost calm. A light air and a strong tide soon carried the *Tern* outside of Ardnamurchan, where, dripping and quivering like a thing of life, she has paused nearly becalmed, with the lonely Islands whither she is bound opening one by one on the dim and shadowy sea.

To the south lies Mull in mist, piling her dull vast hills out above the line of breaking foam ; while away

to the south-west cairn after cairn, looming through the waters, show where barren Coll is weltering in the gloomy waste. To the far west, only cloud resting on cloud, above the dim unbroken water-line of the Atlantic. But northward all brightens, for the storm has passed thence with the wind, and the sunlight has crept out cold and clear on craggy Rum, whose heights stretch grey and ghostly against a cloudless sky. Hard by, in shadow, looms the gigantic Scaur of Eig, looking down on the low and grassy line of Muck,

“Set as an emerald in the casing sea.”

Beyond all these, peeping between Rum and Eig, pencilled in faint and ghostly peaks hued like the heron's breast, are the wondrous Cuchullin Hills of Skye—born of the volcano on some strange morning in the age of mighty births. The eye seeks to go no farther. It rests on those still heights, and in a moment the perfect sense of solitude glides into the soul:—thought seems stationary, brooding over life subdued.

For a sight such as that words are the merest pencil-scratches, and for the feeling awakened by

such sights there is no kind of symbol at all. In trying accurately to describe nature, one glides at once into the mood of the cicerone ; for the moment of enjoyment has past, and the pain of explanation has begun. The *still* power of waters is not quite to be felt until the very body and blood have known their stormy might ; and how better know their might than by slipping out upon the waste in as tiny a vessel as can live thereon ? The smaller the craft, the fewer the fellow-beings at hand, the intenser the enjoyment both of storm and calm. It is a proud pleasure to dash like a sea-fowl under the very mouth of the tempest, conscious of the life in one's veins, drunken as it were with the excitement and uncertainty of the hour—awake to every quiver of the little yielding creature under the wings of which you fly, feeling its panting breath come and go with your own, till perchance its wings are folded down close, and it swims with you for very life before the elements which follow screaming in its track. After a flight so fine, the soul is ready for strange calm waters and melancholy peaks, fit to feel the pathos and sweetness of things at rest, ending with that

dim pathetic tremble, amid which we seem to feel God's shadow in our souls. In this life, and perhaps in lives beyond, there seems need of some such preparation for great spiritual peace ; and it is therefore a poor soul which has not felt some very rough weather.

The British lover of beauty wanders far, but we question if he finds anywhere a picture more exquisite than opens out, vista after vista, among these wondrous Isles of the North. Here year after year they lie almost neglected, seen only by the hard-eyed trader and the drifting seaman ; for that mosaic being, the typical tourist, seldom quits the inner chain of mainland lakes, save, perhaps, when a solitary "Saturday Reviewer" oozes dull and bored out of the mist at Broadford or Portree, takes a rapid glare at the chilly Cuchullins, and, shivering with enthusiasm, hurries back to the South. The heights of Rum, the kelp-caverns of Islay, the fantastic cliffs of Eig, scarcely ever draw the sight-seer ; Canna lies unvisited in the solitary sea ; and as for the Outer Hebrides—from Stornoway to Barra Head—they dwell ever lonely in a mist, warning off all fair-weather

wanderers. A little, a very little, has been said about these Isles; but to all ordinary people they are less familiar than Cairo, and farther off than Calcutta.

Forbidding in their stern beauty, isolated and sea-surrounded, they possess no superficial fascinations; their power is one that grows, their spell is that of the glamour, holding only the slowly-selected soul. Not merely because these Isles are so strangely, darkly lovely, but because we owe to them so much that is noblest and best in the heart of our modern life, did it seem fitting to attempt some faint pictures of their scenery and their people; and to wander from island to island, mixing freely with poor folk, seeing and noting what may afterwards pass into noble nourishment for the heart, is the errand of those on board the little *Tern*.

"For many a tale
Traditionary round the mountains hung,
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods."

As the eye became more and more accustomed to hill and sea, as the first mood of awe and pleasure at the weird vistas wore away, human figures, group

after group before invisible, loomed slowly into view:—the kelp-burner moving blackly through the smoke of his fire on the savage shore; the herring-fishers tossing at their nets, while the midnight sea gleams phosphorescent below and the clouds blacken in the lift above; the wild, wandering women, foul with the fish they are gutting, shrieking like the cloud of gulls that hover over their heads; the quaint country-folk streaming down to the little ports on holidays and fair-days; the shepherd on his hill, the lobster-fisher in the quiet bay, the matron grinding her corn and weaving her petticoat with instruments hundreds of years “behind the age;”—and all these moving against so mighty a background, and speaking a speech stranger to common ear than any modern tongue of Europe—a speech old as the hills and full of their mysterious music and power. Here surely was something for the eye and heart to rest upon, a life subtly colouring ours through many generations, yet preserved quite fresh and unchanged by the spirit of the waters—a life far more surely part of us and ours than that of Florence, or Paris, or Wiesbaden.

To lie becalmed in the little *Tern* off the terrible Rhu, the Ardnamurchan, most dreaded by those best acquainted with its mighty tides and fierce waters, is by no means an unmixed pleasure. Yonder stretches the Ocean, dead-still now, but likely to be roused in an instant into frenzy; and, even more to be dreaded, half a mile on the starboard bow, the gloomy cliffs of the point seem coming nearer, as the fitful eddies of the tide swing the vessel this way and that. Out go the long oars, and slowly, very slowly, the *Tern* draws from the shore. Two long hours of hard pulling, with scarcely any perceptible progress, is not altogether desirable, even in the presence of a scene so fair; and one whistles for the wind more and more impatiently. At last the waters ripple black to northward, the huge mainsail-boom swings over with a heavy jerk, and in a minute the *Tern* flashes ahead full of new life, and the sky brightens over a fresh and sparkling sea, and with hearts leaping, all canvas set, and the little kittiwakes screaming in our track, we leave the mighty Rhu behind.

We are four—the Skipper, the Pilot, the Wan-

derer, and the Cook—only the seaman being a sailor by profession. The Skipper, to describe him briefly, is a wild, hirsute being, generally inclined (as Walt Whitman puts it) to “loafe and invite his soul.” The Pilot is of another turn, a Gaelic fisher, deep in knowledge of small craft, and full of the dreamy reasonings of his race. As for the Wanderer—

“A subtle-souled psychologist,
All things he seemed to understand,
Of old or new, or sea, or land,
But his own mind—which was a mist;”

in other words, he is a nondescript, a mooner on the skirts of philosophy, whose business it is to take notes by flood and fell, and cater for the kitchen with rod and gun. What he provides is prepared to perfection by the Cook in a den about the size of an ordinary cupboard, and served up in a cabin where Tom Thumb might have stood upright and a shortish man have just lain at full length. Over the sleeping accommodation let us draw a veil.

As the *Tern* flies nearer to the mighty Scaur of Eig, a beetling precipice towering 1300 and odd feet above the sea, the sun is sloping far down west-

ward behind the lofty peaks of Rum ; and in deep purple shadow, over the starboard bow, the rugged lines of the mainland, from Loch Moidart to the Sound of Sleat, open up, gloam strangely, and fade, ridge after ridge, away. The distant Cuchullins grow yet more ghostly against the delicate harebell of the sky, catching on their peaks the roseate tints of sunset ; and the mountains of Rum deepen more and more in under-shadow, as the light flames keener on their rounded heights. The wind falls again, faint airs come and go, and the low sound of the sea becomes full of a strange hush. At such an hour, one remembers with a chill shiver the terrible story of the Cave of Eig. In the old bloody days, the inhabitants had given dire offence to the Macleod, and the chief came over, with all his clan at his heels, to butcher the offenders. But not a soul was visible—only the white snow ; for it was winter-time. Every inhabitant, man, woman, and child, had taken refuge in the great cave. The Macleods were about to return to their boats, when they discovered footprints in the snow. Tracing these, they came to the mouth of the great cave.

Then, with a devilish ingenuity, the cruel chief ordered a great fire of turf and fern to be lit at the mouth of the cavern. There was no escape; all the poor shrieking folk were suffocated. This is no mere legend, but horrible truth. Until very recently, the cave was full of human bones, and some remain still, though the busy hands of visitors have carried off the most perfect remains. "Something ails it now—the place is curst!" One sees and hears it all—the flame shining lurid in the white snow, the black smoky cloud at the mouth of the cave, the grimly-grinning caterans piling up the fire with wild yells, and the wild shrieks of the murdered floating out upon the winter wind!

“On Scooreigg next a warning light
Summon'd her warriors to the fight;
A numerous race, ere stern Macleod
O'er their bleak shores in vengeance strode!
When all in vain the ocean-cave
Its refuge to its victims gave.
The Chief, relentless in his wrath,
With blazing heath blockades the path;
In dense and stifling volumes roll'd,
The vapour fill'd the cavern'd hold!
The warrior-threat, the infant's plain,
The mother's screams, were heard in vain;

The vengeful Chief maintains his fires,
Till in the vault a tribe expires!
The bones which strew that cavern's gloom,
Too well attest their dismal doom."*

* Scott's "Lord of the Isles." The following is Sir Walter Scott's note of a visit to Eigg:—"26th August, 1814.—At seven this morning we were in the Sound which divides the Isle of Rum from that of Eigg. The latter, although hilly and rocky, and traversed by a remarkably high and barren ridge, called *Secor-Rigg*, has, in point of soil, a much more promising appearance. Southward of both lies the Isle of *Muich*, or *Muck*, a low and fertile island, and though the least, yet probably the most valuable of the three. We manned the boat, and rowed along the shore of Eigg in quest of a cavern, which had been the memorable scene of a horrid feudal vengeance. We had rounded more than half the island, admiring the entrance of many a bold natural cave, which its rocks exhibited, without finding that which we sought, until we procured a guide. Nor, indeed, was it surprising that it should have escaped the search of strangers, as there are no outward indications more than might distinguish the entrance of a fox-earth. This noted cave has a very narrow opening, through which one can hardly creep on his knees and hands. It rises steep and lofty within, and runs into the bowels of the rock to the depth of two hundred and fifty-five measured feet; the height at the entrance may be about three feet, but rises within to eighteen or twenty, and the breadth may vary in the same proportion. The rude and stony bottom of this cave is strewed with the bones of men, women, and children, the sad relics of the ancient inhabitants of the island, two hundred in number. The date of this dreadful deed must have been recent, if one may judge from the fresh appearance of

As we draw close under the lee of Rum, the still sea is darkened on every side with patches as of drifting sea-weed, and there is a still flutter as of innumerable little wings. Hither and thither, skimming the water in flocks of eight or ten, dart the beautiful shearwaters (*puffini Anglorum* of the ornithologists), seizing their prey from the sea with their tender feet as they fly; while under them, wherever the eye rests, innumerable marrots and guillemots float, dive, and rise. All these have their nests among the purple-shaded cliffs close at hand. The black and green cormorants are there too, wary and

those relics. I brought off, in spite of the prejudice of our sailors, a skull from among the numerous specimens of mortality which the cavern afforded. Before re-embarking we visited another cave, opening to the sea, but of a character entirely different, being a large open vault, as high as that of a cathedral, and running back a great way into the rock at the same height. The height and width of the opening gives ample light to the whole. Here, after 1745, when the Catholic priests were scarcely tolerated, the priest of Eigg used to perform the Roman Catholic service, most of the islanders being of that persuasion. A huge ledge of rocks rising about half-way up one side of the vault served for altar and pulpit; and the appearance of a priest and Highland congregation in such an extraordinary place of worship might have engaged the pencil of Salvator."

solitary ; and the gulls, from the lesser black-backed to the little kittiwake, gather thickly over one dark patch of floating birds astern, where doubtless the tiny herring are darting in myriads. Save for the fitful cry of the kittiwakes, or the dull croaking scream of a solitary tern beating up and down over the vessel, all is quite still, and the presence of these countless little fishers only deepens the solitude. Quite fearless and unsuspicious, they float within oar's length of the vessel, diving swiftly at the last moment, and coolly emerging again a few yards distant. Only the cormorant keeps aloof, safe out of gun range. Rank and unsavoury as this glutton is, his flesh is esteemed by fishermen, and he is so often hunted, that he is ever on the watch for danger.

Low, undulating, grassy, yonder is Muck—the Gaelic Eilan-na-Muchel, or Isle of Swine—Buchanan's *Insula Porcorum*. It is green and fertile, an oasis in the waste. Muck, Eig, Rum, and Canna, form collectively the Parish of Small Isles, with the pastor of which Hugh Miller took his well-known geologic cruise. It must be no lamb-hearted man

who carries the Gospel over these waters during winter weather.

Lower, deeper, sinks the sun, till he is totally hidden behind the hills. Haskeval and Haleval, the two highest peaks of Rum, throw their shadows over the drifting *Tern*, while from some solitary bay inland the oyster-catchers and sealarks whistle in the stillness. A night mist coming from the west deepens the gloaming, and we look rather anxiously after a harbour. Somewhere, not far away, below the two peaks, lies a little loch, with safe anchorage; but no eyes, except those of a native, could pick it out in the darkness. We drift slowly upward on the flood-tide, eagerly eyeing every nook and cranny in the shadowy mass at our side. Just as the day dawns, we spy the mouth of the loch, and launching the long oars, make wearily towards it; but the anchor is soon down, all cares are over for the time being, and, after pipes and grog, all hands turn in for a nap.

Our slumbers are sweet though short, and ere long we are up on deck, looking around on Loch Scresort. Viewed in the soft sparkling light of a windless

summer morning, it is as sweet a little nook as ever Ulysses mooned away a day in, during his memorable voyage homeward. Though merely a small bay, about a mile in breadth, and curving inland for a mile and a half, it is quite sheltered from all winds save the east, being flanked to the south and west by Haskeval and Hondeval, and guarded on the northern side by a low range of heathery slopes. In this sunny time the sheep are bleating from the shores, the yacht lies double, yacht and shadow, and the still bay is painted richly with the clear reflection of the mountains:

“ Not a feature of the hills
Is in the mirror slighted.”

On the northern point of the loch, where the old red sandstone is piled in torn fantastic heaps high over the sea, gulls innumerable sit and bask. “Croak! croak!” cries the monstrous hooded crow at their backs, perched like an evil spirit on the very head of the cliffs and squinting fiercely at the far-off sheep. A bee drones drowsily past the yacht, completing the sense of stillness and pastoral life.*

* Dr. MacCulloch, the author of a very clever but otherwise worthless book on the Highlands, thus speaks of the island of

Scattered along the southern side of the bay are a few poor cottages, rudely built of stone and roofed with peat turfs, and at the head of the loch is a com-

Rum. "There is a great deal of stormy magnificence about the lofty cliffs, as there is generally round the shores of Rum; and they are, in most places, as abrupt as they are inaccessible from the sea. The interior is one heap of rude mountains, scarcely possessing an acre of level land. It is the wildest and most repulsive of all the islands. The outlines of Halival and Haskival are indeed elegant, and render the island a beautiful and striking object from the sea. In some places extensive surfaces of bare rock are divided into polygonal compartments, so as to resemble the grand natural pavements of Staffa, but with an effect infinitely more striking. Loch Scresort is without features or character; the acclivities ascending gently from a flat and straight shore. If it is not always bad weather in Rum, it cannot be good very often; since, on seven or eight occasions that I have passed it, there has been a storm; and on seven or eight more on which I have landed, it was never without the expectation of being turned into a cold fish. 'The bitter breathing winds with boisterous blasts' seem to have set up their throne here, as at Loch Scavaig, and the rains too. Like that place, it possesses a private winter of its own, even in what is here called summer. Into the bargain, it possesses a most 'inamabilis unda,' where you may be swamped in any weather." Thus is the wonderful island dismissed by MacCulloch—a writer who, with all his great ability, lacked the two great gifts of spiritual imagination and human insight. He was a foolish scholar; and his book would be worthless on the ground of its pedantry alone.

fortable whitewashed house, the abode of Captain Macleod of Dunvegan, the tenant of the island. There is, moreover, a rude stone pier, where a small vessel might lie secure in any weather, and off which a battered old brigantine is even now unloading oatmeal and flour. Casting loose the punt, we row over to the vessel, and begin a chat with the shrewd-looking ancient skipper, who is superintending the passage of the sacks into a skiff alongside. In that extraordinary dialect called Gaelic-English, which may be described as a wild mingling of Gaelic, bad Irish, and Lowland Scotch, he gives us to understand that he is at once the owner and master of his craft, and that he cruises from island to island during the summer, bartering his cargo of food for whatever marketable commodities the poor folk of the place may have prepared. His great trade is with the fishers, who pay him in dried fish, chiefly ling and

His *remarks* on landscape are sometimes singularly astute, but he never seems to be greatly moved. He had a kind of sympathy with men, but not enough to prevent him from entirely misapprehending the Highland people. His book is amusing, and nothing more.

cod ; but all is fish that comes to his net, and can be anyhow cashed in the South. Doubtless, the odds of the bargains are quite on his side. In answer to our queries as to the general condition of the islanders, he shakes his grey head dismally, and gives us to understand that but for him, and for such as he, many a poor household would perish of starvation.

Starvation, however, does not seem the order of the day in Loch Scresort. On landing, and making for the first hut at hand, we find the cow, with her calf by her side, tethered a few yards from the dwelling, two pigs wallowing in the peat-mire close by, and at least a dozen cocks, hens, and chickens, running to and fro across the threshold, where a fresh, well-fed matron, with a smile for the stranger, salutes us in the Gaelic speech. With that fine old grace of hospitality which has fled for ever from busier scenes, she leads us into her cottage—a “but” and a “ben.” The apartment into which we are shown, despite the damp earthen floor and mildewy walls, is quite a palace for the Highlands ; for it has a wooden press bed, wooden

chairs and table, and a 'rude cupboard, shapen like a wardrobe; and the walls are adorned, moreover, by a penny almanac and a picture cut out of the 'Illustrated London News.' Drink fit for the gods is speedily handed round, in the shape of foaming bowls of new milk fresh from the udder—a cup of welcome invariably offered to the traveller in any Highland dwelling that can afford it. A few friendly words warm up the good woman's heart, and she begins to prattle and to question. She is a childless widow, and her "man" was drowned. She dwells here all alone; for all her relatives have emigrated to Canada, where she hopes some day to join them. On hearing that we have passed through Glasgow, she asks eagerly if we know a woman called Maggie, who sells eggs; the woman's surname she does not remember, but we must have noticed her, as she is splay-footed and has red hair. She has never been farther south than Eig, and hence her notion of big cities. She longs very much to see Tobermory and its great shops—also to look up a distant kinsman, who has flourished there in trade. She tells us much of the laird and his family—the "folk in the big

house;" they are decent, pious people, and kind to the poor. Will she sell us some eggs? Well, she has not heard the price of eggs this season, but will let us have some at fivepence a dozen. She loads the pilot with a basketful of monsters, and we go on our way rejoicing.

Casting our eyes up the hill as we leave the cottage, we meet a pair of steadfast eyes, regarding us over a knoll a few yards distant; and lo! the head and antlers of a noble stag, a veritable red-deer from the peaks. He has wandered down to prey upon the little patch of corn, from which the widow with difficulty drives him and his mates many times in the day. A royal fellow! Conscious of his immunity, he stares coolly at us with his soft yet powerful eye. We approach nearer—he does not move—a pistol-shot would stretch him low; but suddenly espying our retriever, who has lingered behind, lapping up some spilt milk, he tosses his head disdainfully, and turns to go. As Schneider the dog runs towards him, he breaks into a trot, then bounds suddenly over a boulder, and is off at full speed. The dog pursues him eagerly, but the fleet-footed one speeds silently

away, floating lightly upward to the heights, and leaving his panting pursuer far behind.

But the eye, following him upward, rests on the peaks, and is sublimed by a sudden sense of the silences broken only by the red deer's splash in some dark tarn. Fading gradually upward from deep green to ashen grey, mingling softly into the white little cloud that poises itself on the highest peak of all, the mountains lie in the crystalline air of a hazeless summer day. Every rock comes out clear, every stream shows its intense white seam against the hillside, and the knolls of crimson heather in the foreground seem visible to the tiniest leaf.

The temptation is too great, and we are soon vigorously facing the lesser range of heights. On all the knolls around us the white canna-grass waves in the wind, and the yellow iris peeps among the green twigs of under-grass, and in the hollows here, where the peat is cut and piled for drying, we stop and pluck bog-asphodel. Higher we speed, knee-deep now in the purple heather—from which the dog scares moor fowl under our very feet. The air

rarefies, full, as it were, of holier, deeper breath. The deep red of the heather dies away into brown and green, and yet a few paces farther, only green herbage carpets the way—boulders thicken, the hillside grows still more steep, till at last, quite breathless with exercise and the sharp fine air, we get among the greystone cliffs and hugely-piled boulders of the peaks.

The great glorious world lies around and beneath us—mountains, crags, and their shadows in a violet sea. Close at hand, to the northward, see Canna, with her grim shark's teeth of outlying rock jutting up here and there, far out in the westward ocean; and behind her tower the Cuchullin Hills of Skye, sharpening into peak on peak, blue mists brooding on their base, but all above snowed over with livid layers of hypersthene, and seamed with the black forked bed of torrents, that in wild weather twist down like lightning to the hidden lakes below.

Far down westward on the ocean there is a long low line, as of cloud on the horizon. That is the Outer Hebrides, our Ultima Thule. The low levels are veiled by distance, but the hills and promontories

—now a dull headland, beyond a stretch of high-land—loom here and there through the mist—

“The dreamy grief of the gray sea.”

With a feeling distantly akin to that of the old wanderers of the waters, gazing from their frail barks at the cloud of unexplored demesne, we eye our distant quarry. A far flight for the tiny *Tern*, on seas so great and strange! Weary with a long-reaching gaze, our eye drops downward on the western side of the isle whereon we stand. The low grassy swell of the Minch breaks in one thin, creamy line against that awful coast—a long range washed into cliffs and precipices, and unbroken by a single haven or peaceful creek. When the mists and vapours gather here, and the south-wester comes pouring in upon these shores, and the sea rises and roars as it can roar only on rocky coasts, many a brave ship goes to pieces yonder. There is then no hope on this side of time. Not a soul is there to look on from the land, and he who drifts living as far as the shore is dashed to pieces on its jagged wall. There is no pause, no suspense. A crash, a shriek, and

nothing remains but spindrift and splintering planks.

After a long ramble, we regain our punt, and are soon busy hoisting sail on board the yacht, for a fresh breeze has sprung up, which should waft us swiftly on to Canna. Up goes the *Tern's* white wings, and we fly buoyantly away, the faint scent of *honeysuckle* floating from the rocks as we round the jagged point of the bay. It is the last farewell of Loch Scresort—the last sweet breath of a sweet place. The sun shines, the spray sparkles, and with happy hearts and backward-looking eyes, we speed along on the joyful gentle sea.

The breeze stiffens, blowing on our quarter, and the little *Tern*, though she carries a double reef in the mainsail, has soon about as much as she can bear; but cheërily she foams through it, veritably “like a thing of life,” fearless, eager, quivering through every fibre with the salt fierce play—now dipping with a stealthy motion into the green hollow of the waves, then rising, shivering on their crest, and glancing this way and that like a startled bird; drifting sidelong for a moment as if wounded and

faint, with the tip of her white wing trailing in the water, and again, at the wind's whistle, springing up and onward, and tilting the foam from her breast in showers of silver spray.

Though the breeze is so keen, there is neither mist nor rain. Far away yonder to the west, a slight grey streak hovers over the clear sea-line—and from thence, as from the out-pursed lip of a god, the invisible wind is blown. All is fresh and clear—the peaks of Rum, the far-off mainland—all save the white Cuchullins, which have suddenly clothed themselves with their own smokes and vapours, through which they loom at intervals, Titan-like and forlorn. From the blank stony stare of hills so ghostly in their beauty, yet so human in their desolation, one turns to look at Kilmory Bay, which opens before us as we round the northern shores of Rum. It is a little space of shingly sand, yellow and white and glistening, slipped in between grim crags and under the shadow of the mountains. The thin cream line of foam stirs not on its edge, as the deep soft billows roll inward and lessen over shallows. Above, on the slope of the hill, there are

stretches of grassy mead as green as any in Kent, and cattle grazing thereon; and still higher, the heights of heather die away into hues of grey moss and lichen, till the stony peaks are pencilled grimly on the quiet azure of the sky.

Canna is now in full view. The "castled steep," as Scott calls its high cliff, towers in deep brown shadow, surrounded by green heights of pasture; while below is one long line of torn crags and caves, in the lee of which, on a stretch of nearly calm sea, the gulls and guillemots gather and the solan goose drops like a stone to his prey. The breeze now strikes nearly dead ahead, and the *Tern* has a sore struggle of it beating onward. Not until she is close in upon the jagged cliffs does the narrow entry into the harbour open, and it is a difficult job indeed to pick our way through the rocks, in the teeth of wind so keen; but directly we round the corner of the cliffs, the little landlocked bay opens safe and calm, and, gliding into five-fathom water, we cast anchor just opposite the Laird's house.

CHAPTER VIII.

CANNA AND ITS PEOPLE.

The Laird of Canna—His Kingly Power—Prosperity of the State—The Island—The Old Tower—Canna in Storm and in Calm—The Milking—Twilight—A Poem by David Gray—Haunts of the Ocean Birds—Whispers from the Sea—The Canna People—The Quiet Life—The Graveyard on the Hill-side.

THE Laird of Canna might fitly be styled its King ; for over that lonely domain he exercises quite regal authority, and he is luckier in one respect than most monarchs—he keeps all the cash. His subjects number four score—men, women, and children. Some till his land, some herd his sheep. For him the long-line fishers row along the stormy coasts of Rum, for him the wild boors batter out the brains of seals on the neighbouring rocks of Haskeir ; the flocks on the crags are his, and the two smacks in the bay ; every roof and tenement for man or beast pays him

rent of some sort. The solid modern building, surrounded by the civilized brick wall, is his palace—a recent erection, strangely out of keeping with the rude cabins and heather houses in the vicinity. Yet the Laird of Canna is not proud. He toiled hard with his hands long before the stroke of good fortune which made him the heritor of the isle, and even now he communes freely with the lowliest subject, and is not above boarding the trading vessel in the bay in his shirt-sleeves. A shrewd, active, broad-shouldered man is the Laird, still young, and as active as a goat. Though he sits late at night among his books, he is up with the greyest dawn to look after his fields. You meet him everywhere over the island, mounted royally on his sturdy little sheltie, and gazing around him with a face which says plainly,—

“I am monarch of all I survey ;
My right there is none to dispute.”

But at times he sails far away southward in his own boats, speculating with the shrewdest, and surely keeping his own. In the midst of his happy sway he has a fine smile and a kindly heart for the

stranger, as we can testify. The great can afford to be generous, though, of course, if greatness were to be measured by mere amount of income, the Laird, though a "warm" man, would have to be ranked among the lowly. He has in abundance what all the Stuarts tried in vain to feel—the perfect sense of solitary sway.

Think of it,—dreamer, power-hunter, piner after the Napoleonic! A fertile island, a simple people, ships and flocks all your own, and all set solitary and inviolate in the great sea: for how much less have throats been cut, hearths desolated, even nations ruined? There is no show, no bunkum, no flash-jewellery of power, but veritable power itself. In old days, there would have been the gleaming of tartans, the flashing of swords, the sound of was-sail, the intoning of the skald; but now, instead, we have the genuine modern article—a monarch of a speculative turn, transacting business in his shirt-sleeves. The realm flourishes too. Each cotter or shepherd pays his rent in labour, and is permitted a plot of ground to grow potatoes and graze a cow. The fishermen are supported in the same way.

Both sexes toil out of doors at the crops and take part in the shearing, but the women have plenty of time to watch the cow and weave homespun on their rude looms. All on the isle, excepting only the Laird himself, belong to the old Romish faith, even the Laird's own wife and children being Catholics. There is no bickering, civil or religious. The supreme head of the state is universally popular, and praised for his thoughtfulness and generosity—a single example of which is as good as a hundred. It is said to be the custom of many Highland proprietors, notably those of Islay, to levy a rent on those who burn the seaweeds and tangles on their shore, charging the poor makers about a pound on every ton of kelp so produced. Not so the Laird of Canna. “He charges nothing,” said our informant, a wild old Irish wanderer, whom we found kelp-burning close to our anchorage; “the Laird is too dacent a man to take *rint for the rocks* !”

One might wander far, like those princes of Eastern fable who went that weary quest in search of kingdoms, and fare far worse than here. Though environed on every side by rocks and crags, and

ringed by the watery waste, Canna is fat and fertile, full of excellent sheep pastures and patches of fine arable ground. Its lower slopes in times remote were enriched by the salt sea-loam, and its highest peaks have been manured for ages by innumerable sea-fowl. Huge sheep of the Cheviot breed cover all the slopes, finding their way to the most inaccessible crags; long trains of milch cows wind from the hills to the outside of the Laird's dairy, morning and gloaming; and in the low rich under-stretches of valley are little patches of excellent corn, where the loud "creek-creek" of the corn-crake sounds harshly sweet. So much for the material blessings of the island. Now, let us note those other blessings which touch the eye and soul.

It is a fish-shaped island about five miles long and a mile and a half broad, throwing out by a small isthmus on the western side a low peninsula of grassy green. The main island forms a ridge, the cliffs of which rise on the northern side to about 1,000 feet above the level of the sea, and descend on the southern side to the shore, by a succession of terraces of dazzling greenness, supported on magnificent

columns of basalt. In the space between the peninsula (which, being separated from the mainland at high water, is sometimes called Sandy Island) and the south-eastern point of the mainland, lies the harbour, and across the isthmus to the west lies another greater bay, so sown with grim little islands and sunken rocks as to be totally useless to navigators in any weather. The peninsula is somewhat low, but the crags of the main island tower to an immense height above the level of the sea.

In a tiny bay opening to the east, towers the lofty rock whereon was situated the old tower, a few fragments of which are to be seen by any one making the difficult ascent. Here it was that a Lord of the Isles confined one of his mistresses,—a story still current in the island, and familiar to strangers from Scott's lines :

“Signal of Ronald's high command,
A beacon gleam'd o'er sea and land,
From Canna's tower, that, steep and grey,
Like falcon-nest o'erhangs the bay.
Seek not the giddy crag to climb,
To view the turret scathed by time ;
It is a task of doubt and fear
To aught but goat or mountain deer.

But rest thee on the silver beach,
And let the aged herdsman teach
His tale of former day;
His cur's wild clamour he shall chide,
And for thy seat by ocean's side,
His varied plaid display;
Then tell, how with their Chieftain came,
In ancient times, a foreign dame
To yonder turret grey.
Stern was her Lord's suspicious mind,
Who in so rude a jail confined
So soft and fair a thrall!
And oft, when moon on ocean slept,
That lovely lady sate and wept
Upon the castle-wall,
And turn'd her eye to southern climes,
And thought perchance of happier times,
And touch'd her lute by fits, and sung
Wild ditties in her native tongue.
And still, when on the cliff and bay
Placid and pale the moonbeams play,
And every breeze is mute,
On the lone Hebridean's ear
Steals a strange pleasure mix'd with fear,
While from that cliff he seems to hear
The murmur of a lute,
And sounds, as of a captive lone,
That mourns her woes in tongue unknown.—
Strange is the tale—but all too long
Already hath it staid the song—
Yet who may pass them by,
That crag and tower in ruins grey,
Nor to their hapless tenant pay
The tribute of a sigh?"

There is scarcely an old ruin in the north but is haunted by some spirit such as this,—and there is a ruin on every headland.

Canna is the child of the great waters, and such children, lonely and terrible as is their portion, seldom lack loveliness—often their only dower. From the edge of the lapping water to the peak of the highest crag, it is clothed with ocean gifts and signs of power. Its strange under-caves and rocks are coloured with rainbow hues, drawn from glorious-featured weeds; overhead, its cliffs of basalt rise shadowy, ledge after ledge darkened by innumerable little wings; and high over all grow soft greenswards, knolls of thyme and heather, where sheep bleat and whence the herd-boy crawls over to look into the raven's nest. On a still summer day, when the long Atlantic swell is crystal smooth, Canna looks supremely gentle on her image in the tide, and out of her hollow under-caves comes the low weird whisper of a voice; the sunlight glimmers on peaks and sea, the beautiful shadow quivers below, broken here and there by drifting weeds, and the bleating sheep on the high swards soften the stillness. But

when the winds come in over the deep, the beauty changes—it darkens, it flashes from softness into power. The huge waters boil at the foot of the crags, and the peaks are caught in mist; and the air, full of a great roar, gathers around Canna's troubled face. Climb the crags, and the horrid rocks to westward, jutting out here and there like sharks' teeth, spit the lurid white foam back in the glistening eyes of the sea. Slip down to the water's edge, and amid the deafening roar the spray rises far above you in a hissing shower. The whole island seems quivering through and through. The waters gather on all sides, with only one long glassy gleam to leeward. No place in the world could seem fuller of supernatural voices, more powerful, or more utterly alone.

It is our fortune to see the island in all its moods; for we are in no haste to depart. Days of deep calm alternate with days of the wildest storm—there is constant change.

Everywhere in the interior of the island there are sweet pastoral glimpses. On a summer afternoon, while we are wandering in the road near the shore, we

see the cattle beginning to flock from the pastures, headed by two gentle bulls, and gathering round the dairy house, where, in "short-gowns," white as snow, the two head dairymaids sit on their stools. The kine low softly, as the milk is drawn from the swelling udder, and now and then a calf, desperate with thirst, makes a plunge at his mother and drinks eagerly with closed eyes till he is driven away. Men and children gather around, looking on idly. As we pass by, the dairymaid offers us a royal drink of fresh warm milk, and with that taste in our lips we loiter away. Now we are among fields, and we might be in England—so sweet is the scent of hay. Yonder the calm sea glimmers, and one by one the stars are opening like forget-me-nots, with dewdrops of light for reflections in the water below. Can this be Canna? Can this be the solitary child of the ocean? Hark! That is the corn-crake, crying in the corn—the sound we have heard so often in the southern fields! As we listen, our eyes are dim indeed, for we are murmuring the tender rhyme of the poet of Merkland—lines never yet published till now, but treasured up by us as something passionately

sweet. It seems his very voice we hear, murmuring
them in the twilight.

“ THE CORN-CRAKE.

“ I’ve listened now a full half-hour,
Nor knew that voice possessed the power
Of Lethe’s fabled wave to bless
My spirit with forgetfulness.

“ The night is calm as my desire.
I see the stars, yet scarcely see,
So sweetly melteth all their fire
Into the blue serenity.
The mountains mingle with the haze,
And the three glorious sycamores
That stand before three cottage doors,
And throw warm shadows on the floors
On beautiful sunshiny days,
Come out in firmer, blacker lines,
Where softly bright a crescent shines.
A famous crescent is it still
Which seems to love this Merkland Hill
As well as ever Helicon,
And shines with as intent a will
On Luggie, as it ever shone
On Castaly in days of yore,
When poesy was deepest lore
And love the customary glee ;
A land—a land of Arcady.

“ But whether in that land of dreams,
When sun had set and many streams

Were mingling in one murmurous moan,
Thro' alder coverts flowing on,
Thy voice, dear Corn-crake! sounded thro'
The calmness, when the dear cuckoo
Had fallen asleep in shady glen,
Far from the paths of mortal men,
I cannot tell; yet I uphold,
That never a more vernal cry,
From lawn or air, or hedge or wood,
Filled all the eager hungry sky,
Or charmed a sylvan solitude.

“O Corn-crake! will you never weary?
You cry as if it were thy duty,
And thy voice were all thy beauty.
Do you cry that I may hear thee?
Not a bird awake but thee,
Except, across the dim dim sea,
The voluptuous nightingale
Singing in an orange dale.”

By a word, by a tone, we are carried into a dream:
the nightingale sings, and the Scottish poem dies
away among all the perfumes of the south!

When there is little or no sea, it is delightful to
pull in the punt round the precipitous shores, and
come upon the lonely haunts of the ocean-birds.
There is one great cliff, with a huge rock rising out
of the waters before it, which is the favourite breed-

ing haunt of the puffins, and while swarms of these little creatures, with their bright parrot-like bills and plump white breasts, flit thick as locusts in the air, legions darken the waters underneath, and rows on rows sit brooding over their young on the dizziest edges of the cliff itself. The noise of wings is ceaseless, there is constant coming and going, and so tame are the birds that one might almost seize them, either on the water or in the air, with the outstretched hand. Discharge a gun into the air, and, as the hollow echoes roar upward and inward to the very hearts of the caves, it will suddenly seem as if the tremendous crags were loosening to fall,—but the dull dangerous sound you hear is only the rush of wings. A rock farther northward is possessed entirely by gulls, chiefly the smaller species; thousands sit still and fearless, whitening the summit like snow, but many hover with discordant scream over the passing boat, and seem trying with the wild beat of their wings to scare the intruders away. Close in shore, at the mouth of a deep dark cave, cormorants are to be found, great black “scarts,” their mates, and the young, preening their glistening

plumage leisurely, or stretching out their snake-like necks to peer with fishy eyes this way and that. They are not very tame here, and should you present a gun, will soon flounder into the sea and disappear; but at times, when they have gorged themselves with fish, so awkward are they with their wings, and so muddled are their wits, that one might run right abreast of them and knock them over with an oar.

Everywhere below, above, on all sides, there is nothing but life—birds innumerable, brooding over their eggs or fishing for the young. Here and there, a little fluff of down just launched out into the great world paddles about bewildered, and dives away from the boat's bow with a faint troubled cry. On the outer rocks gulls and guillemots, puffins on the crags, and cormorants on the ledges of the caves. The poor reflective human being, brought into the sound of such a life, gets quite scared and dazed. The air, the rocks, the waters are all astir. The face turns for relief upward, where the blue sky meets the summit of the crags. Even yonder, on the very ledge, a black speck sits and croaks; and

still farther upward, dwarfed by distance to the size of a sparrowhawk, hovers a black eagle, fronting the sun.

There is something awe-inspiring, on a dead calm day, in the low hushed wash of the great swell that for ever sets in from the ocean; slow, slow, it comes, with the regular beat of a pulse, rising its height, without breaking, against the cliff it mirrors in its polished breast, and then dying down beneath with a murmuring moan. What power is there! what dreadful, fatal ebbing and flowing! No finger can stop that under-swell, no breath can come between that and its course; it has rolled since Time began, the same, neither more nor less, whether the weather be still or wild, and it will keep on when we are all dead. Bah! that is hypochondria. But look! what is that floating yonder, on the glassy water?

“O is it fish, or weed, or floating hair,
O’ drownèd maiden’s hair?”

No; but it tells as clear a tale. Those planks formed lately the sides of a ship, and on that old mattress, with the straw washing out of the rents,

some weary sailor pillowed his head not many hours ago. Where is the ship now? Where is the sailor? Oh, if a magician's wand could strike these waters, and open them up to our view, what a sight should we see!—the slimy hulls of ships long submerged; the just sunken fish-boat, with ghastly faces twisted among the nets; the skeleton suspended in the huge under-grass and monstrous weeds; the black shapes, the fleshless faces looming green in the dripping foam and watery dew! Yet how gently the swell comes rolling, and how pleasant look the depths, this summer day,—as if Death were not, as if there could be neither storm nor wreck at sea.

More hypochondria, perhaps. Why the calm sea should invariably make us melancholy we cannot tell, but it does so, in spite of all our efforts to be gay. Walt Whitman used to sport in the great waters as happily as a porpoise or a seal, without any dread, with vigorous animal delight; and we, too, can enjoy a glorious swim in the sun, if there is just a little wind, and the sea sparkles and freshens full of life. But to swim in a dead calm is dreadful to a sensitive man. Something mesmeric grips and

weakens him. If the water be deep, he feels dizzy, as if he were suspended far up in the air.

We are harping on delicate mental chords, and forgetting Canna; yet we have been musing in such a mood as Canna must inevitably awaken in all who feel the world. She is so lonely, so beautiful; and the seas around her are so full of sounds and sights that seize the soul. There is nothing mean, or squalid, or miserable about Canna; but she is melancholy and subdued,—she seems, like a Scandinavian Havfru, to sit with her hand to her ear, earnestly listening to the sea.

That, too, is what first strikes one in the Canna people,—their melancholy look; not grief-worn, not sorrowful, not passionate, but simply melancholy and subdued. We cannot believe they are unhappy beyond the lot of other people who live by labour, and it is quite certain that, in worldly circumstances, they are much more comfortable than the Highland poor are generally. Nature, however, with her wondrous secret influences, has subdued their lives, toned their thoughts, to the spirit of the island where they dwell. This is more particularly the case with

the women. Poor human souls, with that dark, searching look in the eyes, those feeble flutterings of the lips! They speak sad and low, as if somebody were sleeping close by. When they step forward and ask you to walk into the dwelling, you think (being new to their ways) that some one has just died. All at once, and inevitably, you hear the leaden wash of the sea, and you seem to be walking on a grave.

“A ghostly people!” exclaims the reader; “keep me from Canna!” That is an error. The people do seem ghostly at first, their looks do sadden and depress; but the feeling soon wears away, when you find how much quiet happiness, how much warmth of heart, may underlie the melancholy air. When they know you a little, ever so little, they brighten, not into anything demonstrative, not into sunniness, but into a silvern kind of beauty, which we can only compare to moonlight. A veil is quietly lifted, and you see the soul’s face; and then you know that these folk are melancholy, not for sorrow’s sake, but just as moonlight is melancholy, just as the wash of water is melancholy, because *that* is the natural

expression of their lives. They are capable of a still, heart-suffering tenderness, very touching to behold.

We visit many of their houses, and hold many of their hands. Kindly, gentle, open-handed as melting charity, we find them all; the poorest of them as hospitable as the proudest chieftain of their race. There is a gift everywhere for the stranger, and a blessing to follow,—for they know that after all he is bound for the same bourne.

Theirs is a quiet life, a still passage from birth to the grave; still, untroubled, save for the never-silent voices of the waves. The women work very hard, both indoors and afield. Some of the men go away herring-fishing in the season, but the majority find employment either on the island or the circumjacent waters. We cannot credit the men with great energy of character; they do not seem industrious. An active man could not lounge as they lounge, with that total abandonment of every nerve and muscle. They will lie in little groups for hours looking at the sea, and biting stalks of grass—not seeming to talk, save when one makes a kind of grunting

observation, and stretches out his limbs a little farther. Some one comes and says, "There are plenty of herring over in Loch Scavaig—a Skye boat got a great haul last night." Perhaps the loungers go off to try their luck, but very likely they say, "Wait till to-morrow—it may be all untrue;" and in all probability, before they get over to the fishing ground, the herrings have disappeared.

Yet they can work, too, and with a will, when they are fairly set on to work. They can't speculate, they can't search for profit; the shrewd man outwits them at every turn. They keep poor—but keeping poor, they keep good. Their worst fault is their dreaminess; but surely as there is light in heaven, if there be blame here, God is to blame here, who gave them dreamy souls! For our part, keep us from the man who could be born in Canna, live on and on with that ocean murmur around him, and elude dreaminess and a melancholy like theirs!

"Bah!" cries a good soul from a city; "they are lazy, like the Irish, like Jamaica niggers; they are behind the age; let them die!" You are quite

right, my good soul ; and if it will be any comfort to you to hear it, they, and such as they, are dying fast. They can't keep up with you ; you are too clever, too great. You, we have no doubt, could live at Canna, and establish a manufactory there for getting the sea turned into salt for export. You wouldn't dream—not you ! Ere long these poor Highlanders will die out, and with them may die out gentleness, hospitality, charity, and a few other lazy habits of the race.

In a pensive mood, with a prayer on our lips for the future of a noble race destined to perish locally, we wander across the island till we come to the little graveyard where the people of Canna go to sleep. It is a desolate spot, commanding a distant view of the Western Ocean. A rude stone wall, with a clumsy gate, surrounds a small square, so wild, so like the stone-covered hill-side all round, that we should not guess its use without being guided by the fine stone-mausoleum in the midst. That is the last home of the Lairds of Canna and their kin ; it is quite modern and respectable. Around, covered knee-deep with grass, are the graves of the islanders, with no other memorial stones than simple pieces of rock, large

and small, brought from the sea-shore and placed as footstones and headstones. Rugged as water tossing in the wind is the old kirkyard, and the graves of the dead therein are as the waves of the sea.

In a place apart lies the wooden bier, with hand-spokes, on which they carry the cold men and women hither; and by its side—a sight indeed to dim the eyes—is another smaller bier, smaller and lighter, used for little children. Well, there is not such a long way between parents and offspring;—the old here are children too, silly in worldly matters, loving, sensitive, credulous of strange tales. They are coming hither, faster and faster; bier after bier, shadow after shadow. It is the tradesman's day now, the day of progress, the day of civilization, the day of shops; but high as may be your respect for the commercial glory of the nation, stand for a moment in imagination among these graves, listen to one tale out of many that might be told of those who sleep below, and join me in a prayer for the poor islanders whom they are carrying, here and in a thousand other kirkyards, to the rest that is without knowledge and the sleep that is without dream.

CHAPTER IX.

EIRADH OF CANNA.

“ She was a woman of a steadfast mind,
Tender and deep in her excess of love;
Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy
Of her own thoughts.”

WORDSWORTH'S "EXCURSION."

THERE was a man named Ian Macraonail, who lived at Canna in the sea. In the days of his prosperity God sent him issue,—five lads and a lass. Now Ian had great joy in his five sons, for they grew up to be fine young men, straight-limbed, clean-skinned, clever with their hands; and in the girl he had not joy, but pain, for she was a sickly child and walked lame through a trouble in the spine. Her name was Eiradh, and she was born to many thoughts.

When she was born she cried; nor did she cease crying after long days; and folk seeing that she was so sickly a child, thought that she would die

soon. Yet Eiradh did not die, but cried on, so that the house was never quiet, and the neighbours, when they heard the sound in the night, said, "That is Ian Macraonail's bairn; the Lord has not yet taken her away." When she was three years old she lay in the cradle still, and could not run upon her feet; and then foul sores came out upon her head—after they burst she had sound sleeps, and her trouble passed away.

The mother's heart was glad to see the little one grow stiller and brighter every day, and try to prattle like other children at the hearth; and she nursed her with care, slowly teaching her to move upon her feet. Afterwards they taught her how to use a little crutch of wood which Ian himself cut in the long winter nights when he was at home.

Ian Macraonail was a just man, and his house was a well-doing house, but Eiradh saw little of her father's face. In the summer season he was far away chasing the herring on the great sea, and even on the stormy winter days he was fishing cod and ling with a mate on the shores of Skye and Mull. When he came home he was wet and sleepy, and all the

children had to keep very still. Then Eiradh would sit in a corner of the hearth and see his dark face in the peat smoke. If he took her upon his knee, she felt afraid and cried; so that the father said, "The child is stupid; take her away." But when he took her young brother upon his knee, the boy laughed and played with his beard.

For all that the mother held Eiradh dear above all her other children, because she was sickly and had given her so much care.

Ian had built the house with his own hands, and it looked right out upon the sea. All the day and night the water cried at the door. Sometimes it was low and still and glistening; and it was pleasant then to sit out on the sand and throw stones into the smooth and glassy tide. But oftenest it was wild and loud, shrieking out as if it were living, dashing in the seaweed and planks of ships, and seeming to say, "Come out here, come out here, that I may eat you up alive!" All the long night it cried on, while the wind tore at the roof of the house, and would have carried it far away if the straw ropes and heavy stones had not been there to hold it down.

Then Eiradh would hide her head under the blankets and think of her father upon the sea.

The water cried at the door. When Eiradh's eldest brother grew up into a strong youth, he went away with his father upon the sea. He stayed away so long that his face grew strange. When he came home he was sleepy and tired, like his father, and said little to his sister and brothers ; but one day he brought Eiradh home a little round-eyed owl, like a little old woman in a tufted wig. Eiradh was proud that day. When the calliach opened its mouth and roared for food, she laughed and clapped her hands ; and she made the bird a nest in an old basket, and fed it with her own hands. She loved her great brother very much after that, and was happy when he came home.

The water cried at the door. One day Eiradh's second brother joined his father and brother upon the sea, and ever after that was sleepy and tired like the others when he came home. The mother said to Eiradh, "That is always the way ; boys must work for their bread." But Eiradh thought to her-

self, "It is the sea calling them away. I shall soon not have a brother left in the house."

The water cried at the door till all Eiradh's five brothers went away. Then it was very lonely in the dwelling, and the days and nights were long and dull. When the fishers came home, their faces were all strange to her, and they seemed great rough men, while she was only a little sickly child. But they were kind. They told her wild stories about the sea and the people they had seen, and laughed out loud and merry at the wonder in her great staring eyes. They told her of the great whales and the sea-snakes that have manes like a horse and teeth like a saw; and how the old witch of Barra smoked her pipe over her pot and sold the fishermen winds.

One night when Eiradh was twelve years of age, she sat with her mother over the fire, waiting for her father and brothers to come home in the skiff from Mull. It was a rainy night, late in the year. Now, the mother had been ailing for many days with a heaviness and pain about the heart, and she said to Eiradh: "I feel sick, and I will lie down upon

the bed to rest a little." Eiradh kept very still that her mother might sleep, and the pot, with the supper in it, bubbled, the rain went splash-splash at the door, till Eiradh fell to sleep herself. She woke up with a loud cry, and looking round her saw her father and brothers in the room. The steam was coming thick like smoke from their clothes, their faces were white, and they were talking to one another. She called to them not to make a noise because mother was asleep; but her father said, in a sharp voice, "Take the girl away—she is better out of the house." Then a neighbour woman stepped forward, out of the shadow of the door, and said, "She shall go with me." When the woman took her by the hand and led her to the other house through the rain, she was so frightened she could not say a word. The woman led her in, and bade her seat herself beside the fire, where a man sat smoking his pipe and mending his nets. Then Eiradh heard her whisper in his ear, as she passed him, "This is lame Eiradh with the red hair—her mother has just died."

It seemed to Eiradh that the ground was suddenly

drawn from under her feet, and she was walking high up in the air, and all around her were voices crying: "Eiradh! Eiradh with the red hair! your mother has just died." When that passed away, a sharp thread was drawn through her heart, and she could scarcely cry for pain; but when the tears came they did her good, washing the pang away. But it was like a dream.

It was like a dream, too, the day when the woman took her by the hand and led her back to the house. The sea was loud that day—loud and dark—and it seemed to be saying, with its great voice: "Eiradh! Eiradh! your mother has just died." The home was clean and still; father was sitting on a bench beside the fire in his best clothes, looking very white. When she went in he drew her to him and kissed her on the forehead, and she sobbed sore. The woman said, "Come, Eiradh;" and led her aside. Something was lying on the bed all white, and there was a smell like fresh-bleached linen in the air; then the woman lifted up a kerchief, and Eiradh saw her mother's face dressed in a clean cap, and the grey hair brushed down smooth and neat. Eiradh's

tears stopped, and she was afraid—it looked so cold. The woman said: “Would you like to kiss her, Eiradh, before they take her away?” but Eiradh drew her breath tight, and cried to be taken out of the house.

That night she slept in the neighbour’s house, and the next day her mother was taken to the graveyard on the hill. Eiradh did not see them take her away; but in the afternoon she went home and found the house empty. It was clean and bright. The peat fire was blazing on the floor, and there were bottles and glasses on the press in the corner. By-and-by her father and brothers came in, all dressed in their best clothes, and with red eyes; and many fishermen—neighbours—stood at the door to take the parting glass, and went away quite merry to their homes. But the priest came and sat down by the fire with her father and brothers, and patted Eiradh on the head, telling her not to cry any more, because her mother was happy with God. She went and sat on the ground in a corner, looking at them through her tears. Her father was lighting his pipe, and she heard him say, “She was a good

wife to me ;” and the priest answered, “She was a good wife and a good mother ; she has gone to a better place.” Eiradh wondered very much to see them so quiet and hard.

With that, the days of Eiradh’s loneliness began. She had no mother now to talk to her in the long nights when her father and brothers were away upon the sea ; but she used to go to the neighbour-woman’s house and sleep among the children. Oftener than ever before, she loved to sit by the water and listen, playing alone ; so that her play-mates used to say, “Eiradh is a stupid girl, and likes to sit by herself.” One day she went to the graveyard on the hill and searched about for the place where her mother was laid. The grass was long and green, and there were great weeds everywhere ; but there was one place where the earth had been newly turned, and blades of young grass were beginning to creep through the clay. She felt sure that her mother must be sleeping there. So she sat down on the grave and began to knit. It was a clear bright day, the sheep were crying on the hills, and the sea far off was like a glass ; and it was

strange to think her mother was lying down there, so near to her, with her face up to the sky. Eiradh began wondering how deep she was lying and whether she was still dressed in white. Her thoughts made her afraid, and she looked all around her. Though it was daytime, she could not bear to stay any longer, for she had heard about ghosts. As she walked home on her crutch, she looked round her very often, fancying she heard some one at her back.

Though Eiradh Nicraonail was a sickly girl, she was clever and quick, and she soon began to take a pleasure in the house. The neighbour-woman helped about the place and taught Eiradh many things—how to cook, how to make cakes of oatmeal on the brander, and how to wash clothes. She was so quick and willing, and longed so much to please her father and brothers, that they said, “Eiradh is as good as a woman in a house, though she is so young.” Then Eiradh brightened full of pride, and ever after that kept the home clean and pleasant, and forgot her griefs.

There was a man in Canna, a little old man with a club foot, who got his living in many ways, for he

could make shoes and knew how to mend nets, and besides, he was a learned man, having been taught at a school in the south. Some of the children used to go to him in the evenings, and he taught them how to read ; but he was so sharp and cross that sometimes he would have nothing to say to them though they came. Now and then, Eiradh went over to him, and he was gentler with her than with the rest, because she had a trouble of the body like himself. He learned her her letters, and afterwards, with a wooden trunk for a desk, made her try to write. Often, too, he came over to her in the house, and smoked his pipe while she knitted ; but if her father or any of her brothers came in, he gave them sharp answers and soon went away, while they laughed and said, "It is a pity that his learning does not make him more free." He was a strange old man, and believed in ghosts and witches. Eiradh liked to sit and listen to his tales. He told her how the bagpipes played far off when any one was going to die. He told her of a young man in Skye, who could cause diseases by the power of the evil eye, and of a woman in Barra, who used to change into

a hare every night and run up to the top of the mountains to meet a spirit in black by the side of a fire made out of the coffins of those who died in sin. He had seen every loophole in Skipness Castle full of cats' heads, with red eyes, and every head was the head of a witch. He believed in dreams, and thought that the dead rose every night and walked together by the side of the sea. Often in the dark evenings, when Eiradh was sitting at his knee, he would take his pipe out of his mouth and tell her to listen; if she listened very hard in the pauses of the wind, she would hear something like a voice crying; and he told her that it was the spirit of the poor lady who died in the tower, walking up and down, moaning and wringing its hands.

As Eiradh grew older she had so much to do in the house that she thought of these things less than before. But when she sat by herself knitting, and the day's work was over, voices came about her that belonged to another land, and she grew so used to them that their presence seemed company to her, and she was not afraid. By the time that she was seventeen years of age God's strength had come

upon her, and she could walk about without her crutch. She had red hair, her face was white and well-favoured, and her eyes were the colour of the green sea.

One night, when her father and brothers were sleeping with her in the house, Eiradh Nicraonail had a dream. She thought she was standing by the sea, and it was full of moonlight and the shadows of the stars. While she stood looking and listening there came up out of the sea a black beast like a seal, followed by five young ones, and they floated about in the light of the moon with their black heads up listening to a sound from far away like the music of a harp. All at once the wind rose and the sea grew rough and white, and the light was quite dark. In a little time the distant music grew louder and the wind died away. Then Eiradh saw the beast floating about alone in the white moonlight and bleating like a sheep when robbed of its lamb; and at last it gave a great cry and stretched itself out stiff and dead, with its speckled belly shining uppermost and the herring-syle playing round it like flashes of silver light. With that she awoke, and it was

dark night; the wind was crying softly outside, and she could hear her father and brothers breathing heavy in their sleep.

The next day, when her father and brothers sat mending their nets at the door she told them her dream. They only laughed, and said it was folly put into her head by the old man who taught her to read. But she saw that they looked at one another, and were not well pleased. All that day the dream troubled her at her work, and whenever she heard the sheep bleat from the hill-side she felt faint. The next night she said a long prayer for her father and brothers, and slept sound. The dream did not come again, and in a few days the trouble of it wore away. But when the news came that they were catching herring in Loch Scavaig, and the fisherman and his sons began preparing their boat to sail over and try their chance, all Eiradh's fears came back upon her twentyfold. It was changeful weather early in the year; there were strong winds and a great sea.

The day before the boat went away Ian had the rheumatic trouble so sore in his bones that he could not rise out of his bed; and he was still so sick

next day that he told the young men to go away alone, for fear of missing the good fishing. They went off with a light heart—four strong men and a tall lad.

Ian Macraonail never saw his sons any more. Three days afterwards news was brought that the boat had laid over and filled in a squall, and that every one on board had been drowned in the sea.

Then Eiradh knew that her strange dream had partly come true, but that more was to come true yet. The water cried at the door. Ian sat like a frozen man in the house, and when Eiradh looked at him her tears ceased—she felt afraid. He scarcely said a word, and did not cry, but he paid no heed to his meat. He looked like the man on the hill-side when the voice of God came out of the burning bush.

Again and again Eiradh cried "Father!" and looked into his face, but he held up his hand each time to warn her away. A thread ran through her heart at this, for she had always known he loved her brothers best, and now he did not seem to remember

her at all. She went outside the home, and looked at the crying water, and hated it for all it had done. Her heart was sad for her five brothers who were dead, but it was saddest of all for her father who was alive.

The priest came, and prayed for the dead. Ian prayed too, with a cold heart. Afterwards the priest took him by the hand, looking into his eyes, and said, "Ian, you have suffered sore, but those the Lord loves are born to many troubles." Ian looked down, and answered in a low voice, "That is true; I have nothing left now to live for." But the priest said, "You have Eiradh, your daughter; she is a good girl." Ian made no answer, but sat down and smoked his pipe. Eiradh went out of the house, and cried to herself.

Now, that day Ian Macraonail put on his best black gear and the black hat with the broad crape band. The black clothes made him look whiter. He took his staff, and went up over the hill on to the cliffs, over the place where the black eagle builds, and stood close to the edge, looking over at Loch Scavaig, where the lads were drowned. While

he stood there a shepherd that knew him came by, and seeing him look so wild, fancied that he meant to take the short road to the kirkyard. So the man touched him on the shoulder, saying, "He sleeps ill that rocks himself to sleep—we are in God's hands, and must bide His time." Ian knew what the shepherd meant, and shook his head. "I have been a well-doing man," he said, "and mine has been a well-doing house. I have drunk a bitter cup, but the Lord forbid that I should do the sin you think of." So the shepherd made the sign of the blessed cross, and went away.

After that Ian wore his black gear every day, and every day he went up on the high cliffs to walk. He ate his meat quite hearty, and he was gentle with Eiradh in the house; but he stared all around him like a man at the helm in a thick mist, and listened as the man at the helm listens in the mist for the wind that is coming. It was plain that he took little heart in his dwelling, or in the good money he had saved. One day he said, "When I go again to the herring-fishing, I must pay wages to strangers I cannot trust, and things will not go well."

The day after that, at the mouth of lateness, they found him leaning against a stone, close over the place where the black eagle builds; and his heart was turned to lead, and his blood was water, and there were no pictures in his eyes.

Now Eiradh Nicraonail was alone in the whole world.

II.

When Ian was in the narrow house where the fire is cold and the grass grows at the door, Eiradh sold the boats and the nets, and all but the house she lived in; and when she counted the good money, she found there was enough to keep her from hunger for a little time. In these days she had little heart to work in the house and in the fields, and every time she thought of those who were lying under the hill she felt a salt stone rise in her throat. In the long nights, when she was alone, voices came out of the sea, and eyes looked at her,—she heard the wind calling, and the ghost of the lady crying up in the tower,—and she thought of all the strange things the old man had told her when she was small. Often

her heart was so troubled that she had to run away to the neighbours and sit among them for company. She often said, "I would rather be far away than here, for it is a dull place;" and she planned to take service on some farm across the water.

The women bade her wait and look out for a man, but Eiradh said, "The man is not born that would earn meat for me." She was dull and down-looking in these days, speaking little, but her bodily trouble was all gone, and she was clean-limbed and had a soft face. More than one lad looked her way, and would have come courting to her house at night, but she barred the door and would let no man in. One night, when a fisher lad got in, and came laughing to her bedside, he was sore afraid at the look of her face and the words of her mouth, though she only cried, "Go away this night, for the love of my father and mother. I am sick and heavy with sleep."

These were decent and well-doing lads, shepherds earning good wage, but Eiradh had a face to frighten them away.

The winter after Ian Macraonail died, Calum

Eachern, the tailor, came north to Canna. The folk had been waiting for him since long, and there was much work to be done—so that Calum was busy morning and night in one house or another; but though he had been busier, his tongue could never have kept still. Every night people gathered in the place where he worked, and those were merry times. He was like a full kist, never empty; his tales were never done. He had the story of the king of Lochlan's daughter, and how Fionn killed the great bird of the red beak, and many more beside. He loved best to tell about the men of peace, with their green houses under the hillside, and about the changeling bairns that play the fairy pipes in the time of sleep, and about the ladies with green gowns, that sit in the magic wells and tempt the herdboys with silver rings. He had that many riddles they were like the limpets on the sea-shore. He knew old songs, and he had the gift of making rhymes himself to his own tune. So the coming of Calum Eachern was like the playing of pipes at a wedding on a summer day.

Calum was little, narrow in the shoulders, and

short in the legs. His face was like a china cup for neatness. He had a little turned-up nose, and white teeth, and he shaved his beard clean every day. He had little twinkling eyes like a fox's, and when he talked to you he cocked his head on one side, like a sparrow on a dyke.

One night, he was at work in a neighbour's house, and Eiradh went in with the rest. Calum sat on his board, and some were looking on and listening to his talk. When Eiradh went in, he put his head on one side and looked at her, and said in a rhyme—

“What did the fox say?
Huch! huch! huch! cried the fox;
Cold are my bones this day—
I have lent my skin to cover the head
Of the girl with the red hair.”

All the folk laughed, and Eiradh laughed too. Then she sat down on the floor by the fire, and hearkened with her cheek on her hand. Calum Eachern was like a bee in the time of honey. He stitched, and sang, and told tales about the men of peace, and the land where jewels grew as thick as chuckie-stones, and gold is as plenty as the sand of

the sea. Whenever Eiradh looked up, he had his head on one side, and his eyes were laughing at her. By-and-by he nodded and said :

“ What did the sea-gull say ?
Kriki ! kriki ! cried the sea-gull ;
Hard it is to hatch my eggs this day—
I have lent my white breast
To the girl with the red hair.”

Then he nodded again and said :

“ What did the heron say ?
Kray ! kray ! said the heron ;
Poor is my fishing in the loch this day—
I have lent my long straight leg
To the girl with the red hair.”

With that, he flung down the shears, and laughed till the tears were in his eyes. Eiradh felt angry and ashamed, and went away.

But for all that, she was not ill pleased. Listening to Calum Eachern had been like sitting out of doors on a bright sunny day. It made her heart light. All the night long she thought of his talk. She had never heard tales like those before—all about brightness and a pleasant place. When she went to sleep,

she dreamed she was in an enchanted castle all made of silver mines and precious stones, and that Calum Eachern was showing her a fountain full of gold fish, and the fountain seemed to fall in rhyme. All at once, Calum laughed so loud that the castle was broken into a thousand pieces, and when she woke up it was bright day.

The day after that who should come into the house but Calum Eachern. "A blessing on this house!" said he, and sat down beside the fire. Eiradh was putting the potatoes in the big pot, and Calum pointed at the pot and said :

"Totoman, totoman,
Little black man,
Three feet under
And bonnet of wood!"

Eiradh laughed at the riddle. Then Calum, seeing she was pleased, began to talk and sing, putting his head on one side and laughing. All at once he said, looking quite serious, "It's not much company you will be having here, Eiradh Nicra-onail."

"That's true enough," said Eiradh.

"It's a dull house that is without the cry of bairns, I'm thinking."

"And that's true too," said Eiradh.

"Then why don't you take a man?" said he, looking at her very sharp.

Eiradh gave her head a toss, and lifted up the lid of the pot to look in.

"Your cheek is like a rose for redness," said Calum. "Are ye ashamed to answer?"

At that, Eiradh lifted up her head and looked him straight in the face.

"The man is not born that I heed a straw," said she.

Calum laughed out loud to hear her say that, and a little after he went away.

Eiradh did not know whether she was pleased or angry, and all that night she had little sleep. She did not like to be laughed at, and yet she could not be rightly angry with such a merry fellow as Calum. It seemed strange to her that he should come to the house at all.

It seemed stranger, the next night, when Calum came in again, and sat down by the fire.

"How does the Lord use you this night, Eiradh Nicraonail?"

"The Lord is good," answered Eiradh.

"Can you read print?" he said, smiling.

"Ay," answered Eiradh, "print, and writing too."

"And that's a comfort," said Calum. "But I've brought you somebody to sit with ye by the fire in the long nights."

"And what's he like?" asked Eiradh, thinking that Calum meant himself.

"He's not over fine to look at, but he's mighty learned. He's a little old man with a leather skin, and his name written on his face, and the marks o' thumbs all over his inside."

"And where is he this night?"

"This is him, and here he is, and many a merry thing he'll teach you, if you attend to his talking," said Calum; and he gave her a little book in the Gaelic, very old and covered with black print; and soon after that he went away.

When he was gone, Eiradh sat down by the fire and turned over the leaves of the book that he had

given her, and it seemed like the voice of Calum talking in her ear. There were stories about the fairies and the men of peace, and shieling songs of the south country, and riddles for the fireside in the south country on Halloween. Eiradh read till she was tired, and some of the stories made her laugh afterwards as she sat by the fireside with her cheek on her hand. She could not help thinking that it would be fine to live in the south country, where there was corn growing everywhere, and gardens full of flowers, and no sea.

After that Calum Eachern came often to the house, and Eiradh did not tell him to stay away. Some of the folk said, "Calum Eachern has a bad name," and bade Eiradh beware, because he had a false tongue. Eiradh laughed and said, "I fear the tongue of no man." Every night she read the printed book, till she knew it from the first page to the last, and when she was alone she would sing bits of the songs to Calum Eachern's tunes. Sometimes she would stand on the sea-shore, and look out across the water, and wonder what like was the country on the other side of the Rhu. In those days she was sick of Canna, and

thought to herself, "If I was living in the south country, I should not be afraid of them that are dead;" and she remembered Calum's words, "It's not much company you will be having here, Eiradh Nic-raonail."

One night there was a boat from Tyree in the harbour, and when Calum came in late Eiradh knew that he had been drinking with the Tyree men. His face was red, and his breath smelt strong of the drink. He tried hard to get his will of her that night, but Eiradh was a well-doing girl and pushed him out of the house. She was angry and fit to cry, thinking of the words, "Calum Eachern has a bad name." That night she had a dream. She thought she was walking by the side of the sea on a light night, and she had a bairn in her arms, and she was giving it the breast. As she walked she could hear the ghost of the lady crying in the tower. Then she felt the babe she carried as heavy as lead, and it spoke with a man's voice, and had white teeth; and when she looked at its face, it was Calum's face laughing, all cocked on one side. With that she woke.

When she saw Calum next, he hung down his head, and looked so strange and sad that she could not help laughing as she passed by. Then he ran after, and she turned on him full of anger. But Calum had a smooth tongue, and she soon forgot her anger listening to one of his tales. She liked him best of all that day, for he was quiet and serious, and never laughed once. Eiradh thought to herself, "The man is no worse than other men, and drink will change a wise man into a fool."

Calum never tried to wrong her again, but one night he spoke out plain and asked her to marry him, and go home with him in a Canna boat to the south. It was a long while ere Eiradh answered a word. She sat with her cheek on her hand looking at the fire, and thinking of the night her mother died, and of her father and brothers that were drowned, and of the voices that came to her out of the sea. It was a rough night, and the wind blew sharp from the east, and she could hear the water at the door. Then she looked at Calum, and he had a bright smile, and held out his hand. But she only said, "Go away this night," and he went away

without a word. All night long she thought of his words, "It's a dull house without the cry of bairns," and she remembered the days when her mother used to nurse her, and her father cut her the crutch of wood with his own hands. Next morning the sea was still, and the light was the colour of gold on the land beyond the Rhu. That day the folk seemed sharp and cold, and more than one mocked her with the name of Calum; so that she said to herself, "They shall not mock me without a cause;" and when Calum came to her the next night, she said she would be his goodwife.

Soon after that Calum Eachern and Eiradh Nic-raonail were married by the priest from Skye; and the day they married they went on board a Canna smack that was sailing south. An old man from Tyree was at the helm, and she sat on her kist close to him. Calum sat up by the mast with the men, who were all Canna lads, and as they all talked together Calum whispered something and laughed, and all the lads looked at her and laughed too. Calum was full of drink. He had a bottle of whiskey in the breast of his coat, and as the boat sailed out

of the bay he waved it to the folk on shore, and laughed like a wild man.

Now Eiradh felt sadder and sadder as she saw Canna growing farther and farther away; for she thought of her father and mother, and of the graveyard on the hill. The more she thought, the more she felt the tears in her eyes and the stone in her throat. Going round the Rhu she had the sea-sickness, and thought she was going to die. Though she had dwelt beside the sea so many years, she had never sailed on the water in a boat.

III.

Where Calum Eachern lived, the folk had strange ways, and many of them had both the Gaelic and the English. Their houses were whitewashed and roofed with slate, and there was a long street with shops full of all things that man could wish, and there was a house for the sale of drink. The roads were broad and smooth as your hand, and on the sides of the hills were fields of corn and potatoes. The sea was twenty miles away, but there was a burn, on the

banks of which the women used to tread their clothes. Eiradh thought to herself, "It is not as fine a country as Calum said."

Calum's house was the poorest house there. It had two rooms, and in the front room Calum worked; the back room was a kitchen with a bed in the wall. Eiradh had brought with her some of the furniture from her father's house, and plenty of woollen woof made by her mother's own hands; and she soon made the place pleasant and clean. They had not been home a day when the laird came in for the back rent that was due, and Eiradh paid the money out of her own store. She had the money in a stocking inside her kist, and some of it was in copper and silver, but there were pound notes quite ragged and old with being kept so many years.

It would take me a long winter's night to tell all that Eiradh thought in those days. She was like one in a dream. She felt it strange to see so many people coming and going in and out of the shops and houses, and the crowds on market days, and the great heap of sheep and cattle. The folk were civil and fair-spoken, but most of the men drank at the public

house. There was a man next door who would get mad-drunk every night he had the money, and it was a sad sight to see his wife's face cut and bruised and the bairns at her side crying for lack of food. Many of the men were weavers, and walked lame as Eiradh used to do, and had pale sickly faces, black under the eyes. The Gaelic they had was a different Gaelic from that the folk had in Canna, and sometimes Eiradh could not understand it at all.

Now, it was not long ere Eiradh found that Calum had a bad name in the place for drinking; and, besides, he had beguiled a servant lass the year before, under the promise of marriage. Eiradh thought of the night when he had come drunk to the house, but she said nothing to Calum. She would sit and watch him for hours, and wonder she had thought him so bright and free; for she soon saw he was a double man, with a side for his home and another for strangers: and the first side was as dull as the second was bright. He never raised his hand to her in those days, and was sober; but he would sit with a silent tongue, and sometimes give her a strange look. Eiradh thought to herself

“Calum is like the south country, and looks brightest to them that are farthest away.”

A year after they had come to the south country, Calum turned his front room into a shop, and made Eiradh look after it while he was at work. The goods were bought with her own good money, and were tea, sugar, tobacco, and meal. The first month, Eiradh got all her money back. It was pleasant to sit there and sell, and know that she made a profit on each thing she sold; and Calum was light and merry, when he saw that his idea had turned out well. Eiradh's health was not so good in those days, and she had no children.

After that came days of trouble, for Calum grew worse and worse. He would take the money that Eiradh had earned, and spend it in the public house; and when he came home in drink, he raised his hand to her more than once. Then Eiradh thought to herself, “My father did not love me, but he never struck me a blow; there is not a man in Canna who would lift his hand to a woman.” After that she took no pleasure in trade, but would sit with a sick face and a silent tongue, thinking of Canna in

the sea. Calum liked her the less because she did not complain. One day he told her that he did not marry her for herself, but for the money she had saved ; and this was a sore thing to say to her ; but though the tears made her blind, she only looked at him and did not answer a word. There was some of the money left in her kist, but she never cared to look at it after what Calum had said.

After the 'day he married Eiradh, Calum had never left his home to work through the country as he once did. But one night late in the year he said he must go south on business, and in the morning he went away. Eiradh never saw him again on this side the narrow house. He went straight to the big city of Glasgow, and there he met the lass he had beguiled the year he married Eiradh, and the two sailed over the seas to Canada. The news came quick to Eiradh by the mouth of one who saw them on the quay.

One would need the tongue of a witch to tell all Eiradh's thoughts in those days. The first news seemed like the roar of the sea the time her brothers died, and the words stopped in her ears like the

crying of the water day and night. She felt ashamed to show herself in the street, and she could not bear the comfort of the good wives ; for they all said, "Calum had ever a bad name," and she remembered how the folk in Canna had used the same words. She would sit with her apron over her face, and greet* for hours with no noise. It seemed dreadful to be there in the south country, without friend or kindred, and the folk having a different Gaelic from her own. She felt sick and stupid, just like herself when she would cry night and day from the cradle, without strength to run upon her feet. She thought to herself, "I may cry till my heart breaks now, but no one heeds ;" and the thought brought up the picture of her mother lying in the bed all white, and made her cry the more. Now, in those days voices came about her that belonged to another land, and the faces of her father and mother went past her like the white breaking of a wave on the beach in the night. She had dreams whenever she slept, and in every one of her dreams she heard the sough of the sea.

* Weep.

But Eiradh Eachern was a well-doing lass, and had been bred to face trouble when it came. Her first thought was this: "I will go back to Canna in the sea, and work for my bread in the fields." But when she looked in the kist, she found that Calum had been there and taken away all the good money out of the stocking, and a picture besides of the Virgin Mary, set round with yellow gold and precious stones the colour of blood. Now, this grieved Eiradh most. She did not heed the money so much, but the picture had belonged to her mother, and she would not have parted with it for hundreds of pounds. She felt a sharp thread run through her heart, and she was sick for pain.

It is a wonder how much trouble a strong man or woman in good health can bear when it comes. Eiradh thought to herself at first, "I shall die;" but she did not die. The Lord was not willing that she should be taken away then. He spared her, as he had spared her in her sickness when a bairn at the breast.

One day a neighbour came in and said, "Will you not keep open the shop the same as before?"

You have always paid for your goods, and those that sent them will not press for payment at first." Now, Eiradh had never thought of that, and her heart lightened. That same day she got the school-master to write a letter, in the English, to the big city, asking goods. The next week the goods came.

Then Eiradh thought, "God has not forgotten me," and worked hard to put all in order as before. Many folk came and bought from her, out of kindness at first, but afterwards because they said she was a just woman, and gave full value for their money. All this gladdened her heart. She said, "God helps those that are fallen," and every penny that she earned seemed to have the blessing of God.

In those times she would lock up the house when the day was done, and walk by herself along the side of the burn; for the sound of the water seemed like old times; and when the moon came out on the green fields, they looked for all the world like smooth water. Voices from another land came to her, and spirits passed before her eyes; so that she often thought to herself, "I wonder how Canna looks this night, and whether it is storm or calm?"

I might talk till the summer came, and not tell you half of the many thoughts Eiradh had in the south country. She loved to sit by herself, as when she was a child; and the folk thought her a dull woman, with a white face. The women said, "Calum Eachern's wife has the greed of money strong in her heart, but she is a just-dealing woman." It was true that Eiradh found pleasure in trade, and would not sell to those who did not come to buy money in hand. Every piece she saved she put in the stocking in the old kist, and every week she counted it out in her lap.

So the time passed, and sometimes Eiradh could hardly call up right the memory of Calum's face. It seemed like a dream. These were the days of her prosperity, and every week she saved something, and every second Sabbath she saw the priest. Now, the folk in those parts had a religion of their own, and did not believe in the Virgin Mary or the Pope of Rome. Some of them were worse than that, and did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the children had the English as well as the Gaelic; and the preachings were in the English, and the English

was taught in the school. But all the time she lived in the south Eiradh could not speak a word of that tongue. It seemed to her like the chirping of birds, with little meaning and a heap of sound.

All the years Eiradh sat in the shop, the Lord drew silver threads in her hair, and made lines like pencil-marks over her face; and when she was thirty-five years of age her sight failed her, and she had to wear glasses. She had little sickness, but she stooped in the shoulders, and had a dry cough. In those days she did not go out of the house at night, but sat over the fire reading the book Calum had given her long years before. The leaves of the book were all black and torn, and many of the pages were gone. Every time she looked at it she thought of old times. She had little pleasure in the tales and riddles of the south country—all about brightness and a pleasant place; for she thought to herself, “The tales are all lies, and the south country looks brightest far off, and the folk do not believe in the Virgin Mary or the saints.” For all that, she liked to look at the old book; and to let her thoughts go back of their own accord, like the flowing of water

in a burn. Best of all, she loved to count the bright money into her lap, and think how the neighbours praised her as a just-dealing woman who throve well.

IV.

The years went past Eiradh Eachern like the waves breaking on the shore, and the days were as like each other as the waves breaking, and she could not count them at all. She was like the young man that went to sleep on the Island of Peace, and had a dream of watching the fairy people, and when he woke he was old and frail upon his feet. Eiradh was fifty years of age when she counted the money in her kist for the last time, and found that she had put by a hundred and twenty pounds in good money. That night she sat with the heap of money in her lap, and the salt tears running down her cheeks, and her bottom-lip quivering like the withered leaf on the bough of a tree.

Now, all these years Eiradh had one thought, and it was this: "Before I die, I will go back to Canna

in the sea." Every day of her life she fancied she saw the picture of the green cliffs covered with goats and sheep, and the black scarts sitting on the weedy rocks in a row, and the sea rising and falling like the soft breasts of a woman in sound sleep. Every night of her life she had a dream of her father's house by the shore, and the water crying at the door. It seemed ever calm weather to her thoughts, and the sea was kinder and sweeter than when she was a child. Eiradh often thought to herself, "The water took away my five brothers, and close to the water my father and mother closed their eyes;" and the more she thought of them sleeping, the less she was afraid.

So when she had saved one hundred and twenty pounds in good money, she felt that she could abide no longer in the south country. The more she tried to stay a little longer, the more voices from another land came to her, saying, "Eiradh, Eiradh! go back to Canna in the sea." At last she had a dream; and she thought she was lying in her sowe* in a dark land, waiting to be laid in the earth. All at

* Shroud.

once she felt herself rocking up and down, and heard the sound of the sea crying, and when she put out her hand at her side it was dripping wet. Then Eiradh knew that she was drifting in a boat, and the boat was a coffin with the lid off, and though there was a strong wind she floated on the waves like a cork. All night long she floated and never saw land; only a light shining far far off, over the dark water. When she woke up, she was sore troubled, and said to herself, "It is my wraith that I saw, and unless I haste I may never see my home again."

After that she never rested till she had sold the trade of her shop in the south country, and all she kept to herself was the old kist full of her clothes and the money she had saved. But she made a pouch of leather with her own hands, and put the money in it, and fastened the pouch to her waist underneath her clothes, and the only thing in the pouch beside the money was the old book in the Gaelic Calum had given her when she was a young woman.

I have told you that the place was twenty miles from the sea. One day she put her kist in a cart

that was going that way, and the day after she took the road. It was a fine morning, early in the year. When she got to the top of the hill, and saw the place below her where she had lived so long, all asleep and still, with the smoke going straight up out of the houses, and not a soul in the street, it seemed like a dream. As she went on, the country was strange, but it looked finer and bonnier than any country she had ever seen. Now, her heart was so light that day that she could walk like a strong man. The sun came out, and the birds sang, and the land was green, and wherever she went the sheep cried. Eiradh thought to herself, "My dream was true after all, and the south country is a pleasant place."

For all that she was wearying to see Canna in the sea, and wondering if it was the same all those years. She counted on her fingers the names of the folk she knew, and wondered how many were dead. Every one of them seemed like a friend. She was keen to hear her own Gaelic again after so many years in a foreign land.

She walked twelve miles that day, and slept at a

farm by the road at night. The next day she saw the sea.

It was good weather, and the sea was covered with fishing-boats and ships. She could hear the sough of the water a long way off, and it seemed like old times. There was a bit village on the shore, full of fisher-folk, and the houses minded her of those where she was born. There were skiffs drawn up on the shore, and nets put out to dry, and the air was full of the smell of fish.

She slept in the house of a fisher-woman that night, and the next day a fishing-boat took her out to catch the big steamboat to Tobermory. It was the first time that Eiradh had seen a boat like that, and it seemed to her like a great beast panting and groaning, and swimming through the water with its fins and tail. It was full of the smell of fish, and the decks were covered with herring-barrels, and where there were no herring-barrels there were cattle and sheep. In one part of the boat there was a long box like a coffin, covered over with a piece of tarpaulin to keep it dry; and one of the sailors told Eiradh that it held the dead body of an

old man from Skye, who had died on the Firth o' Clyde, and was being carried home to be with his kindred at home. Eiradh said, "It is a sad thing to be buried far away from kindred;" and she thought to herself, "If I had died in the south country, there would have been no kin or friend to carry me to Canna in the sea."

Neither wind nor tide could keep the big steam-boat back; so wonderful are the works of the hand of man, when God is willing. Late at night Eiradh landed at Tobermory in Mull, but the moon was bright, and she saw that the bay was full of fishing-boats at anchor. Eiradh wondered to herself if any of the boats were from Canna.

She got a lodging in the inn that night, and the next morning she went down to the shore. There were heaps of fishermen on the beach, and many of them passed her the sign of the day, but none of them seemed to have her own Gaelic. Then Eiradh said, "Is there a Canna boat in the bay?" and they said "Ay," and pointed out a big smack with her sails up, and a great patch on the mainsail. The skipper of the smack was on shore, and his name

was Alastair. He was a big black-whiskered man, with large silly eyes like a seal's. Eiradh minded him well, though he was a laddie when she left, and went up and called him by his name, but he stared at her and shook his head. Then Eiradh said, "Do you mind Eiradh Nicraonail, who dwelt in the small house by the sea?" and the man laughed, and asked after Calum Eachern. Eiradh told him her troubles, and got the promise of a passage to Canna that day.

In the afternoon it blew hard from the east, but Eiradh went on board the smack with her kist. They ran out of the Sound of Mull with the wind, and kept in close to the Rhu, for the sake of smooth water. Eiradh felt a heaviness and pain about her heart, and sat on the kist with her head leaning against the side of the boat. She had a touch of the sea-sickness, but that passed away.

Alastair steered the smack on the west side of Eig, and the squalls came so sharp off the Scaur that they had to take down the topsail. As they sailed in the smooth water on the lee side of Eig Eiradh asked about the Canna folk she had known,

and most of them were dead and buried. Then she asked about the old man who had taught her to read and write, and he was dead too. Many of the young folk had gone away across the ocean, to work among strangers and wander in a foreign land.

The heart of Eiradh sank to hear the news; for she thought to herself, "Every face will be as strange as the faces in the south." Then Alastair, seeing she put her hand to her heart, said, "What ails ye, wife? are you sick?" Eiradh nodded, and leant her head over the boat, looking at the sea.

A little after that the smack rounded the north end of Rum, and Eiradh saw Canna in the sea, just as she had left it long ago. There was a shower all over the ocean, but the green side of Canna was shining with the light through a cloud. Eiradh looked and looked; for there was not an inch of the green land but she knew by heart.

The wind blew fresh and keen, and they had to lower the peak of the mainsail running for the harbour. Eiradh saw the tower, all gray and wet in the rain, and she thought she heard the lady's voice calling as in old times. Then she looked over to

the mouth of Loch Scavaig, thinking to herself, "There is the place where my brothers were lost!" and that brought up the picture of her father, sitting dead on the cliffs and looking out to sea. Eiradh's eyes were blind with tears, and she could not see Canna any more; but as they ran round into the bay, her eyes cleared, and she saw her home close by the water-side, with the roof all gone, and the walls broken down, and a cow looking out of the door.

A little after that, when the anchor was down and the mainsail lowered, Alastair touched Eiradh on the arm, thinking she was asleep, for she was leaning back with her face in her cloak. Then he drew back the cloak, and saw her face with a strange smile on it, and the eyes wide open. Though he was a big man, he was scared, and called out to his mates, and an old man among them said, "Sure enough she is dead." So they carried her body ashore in their boat, and put it in one of the houses, and sent word to the laird.

Eiradh Eachern had died of the same disease that killed her mother. She had o'er many thoughts to live long, and she knew the name of trouble.

In her kist they found her grave-clothes all ready made and neatly worked with her own hands, and they buried her on the hill-side close to her father and mother. May the Lord God find her ready there to answer to her name at the Last Day!

END OF VOL. I.

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