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THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY-400 023.



TWO MONTHS

IN THE

HIGHLANDS, ORCADIA, AND SKYE

BY

CHARLES RICHARD WELD

AUTHOR OF "VACATIONS IN IRELAND" "THE PYRENEES, EAST AND WEST" ETC.

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de

" Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume ;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom"

Burns

Z. B. 30

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1860

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TO

M. G. V. LEACOCK

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

BY HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER

CHARLES RICHARD WELD

BURLINGTON HOUSE

June 1860

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TWO MONTHS
IN
THE HIGHLANDS, ORCADIA, AND SKYE.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.—Where shall we spend our Holiday.—Invitation to the Highlands.—Sporting Quarters.—Where? the Wilds of Caithness? Round Sutherland? The Hebrides?

It was July—the July of 1859, and the fierce mid-summer sun, which had been for weeks parching, broiling, and blistering all London, had set—when, while I was sitting with doors and windows wide open, a familiar friend entered the room. As usual at this time of the year, my thoughts had been running on a holiday ramble, and visions of unvisited continental cities and lands were before me, when my friend gave a new current to my ideas, by announcing that the purpose of his visit was to ask me to join a shooting and fishing party in the Highlands.

“ The Highlands—there was a pleasant frigidity in the

name contrasting favourably with the continent, now hotter even than England, and where there was little chance of enjoying coolness unless one's holiday could be spent half-way up a snow-crested Alp. So when the map was spread out and I saw that the proposed sporting quarters were nearly 800 miles north of London within a very short walk of the Pentland Firth, and almost within view of the Orkneys, the continent faded from my imagination and I accepted the invitation.

And dear man-reader, if that love for hunting and sporting which is a predominant passion of our sex, be not quite burnt out of you, would you not have acted likewise? For mark the munificence of the offer: five friends had rented, I will not say how many thousand acres of moor, because, in truth we never knew to a thousand or so, the extent of our range; said moors being traversed by one of the very best salmon rivers in Scotland. True, good salmon fishing extends only over the spring months, but still salmon were to be caught, and then there were wonderful accounts of grilse; and say, ye salmon fishers, is not an eight-pound fresh-run grilse as strong and perplexing in his ways when hooked as his elder brother a salmon?

And then the lakes—the cool, pleasant lakes, set amidst the mountains; all abounding with lusty trouts to be captured in an idle, dilettante kind of way, a pleasing divertissement after long tramps over the moors, or days of thrashing the river with a twenty-foot rod.

Thus, with five genial companions—excellent quarters—good fare, the prospect of a shooting and fishing-coat life in the wild Highlands promised well; but I had other motives for accepting the invitation; for, thought I, to go so far north, and see only moor-land, salmon, grouse, and gillies, would be a spendthrift-like way of spending those precious days of holiday time all our own, and would moreover be throwing away a good opportunity for seeing something of the north of Scotland. One can fancy the enthusiastic sportsman exclaiming in the sweltering crowd and crush of the London season:

“ Oh, for a *lodge* in some vast wilderness!”

(where grouse abound); but shooting and fishing day after day become to one, less enthusiastic, monotonous pursuits, and the holiday will be the more agreeable and fuller of pleasant memories if the gun and rod be exchanged after a season for the staff, knapsack, and sketch-book.

Will you then, kind reader, accompany me under these conditions. First, we will see what Caithness can yield in the form of sporting enjoyment, and then we will start on our wanderings to the Orcades; round the wild coast of Sutherland, and if time permits see something of the storm-vest Hebrides.

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Despatch of the heavy Baggage.—A Telegram.—Pleasing Disappointment.—Journey to Peeblesshire.—Advantages of being a Commercial Traveller.—A Night in the Train.—An Appetising Drive.—Home of the Peeblesshire Laird.—Down Tweedside.—Nidpath Castle.—The Lord's Jester.—Tweed Green.—The Royal Archers.—Silver Arrow.—Peebles.—The Chambers' Institution.—The Dukes of Queensberry.—An Old Sybarite.—Manor Water.—The Black Dwarf.—Scott's Visit to Ritchie.—The Dwarf's Tomb.—A Charming Lodge.—The Peeblesshire Moors.—Wild Grouse.—Hedgehog's Nest.—Erroneous belief respecting these Animals.—Exhumation of a Hedgehog.—Its Dissection.—Contents of the Stomach.—Rhythmic motion of the Heart.—My Friend's Lodge.—Its Inmates.—Return Home.

THE heavy baggage is packed, and on its sea way to the North, and light-hearted we are about speeding after it by rail to the granite city, when, enter our servant with a telegraphic despatch.

Now, as we are not; thank the Fates, in the habit of receiving these documents—fancy what the lives of those business men must be who, not satisfied by the twenty or so daily delivery of letters in our huge metropolis are perpetually receiving telegrams!—a telegraphic despatch is by no means calculated to have a

soothing influence, and now, just as we were singing in the outburst of our joy :

“ Dear, damn'd, distracting town, farewell.”

—the words are Pope's—here is a message flashed upon us with electric speed, which for all that we know may wither up holiday plans and pleasures, nay, crush the very soul and manhood out of us. But courage, courage, break the seal, better to know the worst than linger in agonising uncertainty. So we tear the envelope open—and, oh! joy, with what relief we read—*“ Stop at Symington Station where my carriage will meet you.”* This being interpreted meant that the chief of our party, a great Scotch Laird, and as good as he is great; not being able to proceed to the shooting quarters in the North as soon as he expected, dexterously managed to hit me with a telegram inviting me to join him at his seat in Peeblesshire, and thus diverted my proposed direct route from London to Aberdeen.

So transferring my patronage from the Great Northern Railway to the North Western, I found myself shortly after 9 P.M. whizzing to the North. Fortune favoured me. I had but one fellow-passenger to whom I was indebted for a much more comfortable night than I expected to pass in the semi-cushioned second-class carriage. The said passenger, judging by the amazing number and variety of flat, square, round, and oval packages which were stowed under the seats, was a com-

mercial traveller. When we dashed into the dark night he proceeded to arrange these packages very methodically, adjusting them on the seats in such a manner that they enabled us to recline comfortably and obtain some hours' sleep. Commercial gentlemen dislike having inquisitive questions put to them respecting their profession, so I bridled my curiosity to know what the packages contained. Certainly, not hardware, more probably silk or woollen goods, for they were extremely soft and really did good mattress service. At all events, the hours sped swiftly, as they generally do during night travel; and when I rubbed my eyes after a wild unearthly dream of rushing down slopes on fiery dragons, I found that we were in border-land, and ere the sun had kissed the Cumberland hills, the train stopped at Symington. There was my friend's carriage, and there his servant looking out for the gentleman from London.

Heavens! what a change. We get out of the close railway carriage, the heat of London in us still, and a sharp bracing frosty air blows on our face. Twelve miles do we drive through open air and a charming country, and just as we are beginning to think that lovely as is the country the sight of breakfast would be more welcome, the carriage passes through handsome gates, up a long lordly avenue, and at length stops at the door of a large and elegant mansion. A hearty greeting from the Laird and his family, and a rare

Scotch breakfast made me quickly feel at home, and when a delightful stroll through the grounds rendered me better acquainted with my quarters, I said to myself, surely never did a telegram lead to more pleasant results. How, like a schoolboy fresh from school I rambled, rod in hand, by that lovely river which inspired Crawford to sing in his old Pastoral :

“ What beauties does Flora disclose !
How sweet are her charms upon Tweed ! ”

or fished in a lake on my friend's estate, set amidst cool pines and beeches—you, if a toiler through the greater portion of the year will be well able to understand, and I thought that a young Scotch laird with such possessions must surely have a large portion of happiness within his grasp.

“ Come,” said my friend one day, “ I should like to show you something of Peeblesshire.” So the horses were ordered, and after an early breakfast we rode down Tweedside to Peebles, amidst hanging woods and cultured fields descending to the margin of the river. We halted at the Castle of Nidpath, the situation of which is well and truly described by Pennicuick :—

“ The noble Nidpath Peebles overlooks,
With its fair bridge and Tweed's meandering crooks ;
Upon a rock it proud and stately stands, ●
And to the fields about gives forth commands.”

Yes ; doubtless in olden days it, or rather the haughty Earls of Tweeddale, did command right royally valleys as well as fields, nay, the wide country round ; for it was not until Cromwell's troops besieged Nidpath in 1650 that its pride was humbled. Nor in all probability would it then have succumbed had not one of its possessors made a terrible blunder by allowing the old and comparatively weak castle to stand when the newer part was built.

Let us enter the dilapidated building. There, on the arched portal in the courtyard, is the crest of the Lords Yester, Earls of Tweeddale, a goat's head surmounting a coronet, and below a cluster of strawberries, the well known emblem of the Frasers, who came originally from Normandy, and derived their name from *fraise*. There is but little of interest to be seen within the castle, beyond small rooms lighted by the usual narrow windows ; but it is well worth the trouble of ascending to the front bartisan for the sake of the grand view up and down the Tweed.

This seen, we pushed on to Peebles, passing "Tweed Green." Here the Royal Archers of Scotland contend occasionally for a medal, which, instead of being kept by the winner, is attached to the famous Peebles Silver Arrow.

This curious and very interesting relic, now preserved in Edinburgh, is about fifteen inches long, and to the

stalk are attached by small silver chains the medals gained by successful archers. An inscription on the arrow states that it was presented by James Williamson, Provost of Peebles, in 1628, and the medals bear dates from that period to the present, excepting a long blank from 1664 to 1786, accounted for by the probability that during this time religious and other troubles caused the arrow to be concealed and archery to fall into abeyance.

The arrow is said to have been discovered in the wall of what was originally a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which was pulled down in 1780.

My friend had to transact some business in the town, so while he is engaged let us see whether we can while away half-an-hour pleasantly.

And what has happened to set the little town all astir? for as we walk up High Street the population is seething with excitement. Great appeared the astonishment of a burgher to whom I addressed myself, requesting to be enlightened. "And dinna ye ken that the Institution is about to be opened?" was the reply. Further questionings resulted in my learning that an ancient building at the upper end of High Street had been purchased by Mr. William Chambers, and that he had restored and adapted it to the purposes of a literary institution, stocking it with a valuable library of 18,000 volumes. A good and glorious result this of penny

literature; and Mr. William Chambers may well be proud that the industry and energy of his brother and himself have enabled him to perpetuate his name in the town long occupied by his ancestors, who were woollen manufacturers.

The building, which originally belonged to the Church, and subsequently to the Earls of Tweeddale, is a picturesque example, notwithstanding alterations, of the architecture of the seventeenth century. It is provided with a porte-cochère giving access to a courtyard. An inscription over the entrance sets forth the history of the structure. This is sufficiently remarkable to make antiquaries rejoice that Mr. William Chambers has preserved the interesting relic. Among other notable persons who lived here were the Earls of March, afterwards Dukes of Queensberry, from whence it obtained the name of Queensberry Lodging, and here was born the fourth Duke of Queensberry, that wicked old Sybarite who boasted that he lengthened his days by bathing daily in warm milk, and who, scandal averred, hoped to impart a juvenile freshness to his wrinkled cheeks by sleeping with raw veal cutlets on his face. Certain is it that he lived to the age of 85, dying, as Mrs. Stowe relates in her "Chronicles of Fashion," with his bed covered with *billets-doux*, which the old effete debauchee was unable to open.

How far he may have been indebted for his longevity

to his natal air inhaled in early life, I cannot say ; but judging by the hale appearance of the inhabitants whom I saw in the streets, the observation of Dr. Pennicuick, made one hundred and forty years ago, that "the fresh good air of Peebles makes the inhabitants lively, and puts off death to a greater age than elsewhere," seems to hold good still.

"Now," said my friend when he had finished his business, "I will show you where my moors lie." So we rode up Tweedside a mile beyond Nidpath, and fording the river, came presently to the border of Manor Water, a lovely burn mumuring over a pebbly bed, and hear it ye anglers ! full as of old of speckled beauties. For this is the stream where Earnscliff was fishing, "his basket filled with trout at his shoulder," when the Black Dwarf and he had a parley on angling. We are, indeed, on classic ground, for see, there is the Black Dwarf's hut, nearly in the same state as it was at the period of David Ritchie's death. The original dwelling of Ritchie, or Bow'd Davie, as he was generally called, was a mere hovel erected almost entirely by his own hands ; for he disliked the society of mankind, and apparently cared only for his sister and his bees, of which he kept great numbers.

A few years before Davie's death, which happened in 1811, Sir James Nasmyth erected a new cottage for the recluse, and this is the building now standing.

How genius hallows localities! Herê is an insignificant looking cottage, not in itself worthy a moment's consideration, and yet palaces are not more famous. Scott used his privilege as a novelist and represents poor Bow'd Davie far more deformed than nature, unkind as she was, had moulded him. Still, in many respects the mysterious hermit of Woodhouse was not unlike the description given of him in the "Black Dwarf." Nor was this made up of second-hand evidence. Dr. Adam Fergusson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, one of the very few persons admitted to the privilege of visiting Ritchie, took Scott to see the Dwarf. The visit was made in 1797, when Scott was twenty-seven years old, an age when the mind is easily affected; and there is no doubt that Ritchie's conduct and appearance made a deep impression on the young novelist.

It is recorded that when Scott and Dr. Fergusson were within the Dwarf's dwelling, he double-locked the door; and, seizing Scott's wrists with vice-like grasp, shrieked in an unearthly voice, "Man, ha'e ye ony poo'er?" meaning spiritual or cabalistic power. Scott disclaimed all fellowship with the powers of darkness, upon which the Dwarf waved his gaunt, bony arms, and called a huge black cat forth from beneath the bed. The beast, at his master's bidding, sprang upon a shelf, and while the animal's eyes glared, and his fur stood out

like a porcupine's erect bristles, Ritchie screamed, "See, HE has poo'er!" and observing that Scott was greatly moved, the dwarf repeated: "Ay, HE has poo'er!" and then sat down, laughing and grinning horribly.

During the scene neither Fergusson nor Scott spoke a word; and when at length Ritchie unlocked the door and allowed his visitors to depart, they gladly bade the recluse farewell.

That the impression left upon Scott's mind by this visit was strong, is evident from the pages of the "Black Dwarf." See even how Ritchie's physical power was remembered: "Gripping for gripping, freend, I'll wad a wether he'll mak the bluid spin frae under your nails. He's a teugh carle, Elshie! he grips like a smith's vice!"

Ritchie is buried in the neighbouring church-yard of Manor Parish; a simple slab beneath an ash-tree bears the inscription —

IN
MEMORY
OF
DAVID RITCHIE,
THE ORIGINAL OF THE BLACK DWARF,
DIED 1811.
ERECTED BY W. & R. CHAMBERS.
1845.

“For they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.”

says the philosophic Gray, and the body of the poor Black Dwarf has returned to the dust from whence it sprang. But his spirit is still abroad. Superstitious peasants maintain that it exercises fatal influence, and agricultural calamities are frequently ascribed to the Black Dwarf's power, which doubtless are to be accounted for by very simple and reasonable meteorological causes.

Should curiosity lead you to visit the scenes of Scott's Elshie, if you have time you will do well to continue your ride or walk up Manor Water, to where it bubbles from the mountain side. Here grand scenery is around you. Scrape, a mountain 2800 feet high, and others of scarcely less inferior elevations, raise their heads to cloud-land, and between them lie soft vales, and dark glens watered by streams

“That make sweet music with the enamell'd stones.”

“I verily believe that I should die,” said Sir Walter Scott, “if I did not see the heather every year;” and assuredly, there is no greater rural pleasure after a long ramble than lying down on

“The swelling instep of the mountain's foot,”

breast high in such lovely heather as we presently came

to—the large-belled variety, then in full purple glory, clothing the hill side, up which we walked, having left our horses at the bottom of the glen.

Between a slope, brilliant with this exquisite flower; and the Manor Water — here a brawling brook — stood a charming cottage overhung by a clump of ash trees. Here, thought I, with agreeable companions, a summer's holiday might be spent right pleasantly; and just as I was half envying the possessor of the place, my friend announced that the cottage was his shooting-lodge, and that his moors extended for many miles around us. Why, with such a property, he should rent moors near John o' Groat's house puzzled me; but it appears that he was desirous, by not shooting over his preserves for a season, to allow the grouse to increase; and he further informed me that, although his moors are very extensive, yet, on account of their lying almost entirely on elevated ground, the birds after the first week's shooting become excessively wild, so much so that it is extremely difficult to get within shot of them; whereas on flat, low-lying moors, grouse are far less wild — a fact which I can verify — and thus afford much better sport.

So the parent-grouse on my friend's moors were not made childless last season, nor were tender cheepers bereft of their parents before they could shift for themselves.

We were reclining on the mountain slope when I was

attracted by a heap of what appeared to be moss, cut into minute fragments, lying close to a tuft of heather. On drawing the attention of the keeper, who had joined us, to the heap, his practised eye at once detected that it was the work of a hedgehog, probably a maternal hedgehog which had made a warm nest for her family ; and as this animal ranks in the numerous list of vermin believed to destroy game, it was straightway decided that it should be exhumed and destroyed.

Probably, however, there is no animal which unjustly bears so bad a name for mischief as the hedgehog. Loudon tells us, in his pleasant "Magazine of Natural History," that not half a century has elapsed since the churchwardens of a parish in England gave three pence for every hedgehog destroyed within the parish, because it was believed that the little beasts sucked the cows. The want of observation on the part of these sapient churchwardens is wonderful ; for had they taken the slightest pains to examine the hedgehog's mouth, they would have seen that by no possibility could it have performed such a lacteal operation.

"I would," says humane and animal-loving Waterton, "willingly walk twenty miles on foot over the flintiest road, to hear some patroness of infant schools tell her pupils that hedgehogs never suck a cow, though our silly farmers, almost to a man, would fain persuade us that these little harmless creatures are guilty of the preposterous act."

Perhaps Sir William Jardine has aided in keeping up the dislike to these animals, though of course unwittingly; for he says, in one of his notes to his edition of White's *Selborne*, "the hedge-hog feeds on flesh and vegetables, and is very fond of eggs, doing considerable mischief by destroying game during the breeding season. It will even enter a hen-house, and when within its reach will turn off the hens and devour the eggs."

Such being the character of the hedge-hog, it was hardly to be expected that my interference to save the life of that near us, would be successful! Poor little beast, in vain did I urge that as the grouse were hatched, there were no eggs to be sucked. True, there were no eggs to be sucked, but there were young grouse to be killed, and on these hedge-hogs feasted right royally. No such thing I declared; they may, and probably do, sometimes indulge in a newly-laid egg—as you do;—are partial to insects, and have even occasionally eaten snakes, but depend upon it, they abstain from grouse. My exertions to save the hedge-hog and her family were however futile, a hooked stick was procured, and used with such vigour, that in a few minutes, out rolled a hedgehog and three baby hedgehogs from amidst the soft moss bed.

Thus rudely disturbed from their slumber—the hedge-hog is a nocturnal animal—their instinct prompted them of course to remain contracted, and in the form

of a spiny sphere, and three smaller satellites, the hedgehog and her little ones remained motionless. It was resolved that they should not be murdered while in this state. Wait a little, said the ruthless keeper, and they will uncoil, and put their heads out, and when they do I will just give them a tap on the skull. The hedgehog has quick ears, and the slightest noise alarms him. There is a well authenticated instance of one which was domesticated, always curling himself up at the striking of the kitchen clock, although he was well accustomed to the sound. We had to remain a long time perfectly quiet, before, mamma first, and then her infants, put forth their little heads, and straitened their snake-like vertebræ. They seemed to apprehend that they incurred great risk of coming to grief, for their motions were so slow that they evidently feared that the rude spoiler of their nest was not very distant. At length they moved down the slope in a shuffling kind of trot, but not far, for the stick which had routed them from their dormitory, quickly descended on their tender heads with well directed aim; and they died without a struggle.

“Now,” said I, “the murder being done, let us see what mamma hedgehog has been feeding on. So we skinned the animal, the spines no longer capable of being erected by the exquisitely contrived muscular mechanism, now stilled by death, were pendant and

harmless; and laying open the stomach by a long deep cut, it was found full of vegetable matter, apparently grass, not a vestige of animal remains being visible, so this hedge-hog had certainly not supped on grouse or any other game. The little beast had, however, fed well, for its flesh was well covered with fat. It would doubtless have been relished by gipsies, who are not above eating hedge-hogs when they cannot procure better flesh fare, and it is worthy of mention, that the flesh of the allied animal, the Canadian Porcupine (*Hystrix Dorsata*) is considered rather a delicacy by the natives of the country it inhabits.

It was very curious to note how long after the hedge-hog was dead (fully ten minutes) the heart continued to pulsate, maintaining with perfect regularity, alternating contractions, and dilatations of its auricles and ventricles. This motion to which the appropriate name of Rhythmic has been given, continued even when the heart was nearly separated from the neighbouring viscera, thus showing that the motion is due to certain nervous centres, in the nervous ganglia of the heart, which centres by spontaneous discharge of nervous force, cause the muscular substance to contract.*

* The reader who may be curious to know more respecting this very interesting subject will find it treated in a masterly manner, divested too of hard scientific terms, in "The Croonian Lecture," delivered by James Paget, Esq., before the Royal Society, and printed in the Society's Proceedings, vol. viii. p. 473.

“Come,” said my friend, when our dissecting operation was over, “although my lodge is not in shooting trim, we will see if it can yield us some refreshment.” So we proceeded down the glen, and were soon before the door. Our advent made a great stir among the household to whom my friend had lent his lodge. Within a snug parlour sat an aged couple, surrounded by their daughters, fine buxom girls. I use the word in its double sense, for their obedience was made most manifest by the alacrity with which they carried out their mother’s injunctions to place refreshments before us, and having partaken of them, we remounted again, forded the Tweed, and after a most pleasant ride, reached home as the sun went down in the heart of the golden west.

CHAP. III.

Country Houses. — Attractions of Country and Town. — Leave Peeblesshire. — Perth. — The “Inches.” — View from Moncrieff Hill. — Slow travelling. — Aberdeen. — Rival Hotels. — The Peripatetic Philosophers. — The Red Lions. — The Granite City. — The Sights of Aberdeen. — The Market. — M'Donald and Leslie's Works. — The Colleges. — Cathedral of St. Machar. — Ecclesiastical Desecration. — Cromwell's Troopers. — The Bishops of Old. — Archbishop Beaton.

If the pleasant and lovely lands of my Peeblesshire friend were mine, thought I when I woke on the morning after the excursion narrated in the preceding chapter, not a yard north would I journey this summer; and I confess, when I remembered that far distant Caithness where I was going has no claim whatever to be included among the picturesque counties of Scotland, I felt somewhat sad at the prospect of turning my back upon so much beauty.

Philosophy, however, came to my aid. Down, down, all covetous and envious thoughts. “And are you quite sure,” said I to myself, “that if this fine place, with its mountains, woods, rivers, and lake were yours, that you would be one jot happier? For mark how the lords of

our fair land wait until flowers fade and leaves fall, before they forsake hot sweltering London; and even then is it to enjoy their paternal acres in a Virgilian sense that they leave the city? By no means. A few, doubtless, when emancipated from legislative duties, or the paterfamilias occupation of bringing out budding daughters, do really enjoy the repose and appreciate the beauty of their lovely country homes; but the majority of our landed gentry are more attracted to the country by the sport it yields, than by the trees and flowers it produces."

Having thus settled, very satisfactorily to myself, that even flat Caithness would not be wanting in the elements of enjoyment, I bade my friend a temporary farewell, having arranged to meet him at Aberdeen, and resumed my journey to the north.

Fierce war, which raged between rival railway companies, led to my being detained at Perth four hours. This would have been vexatious to a man who values his hours at guineas, but was no annoyance to me. For where will you find a fairer scene than the famous "Inches," with their broad sward bounded on the east by the broad Tay; and where a pleasanter walk than that to the summit of Moncrieff Hill, from whence there is a view of such rare beauty, that we are told the Romans when they saw it, exclaimed: "Ecce Tiber; Ecce Campus Martius!"

At four o'clock in the afternoon I left Perth ; and so anxious, apparently, were the directors of the railway that no evil should befall us by rapid travelling, that we did not reach Aberdeen until past ten.

Here I had very great difficulty in getting myself and luggage conveyed without parting to the Royal Hotel, so solicitous were the touters of other hotels to carry me off to their employers' establishments.

The granite city was beginning to seethe with excitement, arising from the approaching advent of the peripatetic philosophers, who it was fondly expected would bring much wisdom and leave much gold behind them for the benefit of the citizens generally, and the inn and lodging-house keepers especially. With respect to the lucre, it is probable that the inn-keepers were careful that there should be no disappointment ; and if the citizens of what the Scotch love to call the Oxford of Scotland thought the philosophers not quite so brimful of learning as they were led to expect, let us hope that they found them more amusing. For if report is to be believed, at no previous meeting of the British Association did the "Red Lions" muster in such force, or create such astonishment and merriment as they did in the "brave town of Aberdeen." *

* For the information of those who are not in the habit of attending the annual gathering of our philosophers, I may state that a society consisting of members of the British Association,—many of great

“When you have secured quarters in Aberdeen,” says the Guide Book, “straightway sally forth, and admire the spacious line of Union Street.” A geometer, entirely ignorant of the appearance of Aberdeen, and full of precise ideas respecting geometrical figures, would perhaps go forth curious to see what this admirable spacious line was like. Setting aside the figure of speech, I went out after breakfast very willing to admire said Union Street, but could not get my admiration up to the required mark. True, the houses form two very long lines, but the buildings are low, and the dull grey granite is by no means pleasant to look upon. Pleasant, certainly, is it to see such rows of good, solid houses, testifying how well the citizens of Aberdeen have thriven in trade, but they are not structures calculated to fill the traveller with admiration, particularly if his memory of European cities has not faded. Shall I confess the truth as it stands recorded in my note-book? By all means, doubtless answers the reader, who wishes to have

scientific eminence, calling themselves the Red Lions, are accustomed to dine together on one day during the week that the Association meet. At this réunion the professional buskin is laid aside, comic songs are sung, and hilarity is testified by the philosophers growling in imitation of the animal from which the society takes its name, the growls being accompanied by a general wagging of coat tails. The effect of such proceedings, enacted by gentlemen who bear the character of being learned professors, on the astonished waiters at the hotels where the “Red Lions” show off, may be imagined, certainly not described.

the note-book's jottings in their pristine freshness. Well then, what impressed me most at Aberdeen — and I spent a day exploring the two towns — were the fine capacious market, and Messrs. M'Donald and Leslie's granite works.

The market was filled to overflowing (it was market-day) with a profusion of fish, flesh, fowls, fruit, and vegetables. There were heaps upon heaps of delicious strawberries, not sold in attenuated pottles tapering to nothingness, but in capacious cabbage-leaves at prices astonishing to a Londoner. Serried ranks of baskets filled with golden-hued fresh butter, resting on snow-white cloths—and hear it, ye cockney housekeepers—only 11*d.* a pound. Piles of fish, among which salmon were very conspicuous,—the best cuts 9*d.* a pound—and a prodigious number of fowls whose decease must have reduced the harems of many chanticleers to the condition of single-wife man. No wonder that the philosophers fed well at Aberdeen, nor that they look forward with pleasure to revisiting the city at no distant period; for every philosopher has not a Newton's indifference to what gastronomers consider the great business of the day—viz. dinner.

Note-book further makes particular mention of the fish-wives, a race of mighty ruddy-checked women, any one of whom would be a match in tongue, probably as well as in muscle, for three ordinary city-bred men.

I believe that my disappointment at the appearance of Union Street arose from the houses not being constructed of that rose-coloured granite to which the name of Aberdeen is generally attached. Erroneously, however, for the quarries of this stone are at Peterhead twenty-five miles north of Aberdeen. Vast quantities are conveyed to Messrs. M'Donald and Leslie's works, which are courteously shown to visitors. Here I saw this obdurate crystalline rock assuming every variety of form under the compelling power of extremely ingenious machinery driven by steam. Monuments, columns, sarcophagi, crosses, and tablets, many of exquisite design, were in process of completion, some destined to mark the final resting-place of our countrymen in far distant lands. Although machinery is made to do as much cutting and polishing work as possible, elaborate traceries and ornamentation can only be properly executed by skilled manual labour. The cost of such work is necessarily very great; and when you are told that a workman has been toiling for many months upon a small tablet, designed as a mark of affection for some much-loved relative or friend, you no longer wonder that highly sculptured Aberdeen granite is costly.

The beautiful semi-detached columns in front of the Carlton Club were cut and polished in Messrs. M'Donald and Leslie's yard, and many other specimens of their work may be seen in London.

Under the guidance of a friend I visited the two colleges and was soon satisfied that in spirit only can they be compared to classic and æsthetic Oxford. I turned more hopefully to the remains of the ancient cathedral of St. Machar, but here again I was doomed to disappointment. This *was* an architectural glory, but the spoiling Covenanters and Cromwell's still more destructive troopers laid its glory low.

We are told that the altar-screen of this cathedral was a marvellous piece of work, "matchless within all the kirks of Scotland," so beautiful that one would have expected that even the iconoclasts of the Covenant would have spared it. But not so; let old Spalding tell us how it was treated:—

"Upon the 16th December, 1642, Dr. Guild and Mr. William Strachan, our minister, began the down-taking of the back of the high altar upon the east wall of Bishop Garvin Dunbar's aisle as high near as the ceiling, curiously wrought of fine wainscot, so that within all Scotland there was not a better wrought piece. It is said that the craftsman would not put his hand to the down-taking till our minister first laid his hand thereto, which he did, and then the work began. And in down-taking one of the three timber crowns, which they thought to have gotten down whole and unbroken, it fell suddenly upon the kirk's great ladder, broke it in three pieces, and itself all in *blads*, and broke

some pavement with the weight thereof. Now our minister devised a loft going athwart the church south and north, which took away the stately sight and glorious show of the body of the whole kirk, and with this back of the altar he decored this beastly loft."

Cromwell's puritanical soldiers, who, professing respect for the house of God, stabled their horses in His temples, and built forts to keep the Scotch in subjection with the sculptured stones, seem to have taken especial pains to destroy the Cathedral of Aberdeen. For not satisfied with removing the stones they undermined the lofty tower, so that it fell and overthrew a large portion of the walls.

There is no doubt, however, that the habitual luxury and pomp formerly practised by bishops and other high church dignitaries had great effect in exciting and increasing the anger of the Covenanters. The Caldwell family papers, published by the Maitland Club, contain an account of the sacking of Archbishop Beaton's palace in Glasgow, from which we obtain an insight into the former manner of life of a Scottish prelate. Among the articles enumerated in the inventory of the bishop's effects which fell into the pillagers' hands are many scarlet robes lined with rich furs, rings of gold set with precious stones, thirteen roasting spits, six dozen salmon, fifteen swine, and twelve tuns of wine. So much for worldly comforts; but while the prelate's

wardrobe, cellar, and larder were thus abundantly stocked there seems to have been no "mental larder," not even a single religious book in the bishop's palace.

The Cathedral of St. Machar was commenced in 1366. It was never completed ; for although various popes and bishops encouraged the work by granting indulgences and in other ways, the nave and a portion of the choir and transepts only were finished. The architecture of the nave, which alone remains, is the Middle Pointed, which prevailed in England for about a century subsequent to 1272. In Scotland this architecture was generally preferred from the end of the thirteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. When first introduced it was strictly English ; but when France had grafted many of her customs on Scottish soil, at and after the accession of the Stuart king in 1371, we find that the Middle Pointed gradually changed to the architecture that prevailed in France.

By far the most interesting portion of the ruined pile of St. Machar is the panelled oak ceiling, still gay with the blazoned shields, arms, and devices of forty-eight emperors, kings, princes, and bishops. These ornaments have happily escaped destruction. How they were allowed to remain during the days of puritanical frenzy, when Knox thundered from pulpits that the only way to get rid of rooks was to pull down their nests, and the mere lining of a pew with cloth was accounted,

even in the middle of last century, rank popery*, can only be accounted for by the comparatively inaccessible position of these gay ornaments. Even now, although the guide books boast that the cathedral "is kept in a high state of preservation," I much fear that the flaunting shields would be sadly defaced if they were accessible. For the seats in the gallery are hacked and hewed in a disgraceful manner, and exhibit sad tokens of irreverence.

* Burt in his amusing "Letters from Scotland," (written in 1731), says that when an Englishman proposed to a Scotch minister's wife that her pew should be lined, she exclaimed, "Clothe the pew with cloth; why, my good man would think that rank popery." What would he have said to the clothing in these days of altars, pulpits, and clergymen in Puseyite Churches?

CHAP. IV.

From Aberdeen to Caithness.—Voyage in the Prince Consort.—Motley Passengers.—Peterhead.—A scrambling Supper.—Scaldings.—Lights a-head and around.—Herring-fishing Boats.—Fraserburgh.—The Moray Firth.—A hot Night.—The Caithness Coast.—The Maiden Paps.—Noss Head.—Wick Herring Fleet.—Land at Wick.—Great bustle.—Amazing quantity of Herrings.—Stalwart Fishers.—Stout Girls.—No Porters.—How Luggage is carried.—Our maimed Passenger.—Proceed to the Caledonian Hotel.—Rest.

It is a long and expensive land journey from Aberdeen to Caithness, for the iron horse's most northern stable at present is Inverness, beyond which town he does not travel. Thus, if you are bound to John o'Groat's land on a summer tour, and can put up with a little roughing, you will do well to take the steamer from Aberdeen to Wick. This costs (first saloon) 18*s.*, and the voyage in propitious weather is made in about ten hours; whereas, to Wick *vid* Inverness by rail and mail-coach occupies two days and a night, and costs nearly 4*l.* But I advise the tourist not to undertake the voyage if there be a dense fog, or a strong east wind blowing, for your steamer may come to grief, like the "Duke of Rich-

mond" which was wrecked on the coast near Aberdeen last autumn.

I had arranged with the Peeblesshire Laird to join him on board the "Prince Consort," a fine new steamship, at Aberdeen, provided the weather was auspicious, and as Boreas showed no signs of blustering at 5 o'clock in the afternoon I drove to the quay, and shortly after we steamed out of the harbour.

The vessel was gorged with passengers and merchandise. The former consisted of many varieties. Farmers returning home from a great cattle show in Edinburgh. Orcadians and Shetlanders, a few even from the Faroe Islands, who had been on a holiday trip to Edinburgh, the "Town" of these Northmen. Sportsmen as may be supposed were not wanting, indeed, almost every other passenger was either a sportsman or connected with what our Gallic neighbours call *Le Sport*. Here you saw how powerful is the attraction of the Highlands when the twelfth of August draws near, and you also saw how luxurious and costly is the equipment of sportsmen in the present day. Vehicles of various kinds and of the most elegant construction encumbered the fore deck. One was an ingenious combination of carriage and boat, the latter to be used on lonely mountain lakes far removed from house or boat. Amidst these vehicles were chained kennels of dogs, entangled apparently in inextricable

confusion, and like the canine race generally by no means disposed to fraternise with each other.

The little wind that blew being off the land the sea was fortunately very tranquil, otherwise the night would have been full of horrors, for we were packed in the cabin almost as close as we could stand; crowded steamers from Edinburgh to the north of Scotland being the rule during the month of August.

When the evening closed we were off Peterhead, the ship's course being sufficiently close to the land to enable us to see the coast, here of a nature that would make the mariner very desirous of giving it a wide berth during a gale from the east. Granite girds the land with its adamantine ribs, and woe betide the bark that strikes this crystalline rock.

How rarely does it happen that the commissariat of a sea-going steamer is hard pressed. On this occasion, however, the steward was sorely perplexed to satisfy the demands made on his stores. His assistants seemed utterly confounded by the rapacity of the hearty feeding northmen, who were perpetually calling for more meats and strong drinks. In his hurry to serve the hungry farmers, one waiter fell and upset a huge kettle full of boiling water on a gentleman's leg. How patiently the unfortunate passenger, who was going to the moors, submitted to the mishap, which put an end to his shooting, was wonderful. The fellow should

have cried "scaldings," was the only remark that he made when his stripped limb exhibited a terrible spectacle of raw flesh.

With great difficulty we managed to get a scrambling kind of supper, and after a tumbler of toddy — be sure there was no lack of that — I went on deck.

Had my first glass of so called "Ben Nevis" been too potent, or did my eyes truly inform my senses? All around were innumerable lights dancing like meteors, about twenty feet above the sea, and reflected in many cases in the glassy wave. Beautiful, most beautiful, was the effect of these ever moving lights amidst which the steamer glided. Were we within the lagunes of a northern Venice, and did these flashing lights illumine festive scenes? Not so; they were those of hardy herring fishers pursuing their nightly labour, at the mast-head of whose boats a lantern swung. The greater portion belonged to Fraserburgh and Peterhead, which towns contributed 649 boats last summer to the herring fishing fleet; but there were many more lights than these, for all the villages on the east coast south of the Moray Firth are engaged in this fishery.

In consequence of numerous accidents during fogs the proprietors of fishing boats are now compelled to show a light at the mast-head. Were the regulations less strict, few fishers would be at the trouble of adopting this simple precaution to guard against being run

down by the numerous coasting steamers. All over the world sea fishers seem to be especial examples of the apathy arising from familiarity with danger. On the fog wrapped banks of Newfoundland the cod fisher, from his obstinate objection to show a light, is in continual danger of being run down, and it is only by keeping a most vigilant look-out a-head, that the fast-going Atlantic steamers are enabled to be steered clear of the small barks covering the sea during the fishing season.

When we had passed the last line of lights, we were at the entrance of the Moray Firth, across which our steamer shaped her course. There was nothing now to be seen but sea and sky, so I turned in for a few hours, being — I can hardly say the fortunate — possessor of a ledge, which seemed to be made for the purpose of showing how small an area may be made to support the human body.

Unrefreshing sleep was broken by the dawn struggling through the narrow port-holes. Glad to leave the cabin reeking with vile odours, I left my narrow quarters. It was only a little after two o'clock, and yet the East was ruddy, a sure sign that we were in the latitude of long summer days. The Moray Firth was crossed, and we were running up the Caithness coast. Far away through the grey of the morning appeared the Maiden Pass, singularly shaped eminences, backed by Mòrbhèin, a grand old red sandstone mountain, rising 3500 feet

above the adjoining hills. The coast, far as the eye could reach, presented a bold tawny front, being composed mainly of red sandstone and conglomerate, which may be said to girdle the whole of Caithness. Do not suppose, however, that where we are going to pitch our tent for a season is a land of mountains, or even hills. There are, indeed, several hills in the south of the county, but by far the largest portion consists of vast rolling moors, walled seawards by sandstone cliffs.

An hour more and we are in sight of Noss Head, and close to that of Wick. But the eye turns from these to the sea around, which is paved with hundreds upon hundreds of boats, spreading their red-brown sails, all making for Wick. We are, in fact, in the midst of the great herring fishing fleet of Wick. You would have thought that all the boats belonging to Scotland had been off Peterhead last night, but if you do not see those belonging to Wick you will have but a very imperfect idea of the magnitude of our great Scotch herring fishery.

The sea was literally covered by boats, all similar in size and rig, and differing only by numerals conspicuously painted on the bows beneath a huge W. As we drew near the harbour, the boats were closer packed, until at its entrance, we were obliged to go at quarter speed to guard against frequent collision. At length the steamer reached her moorings, and after more than

usual confusion, occasioned by disembarking in boats, we landed.

The bustle was amazing. You had to keep a sharp look-out to avoid being tripped up by ropes, or caught in the wet nets which were being hauled out of the newly arrived boats. Besides these, the narrow quay was encumbered by hundreds of carts in readiness to carry the herrings to the gutting troughs. And the herrings — there had been a great take on the previous night, and in every boat were silvery heaps glistening in the rays of the rising sun. Now, indeed, you are enabled to form some idea of the wealth of the deep, and how inexhaustible is that storehouse. •

Look at the fine stalwart fishers, clad from head to heel in oilskin garments, their faces shining like the newly-risen sun with health. Who could fear the decay of our naval power when we have such men as these? Remember too that there are thousands of them, for the far Western Isles, Sutherland, and in short, all parts of Scotland, and a portion of the north of England, send out fishers, so great and profitable is this mighty herring harvest.

We are not tired of looking at the stirring scene, now more bustling than ever, for stout girls are carrying the herrings to the gutting troughs as fast as they can run — but here is our luggage, and we have to get it conveyed to the inn. Happy the man here who has only

his knapsack to think of—for, hear it, ye luxurious tourists, there are no cabs at Wick; no, nor during the fishing season even porters eager for employment. With some persuasion we coax a man to hire us his cart, who, as soon as he has placed our luggage in it and ascertained to what inn we are going, jumps up, makes a driving seat of our softest portmanteau, whips his horse into a gallop, and is off, leaving us to follow as best we can over execrable pavement.

You will see by this that a visit to Caithness *via* steamer to Wick is not precisely what you would choose for a marriage trip with a delicate bride, for the proprietors of the steamers have not yet followed the example of some of their transatlantic friends, who very obligingly provide bridal chambers for *nouveaux mariés*.

Well, we follow our traps—but stop, what is that shapeless mass being borne up the steps by half a dozen men? We turn back and see our poor scalded fellow-passenger. He cannot walk, so they put him down on an inverted tub and there leave him. “How do you feel?” I asked. “In much pain,” he replied; “but it is not the pain that distresses me, but the loss of my shooting.” This, indeed, was hard. He had travelled nearly one thousand miles, and now on the eve of the 12th August, and almost within sight of the moors, to be laid low was a trying calamity.

Through a maze of herrings, nets, and ropes, we wend our way through Pulteney Town, a suburb of Wick, to the Caledonian Hotel, the best in the place, and as the clocks struck five cast off our clothes and took possession of the last two untenanted beds, in hopes of obtaining a few hours' refreshing sleep.

CHAP. V.

A Herring Breakfast.—Dutch Proverb.—The Wick Herring Fishery.—The Nets. — How Herrings are caught. — Profits of the Fishery. — Fishing Returns. — Difficulty in raising Nets. — Dangers attending the Fishery. — Origin of the Herring Fishery. — Enterprise of the Dutch.—The first Herring Curer.—Monument to Beukel.—Export of Herrings.—Slaves fed on Herrings.—Rise of the British Herring Fishery.—Bounty on Herrings.—Statistics of the Fishery.—Natural History of the Herring. — Curious belief in the Migration of the Herring.—Habits of this Fish. — Superstitions connected with it. — Goldsmith on Herrings.—The Food of Herrings.—Argument respecting Variety. — Difference in the Quality of Herrings. — A Colossal Herring.

WE were not disappointed. I at least slept well, so well, that when my friend awoke me it was ten o'clock.

A good wash — how steamer stinks cling to one! and to breakfast; and such a breakfast. Herrings which a few hours before had been disporting themselves in the deep, came up in continuous detachments, dressed in a variety of ways. The Dutch have a proverb: "When herrings come in the doctor goes out." And it is pleasant to know that your real fresh herrings are as wholesome as they are good.

Our dog-cart had arrived from our shooting quarters, but to have left Wick without seeing the process of preparing herrings for shipment would have been leaving unseen a most remarkable sight. But before seeing how the herrings are cured, it will be well, on the principle of catching your hare before you cook him, to learn how they are caught, and obtain a little information respecting a fish which adds many thousands of pounds annually to our national finances.

The mode of catching herrings is too well known to render it necessary to enter into any detailed description. Suffice to say that the nets are made to form walls as it were of net-work, extending for many miles in length. It would be easy, of course, for the herrings to escape capture by passing under the nets, but being, happily for us, endowed with a determination to go a-head in spite of all difficulties, they plunge their heads within the meshes, and their gills acting like hook barbs retreat becomes impossible; while, on the other hand, the meshes are not sufficiently large to allow the herring's body to pass through them.

The Wick boats are provided with sets of nets 850 yards long, and manned by four men and a boy. The cost of each boat fully equipped for fishing is about 150*l*. The profits are estimated at 1*l*. per barrel.

The take of herrings partakes, of course, in the glorious uncertainty attending fishing. Indeed, the

capricious habits of these fish renders the herring fishery particularly inconstant. Here for example are the returns of the fishery at Wick, for six nights in the week ending August 17th, 1859:—

	No. of Boats.	Average Crans per Boat.	Total No. of Crans.
Aug. 10.	1,094	3	3,282
„ 11.	1,094	16½	18,051
„ 12.	980	7	6,230
„ 13.	1,090	7	7,630
„ 16.	1,090	3½	3,815
„ 17.	1,090	17	18,530

When the wind is high and every mesh is tenanted by a herring, the labour of raising the nets, which appear as they are drawn out of the water like sheets of burnished silver, is excessive. The labour is, moreover, always increased when by some accident the herrings die before the nets are raised. This arises from the circumstance that while bodies of white fish such as cod, &c. float when dead; those of fish with comparatively small air bladders sink when life is extinct. Hugh Miller relates, that a few years ago the nets of fishers in the Moray Firth gorged with dead herrings could not be raised by the united exertions of three crews, and were obliged to be abandoned.

During fine nights all goes well and the fishing is prosecuted with little or no danger, but fierce storms not unfrequently strike the north-east coast. The boats

do not, of course, venture out in the teeth of a gale, but sometimes a tempest suddenly comes on, and then Turner in his most spasmodic mood could not have painted the terrible misery and confusion that arises. Conceive if you can upwards of one thousand boats with their nets down struck by the storm blast. Amidst the thunder notes of the hurricane they strive to reach the haven from whence they sailed, but the open boats shipping water at every sea labour in the foaming ocean troughs, and the crews are glad to run, with loss of nets and tackle, for any creek where shelter may be found. Picture this, and you will feel how much is conveyed by the lines in the popular ballad of "Caller Herrin'":—

"Wives and mithers, maist despairin',
Ca' them lives of men!"

When I was on the north coast of Sutherland, a Wick herring boat was towed into the harbour near Durness. She had been fallen in with between the Orkneys and the Scotch coast in a very damaged condition, and was drifting to the west without a living thing on board. What had become of her crew no one could tell.

11 The Dutch may be said to have originated the herring fishery. The *duris urgens in rebus egestas* whetted the Hollander's enterprise; who, unable with all his agricultural ingenuity to draw sufficient sustenance from his

water-logged country, was obliged to seek it in commerce and the treasures of the deep.

Very early in the history of Holland we find the people described as great sea fishers. The herring fishery in particular was pursued by them with extraordinary vigour. De Witt states that in his time every fifth individual in Holland was engaged in either catching, curing, or selling herrings.

During the years that the fishing was at its greatest prosperity, it was computed that 3000 vessels were employed in fishing off their own coast, 800 in fishing the seas round the Orkney and Shetland Islands, and 600 others off the east coast of England and Scotland.

This enormous fishery, which employed altogether 112,000 men, was in a great measure created by the discovery of the art of curing herrings by a Dutchman of the name of Beukel, in the early part of the fourteenth century, and consequent large demand by Roman Catholics for these fish.

Indeed, such was the importance attached to this discovery that the Emperor Charles V. visited Beukel's grave at Biervliet, and ordered a costly monument to be erected over it to commemorate his great services to his country. To this day the largest portion of our cured herrings are shipped to Stettin for consumption in Roman Catholic countries; but the Reformation, and the abolition of the Slave Trade, are said to have

had some effect in crippling the energies devoted to this fishery.

Planters were in the habit of feeding their slaves on what was called broken herrings, that is, fish not properly cured; and thus an enormous quantity of herrings contained in barrels devoid of the crown brand, denoting superior curing, were shipped to the West Indies. There is no such thing now as "broken herrings;" and it appears that the curing of late years is so much superior to that of the last century that the consumption of cured herrings has greatly increased."

The large profits drawn by the Dutch from the herring fishery at length roused the British Government to the desirableness of establishing a herring fishery of our own. Accordingly in 1749 the British Fishing Society was instituted, and a bounty of 50*l.* was offered for every ton of herrings caught. This system was continued until 1830, when the bounty, which had undergone various reductions, was entirely withdrawn. The result shows the wisdom of this measure; for while there were 329,557 barrels of herrings caught in 1830, in 1842 the number rose to 667,245.

In 1803 the Government engaged a number of experienced Dutch fishermen and sent them to Wick, which led to that port taking the lead from that period in the herring fishery; and so well did the Scotch profit by the instruction which they received that in a few

years we find the herring fishery extending nearly all round our coasts.

The magnitude of the operations will be seen by the following returns, taken from the official Report of Fisheries for 1851.

During that year 10,480 boats prosecuted the herring fishery in Scotland and the Isle of Man. These were manned by 40,362 fishermen and boys, and the number of persons engaged in curing the fish was 68,939. The value of the boats and fishing-nets is put down at 534,324*l*.

The natural history of the fish which sets this gigantic machinery in motion is interesting.

Anderson, the historian of Greenland, propounded, and Pennant endorsed, a wonderful story about herrings which was long believed, and was adopted by the authors of the great French "Encyclopédie."

They maintained that the home of the herring was the Arctic seas, and that it there attained an enormous size. Anderson assures his readers that the herring round the Iceland coast is two feet in length; and that in spring mighty shoals of this fish proceed south, being chased by whales, grampuses, and sharks. A little observation would have made them aware that the great Arctic whale does not feed upon herrings; not, probably, because the monster would find this dainty food unpalatable, but because the formation of

its œsophagus prevents him swallowing herring sized fish.

Well, indeed, would it have been for our Arctic adventurers, if the Polar seas were stocked with herrings two feet or even one foot long. The fact is, the herring is not caught in the Arctic seas.

There is every probability that the great mass of these fish live in the depths of the Atlantic, approach the shore at spawning time, and retire to their ocean home when that operation is over.

Off the north-east of Scotland the herring has been observed to appear about the second week in August, and to remain until the beginning of September, and in smaller numbers until the end of October, while occasional herrings may be caught during all months of the year.

Although it is pretty well established that herrings migrate from the Atlantic to continental and British shores, nothing is more uncertain than their places of resort. For some consecutive years we read of their frequenting certain bays and creeks, and then suddenly disappearing from them. Thus, herrings were so abundant on the Norway coast in the latter end of the last century, that in the short space of three weeks the take, in one season, amounted to 600,000 barrels. At the beginning of this century the fish deserted that coast, and at the same time forsook the Baltic—a circumstance

ascribed by the fishers, who, in all countries, love to account by strange reasons for any falling off in their fishing, to the battle of Copenhagen; another form of the old Highland superstition, that herrings invariably desert coasts where blood has been shed.

Off our shores herrings have always exhibited great capriciousness. Goldsmith, whose business was certainly not to write natural history, and who, had he lived in these days of high pay for stirring novels, would have given us more tales akin to the immortal "Vicar of Wakefield" and fewer essays on natural history, was sadly ignorant of the habits of the herring. "The Arctic whale," he tells us in his 'Animated Nature,' "swallows barrels of herrings at a yawn." His writings, however, were considered in his day authority in matters of zoology, and they had considerable effect in establishing herring fisheries, which being based on incorrect information turned out most unprofitable speculations.

Mr. James Wilson, who paid great attention to the habits of this fish, states, that "not only do the herrings of our different coasts and counties differ in their time of spawning, but that there is considerable variation even among those congregated in one and the same place."

Another curious fact respecting the herring is, that when in the prime condition it is scarcely ever found to contain "animal substances of the grosser kind."

Mr. Wilson opened a great many herrings immediately after they were caught, and while the finest fish contained no remains of food, others, in the worst possible condition, were gorged with what would be considered excellent fattening matter. This apparent anomaly is explained by the ichthyological law, that fish exist in high condition only for a certain portion of each successive year after they have assumed the functions of the parent state.

Herrings appear to have unpleasant parricidal habits. Mr. Wilson found that several which he opened contained a quantity of spawn of their own species. Their usual food, however, consists of Entomostracæ, countless millions of which exist in the sea round our coasts.

Naturalists are divided in opinion as to whether there is more than one species of herring. Yarrell figures a second species, to which he has given the name *Clupea Leachii*. He describes it as being seven inches and a half long, and two inches in depth. It spawns, according to his account, in the middle of February.

Mr. Wilson, while admitting the possibility of the existence of a second species of herring, in insulated groups, is convinced that the vast army* of herrings, which visits our shores in apparently inexhaustible numbers, consists of but one species; and his opinion

* Our word herring is derived from the German "heer," an army, to express their prodigious numbers.

is of great value; as he had ample opportunities of arriving at an impartial judgment.

Be this as it may, it is certain that a new and very beautiful herring has been discovered in the sea, near Jamaica. It is called the silver-banded herring, from the broad silvery band which extends longitudinally along its sides, and gives it the appearance of burnished silver.

Another peculiarity of our British herring merits notice. This is, that herrings caught in bays and sea lochs are invariably superior in quality to those captured on the east coast. It is true that nowhere will you find larger herrings than those caught at Wick. Last year they were especially remarkable for their great size—one that I saw was sixteen inches long, eight and a half in girth, and weighed one pound; but I can endorse, by experience, the opinion entertained by various persons, viz. : that neither the Wick herrings nor those caught in other parts of the open sea, equal in flavour and delicacy the herrings of Loch Eribol, a large sea lake on the north coast of Scotland, nor those of the various salt-water lochs on the west coast. Indeed, they are even said to improve in flavour by a visit to the large but somewhat shallow Moray Firth. I must not, however, omit stating that there is a particular description of herring caught at Wick, bloated to such a degree, *au naturel*, that when taken from the meshes his head

generally falls off. These fish are carefully laid aside, as a *bonne bouche*, to figure at the table, and to them were we indebted for our excellent breakfast at Wick. And now let us go and see what they are doing with the herrings which we saw on landing this morning.

CHAP. VI.

Wick.—Dirty Nature of the Town.—Deserted Streets.—Male Population asleep.—The Harbour.—Staxigo.—Scandinavian Names.—Gutting Troughs.—The Gutters.—Transition of Species Theory.—How a Gutter casts her Skin.—The Gutting Process.—A Company of silent Women.—How to eviscerate a Herring.—Rapidity of the Performance.—Wages of the Gutters.—Number of Herrings gutted.—Packing the Fish.—The Crown Brand.—Official Returns of the Fishery.—Quantity of Herrings exported.—Morality of the Fishers and Curers.—Riot at Wick.

ON leaving our hotel we bent our steps to the harbour. Wick, at any time, cannot be a lovely town; but during the herring fishing it is odious. The stationary population of 6,722 souls is increased during the fishing season to upwards of 16,000, and as the houses do not increase in the same proportion, and the sanitary arrangements are not of the highest order of excellence, you may imagine that this great influx of population is not calculated to improve the appearance of Wick.

But as we walk through the fishy streets, there is no sign of an overflowing population; the thoroughfares

are nearly peopleless, and, with the exception of children making dirt pies here and there, and old crones airing themselves at open doors, there is no one to be seen.

The explanation is easy; the men are in bed, the women at work among the herrings, as we shall soon see. We pass through more streets, the population of which is sunk in slumber, and emerging on the harbour, we are amidst a world of women.

The harbour is full of fishing-boats, as close as they can pack; no room for a punt. You wonder how they ever got in, and equally how they ever get out. This is not the commercial port. Ships trading with Wick lie in the more commodious harbour of Staxigo*, belonging to the adjacent village of that name.

Wick harbour is surrounded on the land side by hundreds of erections, looking like abortive attempts at building wood houses, some twenty feet square, for the walls are only about three feet high. These are the gutting troughs. Round them stood rows of what close inspection led you to conclude were women, though at first sight you might be excused for having some doubts respecting their sex. They all wore strange-shaped canvas garments, so bespattered with blood and the entrails and scales of fish, as to cause them to resemble

* Founded by the Scandinavians, who have named many existing places in Caithness. "Go" is an abbreviation of the Scandinavian "Gio," signifying a deep inlet of the sea.

animals of the ichthyological kingdom, recently divested of their skin; undergoing perhaps one of those transitions set forth in Mr. Darwin's speculative book "On the Origin of Species." And if a man may become a monkey, or has been a whale, why should not a Caithness damsel become a herring? Here you may see, during the fishing season, the transition process going on before your very eyes. Skin becoming scaly—and as to metempsychosis, surely there can be no paradise for a Caithness gutter where herrings are absent. I was sceptical respecting mermaids, ranking them among the creations of mythical zoology, but now, with humble physiological philosophy, and with Caithness gutters before you, mermaids, and mermans too, you will say, may exist.

Badinage apart, the women do cast their skins. Work over, they don gay dresses, and, flaunting in colours, you would not know the girls that you meet in the evening to be those whom you saw in the morning coated with blood and viscera.

Sixty-five women, side by side, and all silent! A wonder this, you will think; but if you saw the movement of hands and arms you would admit that to keep these going at the rapid rate which they do, is quite sufficient muscular exercise.

Let us watch the operations. First, the herrings are carried as fast as possible in baskets from the boats to

the gutting-troughs until the boats are emptied of their scaly treasures. Then, the women, familiarly called *gutters*, pounce upon the herrings like a bird of prey, seize their victims, and, with a rapidity of motion which baffles your eye, deprives the fish of its viscera. The operation, which a damsel not quite so repulsive as her companions obligingly performed for me at slow time, is thus effected. The herring is seized in the left hand, and by two dexterous cuts made with a sharp short knife in the neck an opening is effected sufficiently large to enable the viscera and liver to be extracted. These with the gills are thrown into a barrel, the gutted fish being cast among his eviscerated companions. Try your hand, as I did, at this apparently simple process, and ten to one but your first cut will decapitate the herring. If this does not happen, you will mangle the fish so seriously in your attempts to eviscerate it that you will render it entirely unworthy the honour of being packed with its skilfully gutted companions. And even if you succeed in disembowelling a herring artistically, you will probably spend many minutes in the operation, whereas the Wick gutters—I timed them—gut on an average twenty-six herrings per minute.

At this rapid rate you no longer wonder at the silence that prevails while the bloody work is going on, nor at the incarnadined condition of the women. How habit deadens feeling! Who would imagine that a delicate-

looking girl could be tempted by even a high wage to spend long days at this work? Such, however, is the fact; for although the majority of the 2,500 women employed in gutting herrings are certainly not lovely nor delicate limbed, still I observed several pretty and modest-looking girls who would apparently have made better shepherdesses than fish-gutters. But here, as elsewhere, the love of gain overcomes repugnance. The damsel who kindly inducted me into the mysteries of the art of evisceration told me that she had sometimes made 8*l.* in a good fishing season, a large and welcome addition to her annual wage as a domestic servant.

The same operation is performed at all the troughs, of which there must be many hundreds, and some idea may be formed of the activity that prevailed at the time of my visit by the following calculation: — The take on the previous night amounted to 18,051 crans. Now as the average number of herrings in each cran is 750, we have the prodigious number of 13,538,250 herrings, all of which had to be eviscerated. But this is not all. As fast as the herrings are gutted they are carried off in baskets by sturdy girls as fast as they can run to the curing-houses, and shot into small troughs. From these they are taken by the packers, also women, whose business it is to pack, or, as it is locally called, *rouse*, the herrings in barrels, disposing them in layers after they have been well sprinkled with sea-salt, which is generally

preferred to that extracted from the earth. Here the work is superintended by an owner, for two reasons,—one, in order to see that the herrings are properly salted, and the other that they are sufficiently pressed down; for, as the packers are paid by the barrel, dishonest women might pack the fish loosely and thus apparently fill the barrel before it had received its proper complement of fish.

The herrings undergo successive packings at various intervals of time before the barrels are finally closed. At each packing more salt is added, and at the final packing great care is taken to dispose the herrings in even layers.

The viscera is deposited in barrels and sold to farmers for manuring purposes, at the average price of *1d.* per barrel.

When the barrels are finally packed, the official crown brand is impressed upon them, and they are exported to various places: The statistics of our great Scottish fishery will be best seen from the following official returns for 1859 :—

There were 25 fishing stations, including two in the Orkneys and Lewis. These employed 4,711 boats, Wick sending out 1,094. The total take was 294,128 crans, of which 86,426 were caught at Wick, and these were mostly shipped to continental ports, no less than 21,982 barrels being sent to Stettin alone. These

figures are, however, below the average annual take; in some years the catch at Wick alone has exceeded 134,000 crans.

As may be supposed, considerable drunkenness and immorality prevails at Wick during the fishing season. Much of this is due to the indiscriminate herding together of sexes. The ministers complain that while great pains are taken to promote the success of the fishers of herrings, little care is taken to promote that of the fishers of men. Temperance societies have, however, been highly beneficial. A few years ago, I am assured that during the herring fishing season five hundred gallons of whisky were consumed daily. Now the quantity is much less.*

* In Mr. Dunlop's curious and interesting book "On Drinking Usages," the following particulars are given respecting the herring fisheries:—"The regulations of drinking in the herring fisheries are somewhat complicated. At importing salt, several glasses are given to each man; and at sailing for the isles the men are frequently put on board intoxicated; in hiring boats at the fishing-ground, whisky flows profusely—those are esteemed the best employers who give the most spirits, and masters supplant one another by bribes of whisky. Each well-filled boat on arriving at the receiving vessel gets a bottle of whisky, besides a couple of glasses each man. The women who clean the fish have three glasses a day. At the first introduction of this practice they could not be prevailed upon to take above half a glass."

"In a slack fishing, a vessel having three or four hundred barrels, requires about sixty gallons of spirits. Thus educated, the fishermen, not content with their morning's supply, frequently go ashore, and, drinking at their own cost, spend the day in rioting and wickedness."—P. 12.

When the weather is unfavourable and the boats cannot venture out, broils arising from drink and clanship occur, though they rarely attain the magnitude of a riot. Last year, however, was an exception; a quarrel, commenced by a couple of boys wrangling over an apple, was taken up by the idle fishers. Ancient clan feuds broke out between Highlanders, Lowlanders, and Islanders. Knives were drawn and blood flowed so fast that the riot act was obliged to be read, and military brought from Edinburgh, at great expense to the county. I happened to be visiting Sir John Sinclair, at Barrock House, near Wick, when the riot occurred, and had a good opportunity of hearing accounts of the outbreak. As usual, these differed greatly, but sufficiently agreed in two respects to lead the impartial hearer to the conclusion that the fierce dissensions of clanship which formerly raged are not yet extinct.

CHAP. VII.

Leave Wick.—Scotch Churches.—Dr. Chalmers and the cracked Bell. — Image of St. Fergus.— Ruined Chapel.— The wicked Earl of Caithness. — Dreary Country.— Drying Nets. — Farmsteads. — Bothies.— Keen Air.— London Fogs.— Clear Atmosphere.— Loch Watten.— Old Mail Coach.— The River Thurso. — Halkirk. — Salmon Pools. — Imaginary Feat.— Brawl Castle. — Description of the Building.— Old Brawl.— Curious Rooms.— Stone Chair of St. Thomas. — Boiling a Bishop. — A Ghaist-alluring Edifice.— The modern House.— Preserved Birds.— The Gardens at Brawl.— The Ladies' Tree.— Fruit Trees.— Spittal Hill.— My Companions at Brawl.— Our Piper.— Domestic Troubles.— Halkirk Postmaster. — The rival Kirks. — The Established Church Minister. — Wild Sportsmen.

I HAVE dwelt at some length on the herring fishing, on account of its vast importance, for, although Caithness is an agricultural county, the herring trade, as it may be called, has been for many years, and continues to be, the great business of Caithness, employing, it is calculated, about 14,000 persons annually.

Now let us leave the herring metropolis, but while our dog-cart is getting ready we will just take a look at the church. Scotch kirks, as the English tourist in

Caledonia knows to his sorrow, are sorry affairs, and that at Wick forms no exception to the rule. The great object of their builders seems to have been to studiously avoid all ornament, and make the edifices as destitute of beauty as possible. To them the scriptural allusion to the beauty of God's house conveys no meaning. True, as I heard Dr. Chalmers say, an eloquent Presbyterian preacher in a barn, with a cracked bell to summon the faithful to prayers, will have a larger congregation than the highest Churchman in a gorgeous church whose words are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; but are Scotch kirks blessed by these eloquent divines? I can only say that it was not my good fortune to be edified by those I heard in the Highlands.

There is nothing to be seen in Wick church. Formerly a curious old image of St. Fergus, the tutelary saint of the parish, was preserved in the building; but hear it, ye Puseyites, a few years ago it was removed to the jail, where it became soon defaced. Near the entrance to the church the hungry antiquary will find a roofless chapel. The standing walls evince that it must have been an elegant structure. It was erected by the "Wicked" George, Earl of Caithness, and here is an inscription which he placed over the tomb of his father:—

"Here within lyes intombed one noble and worthie man, John, Master Fiar of Caithness, of Clyth and Grunland, Knight, father of

ane noble and potent Lord, now George, Earl of Caithness, Lord Sinclair of Berridale, who departed this life the 15th day of March 1576."

And now let us be off to our sporting quarters. Seventeen miles lie between Wick and Brawl, but we have a good horse and the road is excellent. This is well, for the landscape is very dreary, the general features being rolling moorlands unchequered by a single tree. Adjoining the road agriculture has changed the moorland to fields, and occasionally you see extensive farmsteads with barrack-like edifices, where the bothy system of lodging labourers of both sexes prevails.

Near Wick the country is as brown as a tan-pit, occasioned by the herring nets spread to dry—the nets being tanned by catechu, the wood of the *Acacia Catechu*, an East India tree, which gives them a brown hue. All along the road we met parties of men and women going to or returning from herring business.

The wind blows keen from the north-west, fresh, and bracing, however; the antithesis of those horrible London fogs, when you feel as if a box of lucifer matches had exploded inside you. The atmosphere was so clear that we could see the Sutherland mountains far to the west, and the Paps of Caithness dimly to the south. Ten miles, and we come to a large sheet of water, not cradled amidst mountains, but beautiful in our eyes, for it is one of our fishing preserves, and is reported

to be the habitat of lustrous and lusty trout: of which more anon.

The scenery becomes wilder, cultivation rarer; and, to carry us still farther away from railways and civilisation, here comes a genuine old mail-coach, guard and coachman resplendent in scarlet and gold lace, speeding past us at the rate of eleven miles an hour.

Now we ascend a long but not steep slope, and when at the summit see below us on the left a line of silver serpentine through the valley. That is the River Thurso, famous for its salmon; and see, there, amidst a patch of greenery close to the river, is our home, Brawl Castle. We drive down a cross country road to Halkirk, *our* village; cross the river by a two-arch bridge lingeringly, for from said bridge we see a pool glorious to look upon. No need to be told that salmon are taking their pleasure therein. But should you be sceptical—see yon heavy wave, and hark to the whack of that fellow's tail as it strikes the water—a twenty pounder at least. With the usual piscatorial fertility of imagination we fondly fancy that we have hooked the silvery monster, and scan the banks in order to see where he may be conveniently gaffed. The feat accomplished, we drive on, turn up an avenue skirting the river, see more salmon pools, and at length stop under the walls of Brawl Castle, our home for coming weeks.

Brawl Castle is a high-sounding name it must be confessed, and certainly very far removed from all relationship to the pictured lodge in the wilderness. But of all structures your modern castle is frequently the most deceptive. For we are so apt to associate a grand building with the word "castle" that when we find ourselves put off with an abortion bearing an imposing name, we are at once disappointed and disgusted.

Now it is my bounden duty as a veracious traveller to tell the reader that the Brawl Castle in which I lived for three weeks is not as grand as Taymouth or Dunrobin, nor indeed of any structure justly entitled to the rank of castle. Great things were evidently intended, for there are thick basement walls 100 feet long, divided into six vaults, and pierced with loop-holes; but the superstructure is simply a square and by no means large stone house, made to look ridiculously absurd by having pepper-box turrets fastened to each corner.

Is this the Brawl Castle, you will ask, that figures in the history of Scotland, and where, according to tradition, the proud Harolds and Sinclairs, descendants of the Orcadian earls, kept high state? Not at all. Permit me to be your cicerone, and I will show you the ancient pile. See, just behind the modern structure a crumbling ruin — that is the Brawl Castle of old. It is not extensive, but what remains is grand and massive:

walls twelve feet thick, within which are small rooms, varying in size from ten to six feet square. Below, dungeons of course (what chieftain of old was happy without these snuggeries for his unhappy prisoners?) and winding uncomfortable stairs — be sure the chieftains' ladies wore no crinoline; chambers and stairs lighted by narrow windows; in short, a good old genuine castle, set round with a fosse and other means of defence.

You can discern at a glance how grievously it has been spoiled. Originally it was, doubtless, very much larger. During many years it served the purposes of a convenient quarry of ready-hewn stones; and so little respect has been shown to ancient ruins in this remote part of Scotland, that the stone chair of St. Thomas, described as having been of exquisite workmanship, and which was long preserved in a chapel at Sinnett, was appropriated a few years ago by a barbarous farmer, ruthlessly broken, and used to make a fence. Alas! there was no Ecclesiological Society in those days.

There are ugly stories told about Brawl. Among others, it is related that when the castle was occupied by a certain Earl of Caithness,—a dare-devil hero of battle and rapine,—he adopted the course of boiling a bishop and destroying his palace, which was at the opposite side of the river, in retaliation of the bishop's fulminations against him for not paying tithes.

Thus, if we are not going to live in an ancient castle,

we have the satisfaction of seeing one from our rooms, which, believe me, are far more comfortable than the dismal chambers in the thick walls. They have, moreover, the advantage of not being so liable to be haunted. For old Brawl is, as Burns would have said, a "ghaist-alluring edifice;" and I do not think that any consideration would tempt the rustic to pass the midnight hours in its deserted halls.

A large drawing-room in modern Brawl contains cases of birds, shot in Caithness and Sutherland, admirably stuffed by Mr. Dunbar, which had the distinction of appearing in the Exhibition of 1851; and the walls are hung with engravings of Landseer's sporting pictures: an equally large dining-room, several excellent bed-rooms, and a bath-room, with extensive kitchens, offices, and numerous servants' apartments, render this sporting residence one of the most commodious shooting-lodges in Scotland.

But the glory of Brawl consists in the garden and adjacent grove of real trees, both wonders in almost treeless Caithness.* The garden is so remarkable a

* Indeed how scarce wood has been in this country appears by the following passage from a work on the agricultural state of Caithness, published in 1812. After noticing the remarkable absence of trees, the author says, "The only tree that could be considered as extraordinary in Caithness was an ash in the garden at Brawl Castle, called 'The Ladies' Tree.' It was from thirty to forty feet high, and at nine feet from the ground was three feet in diameter. It was blown down by a

feature that it is especially noticed in county histories. These state that it is the most ancient and by far the most notable garden in Caithness. Southrons may think it strange that so much praise should be accorded to a garden; but fruit of any description is a rare luxury in that county. Anywhere the Brawl gardens would be admired for their great extent and fruit-bearing qualities, and here, in the latitude of $58^{\circ} 15'$ it was really remarkable to see the heavy crops of fruit, and how well they ripened. As may be supposed, the produce of these gardens was not included in the agreement among the articles to be enjoyed by my friends; and as the fruit was in great demand throughout the country, farmers sending long distances for it, we made a compact with the gardener to rent certain fruit-trees. All through August we had strawberries, gooseberries, and raspberries, the latter of great size and excellence. The bushes are not certainly quite as stupendous as those at Walton Hall, described by Waterton as being so high that a step-ladder was necessary to reach the fruit, but they are of a very convenient altitude, and were starred with amber and scarlet berries.

I mention these facts in case any one of my readers may fancy to become an inmate of Brawl during some

gale of wind some years ago, but owing to its uncommon size the proprietor allowed it to remain on the ground as a specimen of Caithness timber."

shooting season, and I assure him if he makes a friend of Sandy the gardener, the garden produce will be found a very pleasant addition to the commissariat.

The grove surrounding the garden is a favourite haunt of hundreds of birds, who find it a perfect paradise. It was always interesting to watch them; and although they fed sumptuously daily on our fruit, we did not grudge the toll that they exacted from us.

This wood, backed by the Spittal Hill, the only elevation of note in the parish — the tawny river, broke here and there by foam and ripple — and the old castle, are good vignette subjects; but let no artist-tourist hope to make pictures in this part of Caithness.

So much for our quarters; and I think you will grant that, although the country is not picturesque, a party of six sportsmen are not to be pitied as the occupants of Brawl.

Let me now introduce you to my friends: our chief the Peeblesshire laird; his two brothers, one recently from India, the other a candidate for the prizes of that country; a London lawyer, whose study of musty parchments has not dimmed his eye nor cobwebbed his mind; and another London professional gentleman.

Nor should I omit stating that we had a piper, who, though he had not had the advantage of being taught at the great bagpipe college in Skye, which indeed ceased to exist before he was born, nevertheless played extremely

well. To be sure, it was sometimes necessary to station him in a distant room, as the skirl was a little too harsh to be enjoyed at close quarters, particularly when John Gunn made too free with the whisky, without which, however, it was not easy to get John to play at all.

Here was good promise for social enjoyment, and the result justified our hopes. Barbarians! methinks I hear some readers say, to consider your party perfect without the society of ladies. Well, we did not overlook our fair friends, some of whom with their husbands would have joined us at Brawl. But Caithness is not a country where ladies can spend long summer days rambling through lovely scenery, and the moors are so rough that only a very strong and fast Diana could cross them. So, with considerable reluctance, we abandoned the idea of giving our establishment the benefit of a mistress. That we should have prospered better under matronly supervision is certain. For sometimes servants, in utter despair as we supposed at the solitude of the place, lost their temper and wits, and became intractable. Our cook, who, we charitably believed, was suffering from a grievous fit of home sickness — we had imported her from Edinburgh — to create a little excitement, took it into her head one morning to strew soot on the stairs and passages, lock the doors, and hide the keys. Of course she was dismissed, and profiting

by experience, we had no more importations from Edinburgh in the cook line.

Good fellowship at Brawl is the more necessary, because you will find no society in the neighbourhood. Halkirk, though a postal district, is apparently so little known by the post-office authorities that our letters were frequently delayed by being sent to Falkirk in the first instance, and the village postmaster's topographical knowledge was so obscure, that on one occasion, when desiring a postage stamp for a letter directed to Southampton, he gravely informed me that a penny was not sufficient to prepay a letter to that town, because it was in foreign parts!

Halkirk is occupied by the proprietors of small holdings, who live in humble cottages amidst which the rival manses cut a commanding figure. Neither the Established nor Free Kirk minister called on us, and I believe that both, certainly one, held us in great dread. Not perhaps unreasonably; for some previous occupants of Brawl during the shooting season had amused themselves, as we heard, firing at the Established Church minister's chimney pots with their rifles. One chimney was certainly potless, and the pots on the other chimneys exhibited signs of having been hit. Now, as this minister has followed the example of the good Vicar of Wakefield, by marrying and making the world a present of sons and daughters, we can appreciate his anxiety

with respect to the annual occupants of Brawl; and it will be admitted that six sportsmen are not precisely the individuals that a Scotch minister would choose as companions for his daughters.

CHAP. VIII.

Preparations for Grouse Shooting.—Examination of Guns.—Breech Loaders.—The Kennel.—Gillies, past and present.—Female Gillies.—How to strike a Bargain.—Morality of Gillies.—A Set of Gillies.—Aphra Behn on “Hielandmen.”—Hiring a Pony.—The Dawn of the 12th August.—A plentiful Breakfast.—Drinking Preparations.—Tea *versus* Whisky.—The Start.—Dale Moor.—The Day’s Shooting.—Caithness Grouse.—Bog-holes.—Plague of Midges.—Rout of a Persian Army.—Vast Extent of the Moors.—Heather Ale.—How a Secret was kept.—Decoction of Heather Flowers.—The Day’s Bag.—How to pack Grouse.

It is the 11th of August, and the day of days in the life of a grouse shooter is at hand.

Had you seen us at Brawl and not known our design, you would have come to the conclusion that we were setting our castle in order, and preparing to make a great defence.

Such an array of guns, powder and shot flasks! and as for ammunition, we had sufficient to destroy, even with No. 7, the first battalion of red breeches that might set foot in Caithness.

Every man fondling his gun and hoping to extract admiration of its exquisite workmanship from others.

And, indeed, where will you see a daintier piece of work than your modern fifty guinea double-barrelled, turned out by Westley Richards and other eminent gunmakers? No mathematical instrument is truer; so rest assured, if you miss your bird, the fault is your own.

Of course we had breech-loaders, and of course there were hot arguments respecting the merits of this new invention. A neater or more portable tool does not exist, and when rapidity in firing is wanted, the breech-loader will undoubtedly do much more execution than the ordinary gun. Care, however, should be taken to keep the cartridges very dry, otherwise the powder may become damp, and your shooting will be spoiled. It is always better not to prepare more cartridges than are likely to be used in the course of a few days.

The armoury discussed, away we go to the kennel. Were there ever twelve greater beauties?—fresh as the morning, and as active as fawns. Strong limbed too, for a small delicate dog will not do for the Caithness moors. But though our dogs are strong and muscular, this day week, I venture to say, they will look very different animals.

And now for the gillies. It is known that we require several, and here they come trooping up the avenue for hire. Fine stalwart fellows for the most part, equal to the work of carrying the huge game panniers comfortably filled, if not close packed.

The time was, and not many years ago, when your Caithness gilly would tramp continually over moor and moss laden with grouse for one shilling a day. Now, however, everything appertaining to sporting is so much more expensive than formerly, that a gilly will ask three shillings per day, and not work for less than half a crown, expecting besides his breakfast and luncheon, and an unlimited quantity of whisky. To the three shillings wage we made a stout stand; and taking counsel, bethought us that as sturdy women work a-field during a long day for tenpence, two of these would be more than equal to one gilly, and then, what a sensation it would make to go on the moors attended by twelve muscular damsels!

So, assuming great gravity, we declared our intention of dispensing with the service of male gillies, as it was evident that we could procure female gillies at a much cheaper rate.

Highlanders are seldom disposed to be hilarious; it is not to be expected that men cradled in chilly mists and gloom will laugh like the children of the sunny south; nor are they quick at comprehending a joke. Our badinage was regarded as serious talk; and though one or two ventured to think that the gentlemen were not in earnest, the majority looked grave, and reduced their terms.

Out with the whisky, a glass to each, and we are

masters of six gillies. Honest, hard-working fellows they all proved, thereby happily contradicting the prevalent opinion in Caithness that gillies are not to be trusted. Probably you may still find a gilly who, imbued with ancient traditions of how his ancestors lived jollily at the expense of his neighbours, is afflicted by a moral ophthalmia that renders him frequently unable to discriminate between *meum* and *tuum*.

Such a character, we know, was not uncommon in olden time. Listen to a verse from Aphra Behn's poem, "How the first Hielandman was made":—

"Says God to the Hielandman, 'Quhair wilt thou now?'
 'I win down to the Lowlands, Lord, and there steal a cow;'
 'Efy,' quod St. Peter, 'thou will never do weel,
 An thou, but new made, so sune gais to steal.'
 'Umff,' quod the Hielandman, and swore by yon kirk,
 'So long as I may geir get to steal, win I never work.'"

Our business with the gillies made us glad that we only required their services in the field, for it would have been a formidable affair to have been obliged to hire as many as the ancient Highland laird was accustomed to do. Look at this list of attendants:—His gilly-more, who carried his broadsword; his gilly-casflue, who carried him over the fords; his gilly-cour-traine, who led his horse in rough and dangerous ways; his gilly-trushanamish, or baggage man; and his piper's gilly, who carried the bagpipe.

Besides the gillies we hired a pony, principally for my use ; and that you may form some notion of the locomotive California that the Londoner is supposed to be in Caithness, hear, that for the hire of a rough-haired beast running wild on the moors, 5*l.* a month was demanded, the animal to be fed by us. Divide this amount by four, and the quotient is about the fair price for the hire of such an animal. Riding ponies are not abundant in Caithness, and those met with have neither the power nor endurance of the wonderful little shelty.

“The morn is up again, the *bracing* morn.”

We spring from our bed, keenly alive to the fact that another 12th of August has dawned, rush heroically beneath a shower bath which seems to flog our back with icicles, leave the bath-room red as a boiled lobster and braced as a drum, dress, and sit down to a breakfast, as unlike those ghosts of breakfasts which make their appearance during the London season, when you often experience the truth of the happy French saying, “that it is only in the morning that you know how you have dined the previous day,” as is the plough-boy’s hearty meal to that of Byron’s bread-and-butter miss.

Well done, our worthy chief, thy catering is prime ! Who shall say that Caithness is barren ? Ham, red round of beef, pies, salmon ; tongue mutely eloquent, of delicious flavour ; eggs, butter and cream, fresh, golden.

and rich. No chance of starving here. No trifling with infinitesimal portions — we eat of all, and leave such a wreck behind that a dog would fare badly which came after us. For the meats have to pay toll for luncheon as well as breakfast, and although we now feel that to eat more would be impossible, we have great faith in the appetising air of the moors, and look forward with pleasure to reclining breast deep in blooming heather, discussing our luncheon and the morning's sport.

And now for filling the liquor flasks—flasks, did I say? —barrels rather, those pretty modern inventions with glass ends through which you see the beverage. Tantalising contrivances doubtless to the ever-thirsty gilly, who, if you have securely locked the bung-hole, cannot even wet his lips with the coveted liquor. But our gillies were not tantalised, for although we had imported from Tunbridge a cask of rare bitter ale, and had various wines and spirits, we preferred filling the barrels with tea without milk or sugar, having found from considerable experience that this is the most refreshing beverage during a long and fatiguing day's shooting.

The gillies did not, of course, approve this decision, for your Scotch, or at all events, Caithness gilly, has not yet acquired the knowledge that a pound of tea that may be had for three shillings and sixpence is capable of giving far more comfort than a gallon of whisky that costs sixteen shillings. So we, or rather they, carried

supplementary flasks filled with fiery whisky, which they drank with the same unconcern that a child would drink a cup of milk. Indeed, I thought that the stronger the spirit the more was it esteemed.

And now at last we are ready : the dog-carts are at the door, the dogs, after a world of trouble, stowed in the wells, the gillies up — nothing, we believe, forgotten, and we are off to the moors. We have a long drive before us, for our moors are not near Brawl; some of the beats are ten miles distant, the nearest four. The day is glorious; sky dappled with clouds, and a pleasant breeze blowing from the west. At the end of the avenue our party separate; good luck to each, and away we speed to heather-land — through the straggling village of Halkirk, past the little patches of cultivation, and now we have nothing but the moor around us. Not, however, monotonously barren, for the edges are fringed by a great variety of wild flowers, and the moor chequered by frequently occurring patches of bog cotton, remarkable for its great size and silvery whiteness. This is a beautiful object on the Caithness moors. Ossian compares the breasts of the lovely huntress Strina Dona to the flower of this plant. “If on the heath she moved, her breast was whiter than the down of Cana.” On, still on, through the vast wilds till we come to the hamlet of Dale. Here we leave our dog-cart, and in a few minutes are in grouse-land.

Now, I am not going to bore you with chronicles of our doings: how Ponto would run hares, those perplexing and troublesome blue hares which, unfortunately for the grouse shooter, are met with in Caithness as well as the common hare; how Rap was wild, Juno steady; how some shot well, others badly; because all these incidents are common in grouse shooting. But I will say a few words about the Caithness grouse. This bird, the true red grouse, (*Tetrao Scoticus* — why not *Britannicus*, seeing that it is found in the north of England, Wales, and Ireland as well as in Scotland, though not in any other part of the world?) differs in one important respect from his fellows elsewhere, being larger. My authority for thus awarding the prize for weight to the Caithness grouse is a Caithness gentleman, son of one of the largest landed proprietors in the county, confirmed by our own experience. He informs me that while the average weight of Scotch grouse is twenty-five ounces, that of Caithness grouse is twenty-five and a half ounces. The Caithness grouse have further the great merit of lying well long after the 12th August; whereas those in the hilly parts of Scotland, after the first week's shooting, seem to have a shrewd notion that they are in considerable request, and make themselves very scarce.

As may be supposed, our shooting was not all *couleur de rose*. Are you a weak-limbed man? Then think

not of shooting on the Brawl moors. For there are "hags" that stand up like islands, and mosses in which you might disappear, to be exhumed, perhaps, in unborn ages, a fossil, the wonder of the species occupying the place now filled by man. It was ludicrous, though sad, to see our dogs in the mad excitement of hunting tumbling constantly into a peat moss, and after long and arduous struggles floundering out tanned animals. Sad, because we knew that such muscular exertion would soon tell on the poor beasts; and, indeed, after two or three consecutive days' work on the moors, they were so used up as to require long rest before they were sufficiently recruited to be fit for work again. And if the dogs were thus knocked up, their masters, as may be supposed, did not find the Caithness moors the easiest walking in the world. Indeed, in one respect the quadrupeds fared better than the bipeds. For while the latter could and did lie down, we early found that lingering pleasantly over luncheon amidst rich purple-belled heather was a physical impossibility on the Caithness moors to one ungifted with a pachyderm skin. To sit down at all was out of the question—nay, even standing still for a moment put your powers of endurance to the severest test. Nowhere, I venture to say, will you be made more aware of the truth of the adage, "union is strength," than on the Caithness moors. For nowhere are those little animated miracles, gnats or midges, more abundant than there. Talk of solitude on the

moors!—why, every square yard contains a population of millions of these little harpies, that pump the blood out of you with amazing savageness and insatiability. Where they come from is a puzzle. While you are in motion not one is visible, but when you stop a mist seems to curl about your feet and legs, rising, and at the same time expanding, until you become painfully sensible that the appearance is due to a cloud of gnats. How well Spenser has pictured them :

“ As when a swarme of gnats at eventide
 Out of the fennes of Allan doe arise, “
 Their murmuring small trumpets sounden wide,
 Whiles in the air their clust’ring army flies,
 That as a cloud doth seem to dim the skies;
 No man nor beast may rest or take repose,
 For their sharp wounds and noyous injuries,
 Till the fierce northern wind with blust’ring blast
 Doth blow them quite away, and in the ocean cast.”

Entomologists tell us that there are several species of the gnat genus. The bite of all is severe, but none more so than that inflicted by the common gnat, which not only uses its skin-piercing weapon with terrible effect, but also instils poison into the wound.

These plagues are as numerous in Sutherland as in Caithness; and having experienced the torment that they inflict, it requires no great stretch of imagination to believe the tradition that a Persian army was put to

flight, when besieging the great city of Nisibis, by mighty clouds of gnats, which settled on them at the earnest solicitation of holy St. Jacobus.

Can entomologists explain why midges, which swarmed on the moors, were almost entirely absent from the banks of the Thurso?

The Brawl moors are so vast that it is only at their edge that you find habitations. Whenever it was possible we made for one of these, which, although extremely rude, completely protected us from our insect enemies, and possessed occasionally the additional advantage of yielding delicious milk.

Have you any heather ale? I more than once asked the peasants who welcomed us to their narrow dwellings. Not one had even heard of such a beverage, so we must presume that the art of making heather ale is lost. The secret, according to Boece's Chronicles, was possessed by the Picts. A story is told, legendary it must be granted, that when Kenneth Mac Alpine resolved on extirpating the Picts, he slew all but two, an aged father and his son, who were said to have the recipe of brewing this heather nectar. Their lives were promised to be spared on condition that they divulged the secret. The father declared that he would disclose the art provided he was granted one boon. This being acceded to, great was the astonishment of the victorious Kenneth and his followers when the old

man demanded as his request that his son should be killed, emphatically insisting that on no other terms would he divulge the secret. Accordingly the youth's head was struck off. Now, said the father, I am satisfied. My son might have taught you the art; I never will. He had the satisfaction of carrying it with him to his grave. And the ballad tells us :

“The Picts were undone, cut off, mother's son,
For not teaching the Scots to brew heather ale.”

I have read, however, that although the art of brewing Pictish heather ale is lost, old grouse shooters have tasted a beverage prepared by shepherds on the moors, principally from heather flowers, though honey or sugar to produce fermentation was added.

And now the sporting reader will be impatient to know the nature of our bags; for this is the true test of the quality of preserves, whether land or water. Well, our chief, who kept the game books very accurately, tells me that our sport averaged fifteen brace of grouse per day per gun, but besides grouse the bags always contained snipe and hares, and occasionally wild ducks and plover. These figures look, it is true, very insignificant by the side of those startling returns which the Scotch papers love to parade of the slaughter perpetrated on certain moors. But I agree with Christopher North in not admiring any shooting ground which re-

sembles a poultry-yard, preferring that requiring skill and good dogs to discover the latent riches. Fifteen brace of grouse as the result of a day's shooting should satisfy any man ; it is right, however, to add that this number was only obtained by hard work, and that our party shot to so late an hour in the evening that when we had driven home and changed our clothes, it was generally ten o'clock before we sat down to dinner.

Of course many more grouse were killed than we could consume. The greater portion were purchased from us by Mr. Dunbar, but we sent a large number to friends in England. And it may be worth while stating that by packing fresh birds in boxes made to hold six and ten brace, without heather or compartments, they always reached their destination, though this was generally as distant as London, in excellent condition.

CHAP. IX.

Sporting Advantages of Brawl.—The River Thurso.—Its Excellence as a Salmon River.—Grilse.—Unpropitious Fishing Season.—Bull for sanctioning Fishing on Sunday.—Hunting Salmon.—Strength of Grilse.—White Trout.—Ancient Salmon Feasts.—The Angler hooked.—Loch Watten.—A crazy Boat.—Excellence of the Watten Trout.—Their Capriciousness.—Ornithology of Caithness.

It is one of the especial advantages of Brawl as a sporting residence, that when your dogs are used up, or you are tired of the moors, you can exchange the gun for the rod, as the river is at hand. At hand—at your very door, rendering it quite possible to transfer a salmon from his pool to the pot in a few minutes.

For, as I have said, the Thurso is one of the best salmon and grilse rivers in the United Kingdom, as proof of which I may state that 30*l.* per month per rod is demanded and freely given for the right of salmon fishing during the spring months, all fish caught to be given up excepting one each day, which the angler is at liberty to retain. The river seems made for fishing. Flowing through strata of the Caithness slate flagstones, it has gouged a channel for its waters, rarely broader

than can be conveniently fished from the banks with an ordinary salmon rod ; and the pools, which are neither few nor far between, are in many instances provided with jutting flagstones, which, besides affording you excellent casting stands, enable you to humour the wildest and sulkiest salmon with great chances in favour of making him your prize. Although the fishing has greatly fallen off in consequence of inefficient legislation—of which, more presently—enormous hauls of salmon are still frequently made at the mouth of the river ; one, last season after paying all expenses realised a net profit of 200%. And see what sport the river afforded last spring:—“ Mr. D. B. Wauchope killed 74 clean salmon in twenty-one days’ fishing, and his brother, Mr. Andrew Wauchope, in the same period, 50, the largest being twenty pounds ; Mr. Muir, 60 ; Mr. Danby, 53 ; Mr. Ivory, 27 ; Mr. Blanshard, 31 ; Mr. Dunbar, 17 ; Mr. Burtley, 3 ; — making a total of no less than 315 clean salmon, all killed with the rod during the merry month of May. The season’s sport from the 1st of February to June amounted to no less than *six hundred and fifty-eight* clean salmon killed by six rods.”

The salmon fishing season, strictly speaking, does not of course extend to August, but in that month salmon are replaced by their active and vigorous eldest children, which under the name of grilse people the pools lately occupied by their parents. Precisely, therefore, in pro-

portion to the abundance of salmon should be that of grilse, and we looked forward confidently to the achievement of great piscatorial deeds.

But it was fated otherwise; and had we not been certain that the Thurso is a good salmon river, our experience of it during the past summer would have led us to a very different conclusion.

Did you ever know a tourist or angler satisfied with the weather? Rarely, you will allow, and last year it is certain that anglers and tourists in Scotland were most sorely tried. For while there was frequent rain during August in the south of Scotland, we in the north during the whole of that month were favoured by but one slight shower, and consequently the Thurso and other rivers in Caithness and Sutherland were nearly dry.

The fine settled weather was the more provoking, because grilse were at the mouth of the Thurso, and were just as desirous to ascend the river as we were to have them for neighbours; but although salmon do contrive to wriggle up very shallow rivers in a wonderful manner, they are not quite so expert in land travelling as eels.

What sport we should have had if steady rain had fallen for some days, was made evident to us by the circumstance that the one slight shower to which I have alluded, though it only raised the Thurso a couple of inches, was immediately followed by a visitation of grilse

I captured one above the bridge pool, which by a mark was recognised as having been bred in the ponds near Thurso. It had been turned into the river during the preceding month of May, a tiny stripling, and now weighed within a couple of ounces of three pounds.

Well, but I fancy I hear the angler say, "Is there not at least one lusty salmon in the bridge-pool?" Aye, dear brother, and more than one; but so clear was the water and so cunning the fish, that our imaginary capture of said salmon was never realised, though we swished the pool at all hours and tried various dainty lures. Indeed, all the pools were tenanted by salmon; and, knowing this, be sure that we did our best to make their personal acquaintance; and though those in the bridge pool declined to be drawn out, others were more accommodating.

It was on a bright Sunday afternoon when we were strolling along the banks of the river, peering wistfully into the pools, that we first saw how abundantly they were tenanted by salmon. The time was when salmon fishing in Scotland on Sunday was not only tolerated, but licensed by the church. In 1451 Pope Nicolas V. issued a bull expressly sanctioning fishing for salmon in the Dee on Sundays; on the condition, however, that the first salmon taken each Sunday should be presented to the parish church. And further, the bull allowed all "the faithful" to net herrings on the Sabbath. But

this fishing on the Sunday seems to have been unpopular ; for on the occasion of a great earthquake at Aberdeen in 1608, it was imagined that it arose from the wickedness of fishing on Sunday, and the salmon fishers were publicly rebuked.

One day favourable for fishing, though the water was still low, two of our party who had gone down the river created a great sensation by sending back a gilly with a 17 lb. salmon, and intelligence that set every rod at work in a few minutes. Presently another salmon was brought up, and shortly after a third. Lucky fellows ! never had we known such sport. By what art were the silvery beauties persuaded to leave their water caves ? Doubtless the right fly had at length been discovered. We rushed down the river side burning for information, meeting on our way a gilly with another heavy fish ; but imagine our disappointment when we found that the salmon had been caught by no skilful angling, but by being hunted up and down the pools, until a well-directed stroke of the gaff terminated their career. You may consider this not very sportsmanlike ; but let me tell you that hunting and gaffing a salmon in large deep pools is very exciting sport, requiring a keen eye and a quick hand.

Success would be almost impossible were it not that the salmon, like the ostrich, apparently considers himself safe provided he can thrust his head under a stone.

The water being very clear, we could see the bodies of large fish projecting on one side of sunken rocks, and in this position it was always practicable to approach the fish without disturbing him. But the gaffing operation was by no means easy; and in our attempts we often measured our length in the river before we succeeded in pulling the astonished fish out of the water.

Our fly-fishing was not, however, entirely unsuccessful. Scarcely a day passed that we did not catch grilse from 3 lbs. to 8 lbs. in weight; and by canny fishing in the gloaming we could always make sure of a fish. An impetuous wayward grilse of 8 lbs. makes glorious reel music; and though old Christopher North declares that he who takes two hours to kill a fish, be its bulk what it may, is no man and not worth his meat nor the vital air—the proportion, as he alleges, being a minute to the pound—I venture to say that he or Scrope himself would have been puzzled to kill a Thurso 8 lbs.-grilse in as many minutes.

And you may be glad to know, dear brother angler, ambitious to flesh your hook in salmon-kind, that grilse which has been a denizen of the river for some days is a much stronger fish than a fresh run salmon or grilse of the same weight. Their river feeding makes them more muscular than obese, fresh run fish. Grilse, too, are more powerful than salmon of the same weight, because their fins are larger in proportion than those of a salmon.

Hook a grilse near the tail, and, take my word for it, you will believe that you are tackled to a forty-pounder at least.

Indeed, angling for grilse is such excellent and exciting sport, that, had they been more numerous than they were, we should not have mourned over the departure of their parents.

Why are there no white trout in the Thurso?

These excellent fish ascend all the rivers, I believe, on the north and west coast of Sutherland; but for some reason, explainable perhaps by learned ichthyologists, they decline entering the Thurso.

Thus our angling was confined to salmon and grilse. It would be the height of ingratitude to pass from those which we caught without recording their excellence. Rarely have I tasted more delicious grilse than those frequenting the Thurso. They have always been celebrated, and their ancestors doubtless were duly honoured at those curious salmon feasts which Scottish chieftains held. According to Captain Burt, whose letters from Scotland, written in 1726, throw considerable light on Scottish customs, the Chieftain and his clan occupied seats near the cruives, on the river bank, disposed "not unlike our country cock-pit seats." The salmon were then taken out, boiled and eaten, and while the feasting was going on, "the hearts of the fish lie upon a plate in view, and keep in a panting

motion all the while, which to strangers is a great rarity."

If the holders of these feasts had been philosophers, we might suppose that they were studying the rhythmic motion of the heart while they were eating.

On the principle that it is always consolatory to have companions in misfortune, we might have derived comfort from the fact that salmon fishing in Sutherland was no better than that in the Thurso. Indeed, we heard of a party who had paid a large rent for a river, and met with such bad sport that one of their number, *pour s'amuser*, beguiled the time by making love to a neighbouring lassie, which, as we were informed, terminated by his being hooked for life. Fortunately perhaps for us, there were no lasses near Brawl to captivate, or if there were, we did not see them. But do not imagine that time hung heavy on our hands; far from it, for when the river disappointed we had the lakes to go to, and on these we fared better.

Loch Watten, as I have said, is not a lake set in lovely scenery, but there is always a charm in a large sheet of clear water, and such is this lake, the largest in Caithness. It is three miles long, about one mile and a half broad, and has an average depth of ten feet, with a limestone bottom. Here is ample water range for trouts, and here, believe me, are beauties rarely met with. Not exactly speckled after the manner of their

brethren, but lustrous and fashioned like a perfect shaped salmon, which Christopher North justly tells us should have high and round shoulders, a short waist, no loins, but all body, with a tail sharp and pointed as Diana's when she is crescent in the sky.

Loch Watten is strictly preserved. The right of fishing attaches, I believe, to the reuter of the Brawl shootings. At all events we had the privilege, and in virtue of it had a boat conveyed to the lake. It was a sorry bark, cracked in many places from exposure to the sun, the lakes in Caithness not being yet provided with trim boat-houses like those on Loch Lomond or Loch Katrine. Our first day's fishing on the lake tested our ingenuity to the utmost, for we had great trouble to keep the boat afloat. Caulking the yawning fissures to the best of our ability, we launched the crazy bark, but had not pushed an oar's length from the shore before she began to fill rapidly with water. A second attempt was more successful, and by dint of frequent and vigorous baling we contrived during the day's fishing to maintain a pretty equal balance between the quantity of water that came in and that which we threw out. But the fishing, my good sir, I think I hear you say, that is what we want to know something of. Softly—softly—you shall hear, and indeed I have only told you of our little boat misery—for it is not pleasant sitting all day up to your ankles in water—in order that

you may, if you purpose devoting a holiday to fishing in Caithness, and are able to afford it, bring with you a boat that will at least have the merit of keeping the water out.

By our gillies' advice we mounted large grey flies. They had not danced five minutes on the water before their attraction was made evident by a rise. Of course we struck, but failing, in magnetical phraseology, to make contact, the fish returned to its water caves unscathed. But—see—another rise, and mark the parabolic curve of the rod as the top inclines gracefully towards the lake. That is no burn troutling. Ten yards of line are already run out, and we have not seen a fin of our trout yet. But now he is disposed to make our acquaintance. Out with the net—canny—canny; and taking care not to foul our flies in the boat's bottom, we lead our captive gently netwards, and have the satisfaction of seeing our first Loch Watten trout dazzling the daylight by its salmon-like lustre, as it reposes in the landing net. One pound if he be an ounce, and answering in all respects to the description given of the trout of this lake. Thus encouraged we fished vigorously, and in a few hours filled a large basket with such a company of lovely trout as I have rarely seen; and I have caught trout in many waters at home and abroad. They averaged one pound each, and anticipating culi-

nary operations, I may add that they found as much favour at table as they did in the creel.

Now this sport reads pleasantly, you will admit; but I should mislead if I allowed you to suppose that you will always be equally successful on Loch Watten. In no lake that I know are the trout more capricious; rising freely on days that you would deem unfavourable for angling, and making no sign on other days which you fondly believe are especially favourable for trout fishing. Conceiving on such occasions that the want of sport arose from our not having hit upon the right flies, we, one day when the trout would not rise to our flies, equipped an otter, trimming the line with such a variety of dainty lures of all sizes, shapes, and colours that we felt sure if the trout were disposed to coquette with one there was choice enough. But though our otter went far into the lake, sweeping many hundred yards of water, we only caught half a dozen fish, and these were lean and doubtless hungry trout hard up for a dinner.

Loch Watten is six miles from Brawl. It is of course disappointing to go so far and not get fish. But if fish fail, fowl may not. The lake is a favourite resort of wild ducks; and in August you will see great numbers of flappers near the shores. Considerable tact is required to get within shot of them; but the gillies will put you up to certain dodges, and if you are lucky to get

a right and left shot you may bag your three brace of delicious birds. Many other aquatic fowl frequent Loch Watten; and indeed it is astonishing how rich is the ornithology of treeless Caithness. The new Statistical Account of Scotland enumerates 177 varieties of birds found in this county, and principally in the parish of Wick. Some are very uncommon. Among the most rare are the red-throated diver and the purple heron. The number and variety of gulls is astonishing. All day long troops of these graceful birds wheeled over us while we were fishing in Loch Watten. Some, and particularly the beautiful ivory gull, seemed like circles of silver as they hung suspended in the ether watching our operations. Heartless must be the man who, for mere wantonness, shoots one of these trusting, beautiful birds. No sight is more pitiful than to see one drop wounded on the water. In a moment the maimed bird is surrounded by its more fortunate companions, which wheel round and round uttering cries of sorrow, and apparently mourning the fate of their hapless mate.

CHAP. X.

The Country round Brawl.—Excursion to Strathmore.—The Pleasures of preparing for a Day's Fishing.—Dirlet.—A Lodge in the Wilderness.—Loch More.—Disappointment in Salmon Fishing.—Great Success of the Otter.—Hospitality at Strathmore.

WILD as is the country around Brawl, "yet you must plunge deeper into the moorland to know what Caithness is. For near Halkirk holms and meadows intervene between moors and mosses; a sharp contest is going on between savage nature and cultivation, and you can see at a glance that the latter is triumphing, for man is reclaiming the land and making it subservient to his uses. For here are no sheep farms, deer forests are distant; and until the rent of shootings greatly increases, which, by the way, is extremely probable, the landowners find it more profitable to let the land be cultivated than to allow it to be the breeding-ground of grouse.

Twelve miles south-west of Brawl stands a house in the wild moorland. Not a dwelling of any description is within sight; the nearest habitation is upwards of

four miles distant. This house is the lodge of the Strathmore shootings. A couple of miles beyond it is Loch More, the head water lake of the river Thurso. The lake is fed by the Altan-na-Cat, or Cat's brook, which rises eight miles to the south-west, in Sutherland. The Brawl shootings extend to within a couple of miles of Strathmore, and we had the right of fishing Loch More. Salmon ascend to this lake; and, according to the gillies, there were monsters in it as cunning as ancient foxes, and not unlike those animals in colour, long sojourn in the peat-stained waters having the effect of changing the salmon's skin from the silver hue that it possesses when fresh from the sea to a dull red.

To try and capture one of these fish was voted an agreeable change; for, as may be supposed, our experience of the Thurso salmon did not make us very sanguine of success. So one fine morning — alas! too fine for good fishing prospects — one of our party and myself set off early for Loch More, taking with us an equipment of rods and fishing tackle amply sufficient to set up a shop. This is generally the case in all fishing expeditions, the number of flies bearing a sad disproportion to the number of captured salmon or trout. But is it not one of the great pleasures — prospective at least — of fishing, to know that you are provided with a perfect assortment of flies? And have

you not found, dear brother of the angle, that the preparation for a day's fishing has been often as pleasant as the fishing itself? The delight of turning over with your friend the well-stuffed fishing-book, dwelling with raptured eye on the gorgeous salmon-fly, or the delicate trout-lures, so artistically tied that you feel certain no fish will detect, until too late for their freedom, the curious *sauce piquante* that the artificial ephemera carry in their tails. True, your anticipations are but rarely realised, and you have caught more imaginary fish in the course of your fish-talk than during your longest day's angling: but such is life—hoping ever; and happy is the man who goes on hoping to the end, despite adverse influences.

The road to Strathmore runs nearly parallel to the river Thurso, passing across vast moorlands over which the eye stretches to the south as far as the Paps of Caithness, that seem like pyramids on the horizon. About eight miles from Brawl, the moorland is pierced by the limestone. This assumes craggy forms, and near the hamlet of Dirlot a lofty pinnacle still bears the crumbling ruins of a castle, according to tradition once the stronghold of a daring freebooter of the name of Sutherland, a near relation, it is said, of the ancestors of the Sutherlands of Dunrobin. Tradition further asserts that the river formerly flowed round three sides of the freebooter's castle, though it now washes only

one side of the crag. In all probability this was the case, for those ancient predatory chieftains were generally careful to plant their eyries in naturally strong localities, from whence they could pounce conveniently on the wayfarer. Between Dirlot and the Strathmore Lodge all is moorland vast and wild, broken only by the now dwarfed river which murmurs over its limestone bed. Four miles further and we came to a plantation, or rather an attempt at one, for the stripling trees scarce showed amidst the tall heather. Beyond this is the lodge. We were just passing it when a young gentleman ran out to convey an offer from his father to put up our dog-cart at the lodge, and before we had time to answer, the latter appeared, repeated the offer, and added that he hoped we would dine with him and his friends. Sportsmen are not remarkable for standing on ceremony, so we accepted the kind invitation, and then drove on to the lake.

This is a true Highland loch, set solemnly in the wild moorland, fringed on three sides by a strip of golden sand; beyond this tall heather glorious in purple bloom, and more distant dark brown hills, some rising to the dignity of mountain forms, casting their sombre shadows over vast regions of dusk.

We sent back our dog-cart to the lodge, launched a tiny bark that we found on the shore, and pushed out on the lonely mountain mere. Mighty shadows stalked

across the lake, flung from cloud mountains, behind which the sun shone with great brilliancy. Only during moments of gloom could we hope to catch a salmon, for though the lake was ruffled by a breeze which wafted the agreeable perfume of the bog-myrtle over us, the water, from long drought, was very clear and low.

The rods are up, we select flies that we fondly hope will prove irresistible, and we thresh the lake with infinite pains over every spot where we conceive it possible that a salmon may lurk. No success. We change our flies, try again with the same negative result. The gillies, indeed, insisted that one salmon at least coquetted with our flies, but I believe that we had not a true business-like rise from a single salmon during three hours. This, you will admit, was not encouraging, and as we had come out to catch fish, we determined to try whether we could fill our baskets with trout. The day was far spent, so we launched an otter, trimming a hundred yards of line with a great variety of flies. The result was amazing. As fast as the line was carried out, the flies were seized, and when a fortunate trout contrived to separate himself from the barbed lure, a dozen hungry fish sprang at the liberated fly. Let no one persuade you that the trout of Loch More love a particular fly. Our experience abundantly attests that all manner of flies, large or small, dark or bright, are equally welcome to the trout of that lake. And, indeed, the result of

much fishing in many waters convinces me that a few flies are sufficient for all purposes, and that well-stocked fly books, though very pleasant to turn over, are very useless in proportion to the cost of their contents.

At every haul of the otter dozens of trout became our prey. At this rate we soon filled our panniers; but do not be apprehensive that we exhausted the supply; for I venture to assert that if you fish Loch More this autumn, you will not come to the conclusion that the trout have been thinned by our proceedings.

The trout of Loch More are not to be compared to those of Loch Watten in size or flavour. At the same time they are delicate eating, and if not as large as their brethren in Loch Watten, they are far more numerous.

Thus, although we did not catch a foxy salmon, we spent a very pleasant day on this wild moorland mere, and did ample justice to an excellent dinner that awaited us on our return to the Lodge at Strathmore.

CHAP. XI.

Excursion to Thurso Bay.—The Town of Thurso.—Its Ancient Importance.—Thurso Castle.—Monument to Earl Harold.—Nature of the Bay.—Palace of the Bishops of Caithness.—Scrabster.—Interesting Geological Locality.—The Old Red Sandstone.—The Flagstones of Caithness.—Fossil Organisms.—Gigantic Fucoids.—Rock Sepulchres.—Deep Caverns.—Rock Pigeons.—Varieties of Species.—Holbourn Head.—The Clett.—Majestic Scenery.—Deep-sea Fishing.—Long Lines.—The Cod's Parasites.—Variety of Fish.—Destructive Dog Fish.—Return to Brawl.

If tired of me as a sporting companion, you must skip one more chapter, for I purpose devoting this to an account of our adventures during a long day spent in the Bay of Thurso, shooting rock pigeons and deep-sea fishing. Let me add, however, that we shall visit a remarkable geological locality; and if you are not entirely insensible to the charms of the stony science, I think that we shall see something to interest us.

An hour's drive brought us to Thurso. This is an ancient town, deriving its name from Thor, one of the northern deities, and Aa, which in the Scandinavian dialect signifies a river. Thurso is said to have been a

place of considerable consequence many centuries ago. So much so indeed, that it appears by the Statutes of King David II., who reigned in the early part of the fourteenth century, that the weights and measures of Thurso were adopted as the standards of Scotland. This doubtless is explained by the circumstance that Thurso was formerly the great mart for trade between Scotland and Norway, Sweden, and Denmark; and thus the weights used in that town might, with great propriety, become the standards of the kingdom.

A few old houses may be seen in the town; and near it, a little to the east, stands Thurso Castle, the seat of Sir George Sinclair, whose kindness and hospitality remain among my pleasant memories of Caithness. Above Thurso Castle the eye is arrested by a tower-like edifice. This was erected by the late Sir John Sinclair over the reputed burial place of Earl Harold, the possessor at one time of the greater part of Caithness, who was slain in battle in the year 1196.

We arranged with a fisherman at Thurso to let us have a stout boat, with deep-sea fishing lines, hooks, &c.; and when all the necessary preparations were made, we embarked at the mouth of the river. Thurso Bay is well protected from east and west winds by Dunnet and Holbourn Heads; while on the north, acting as a gigantic breakwater, rises precipitous Hoy, one of the Orkneys, bounded by cliffs on the west upwards of 1000

feet high. Thus Thurso Bay, even when the wind blows strong, is very favourably adapted for boating excursions, but beware of venturing in rough weather into the Pentland Firth. The merry men of Mey are very agreeable objects to look at in their boisterous mirth from a distance; but their merriment would, in all probability, prove grievous if you attempted to witness their sport in a small boat.

Favoured by a light breeze we made sail, and steered for the west side of the bay. On our way we passed the ruins of an old castle, formerly the residence of the bishops of Caithness. The walls attest the great strength of the building originally, but they have now nearly crumbled into the sea which washes their base. Here, according to local chronicles, John, Bishop of Caithness, was cruelly put to death in the twelfth century. Bishops in this country do not seem to have been at all popular.

A mile to the west of these ruins is Scrabster, the port of Thurso, for only very small vessels can pass the bar of Thurso at high water. Immediately beyond Scrabster the bay is bounded by great mural precipices of the old red sandstone formation, fissured and caverned in a remarkable manner, presenting some of the finest rock scenery in Scotland. In no locality can the curious calcareo-bituminous flag-stones of Caithness be better studied than here. They lie like huge closed folios piled

upon each other, with this advantage, that information is impressed upon them outwardly as well as inwardly. Once—how many millions of ages ago—these sea ramparts were mud at the bottom of a vast Palæozoic sea. Now the mud is changed to a dense, dark, grey rock, forming fantastic bulwarks of horizontal strata, assuming the appearance of gigantic steps. These are occasionally fissured by faults, tossed into weird, crag-like forms, or scooped into far-reaching caverns, within the dark recesses of which the sea perpetually surges.

Remember, too, that this huge hardened mud rock wall contains the remains of countless thousands of fossil organisms long since extinct. You may see the glittering black scales and spines of fish, showing by their contorted forms that they perished by violent death. Indeed, so numerous are their remains within one hour's sail of Thurso, that the language of Mr. Dick, the eminent self-taught geologist of that town, who has devoted much time to the study of the rocks in his neighbourhood, is fully borne out by facts. He says, alluding to the black scales on the flag-stones, that it would seem as if "some old lord of the Treasury, who flourished in the days of the coal money currency, had taken a squandering fit in Thurso Bay, and tossed the dingy contents of his treasure-chest by shovelfuls upon the rocks."

Mr. Dick found some of his finest specimens in

Sanday Bay near Thurso, including the remains of gigantic fucoids, the carbonaceous stems of some of which are four inches in diameter.

Nor, when you contemplate these "rock sepulchres," as they have been appropriately called, forget that what you see is only one of three gigantic platforms or strata of the great old red sandstone formation, in all of which fossils are numerous. Hear the great red sandstone oracle:—"The old red sandstone underlies the coal measures, and is, in Scotland at least, still more largely developed than these, both in depth and lateral extent. In Caithness and Orkney, one of the three great formations of which it consists, has attained to a thickness that equals the height of our highest hills over the sea. The depth of the entire system in England has been estimated, by Sir Roderick Murchison, at ten thousand feet; and as these ten thousand feet include three formations, so distinct in their groups of animal life that not a species of fish has been found common to both higher and lower, it must represent in the history of the globe an enormously protracted period of time." *

And now for the pigeons. We have pushed our boat within the jaws of a wide-mouthed cavern. The sea, here clear as crystal, enables us to see far down a tangled submarine forest of gorgeous hues, pregnant with life. Two of our party, whom we have landed, are standing

* Sketch-Book of Popular Geology, p. 196.

on one of the natural steps at the entrance, and we fire a gun. The report crashes through the dark depths of the cavern, waking a thousand echoes; but before the vexed air has subsided to rest, the startled pigeons dart forth like flashing meteors, with such velocity that only a first-rate shot could hope to bring them down. Such were some of our party; and, thanks to their skill, we bagged several fine birds, which did great justice to their feeding on the corn pastures around Thurso. For, though the rock pigeon breeds in deep marine caves, and eats sea shell-fish and insects, it has a great partiality for corn, as the farmers along the sea-coast know to their cost. The rock pigeon is easily domesticated, and is the original pigeon from which the present numerous varieties of pigeons have been bred. This fact is particularly interesting just now, because biologists who are anxious to make out that all species originate from a nucleus or cell, bring forward the *Columba livia*, or rock pigeon, as an example how an animal may be warped by breeding into strange varieties, some of which differ greatly from their original parents. But even here you can at once see that pouters and fan-tails are pigeons and nothing else.

Picking up our birds was a difficult and hazardous operation, particularly when they fell close to the base of the precipitous cliffs; but although the risk of staving our boat was great, we were never-willing to leave a

pigeon in the water when it was possible to pick it up.

Creeping from cavern to cavern, we at length doubled Holbourn Head; and in a moment our boat, hitherto steady enough, was tossed like a cork, now poised on the crest of a great water hill, now engulfed between waves that rose like walls around us. Amidst the surging waters played a shoal of restless mackerel, rippling and silvering the surface of the waves as they skimmed along with arrowy speed. We rowed amidst them, but they declined making acquaintance with our hand-lines, which were trailing from the boat.

A short distance from Holbourn Head, a tower-like mass of rock rises vertically from the sea to the height of about 250 feet. Between this isolated rock and the head, a terrific sea surges, violently plunging into the gloomy caves and giddy chasms with perpetual thunder-like roar, and sending clouds of spray high into the air, which stream down the cliffs in multitudinous waterfalls. With great difficulty and not without danger, heightened by our indiscreet endeavours to pick up a pigeon that we had shot and which had fallen close to the base of the cliffs, we passed between the Clett and Holbourn Head, having on either hand tremendous walls of rock so precipitous, that had our boat been whelmed by the waves, or staved by coming in contact with the cliffs, we should not have found the slightest foothold. The

scene is very peculiar, and not a little awful. With rapidly driving clouds above and surging waters below, the Clett seemed like one of the fabled Symplegadæ, or moving rocks, which threatened to crush the Argonauts in their famous expedition. But you will not see the wonders of Holbourn Head unless you make the passage between it and the Clett; and the sense of danger attending it, while in the presence of the mighty cliffs you are dwarfed to nothingness, produces emotions that are not easily forgotten.

During my residence at Brawl I rode one day to Holbourn Head, and leaving my pony to browse on the moor, walked to the edge of the dizzy precipice. But although the scene is extremely grand, the overhanging nature of the cliff prevents the rock face being seen, while from the sea this appears

“Like huge cathedral fronts of every age.”

So curiously has time fashioned and scarred the stone into fantastic shapes.

When we had seen all the wonders of the Head we re-entered Thurso Bay. Pleasant—very pleasant—was it to glide on the tranquil sea after having been tossed, greatly to the discomfort of some of our party, on the huge Atlantic waves.

Pulling to the best part of the bay for fishing we cast our deep-sea lines over board. They were nearly half a

mile long, and were trimmed with many hundred hooks, baited with dainty portions of sand eels. Leaving them to be leisurely inspected, and as we hoped approved by the numerous varieties of fish in the bay, we landed on a great flagstone, eat our luncheon, and then took boat again and raised the lines. The sea was very clear, and leaning over the gunwale we saw many fathoms down. But a few yards of line had been raised when, lo! through the light-green water a strange-fashioned creature came wriggling up, opal-hued—nearer, nearer, larger and larger, until at length we discerned that the animal had vast cavernous jaws and huge eyes. The gaff—the gaff. Deep sinks the iron in the fish's side, a dexterous jerk, and a huge cod lies at our feet. Well administered blows on his leather-like head deprive him of motion and life, and we examine him at our leisure. See how he swarms with parasitic worms. Life within life—life on life—life everywhere. Happily for you I am not a helminthologist (student of parasitic worms), otherwise here would be an opportunity of displaying scientific learning, by firing off batteries of terribly hard names given to parasites. Not the less, however, did we wonder and even admire the formation of these parasites, the structure of many of which may be seen pretty well by means of an ordinary magnifying glass.

But look, what comes here flashing in the water like

a disk of burnished silver under the sun's rays? A great bunnock fleuk, or turbot; and now a pollock, or hyle as this fish is generally called in Scotland, and now dainty haddocks.

It would weary you were I to enumerate the variety of fish that we captured. The number would have been much larger, but for the circumstance that nearly half of our hooks were bitten off by dog-fish. This ravenous variety of the British shark is a terrible foe to the sea-fisher, cutting his lines with their sharp teeth, and thus doing incalculable mischief.

But even with this enemy to contend with we nearly filled the boat, and when we landed at Thurso in the evening we had fish enough to stock our larder for weeks. Our boatman and his wife assisted in carrying some of them to our dog-cart, and when we parted he drank a tumbler full of raw whisky, and used all his eloquence, happily in vain, to persuade his wife to follow his bad example.

CHAP. XII.

Leave Brawl.—A Lucky Escape.—Spittal Hill.—On Foot across the Country.—Want of a good Map of Scotland.—Dr. Johnson's reason for this.—To Barrock.—The King's Highway.—Vast Prospect.—A playful Puppy.—Picts' Houses.—Origin of the Picts.—Their Monuments.—Superstitions respecting them.—Contents of the "Houses."—Situation of "Barrock."—A Cordial Welcome.

TRUE to my promise, we will now leave Brawl. It was not, however, without sorrow that I bade farewell to my friends with whom I had spent three happy weeks. Though dependent entirely on ourselves for society, the days and evenings passed very pleasantly, and I feel sure that no merrier party of sportsmen assembled in the Highlands last year than that which assembled at Brawl Castle.

I was going to say that no accident marred our enjoyment, but the events of one night are too vividly remembered to permit me to make such a declaration.

On the night in question all our party but two had returned home, and we were sitting impatiently enough

waiting for the absentees and for our dinner, which ran considerable risk of being spoiled, seeing that it had been ordered for half-past nine, and it was now half-past ten. The night was as dark as Erebus, and speculations respecting the prolonged absence of our friends were beginning to assume the grave form of apprehension respecting their safety, when the habitually solemn silence of the castle was rudely broken by the clattering of a horse's feet on the gravel beneath our window. The sound was ominous of ill, but before we had time to give expression to our fears, a groom rushed in with the intelligence that Mr. ——'s horse had galloped home with the shafts of the dog-cart and part of the harness clinging to him.

Hastening out with a lantern, we went down the avenue, and had proceeded about a couple of hundred yards when we met our friends, happily uninjured, but so bemuddled that it was evident they had bitten the dirt.

Driving up the avenue, the off-wheel of their dog-cart had struck the edge of a half-open gate, the effect of which was the instantaneous capsize of the vehicle. Out flew our friends, gillies, dogs, guns, and game-baskets, while the horse, with a very excusable dislike to its situation on the slope of a precipice overhanging the river, speedily kicked itself free, sending the shattered dog-cart rattling into the river, where it was found the next morning, while the animal galloped home

through the dark night. Strange to say, although the spot where the accident occurred abounded with rocks and large stones, men and dogs fell on soft ground, the only thing that came to grief being a pet breech-loader, one barrel of which was deeply indented by coming in contact with a rock.

The accident formed a topic of much talk in the little village. Exaggerated versions of the story were of course rife, and before many hours had elapsed we were told that it was currently believed in the parish that the gentlemen at Brawl, if not all killed the previous night, had been at all events so seriously injured that they were quite unable to leave their beds. We were happily able to disprove the first part of this story by our bodily presence, and those who saw us wielding our twenty-foot rods the next day could not have thought that we were much injured by the accident.

We have packed up our sporting traps, which will voyage back to London by long sea, and giving directions to have our portmanteau sent by mail to Golspie, we started on our travels with no impediment but our old well-worn knapsack, that we have carried over many an Alp and Apennine.

It was the 25th of August; the air was deliciously fresh, for the summer heat was tempered by autumnal crispness. With such food for the lungs and muscles, braced by long exercise, my spirits rose as, when taking

a last look of Brawl from the summit of Spittal Hill, I stepped from the road on the heather, and saw a vast tract of swelling moorland before me.

But not without some misgivings did I commence my wanderings. For although my route lay through wild country, my destination this night was no wayside inn where I might take my ease, but a baronet's mansion; one of the great lords of Caithness, who sent me a pressing invitation to visit him.

Now, as I had never seen the Laird, you will, perhaps, ask why I should think of paying him a visit with no more abundant wardrobe than could be carried in a wallet. The question is pertinent, and here is the answer. When the said baronet's invitation reached me, all the horses in Thurso were engaged, and our stud at Brawl was too limited to enable me to make use of one of our horses. Accordingly, the matter resolved itself into the simple alternative of either declining to accept the invitation, or proceeding to my friend's house on foot. Ancient Highland hospitality, of which one has heard so much, I argued, cannot be entirely extinct; and having faith in the belief that a man may be equally welcomed by true friendship whether he travels on foot or in a chariot, I accepted the invitation in the spirit in which it was couched, and added that, having no other means of journeying, I proposed walking and carrying my knapsack. .

Behold me, then, on my way to Barrock House, some sixteen miles from Brawl, with no guide but a pocket compass and a small map of Caithness, which entirely failed to give me any precise information respecting the cross-country roads.

Scottish maps, and particularly county maps, are a disgrace to their compilers. It is, I suppose, to be presumed that pending the completion of the Ordnance Survey, no attempt is made to improve those that exist, which really are as imperfect as they seem to have been when Dr. Johnson visited the Hebrides. But the reason given by the doctor for their imperfection in his days cannot be said to hold good now. Dr. Campbell of Dublin, in his amusing diary of a visit to England in 1775, undertaken apparently for the sole purpose of making Dr. Johnson's acquaintance, relates that when the conversation turned one day upon Scotland, Johnson declared with considerable warmth that not only no good map of Scotland existed, but that such a thing could never exist. This nettled Boswell, who demanded why he should make such an assertion. "Why, sir," replied the doctor, "to measure land a man must go over it, and who could think of going over Scotland?"

Could the great lexicographer, with his insanely unjust hatred of Scotland, see the crowds of his countrymen who now invade Caledonia, he would at all events come to a very different conclusion respecting the reason why

a good map of Scotland does not exist; for such, I grieve to say, is the fact. Indeed, the pedestrian might as well hope to find his way through the passes of the Pyrenees with a general map of France, as through Caithness with the best pocket map of that county. Why, when Switzerland, with its labyrinthine tracks through mountain gorges and across lofty snow-robed heights, has its Keller's admirable map, the bye-ways of Scotland, which are far easier of access, should remain unmapped to this day, is an amazing instance of want of energy. A fortune might have been made by a clear and accurate map of Scotland for pedestrian tourists: the Ordnance Survey publications will, it is to be hoped, ere long supply the want.

In the meanwhile, much inconvenience is felt by the tourist, and particularly by the geologist, from this mapless state of things. See, however, how genius overcomes difficulties: when Sir Roderick Murchison visited Mr. Dick at Thurso, he was unable, from the want of a good map of the county, to make certain explanations; upon which, says Sir Roderick, "spreading out a heap of flour upon the board of his bakery, Mr. Dick, who heard me complaining of the want of any map of Caithness, produced in a short time a model in relief of the ground and drainage of Caithness, the geography of which (with the exception of the excellent charts of the coast) is in a worse state than in any part of Scotland."

I soon found that to follow the roads laid down in my map would make my walk between Brawl and Barrock a very long trudge. Accordingly, when I had traversed about three miles of road I made my way to a cottage, in which I found an old woman. Her utterance from age was not very distinct, nor her topographical knowledge very extensive, but as the peasantry of Caithness speak very pure English, due to their descent from the Scandinavians who settled in this part of Scotland, I understood her speech. "Ye'll keep the King's highway," were her directions, "till ye come to the thorn dick, and then ye can go up the dick on to the moor, and when ye're on the top ye'll see Barrock." Mark how the king retains his own in far-off Caithness, and how a thorn dyke serves for a direction; and no wonder, for hedges, as I have said, are rare in Caithness. Great pains, as you may see, are taken to coax thorns to grow. Large flagstones are set up at right angles to the hedge-rows, about fifty feet apart. These break the wind, and to their leeward you see the struggling thorns endeavouring to hold up their heads and live.

Acting upon my directions I skirted the thorn ditch until I came to the moor, and following a faint track, walked to the summit of a knoll, from whence I could apparently see over the whole of north-eastern Caithness. But amidst the vast expanse I could not discover

Barrock House, or rather, I was unable to say which among the far-off but few houses near the sea was that of which I was in quest. Had a Scotch mist wrapped me at this juncture in its chilly and mysterious folds, it is probable that I should not have seen Barrock House that night; but no such meteorological treachery was in store for me; the atmosphere continued perfectly clear, and I pushed on in the direction that I assumed to be right, until I saw a group of cottages on the skirts of the moor. I made for them, and was about twenty yards from the nearest when a huge dog sprang at me from behind a peat stack. For a moment I imagined that the animal meant mischief, and I was preparing to make the best defence in my power with my umbrella, when the brute seized it between his formidable teeth and bore it off in triumph.

The playful theft had been seen by the dog's master, who quickly appeared, and assured me that the animal was but a harmless puppy! He had obtained him from the skipper of a ship trading with Newfoundland, "where," he added, "they tell me, sir, the dogs are as big as ponies." I was not surprised that he believed this, for what he called his puppy was certainly as large as the foal of a shelty, giving promise, if a puppy, of becoming as large as a shelty when full grown.

This little adventure turned out favourable to me. The cottager, a small farmer who managed, as he said,

to make the two ends meet with a wee margin on the right side, insisted on my entering his house, and seeing that I was hot placcd before me a brimming bowl of fresh milk, apologising at the same time for the roughness of the vessel. Had his wife been at home, she would have provided better things; but she had gone to visit a neighbour, and he never knew where she stowed away the jugs. No apology was necessary. New milk out of any clean vessel is glorious drink, and this was perfection, being at once fresh, cool, and sweet. After a little chat, during which I ascertained that cultivation was striding rapidly through this part of Caithness, we went out, and mounting a low wall, the farmer drew my attention to a white object some eight miles distant rising boldly out of the dusky moorland, backed by a grove of trees. This was Barrock House, or rather the farm buildings, or square, as these are called, the house being concealed by the trees. With so conspicuous a beacon there was no possibility of going astray; so having ascertained that no very wet mosses existed between me and Barrock, I shouldered my knapsack and set off steeplechase fashion, determined that nothing should turn me aside but insurmountable hedges or ditches. Neither, however, existed, at least none too wide or high to baffle me; and with no incidents beyond starting a few hares and grouse, I had the satisfaction of arriving at Barrock as the sun was going down.

During this cross-country expedition I fell in with an extraordinary number of those curious little grass-grown hillocks called Picts' houses. These singular structures are so common throughout Caithness as to justify the general belief that the Celtic inhabitants were invaded by the Pechts or Picts, who are supposed to have occupied the Orcades, from whence they passed into Caithness across the strait named after them Pechtland, softened into Pentland. Traditions are rife throughout Caithness respecting the supernatural power of the Picts. To this day the peasants look upon the curious dome-shaped monticules with such superstition that they will not open them, and manifest great dislike to their being disturbed. Many have, however, been examined. Some consist of two concentric circular walls built of stone and clay, having recesses or cells in the inner walls, supposed to have been used for sleeping purposes. Human remains are rarely found within them, but frequently enormous quantities of the bones of sheep, and occasionally fragments of domestic implements.

In one opened a few years since in the Orkneys, skulls of horses, deer, and oxen were found, and also a large bone of a whale. Nearly every hillock in Caithness is called a Pict's house; but this structure, which rarely exceeds fourteen feet in height, must not be confounded with the Pictish brough or castle. This con-

sisted of a circular tower about sixty feet in diameter, constructed with either one very thick wall honeycombed with narrow chambers, or two concentric walls with spaces between them formed by flagstones. These structures, a few of which still exist in the Orkneys, though very dilapidated, attest that the Picts were not the pigmies that they are generally supposed to have been by the Scotch peasantry who are in the habit of seeing the numerous earthmounds erected by them, but rather bold, stalwart warriors, who, after occupying the Orkneys, subdued the northern portion of Scotland.*

No oasis in Africa can be a greater contrast to the surrounding country than Barrock, set in its deep, dark, thick wood, is to Caithness generally. The gloom of the avenue leading to the house was so great, from the thick overarching boughs, that I seemed to have passed from day to night. Colonies of wood-pigeons, magpies, and rooks held garrulous gossip in the trees.

For a moment a rather painful reflection arose when emerging from the woods, I saw an elegant mansion before me, and thought of my pedestrian costume. It would be more fitting, whispered pride, to approach these halls in a carriage than as a wayfaring pilgrim.

* "After an interval of many years, when Brito reigned in Britain, and Posthumus his brother over the Latins, 256 years B.C., the Picts came and occupied the islands called *Orcaades*, and afterwards wasted the north part of Britain."—RITSON: *Annals of Caledonia*.

Pride would probably have prompted other disagreeable comparisons; but before I had time to announce my arrival by ringing the bell, a gentleman opened the door, held forth his hand, grasped mine warmly, and before a minute had elapsed I had the happiness of experiencing the very great pleasure of a cordial welcome from the Laird of Barrock House and its truly kind mistress.

CHAP. XIII.

An Oasis in the Desert.—Agricultural Improvements.—Flower Gardens.—First-fruits of a Moor.—A primitive Caithness Hovel.—Excursion to John o' Groat's House.—Sinclair Bay.—Girnigoe Castle.—The Earls of Caithness.—“The wicked Earl.”—Capture of a Coiner.—Kiess Castle.—Clan Feuds.—Campbell of Glenorchy.—A desperate Fight.—“The Campbells are coming.”—The Baron of Weik.—The last Wolf.—Cromwell's Soldiers.—Freswick.—Houna.—Snug Inn.—John o' Groat's House.—Tradition respecting Him.—His Fame in Caithness.—Site of the House.—Lovely Bay.—John o' Groat's Buckies.—Stacks of Duncansby.—North-East of Scotland.—Grand Precipices.—“Goes.”—Fierce Tide.—The Boars of Duncansby.—The Merry Men of Mey.—Island of Stroma.—Singular Water Supply.—Barogill Castle.—Glorious Sunset.

Not, dear reader, to divulge the domestic sanctity of Barrock House have I brought you to its doors, over which might be written the hospitable motto to be read above the principal entrance of Montacute House :

“Through this wide opening
None come too early,
None return too late.”

Suffice to say that here I made dear friends; that the baronet's second son, a Captain in our Indian army, who

had just married and brought home his bride, made me a sharer in the first-fruits of a wonderfully well-stocked moor, which he had purposely kept sacred until my arrival; and that amidst Lady Sinclair's lovely flower-gardens, and the surrounding thick woods in which the trees are of forest-like growth, I almost forgot that John o' Groat's house was only eighteen miles distant.

Barrock is indeed, in many respects, an oasis in the desert; for while the country generally is almost in a state of nature, Sir John Sinclair has not only reclaimed but made many hundreds of broad acres around his house smile with plenty and prosperity. Lakes and swamps have been drained, thousands of trees planted, extensive farm buildings erected, and a powerful steam-engine is made to do as much agricultural work as possible.

Nowhere will you have a better opportunity of seeing how scientific agriculture may be made to triumph over sloughs of despond than here. Nor should it be forgotten that, while the land ministers to the wants of man, the peasant is advanced in civilisation. Look at the old Caithness hovel, a mere mud structure with often only two openings; the door, and a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape.

While shooting one day, Captain Sinclair introduced me to one of these primitive dwellings. Raising the latch we entered a room opaque with peat smoke, which,

baffled in its attempts to pass out of a hole in the roof, was rolling in dense masses through the interior. The fire from which it proceeded was in the centre of the hovel, backed by a low wall, but there was no attempt at a chimney. Two ancient crones were crooked on their hams in front of the fire, one of whom was crooning a strange-sounding song, while the other was coaxing a noseless teapot to stand upright in the heap of hot peat ashes. Two small open recesses in the wall contained the crockery of the establishment; and a bench, two chairs on their last legs, and a couple of box beds grimed with soot and smoke, completed the furniture. Now, you will doubtless imagine that this dismal hole belonged to a pauper. By no means. The proprietor was a prosperous blacksmith, who was at the time of our visit exercising his calling at a neighbouring hamlet, and the cabin was precisely in the condition that he had inherited it from his father.

Lockhart tells us that Sir Walter Scott, who doubtless often inwardly exclaimed at Abbotsford, "Save me from my friends," often quoted the maxim of an old lady in one of Miss Ferrier's novels, that no visit should be protracted beyond three days. I felt, however, that I could have exceeded this time at Barrock without outstaying my welcome, but I had a long journey before me, and the parting could not be delayed.

Greatly to my delight, when I stated my intention of

proceeding in the first instance to John o' Groat's house, my young friend and his wife declared that they would accompany me thus far.

Not, therefore, as a pedestrian did I leave Barrock, but in a comfortable carriage, in which was stowed a basket full of a variety of provisions.

A short distance from Barrock the road trends seawards, and you have a good view of the grand Bay of Sinclair, terminated to the south by Noss Head. A little to the north of this head, overhanging the sea, stands the castle of Girnigoe, a yet proud ruin, which figures prominently in the history of Caithness. Here lived for many years the Earls of Caithness, who seem to have been special ministers of the powers of darkness. Of one we read that he wreaked his vengeance on a person by confining him in a deep dungeon, and letting him die of raging thirst, arising from his food being limited to salt beef.

Another earl, who bore a grudge against a man, accosted him in an apparently friendly manner. "My pistol," said he, "somehow missed fire this morning;" and while pretending to examine the lock, the earl shot the unsuspecting man through the head.

But the villany of these chieftains seems to have attained the culminating point in the person of George, who I have already introduced to you as the "Wicked Earl of Caithness." Among other acts of lawlessness, it

appears that he harboured John Garrow, a notorious coiner, in his stronghold, who worked so diligently that he filled Caithness and Sutherland with spurious coin. The evil became at length so pernicious that Government took measures to seize the coiner and carry him to Edinburgh. An armed force was despatched to Girnigoe, and Garrow was found surrounded by his implements. As soon, however, as he was seized, the Earl's nephew, John Sinclair, a bold determined fellow, came to the rescue: a fight ensued, and the coiner and John Sinclair were killed.

The Earl, adds the chronicle, was infinitely more grieved that he should have been thus insulted and assaulted in his own castle than by the death of his nephew; "the like whereof," he declared, "had not been enterprised against him or his predecessors." He soon after fled, and his vast estates were laid waste.

You may still see a trap-door in the middle of the floor of a chamber in the castle which communicates with the sea, and forms a convenient species of *oubliette*, which doubtless was often used. There are cells, too, in the rock, in which persons who fell under the Earl's displeasure are said to have been confined.

Our road now led us close to the sea, and almost under the walls of Kiess Castle, which stands on the northern side of Sinclair Bay. This was another stronghold of the Earls of Caithness, but very insignificant

compared to that of Girnigoe. The situation of Keiss is, however, very picturesque, nodding over the sea.

Stories of murder and pillage belong to this ruin. Indeed, all along the coast fierce passions seem to have raged during the fifteenth century, attributable to the struggle for power and possession among the Sinclairs, Sutherlands, Keiths, and Gunns, whence the couplet —

“Sinclair, Sutherland, Keith, and Clan Gunn,
There never was peace where thae four war in.”

Keiss derives particular interest from the circumstance that it formerly belonged to the George Sinclair who made a bold stand in 1680 against the pretensions of Campbell of Glenorchy. Campbell had been created Earl of Breadalbane by the king's patent; and, having married the widow of George, Earl of Caithness, by whom he acquired large possessions in that county, he assumed the title of his wife's late husband. This exasperated George Sinclair of Keiss, and he made it publicly known that he would oppose by force of arms Glenorchy's pretensions. To vindicate his claim Glenorchy procured military assistance.

What a picture we have of the lawless state of this part of Scotland, so late too as 1680, when we find a subject arming his followers and fighting in support of ambitious views. For a fierce battle was fought between Sinclair's force and 700 Highlanders from Argyleshire,

sent to maintain Glenorchy's claims. The Sinclairs, it is stated, maddened with drink, vauntingly rushed on the Campbells at Alt-a-Mhairlich, near Wick, where they were strongly posted. The result was most disastrous to the revellers. They were totally routed; and so many were killed in their flight across the Wick river, that tradition says that the Campbells, in pursuit of the fugitives, passed the river dry-shod on the bodies of the slain. It was on this occasion that the well-known air, “The Campbells are coming,” obtained its name. The history of Caithness adds that, notwithstanding Sinclair's defeat, his claim to the title of Earl of Caithness was ultimately allowed, Glenorchy being created Baron of Weik.

Beyond Keiss a district road in admirable order leads to the northern coast. Views of far-reaching rolling moorlands alternate with peeps of charming bays; that of Freswick, with its broad sweep of sandy shore, being particularly conspicuous.

Near Freswick a little hollow watered by the Wolf's Burn was pointed out to me, where, according to tradition, the last wolf seen in Caithness was killed. Tradition further says that this last of his race disappeared about the time that Cromwell's soldiers were in this remote corner of Scotland. This may be mythical, but the Session Records show that English horsemen were in the parish. Under the date December 30,

1655, the following entry appears: "Ther was no sederunt by reason of a partie of Inglish horsemen being in our fields." And a man of the name of Adam Scatton is fined for drinking on the Sabbath, "and having marking plays in his house for the Englishemen."

Cultivation now becomes rarer, and you feel that you are approaching the end of the land. The scenery is, indeed, of the wildest description, and the little inn at Houna, within a few yards of the Pentland Firth, is happily not calculated to mar the spirit of the scene. Small though it be, the pedestrian tourist will find a clean bed in a box-like room, and a snug parlour, from whence he may see the rolling Pentland Firth in all its majesty.

Putting up the carriage, we set off for the world-famous John o' Groat's house, distant about one mile and a half east of Houna. Here, however, we experienced another instance of the truth of the aphorism that a prophet often enjoys but little honour in his own country. Not that John o' Groat was a prophet, or indeed had any claim, as far as I am aware, to be regarded as such—his reputation being mainly derived from the clever way in which he is said to have surmounted certain domestic difficulties which threatened to embitter the life of his family. You see I cling to the belief that there was such a person as John o' Groat, not being willing to give up a pleasant story. Some, I

know, contend that John was a Scotchman, and derived his name from his calling, which was ferrying persons across the Pentland Firth for fourpence, or a Groat, but I side with those who believe him to have been a worthy and canny Dutchman, who settled in this land-end locality — the Berubium of Ptolemy — at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The story runs that he had eight sons, unruly whelps, who, very improperly having no respect for the law of primogeniture, disputed for precedency at table. Other fathers might have resorted to a little wholesome personal chastisement to correct such conduct, but John o' Groat hit upon an expedient which answered perfectly, as it had the effect of satisfying all his ambitious children. He built an octagonal room with eight entrances, and placed therein an eight-sided table, by which means each of his sons entered by his own door, and no one could be said to sit at the head of the table.

Well, mythical as you will perhaps pronounce this story to be, there is no doubt that John o' Groat's name has a world-wide fame. But it seems that just as the perturbations caused by casting a stone into still water are apparent in far distant circles long after their centre has subsided to rest, so John o' Groat's name, that has been carried to the uttermost ends of the earth, is ignored by some persons residing close to the site of his famous house.

I base this on the fact that a young man whom we

engaged to carry some cloaks to the site of John o' Groat's house, declared, much to our astonishment, that he did not know where it was, and yet he had lived in the neighbourhood all his life. This ignorance was the more astonishing, because he knew well where John o' Groat's buckies were to be found, said buckies being the very pretty shells (*Cypræa Arctica*, or European cowry) found on the shore close to the locality of John o' Groat's house. But though the site of this house is not known to all in the vicinity, you need no guide to find it. Following a path on the edge of the cliff, dipping occasionally into charming little bays paved with silver sand, we came to one of rather larger dimensions. At the head of this stood John o' Groat's house. The site is marked by four small grassy hillocks, the sole vestiges of the celebrated structure.

If we may judge by the album kept at the Houna Inn, pilgrims to this far north point of our island believe John o' Groat's house to be a substantial edifice. The pages teem with expressions of disappointment, out-poured generally in bad prose and worse verse. Here is a specimen :—

“ I went in a boat
To see John o' Groat,
The place where his house doth lie ;
But when I got there
The hill was bare,
And the devil a stone saw I.”

The lines have, however, the merit of being perfectly truthful, for the hillocks are destitute of a single stone, and you have to draw largely on your imagination to believe that any house ever stood on the spot.

The locality, therefore, will not detain you long, but if Æolus deals tenderly with his wind-bags, and particularly with those filled with north-westerns, you will enjoy turning child again and hunting for pretty buckies on the adjoining shore. They are not easy to find, as boys gather them and sell them to visitors. And when tired of playing infant, you have the grand spectacle of the Stacks of Duncansbay within a couple of miles, which you should not omit seeing.

Leaving my friends on the shore, I started by myself for the Stacks. The coast, which is low at John o' Groat's house, swells into grand cliff elevations as you approach the north-east point of Scotland, forming there a mighty precipitous wall, fit termination to a kingdom. Ascending continually over a sward of velvet-like softness, I stood, after about three quarters of an hour's walking, on the verge of the great red sandstone precipice a little south of the north-east point. Five hundred feet below, the sea foamed and boiled, as it chafed the base of the precipices. Nearly opposite rose the Stacks, huge sandstone pinnacles, scarred and furrowed into fantastic shapes, like islands of the far past falling to ruin. Looking south, the eye ranges along

the great cliff line as regular as a fortress wall in some places, and in others scooped into mighty amphitheatres.

The two Stacks, which are about 400 feet high, are insulated. Their summits are perfectly inaccessible — a fact apparently well known to innumerable sea-fowl which perch on the rock ledges, evidently dreading no fowlers' guns. North of the Stacks the cliffs are indented by large ravines or *goes**, as they are locally called. One is very remarkable. You would suppose a Stephenson or a Brunel had cut it, so precipitous are the sides. The walls plunge down vertically to the sea, and are connected by a natural bridge some six yards wide.

Between the Stacks, and indeed all along the coast, a fierce tide was surging. At all times, even in the calmest weather, the sea off Duncansbay Head swells to billows of extraordinary size. These are called the Boars of Duncansbay, and are produced by the collision of the tides running in opposite directions: savage sea boars, whose tusks of huge crested waves would be fatal to any small bark exposed to their influence. The rapidity of these was made very apparent by the rate at which a ship was speeding whose course lay with the tide, while another with a fair wind struggled in vain to make head against the rushing water.

* From the Scandinavian *Gio* or *Geo*, denoting a narrow inlet of the sea.



G. Barnard, del^t from a Sketch by C. R. Weld.

STACKS OF DUNCANS BAY.

Here indeed you will have abundant opportunities of seeing how

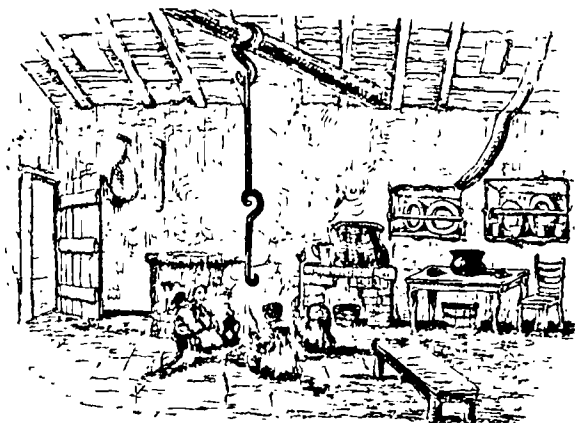
“The dancing men of Mey
Speed the current to the land,”

and fortunate is the ship which during a strong gale from the north is not driven by the current on the rocks which fringe the Pentland Firth. How frequent shipwrecks are in this sea-vexed channel is evident by the masses of wreck on the coast, doing agricultural service in the form of gates, fences, &c.

The view from Duncansbay Head to the west and north embraces the Southern Orkneys, Stroma, and the Skerries, on which a lighthouse has been recently erected. Stroma, about four miles from the Scottish coast, is exposed to the full power of the tide and wind. These forces, when acting in unison, impel the great sea waves over the little island, causing the spray to fall in such quantities on the leeward side as to form innumerable miniature waterfalls. The inhabitants have turned this singular water supply to account. A reservoir has been erected to receive it, which feeds a little stream sufficiently large to turn a corn-mill. The poor islanders may indeed be said to lead a watery life. The sea is one of their principal sources of support. They are dabbling in salt water from their childhood; and are often, during seasons of great tempests, when fishing

and communication with the mainland are impossible, driven to eat limpets, on which account local chronicles declare they are despised by the Orcadians.

On rejoining my friends, who had gathered a rich harvest of "buckies," we returned to the little inn, and dined sumptuously. Then, during the long evening hours, we drove along the coast to Thurso, passing Barrogill Castle, the seat of the Earl of Caithness, looking out on the Pentland Firth, and saw the setting sun fire the Hoy precipices and make the Pentland Firth a sea of golden glory.



CHAP. XIV.

Excursion to the Orkneys.—“Weather permitting.”—The Boatman’s Trust in Providence.—The Royal Mail Steamer.—A stout Craft.—Mountain-like Waves.—Outside Hoy.—A mingling of Miseries.—The Hoy Precipices.—Grand Scenery.—The “Old Man of Hoy.”—Tremendous Sea.—Isle of Grømsay.—Stromness Bay.—Stromness.—Rapid Growth of Seaweed.—Flett’s Inn.—Narrow Streets.—Excellent Quarters.—Fishing for Sillocks.—The Population.—A Quack Doctor.—How to obtain Kisses.—*Vivat* Humbug.—Sale of Winds.

EVERY lawful day, weather permitting, during the summer months a steamer leaves Scrabster at two o’clock for Stromness in Pomona. Pomona is the largest of the Orkneys — so large indeed in comparison to the rest of the Orcadian group that the inhabitants dignify it with the name of the mainland.*

Nowhere around our stormbeaten coast have the words “weather permitting” greater significance than in the Pentland Firth, particularly with reference to the passage to the Orkneys, though the distance to Pomona

* The Scandinavian name of this island was Hrossey, signifying “island of horses.”

is only twenty-eight miles. For not only may you not be able to get to the Orkneys, but when there you must be prepared to run the risk of being detained in the islands by storms. True, when the weather prevents the steamer running a ferry-boat carries the mails between South Ronaldsa and Scotland; but you must not place entire reliance on this boat to convey you out of the Orcadian archipelago, for there are many days in the autumn when even the stoutest boat could not live in the Firth. I heard, indeed, that to avoid needless risk Government prudently offers only such a sum for the carriage of the mails as will remunerate the boatmen to attempt the passage under favourable circumstances. The Scrabster boats seem quite unfitted to combat the wild Atlantic waves; but they frequently make the passage, and their boatmen appear to be influenced by the same religious spirit felt by those with whom Sir Walter Scott sailed when he visited the north of Scotland. Proceeding one day in a bark of rather crazy build, he observed to his boatmen that they must have great confidence to go to sea in such a craft. "Sir," was the reply, "without confidence we would not go to sea in the best boat in the world."

The build of the Royal Mail steamer which links the Orkneys with civilisation is such as to impress you very forcibly that your voyage will not be over smooth summer seas. She is nearly as broad as she

is long, and so bluff at the bows and strongly built that you see at a glance she is made to receive hard knocks.

Although the day was on the whole favourable, it was not without misgivings that I stepped on board the tub-like craft; and these were rather strengthened than otherwise by the skipper, who, cased in an oilskin suit, declared, in answer to our questions respecting the passage, that it would be very rough, and that there were heavy rollers in the Firth.

In Thurso Bay all went smoothly, but no sooner were we outside Holbourn Head than the little steamer puffed into a jumbling sea, and commenced a series of evolutions that quickly stilled the tongues, though not the stomachs, of my fellow passengers, who were soon in such agony as to be unable to remain on deck. Floundering below as best they could, their cries for a steward were answered by a rough sailor, who brought them a kind of trough for common use, over which they mingled their moans and miseries.

Fortunately, although the wind was westerly, and mountain-like waves, born in the Atlantic, were around us, it did not blow sufficiently strong to prevent us passing outside Hoy, the south-west island of the Orkneys. Indeed, we steamed so close to this that the precipices, which attain at one place the stupendous height of 1,300 feet, appeared like a wall within a few

yards of us, while the steamboat, dwarfed by comparison, seemed like a small boat on the rolling sea.

But I had faith in the steamer and her weather-worn skipper, and my enjoyment was complete. How could it be otherwise?—above, grand masses of cloud, sweeping across the deep blue, casting their shadows like dark isles on sea and cliff; below, huge waves, rolling onward in ever-increasing majesty, until in the fulness of their pride and might they broke in thunder tones against the cliffs, belting the rocks with creamy foam contrasting exquisitely with the deep blue of the sea, while the tawny sandstone precipices glowed under the rays of the sun, now sinking in the rich heart of the west.

That man must indeed be ill at ease, physically or mentally, who would not be joyous amidst this glorious combination of sea, sky, and cliff. In its presence, hearing the great sea voice, it was not difficult to understand how the young Orcadian who from her cradle had lived in the contemplation of the eternally heaving ocean, thought when she went to Scotland that nothing was so dead and lifeless as the dark green woods. Scott tells the story, rendered more impressive by Wordsworth, who was paying him a visit at Abbotsford, breaking forth on a breezy day, as the trees were swayed to and fro, and the branches tossed about, "What life there is in trees!" Indeed, so disappointed was the

young lady, that Scott adds, "she went back, and I believe nothing will ever tempt her from the wind-swept, Orcades again."

Though generally presenting a mighty wall face, the Hoy cliffs assume in many places fantastic shapes. The most remarkable of these is an enormous pinnacle four hundred feet high, very like a ruined column, standing in the sea about two hundred yards from the cliff." This is the Old Man of Hoy, well described by the Orcadian poet:—

' See Hoy's Old Man, whose summit bare
Pierces the dark blue fields of air;
Based in the sea, his fearful form
Glooms like the spirit of the storm."

This remarkable natural pillar consists of a base of irruptive porphyry rock, supporting an isolated column of sandstone, which is scarred into strange fantastic shapes. A little to the north of the "Old Man" the cliffs attain their highest elevation, forming titanic barriers to the strength of a mighty ocean lashed to fury by gales from the west. Off these grim precipices we encountered the roughest sea, amidst which the little steamer was tossed so rudely that holding on became extremely difficult, while deep moans and groans from below certified the crescendo kind of agony suffered by those in the narrow little cabin. But this uneasy state of things did not last long. Rounding Hoy Head, we steamed into a

channel dividing Hoy from Pomona, and skirting the sweet green isle of Grämsay, glided into the tranquil and almost land-locked Bay of Stromness. A fleet of small brigs and schooners lay at anchor in the bay, and numerous boats painted light green were moored off Stromness.

The site of this town is very pleasing. It lies embosomed in the bay, the houses being built on the semi-circular hill-side. Those near the water have their gables seaward, and are provided with small harbours, enabling the inhabitants to step from their doors into their boats.

The contrast between the blustering wind and turbulent seas outside Hoy, and the perfect repose of the lake-like bay, now tinged by the roseate hues of the setting sun, was charming. It was nearly seven o'clock when we landed at this Orcadian Venice. The skipper, who was evidently desirous that we should not retain an unfavourable idea of the sailing powers of his tubby craft, assured us that our long passage was in a great measure occasioned by her bottom being coated by sea-weed, which had been growing all the summer months, and was now four or five feet long. As she would soon cease running for the season, it was not considered worth while to clean her bottom; so if you want to make a quick passage to Stromness from Thurso, you must go early in the summer. According to the skipper, great variety

of sea-weeds flourish amazingly in the Pentland Frith. I may mention in corroboration of this, a statement made by Mr. Stephenson, the engineer, to the effect that when working on the Carr Rock, he found that the large algæ, especially *Fucus esculentus*, grew in six months, on rocks, from self-sown seed, six feet; and with respect to the variety of sea-weed in these north waters, I may state that of the 610 species comprised in the Orcadian flora, 133 are sea-weeds, here of the largest size and most beautiful colours.

Proceeding with my friends amidst, apparently, all the population of Stromness, to whom the arrival of the Royal Mail steamer is doubtless the great diurnal event, we threaded a narrow street, across which neighbours might shake hands, and arrived presently at Flett's Inn, where we met with a very agreeable surprise. For, although Stromness has considerable pretension to be called a town, and no longer pays cess or stent to Kirkwall (the population at the last census was 2,057), you are not prepared to expect more than a small inn. Flett's establishment, however, is an excellent hotel, containing various private apartments, a large coffee-room, and numerous good bed-chambers. In few English towns will you see so well appointed an hotel; and hear it, ye Yankees from the Far West, who love to travel with few incumbrances and approve community in toilette articles, you

will find in every bed-room combs and brushes, night-caps, and slippers. Ordering supper, we strolled out. A closer view of Stromness confirmed first impressions. It is a curious non-English looking place. The houses have an antique appearance, and the names over the small shops—that of Halcro is not rare—carry you back to Norse-land. Curious, too, as you walk through the principal street—a mile in length, flagged with large stones, to see the water running up between the houses on the bay side, with the little piers thick with boys pulling sillocks out of the water as fast as their lines were thrown in. This fish, the young of the coal-fish, is so abundant throughout the Orcadian archipelago, that it may be regarded during seasons of scarcity as manna in the wilderness. Stromness possesses but one street, the other thoroughfares being merely narrow alleys, frequently of steep stairs leading hillwards. The evening being very fine and light,—in this northern latitude there is no proper night during the summer for 116 days,—the inhabitants were at their doors. They are a fine race; you can see their Scandinavian origin, but you listen vainly for a trace of Norse dialect. English is spoken everywhere with a peculiar accent. However, up to the close of the last century, Anderson states that in Harray, the only parish not washed by the sea, and consequently where old customs remained longer than in any other,

Norse was spoken, but now that language is ignored by the oldest inhabitant.

The population has, however, a very primitive appearance, little changed since the pirate moored his bark in the bay, and likely to be long unmoved by the pulsation of the electric telegraph, or the throb of the iron horse.

Walking through the labyrinthine alleys, I seemed to be in a foreign town, and the delusion was heightened when, on returning to the inn, we found a crowd assembled before the house, listening wonderingly to a quack doctor, who, surrounded by a glistening array of bottles and gilded boxes, was endeavouring to persuade his audience that he had around him medicines which would cure all the ills that flesh is heir to. The fellow, though much less droll than his Gallic brother, had a good spice of humour. He had come, he said, all the way from America, of which great country he averred that he was a citizen, to cure the sick, the doctors of Europe being arrant fools, absolutely ignorant of the art of medicine. The boxes and phials contained specifics discovered and culled by himself in the all-mighty prairies. His bill, one of which is now before me, sets forth, among many promised cures, that "your rheumatics, though of many years' standing, will be cured in fifteen minutes by a preparation, the extraordinary cures of which are unprecedented in the annals of botany!"

“Ulcerated sore legs of twenty years eradicated and the patient restored to sound vigorous health,” — while for toothache “a single process of *the liquid* was warranted to remove all pain for ever.” This panacea was the great attraction, and I can only say, if the application for the liquid may be taken as any measure of the number of persons suffering from toothache, carious teeth must abound in Stromness. For only 3*d.* to be relieved for ever from the agonies of toothache, and the liquid brought specially for suffering Orcadians across the mighty Atlantic! But it did more. And here the quack (who was, if I mistake not, a Yorkshireman) showed himself superior to the last quack that I saw in the south of France. Yes, it not only banished toothache, but — and here he addressed the young men — it sweetened corrupt breath. Assuming that they all had sweethearts, he assured them that no girl could abide being kissed by a foul-breathed man, whereas she positively enjoyed kisses imprinted by her lover when his breath was sweet. Now here was a liquid, &c.

This was a great success. A rapid sale of bottles followed, and it was really amusing to see young people of both sexes tendering their threepences in a furtive manner, the girls being perhaps conscious that the quack’s observations respecting kissing might be applied to both sexes, while the young men were doubtless un-

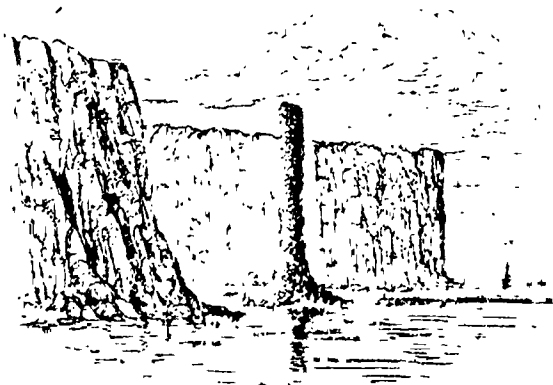
willing to lose so good an opportunity of gaining, if not their sweethearts' love, at all events their kisses. *Vivat* Humbug! It flourishes everywhere; but after all is the poor Orcadian one jot more foolish than fashionable Londoners and Parisians who use specifics advertised by puffing empirics, with the view of arresting the natural decay of their bodies and endeavouring to appear that which they are not?

I could not hear of any old woman in Stromness who pretends to have inherited Bessie Millie's supernatural power of selling winds*; but the great success of the quack doctor's performance made it clear that if he had offered to sell favourable gales as cheap as his liquids, he would have found many persons anxious to be befriended by Æolus during their next voyage.

On returning to the hotel we found a *table d'hôte* repast, at which tea, dinner, and supper harmoniously blended. We were served with various kinds of fish, cutlets, and beefsteaks, and two large *pièces de résistance* in the shape of hams. We shared the meal with

* Sir W. Scott, in his "Diary on board the Lighthouse Yacht," gives a curious account of his visit to Bessie Millie in 1814. He describes her as having a dried mummy-like figure, nose and chin almost meeting, a ghastly expression of cunning, and being upwards of ninety years of age. For sixpence this Hecate sold a favourable wind, the process consisting in boiling her kettle and jabbering certain prayers.

several Orcadians who were in Stromness on farming business, but we were the only representatives of the tourist genus. You see, however, brother rambler, that you will fare well at Stromness, though you may have no travelling companions.



CHAP. XV.

An early Start.—Interesting Geological Locality.—Palæozoic Basin.—Animal Matter.—Fossil Fish.—The *Asterolepis*.—Hugh Miller's Researches.—Huge Russian Ganoid.—Modern *versus* Fossil Fish.—Excellent Breakfast.—Hiring a Trap.—Bad Road.—Moorland.—Stones of Stennis.—The Two Lakes.—Brogar Bridge.—Circle of Brogar.—Scandinavian Sepulchres.—Their Contents.—Elliptical Tumulus.—Dimensions of the Monuments.—Ancient Forest.—Marriage Ceremony.—Odin Stone.—Curious Superstition.—Colossal Profile of Sir W. Scott.—The Pirate.—A wretched Dwelling.—Proceed to Kirkwall.

AT 5 A.M. the hotel was astir. At six o'clock every morning the mail steamer starts for Thurso, and it seems to be a rule not to allow so important an event to take place without apprising everybody in the house of it. So being thoroughly roused I got up and went out to see the geological features of the country round Stromness. These possess peculiar charms for the tyro in the study of the stony science, for you can see at a glance the junction of the granite and the great conglomerate laid bare by the sea.

An extensive granite axis forms the backbone as it were of Pomona. On this Stromness is built, and immediately under it to the west the conglomerate appears.

Below this lies the red sandstone, here forming a portion of a vast palæozoic basin teeming with myriads of fossil fish. Their number and variety is, indeed, bewildering, justifying Milton's magnificent description of the creation of animal life : —

“Forthwith the sounds and seas, each creek and bay,
With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals
Of fish that with their fins, and shining scales,
Glide under the green wave, in sculls that oft
Bank the mid sea.”

The very interesting little museum in Stromness, which I visited, contains a great variety of specimens taken from this huge ichthyolitic sepulchre. Like those in the Caithness flagstones, they are saturated with animal matter, which gives many of the specimens a special and very peculiar character. So abundant, indeed, and well preserved is this matter, that you may see it filling the rock crevices. It is not unfrequently mistaken for coal, to which it bears a great resemblance, and some portions are so bituminous that they will do the duty of sealing-wax. Indeed, occasionally specimens of fossil fish are found embalmed as it were in themselves, the animal matter having become of the consistency and appearance of coal-tar.

The Orkneys are particularly rich in fossil fish. They are computed to be more numerous in these islands than in any other geological system in Eng-

land, Wales, and Scotland. Pomona alone could supply all the museums in Europe with specimens.

Worthy of notice, too, is the fact, that throughout this great fish grave, the animals, like those in the Caithness flagstones, appear to have met with very violent deaths. Everywhere the skeletons are in distorted positions. Hugh Miller believed, that whatever was the cause of the catastrophe, it must have occurred when the sea was unusually tranquil. But that keen observer was entirely at a loss to conjecture even what phenomena killed these millions of fish, whose fossil remains occupy the great Orkney sandstone deposits. Sudden and fierce volcanic outbursts would account for this wide-spread destruction, but there are no traces whatever of volcanic action near the fossil fish beds.

Among the strangest of the strange and wonderful fragments in the vast palæozoic basin which puzzle and perplex palæontologists in their endeavour to make an harmonious whole out of the distorted portions, no animal is more extraordinary than the asterolepis, a monstrous ganoid. This star scale fish has been minutely described by Hugh Miller. He visited Stromness for the express purpose of examining the fossil ichthyological treasures in the neighbourhood, over which he gloats with all the passionate ardour that a miser is supposed to feel when hanging over his money bags. He thus relates incidentally, how numerous are

the remains of fossil fish. Being taken for a farmer he was accosted by a man: "Ye'll be seeking beasts; what price are cattle, noo?" "Yes, seeking beasts," Miller replied, "but very old ones; I have come to hammer your rocks for petrified fish." "I see, I see," said the man, "I took ye for a drover, but I ken something of the stane fish, too; there's lots o' them in the quarries at Skail."

Near Stromness, about a hundred yards above the granite, Miller found a fragment of the *asterolepis*. It was a nail-like bone $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches long, in all probability, he states, "the oldest vertebrate remain yet discovered in Orkney; nay, judging from its place *one* of the most ancient yet found in Scotland,—so far, as I know, absolutely the *most* ancient, belonging to a ganoid as bulky as a large porpoise, and which, as shown by its teeth and jaws, possesses that peculiar organisation which characterised the reptile fish of the upper Devonian and carboniferous periods." He adds that the *asterolepis* to which the nail-like bone which he found belonged, must have been about eight feet long. The bones of one of these animals discovered in Russia are, however, much larger than any hitherto found in Scotland or the Orkneys. Miller conceives that it was not less than twenty-three feet long, and if you look at the cast of the Russian fragments in the British Museum, you will at once see that they belonged to a veritable

monster. "Thus," says Mr. Miller, "in the not unimportant circumstance of size, the most ancient ganoids yet known, instead of taking their places, agreeably to the demands of the development hypothesis, among the sprats, sticklebacks, and minnows of their class, took their place among its huge basking sharks, gigantic sturgeons, and bulky sword-fishes. They were giants, not dwarfs."

If you are curious to know more of the asterolepis, I must refer you to Hugh Miller's "Footprints of the Creator," where you will also find many interesting descriptions of fossil fish. These "medals of creation" were his pet study. Witness the following lines, which appeared when he was deep in fossil ichthyolitic mysteries:—

"Tobacco and whiskey cost siller,
 An' meal is but scanty at hame,
 But gang to the stane-mason Miller,
 He'll pang wi' ichth'olites your wame.
 Wi' fish // as Agassiz has ca'd 'em,
 In Greek, like themsels, *hard* an' *odd*,
 That were baked in stane pies afore Adam
 Gied names to the haddocks and cod."

And now, having gained a little geological knowledge, and a large appetite for breakfast, let us see whether the fish which we hope to find on the breakfast table are not as interesting, at all events, to a hungry man, as their fossil ancestors.

Bravo, Mr. Flett! your catering does you infinite credit. Herrings, haddocks, and kippered salmon, cutlets, ham, tongue, and fresh eggs, and all disposed with excellent artistic effect on a snow-white cloth. The ham, ornamented with curious devices, formed by sticking cloves into the skin, the butter moulded in strange shapes, there is food here for the mind as well as body, and we sit down determined to do justice to the good things before us. Leisurely, leisurely, for the day is all our own; we have hired a dog-cart, and will start for Kirkwall when we think fit. It was not without great sollicitation that we persuaded Mr. Flett to hire his trap. "The roads," quoth he, "are so bad, that the springs will be broken, and how am I to get them mended?" At length, however, he consented to let us have his cart; and, selecting a boy-driver for lightness' sake, we set off for the Orcadian capital.

A few yards' experience of the road made us painfully aware that the landlord had not exaggerated its terrible condition. The springs of our vehicle, tried to the utmost by our united weight—four persons and the driver,—ceased to play, and we were jolted so rudely as we surged into deep holes and rolled out of them, that we soon came to the conclusion that if the road continued thus bad to Kirkwall, walking would be far preferable. But the landlord, who was very unwilling to let us have his dog-cart, had not told us that

a new road between the two towns was nearly finished, and that when we got on it, about four miles from Stromness, all would be smooth. Such was the case; and by this time the bad road, and I have never travelled on worse, may be numbered among the things which existed during the dark ages of Pomona.

Treeless, brown moorland, hilly for the most part, here and there farmsteads, but more frequently miserable hovels, such is the country traversed by the road between the two towns. Four miles from Stromness we diverged from the road; and leaving the dog-cart in charge of the driver, struck across swampy ground in a northerly direction. Our object was to visit the stones of Stennis, which, after Stonehenge, are the most remarkable primitive lapidary erections in Britain.

Their situation is very striking. Two narrow promontories, connected by the stone bridge of Brogar (from the Scandinavian *bro* or *bru*, bridge, and *gard*, inclosure) divide what is generally called Loch Stennis, but which more properly consists of two lakes, Stennis and Harra, the former affected by the tide and salt, the latter tideless and fresh.

These promontories may be regarded as the holy ground of the ancient Orcadians; for, besides the more perfect stones of Stennis, there are four distinct circles, two with and two without erect stones; four detached pillars, a great number of bowl-shaped and conoid bar-

rows, and the remains of numerous tumuli and cromlechs.

The promontories bearing these interesting relics of a people whose history is lost in the misty past, are elevated above the surrounding country. On the southern promontory, locally called Stennis, are the remains of a stone circle 104 feet in diameter, which, judging from the two massive slabs still standing eighteen feet above the ground, must have been a very imposing monument. An overthrown cromlech, one of the only three known to exist in the Orkneys, stands within the area of the circle. This ring occupies an artificial mound surrounded by a trench, which is still very distinct.

A short distance from the circle and east of the bridge of Brogar, stands a single gigantic pillar. No earthworks surround it, but from its position you are led to fancy that it is the sole relic of a huge stone avenue connecting the smaller circle of Stennis with the larger one on the Brogar promontory.

Unfortunately, neighbouring farmers, who had no reverence for these very interesting monuments, have overthrown, broken, and carted away many stones, and thus you are left very much in the dark as to the precise configuration of the structures. On the north promontory there is less room for doubt. Here, occupying a deeply intrenched area of two acres and a half, stands a circle 340 feet in diameter.

Assuming from the distance between the remaining stones that those wanting to complete the circle were equidistant from each other, the circle must have originally consisted of sixty stones; traces of thirty-seven are still visible, and sixteen are still standing. These, however, are mutilated, as they vary in height from three feet to thirteen feet nine inches, the highest erect stone.

The trench surrounding the circular area on which this grand stone circle stands is wonderfully perfect. The average breadth of the trench is thirty feet, and the depth six feet. Two passages or entrances to the circle are situated precisely opposite to each other. Surrounding the trench are several tumuli, supposed to be Scandinavian sepulchres. One was opened a few years ago, and found to contain the remains of two adult skeletons, and one of a child, all interred in a bent posture. Another tumulus in the parish of Sandwick, precisely like those at Stennis, was opened by Sir Joseph Banks and Dr. Solander, on their return from Iceland in 1772. Three stone chests or coffins were found, containing human skeletons in a sitting posture. Near one there was a quantity of small bones, and near another some black beads and chestnut-coloured hair.

The great circle, guarded as it were with the surrounding tumuli, is a very impressive and solemn object.

The storms of centuries have swept over the stones,

which still stand like spirits of the past, robed with lichens waving from their weather-worn surfaces like grizzly beards, or mantling them with brilliant orange hues. The area of the great circle abounds with mosses, among which the beautiful stag-headed variety is extremely common.

To the east and north of the Brogar circle are other tumuli, one, singular from its elliptical form and great size, measuring 112 feet in the direction of its major axis, 66 feet along its minor, and 22 feet high.*

Besides these tumuli, there are smaller circular mounds, on some of which traces of stone circles may still be seen.

In fact, all this part of the country bears evidence of having been occupied by a large population; for besides these vestiges of primitive structures, a deserted stone quarry, about a mile north of the ring of Brogar, attests from its great extent that vast supplies of flag-stones, such as are now erect at Stennis, were drawn from it.

Nor must we forget that this locality, now wild and barren, was once covered with a forest, in which animals

* I am indebted to a very interesting paper, "On the Celtic Antiquities of Orkney," by Lieut. Thomas, R.N., published in the "Archæologia" (vol. xxxiv.), for these and other measurements of the Stennis antiquities. Mr. Thomas was engaged in a Government survey of the Orkney archipelago, and availed himself of the occasion to examine and measure the various monuments. They are very imperfectly described in the guide books.

lived, and which afforded shelter and fuel to the inhabitants. Negative evidence of the existence of this forest appears from the fact that the Earl of Orkney in 925 was called *Torf Einar*, from having taught his subjects to use turf or peat, wood at that period having become very scarce.

Speculations are, of course, rife respecting the purposes of these hoary monuments. Some antiquaries conceive them to have been erected for Druidical worship; and that the large circle of Brogar was a temple dedicated to the sun, the smaller circle of Stennis another dedicated to the moon.

The Orcadians formerly regarded them with feelings of awe mingled with religion; for it appears that couples who had no particular reverence for the marriage ceremony as performed in church, considered themselves married by simply shaking hands through one of the upright stones. This was the famous Odin stone. It stood about 150 yards north of the Stennis circle. Lieut. Thomas states that he conversed with a man who had seen the stone, and who informed him that the hole was about five feet from the ground. He added that to the period of the destruction of the stone by a farmer, it was always customary for the peasantry to leave some offering on visiting it, such as a piece of bread, or cheese, or a rag. It was also believed that a child passed through the hole when young would never shake with palsy in old age.

The marriage ceremony, according to an account published in the third volume of the "Transactions of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries," was in this wise: "When the parties had agreed to marry they repaired to the Temple of the Moon, where the woman, in presence of the man, fell down on her knees and prayed the god Woden (for such was the name of the god whom they addressed on this occasion) that he would enable her to perform all the promises and obligations she had made and was to make to the young man present; after which they both went to the Temple of the Sun, where the man prayed in like manner before the woman. Then they went to the Stone of Odin, and the man being on the one side and the woman on the other, they took hold of each other's right hand through the hole in it, and there swore to be constant and faithful to each other."

But it would seem that they could not have held this ceremony very binding, for local historians add that couples who were united at the stones of Stennis and became tired of each other went to the kirk, and parting in the centre, one went out at the north door, the other at the south, and they then considered themselves free.

Amidst these relics of the dim past, Sir Walter Scott has laid one of the most stirring scenes in his "Pirate." Here the parting took place between Cleveland and Minna Troil; and from Turmiston House, which is in the

vicinity, the pirate is supposed to have witnessed the fight that terminated in the destruction of his ship near Stromness. In this incident, however, the novelist has used a little licence, for Stromness cannot be seen from the locality where the pirate is said to have stood. Generally Scott's descriptions of Orcadian scenery are extremely truthful; so much so, indeed, that Lockhart states when the "Pirate" was published persons in Stromness and Kirkwall who had made Scott's acquaintance when he visited the Orkneys, were certain that he was the author of the Waverley Novels.

A fanciful Orcadian might imagine that nature was grateful to him for having immortalised several portions of his storm-vexed islands. For shortly after Scott's name became famous, it was noticed that the north-west extremity of the high hill of Hoy presented a very striking likeness in profile of the great novelist. During countless ages this precipitous terminal hill-face has been slowly changing, under meteorological influences, and now the outline of the human face that is developed is found to accurately resemble that of the author of the "Pirate:" in another century perhaps another profile may be developed which will resemble that of some unborn worthy.

You will do well to put the "Pirate" in your pocket when you visit the Orkneys; and with respect to Stennis, if you wish to see the stony giants to the best advantage, spend an hour among them when the storm-

blast sweeps across the lakes, the wild swans trumpet, the curlews scream, and the heavens are obscured by heavy clouds; — seen amidst such influences you will appreciate Malcolm's truthful lines :

“ The hoary rocks of giant size
That o'er the land in circles rise,
Of which tradition may not tell,
Fit circles for the wizard's spell ;
Seen far amidst the scowling storm,
Seem each a tall and phantom form,
As hurrying vapours o'er them flee,
Frowning in grim security ;
While like a dread voice from the past,
Around them moans the autumnal blast.”

The only dwelling near the “Stones” is a hovel of so wretched a nature that I entered it, curious to know whether it was occupied by human beings.

The interior consisted of one room, window and chimney-less, shared by bipeds and quadrupeds, both entering by the same door. An aged couple were cowering over a peat fire burning on the floor. Of furniture there was literally none; a heap of rags in one corner and a box doing the duty of bed and chair. The place seemed, and I am afraid was, the abode of great misery; but the owner of the narrow dwelling did not grumble with his lot. True, he said, the site of his cot was very bleak, and living hard, but in summer he earned a few pence by stabling the horses of gentlemen who came to look at the “Stanes,” and very little sufficed for his wants. What a lesson of contentment do these lowly dwellers

among the waste places of the earth teach! — content with such a lot, while the possessor of thousands of pounds and vast estates is often a repining man.

Regaining our dog-cart, we pushed on to Kirkwall, eleven miles from Stennis. Long before we reached the Orcadian capital we saw the vast cathedral of St. Magnus towering over all the adjoining buildings, a dark mass of stern architecture. Crossing a causeway dividing a bay, on the shore of which the oldest part of Kirkwall is built, from a lake, we rattled into the town, passing through narrow and tortuous streets to the inn. This does not sustain the metropolitan reputation of Kirkwall; for, though capacious, it is far behind Flett's Hotel in comfort and cleanliness. Ordering dinner, we went out, directing our steps to the cathedral. But the lions of Kirkwall are of sufficient importance to merit a separate chapter.



CHAP. XVI.

Antiquity of Kirkwall.—Its foreign Appearance.—A Presbytery moderating.—The Bishop's Palace.—The Mass Tower.—Bishop Reid.—History of the Palace.—King Haco.—The Monarch's last Days.—The Earl's Palace.—Patrick, Earl of Orkney.—Portrait of him.—His stern Rule.—Beauty of the Ruins.—The Cathedral.—St. Magnus.—Severity of its Architecture.—Dimensions.—History of the Cathedral.—A religious Vow.—Quaint Inscriptions.—Curious Cell.—The Summit of the Tower.—View over the Orkneys.—Scalpa Flow.—Wasting of the Isles.—The Chimes.—Itinerant Show.—Police Notice.—Orcadian Exhibition.—An enthusiastic Naturalist.—The Eagles of Hoy.—The Orcadian Fauna.—Numerous Whales.—Straw-plaiting.—The Love-stricken Chieftain.—Fine Race of Men.—Return to Stromness.

KIRKWALL, like Stromness, is traversed by one long winding narrow street, flagged in the centre. Many of the houses have a very foreign and antiquated appearance. Dates as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century may be seen on some of the gables, which are turned streetward. In that century (1468) Kirkwall obtained its first charter; James III. having previously made it a royal burgh, on the occasion of his obtaining possession of the Orkneys. As we proceeded, the town seemed more and more foreign. Small courtyards

shaded by trees—actual trees, thick with leaves—stood between some houses and the street. These houses, we were told, were the winter residences of wealthy Orca-dians, in the days when steam and railways were unknown, and when consequently Edinburgh was as remote in the matter of time from Kirkwall as Paris is now. The shops, too, wear a foreign and ancient air, the goods displayed being for the most part old-fashioned, as if the traders had purchased the remnant of stocks far behind the taste of the day. But the delusion that we were threading the mazy streets of a continental town was dispelled when, arriving at the cathedral, we found the doors not only closed, but our request to be admitted was met by a stern refusal from a surly janitor. “The Presbytery was moderating in a call to a minister,” he said, and admittance was out of the question. How long would the Presbytery sit? He could not say; “Perhaps an hour, perhaps two, perhaps till night.” Ecclesiastical proceedings are nowhere remarkable for their brevity, and those in Scotland form no exception to the rule, so we ventured to say that it would be more convenient to the public if the Presbytery deliberated in the vestry and did not shut up the cathedral. No remonstrance, however, could gain us admission, so we went in quest of other sights, being assured that the termination of the sitting would be announced by the ringing of the bells, and that then the cathedral would be thrown open.

We had not far to go. Adjoining the cathedral are two very interesting objects — the ruins of the palaces of the earls and bishops of Orkney. Here admission was easy. A girl unlocked a small door in the surrounding wall, and allowed us to ramble where we pleased, not even offering to inflict false history upon us. So, whatever I may tell you of these ruins is not derived from the legendary lore of a chattering guide. The ruins of the bishop's palace, which we first explored, are very fragmentary. A tower, circular without, square within, embellished with well-executed carvings, and an adjoining square tower, called the Mense or Mass Tower, are the principal remains of a palace that lodged a king and his suite. Clamber to the summit of the circular tower: you need a firm head and strong muscles to execute this *tour de force*, for the steps are few and far between; and you will see from the stumps of walls that remain, and the nature of the ground, that the palace formerly occupied a large area. In fact, the circular tower is a comparatively recent addition to the building, having been erected by Bishop Reid, about 1540, whose statue in freestone still occupies a niche on the north side of the wall.

The history of the original palace is very obscure. It belongs to that period

“ When Norse and Danish galleys plied
Their oars within the Firth of Clyde,
When floated Haco's banner trim

Above Norwegian warriors grim,
Savage of heart and large of limb."

Scandinavians probably built it, but when no chronicler tells. Light begins to dawn on the building in the thirteenth century, for in 1263, according to Icelandic records, Haco, King of Norway, died in the palace. Here is a stepping-stone in history, from whence we may look with interest upon the crumbling ruin. But I should deceive you were I to say that the tottering walls which we now see sheltered a monarch and his court. The portion of the palace in which stern King Haco breathed his last has long ceased to exist; for, alas! ruins were but lightly esteemed by the Kirkwall burghers, who long ago found the palaces of the earls and bishops of Orkney convenient stone quarries, and used them freely. Enough, however, remains to link you with the far past, when the bold Norse sea-kings held and ruled the Orcades. And, thanks to an Icelandic Chronicle, translated by the Rev. James Johnstone, formerly chaplain to our minister at the Court of Denmark, we obtain a sight of the last days of King Haco.*

"The king, now in the forty-seventh year of his reign, had spent the summer in watchfulness and anxiety.† Being often called to deliberate with his captains, he had

* Mr. Johnstone's translation of this interesting chronicle appeared in the Edinburgh Magazine for 1787.

† Caused, in all probability, by the disastrous result (to him) of the battle of Largs.

enjoyed little rest, and when he arrived at Kirkwall, he was confined to his bed by his disorder. Having lain for some nights, the illness abated, and he was on foot for three days. On the first day he walked about in his apartments; on the second he attended at the bishop's chapel to hear mass; and on the third he went to St. Magnus' Church, and walked round the shrine of St. Magnus. He then ordered a bath to be prepared, and got himself shaved. Some nights after he relapsed, and took again to his bed. During his sickness he ordered the Bible and Latin authors to be read to him. But finding his spirits were too much fatigued by reflecting on what he had heard, he desired that Norwegian books might be read to him night and day; first, the lives of the saints; and when they were ended, he made his attendants read the Chronicles of the Norwegian kings from Holden the Black, and so of all the Norwegian kings in succession, one after the other. But the monarch still found his disorder increase. He therefore took into consideration the pay to be given to his troops, and commanded that a merk of fine silver should be given to each courtier, and half a merk to each of the masters of the lights, chamberlain, and other attendants on his person. He ordered all the silver plate belonging to his table to be weighed, and to be distributed if his standard silver fell short. Then he received extreme unction on the eve of the festival of St. Lucia.

Thorgish, Bishop of Stavanger, Gilbert, Bishop of Hamar, Henry, Bishop of Orkney, Albert Thorleif, and many other learned men were present; and before the unction, all present bade the king farewell with a kiss. The festival of St. Lucia was on Thursday, and on the following Saturday the king's disorder increased to such a degree that he lost the use of his speech; and at midnight Almighty God called King Haco out of this mortal life. This was matter of great grief to all those who attended, and to most of those who heard of the event. Immediately on the decease of the king, bishops and learned men were sent for to sing mass. On Sunday the royal corpse was carried to the upper hall and laid on a bier. The body was clothed in a rich garb, with a garland on its head, and dressed out as became a crowned monarch. The masters of the lights stood with tapers in their hands, and the whole hall was illuminated. All the people came to see the body, which appeared beautiful and animated; and the king's countenance was as fair and ruddy as while he was alive. It was some alleviation of the deep sorrow of the beholders to see the corpse of their departed sovereign so decorated. High mass was then sung for the deceased. The nobility kept watch by the body during the night. On Monday the remains of King Haco were carried to St. Magnus' Cathedral, where they lay in state that night. On Tuesday the royal corpse was put in a

coffin, and buried in the choir of St. Magnus', near the steps leading to St. Magnus' shrine. The tomb was then closed, and a canopy was spread over it. It was also determined that watch should be kept over the king's grave all the winter : King Haco had given orders that his remains should be carried to Norway and buried near his fathers. Towards the end of winter, therefore, that great vessel which he had in the west was launched, and soon got ready. On Ash-Wednesday the corpse of the king was taken up, and the courtiers followed it to Skalpied, where the ship lay. They put to sea on the first Saturday in Lent, but meeting with hard weather they steered for Silavog. From this place they wrote letters to Prince Magnus, acquainting him with the news, and then sailed for Bergen. They arrived at Laxavog before the festival of St. Benedict. On that day Prince Magnus rowed out to meet the corpse. The ship was brought near to the king's palace, and the body was carried up to a summer-house. Next morning the corpse was removed to Christ's Church, and was attended by Prince Magnus, the two queens, the courtiers, and the town's-people. The body was then interred in the choir of Christ's Church, and Prince Magnus addressed a long and gracious speech to those who attended the funeral procession. All the multitude present were much affected." . *Requiescat in pace*, King Haco, for though thou in-

clined rather to the lives of the saints than to thy Bible, thou wast not, as the times went, a bad Sovereign! Indeed, we may question whether many European monarchs in these latter days would make so good an end. And now we will go to the Earl's Palace. This has been more fortunate than its episcopal neighbour. So tenderly, indeed, has it been treated by man and time, that it is still a very perfect example of the castellated mansion of the 16th century. It was built in 1600, by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, a bad ruler but a good architect. Architecture indeed was his particular hobby, to indulge which he never scrupled to cruelly oppress his people, making them transport heavy masses of stone, and perform all manner of servile work, without any kind of recompense. "My father," he said "built his house at Sumburgh on the sand, and it has given way already; my houses shall abide and endure." How greatly he was feared appears from the story that when he was on his trial in Edinburgh, a witness from Zetland, where he had built another castle under circumstances of great oppression, refused to give evidence until he was assured that there was no probability of the earl ever returning to Scalloway.

A contemporary writer gives us a life-like portrait of the earl, for the resuscitation of which we have to thank Mr. Robert Chambers, who found it in the Edinburgh Privy Council archives:—

“He had a princely and royal revenue; and indeed behavit himself with sic sovereignty, and gif I durst say the plain verity, rather tyrannically, by the shadow of Danish laws, different and more rigorous nor the municipal or criminal laws of the rest of Scotland, whereby no man of rent or purse might enjoy his property in Orkney without his special favour, and the same dear bought. And his pomp was so great in Kirkwall, that he never went from his castle to the kirk, nor abroad otherwise, without the convoy of fifty musketeers and other gentlemen of convoy and guard.

“And before dinner and supper there were three trumpeters that soundit till the meat of the first service was set at table, and sic like at the second service, and consequently after the grace. He also had his ships directed to the sea to intercept pirates and collect tribute of uncouth fishers that came yearly to these seas. Whereby he made sic collection of great guns and other weapons for weir (war) as no house, palace, nor castle, yea, all in Scotland were not furnished with the like.

“At length the deeds of this island lord became so bold, rebellious, and tyrannical, that he was arrested, brought to Edinburgh, tried, and sentenced to be beheaded, although he was cousin-german to King James VI., the Earl’s father being a natural son of James V.”

We obtain a further insight into the roughness of that age (1615) by reading that "the" ministers finding the Earl so ignorant as to be unable to recite the Lord's Prayer, "they entreated that his execution might be delayed a few days till he were better informed. This was acceded to, and when he took the sacrament he was beheaded."

However much we may lament that this palace should have been erected at the cost of great suffering, we must admit that the building is a model of good taste. It forms three sides of an oblong square, one side being considerably longer than the others. The exterior and interior decorations are extremely elegant. One hall, sixty feet long, is so perfect that with very little repair it might be made to do duty as a banqueting hall, and the crenelated turrets, chimneys, lintels, and Gothic shafted windows, are all conceived and executed in the best taste. Sir Walter Scott, who doubtless had day-dreams of a future Abbotsford when he visited Kirkwall, was charmed with these ruins. He writes in his diary, "Any modern architect wishing to emulate the real Gothic architecture might derive excellent hints from this building."

You will remember that the novelist has laid the striking scene in the "Pirate," between Cleveland and Jack Bunce, in the large hall.

As usual in these castellated mansions, there are nu-

merous dungeons connected by dark labyrinthine passages in the palace, and there are strange little closets in the turrets, the boudoirs perhaps of the Earl's ladies. The contrast is very great between the architectural beauty of the upper portion of this ruined palace and the lower story, with its heavily barred windows, suggestive of the constant apprehension of assault. All the entrances, too, were provided with heavy iron gratings, some of which still remain. These defences, and the generally perfect state of the ruins, are the reasons, it is to be presumed, that have induced the authorities of Kirkwall to contemplate turning the Earl's palace into a prison. Such at least, I was told, was their intention last autumn. The scheme is in every respect to be deprecated. Venerating and loving all architectural relics stamped with beauty, I trust most sincerely that such an act of desecration will not be perpetrated. Shaded by trees, the branches of which fling their shadows over the sculptured stones, the palace is now a lovely architectural gem, set in the sterile severity of the Orcadian landscape; what it would be, turned into a gaol by the burghers of Kirkwall, who we may be sure have but little æsthetic feeling, is grievous to contemplate.

Sic fuit est, et erit, was Earl Patrick's presumptuous motto; but in thus prophesying immortality for his works, he certainly never supposed that his palace would be turned into a prison.

While on subjects connected with the past, I may mention that in a "Pict's house," opened at Kirkwall a few years since, carved stones, with a series of concentric circles, were found, very similar to those discovered in a cromlech at Locmariaker in Brittany. Sculptured stones are more common in Scotland and the islands adjoining than is generally supposed. The Spalding Club published in 1856 a large folio volume, containing representations of stones which are genuine and highly interesting records of the early inhabitants of Scotland, for they refer to a period when communication by writing was unknown.

Boece tells us that King Reutha, who lived about two centuries before the Christian era, was the first monarch who set up figured stones over the bodies of heroes. "He commandit manie hie stanis to be set about the sepulture of every nobil man. On the stanis was ingravin imagenis of dragonis, wolfis, and other bestis; for no invention was in thay dayis to put the deidis of nobil men in memorie."

We had scarcely finished our exploration of the ruins when the cathedral bells proclaimed that the presbyters had terminated their labours. So we left the interesting palace, made the courteous little janitrix supremely happy by giving her a shilling, and passed into the cathedral.

Stern and grimly solemn is the interior of this ancient

edifice. You see at a glance that it would drive a high churchman to despair. No need to proclaim: "No spiritual gymnastics to be performed here." The austere severity and gloom of the nave would freeze the soul of even the mildest Puseyite. Nevertheless, St. Magnus possesses great charms; for there is a sombre sublimity in the vast nave, with its massive ancient Norman columns, and bold arches, which is very impressive; you feel that you are in the house of God.

Twenty-eight pillars support the roof, and the nave is flanked by narrow aisles, roofed by groined arches and lighted by small windows. The interior length of the building is 218 feet, and that of the transepts 90 feet. The height of the nave is 56 feet. The tower is supported by four noble pillars 24 feet in circumference. These dimensions will give you some idea of this, the most northern of our cathedrals.

The choir and chancel are more ornamented than the nave, but unfortunately the sculptured bosses, capitals, arches, and mouldings are so masked by vile modern carpentry—the choir being fitted up as the parish church—that it is extremely difficult to see the ornaments. You will, however, at once perceive that the architecture of the choir is of a later date than that of the nave, the round arch giving place to the pointed, but the two styles are not so widely different as to destroy the har-

mony and massive grandeur of the entire building : anywhere it would be considered a very fine and imposing ecclesiastical edifice ; here, in remote, barren Orcadia, it is an architectural wonder.

What, you will ask, induced Norsemen to build such a pile ? A religious vow — religiously kept too — not dwarfed in the day of success from a cathedral to a tiny chapel to Virgin or saint. The story runs thus :—

In the year 1110, Magnus, the reigning Scandinavian Earl of Orkney, had the bad fortune to offend his cousin Haco. Those were days, you will remember, when the sea-kings loved to

—— “ woo the approaching fight,
And turn what some deem danger to delight.”

But indeed, in this case, there was no fighting, for Haco took a very summary way of settling his differences for ever with Magnus by assassinating him — a good deed, as he doubtless deemed it, seeing that he at once obtained a full measure of revenge and the murdered earl's possessions. But Haco was not long left to enjoy his unjustly acquired property. The murder of Magnus made a noise in the world. The Pope enrolled him in the catalogue of saints, and his nephew Kolius came in hot haste from Norway to avenge his uncle's death. Surrounded by his followers, Kolius vowed that if he succeeded in defeating Haco he would erect a church in honour of St. Magnus which should eclipse all other

buildings in Orkney. He was successful, and we see the result. Not that the cathedral in its present condition was built by him, for many additions have been made to it, principally by Catholic Bishops of Orkney,—but he erected the most ancient part of the structure.

Thus, besides its solemn and stern grandeur, antiquity invests it with additional interest. The royal dust of Scandinavia moulders within its walls, besides that of a long list of Orcadian worthies. You will look in vain for their tombs; but you will find an abundance of monumental slabs around the nave, covered with quaint inscriptions in raised letters, generally so badly cut as to render them very difficult to decipher. Here is one that I copied:—

“ Heir Rests The Corps of Ane Pious And Honest Man
 JOHN K A A,
 Som Tym Baily of Kirkwall
 Obiit 28th Nov. 1679, An. Æt. 50.
 He Wes Married With AGNES LOVTTI
 Upon The 2nd Jan. 1655,
 Agnes 9 Children boor vnto hir Mate
 6 Ded Befor Ther Sir
 By Cruel Fate
 Rob., Margaret, Barbara, William, Thomas, and Elspet,
 But James and George With Ther Der
 Sister Margaret Surviv For Comforting
 The Relicts and Assvage Grief
 Its hoped The Will Make Her Glad.
 Memento Mori.

The lions of St. Magnus are not so numerous as to

make the services of a cicerone necessary, nevertheless you will do well to let the verger act the part of showman, otherwise you might miss some curious things. Among these is a singular little cell five feet from the ground in the thickness of the wall; when discovered, an iron chain, to which a piece of barley bread was attached, hung from the top. These are facts; whether you will choose to accept also as a fact the story that refractory monks were imprisoned in this cell and mortified in the flesh until they yielded to their superiors, is another question.

How a Puseyite would love to set this cathedral in order! Clear out the vile deal pews — everywhere hideous, but in Scotland particularly so — fill the windows with painted glass, — remove the lichen* which mantles the walls, giving the interior a dark, velvety, green hue, — and, in short, restoring it to its papal glory. Its present state would be a holy sorrow to the Pope, who would doubtless, were he all-powerful, make its condition the subject of many encyclical letters if it were still under his rule.

We clambered to the summit of the tower up steep sandstone steps worn in many places to a dangerous verticality. Your eye ranges from the top over a great portion of the Orkneys. How small the green isles look amidst the great blue sea! There are sixty-seven

* *Leprasia æruginosa*.

of them, twenty-nine of which are inhabited, the rest mere holms for pasturing sheep. Kirkwall seems to be almost on the sea. The waters of Scalpa Flow on the south, and those of Ingeness and Kirkwall Bays on the north, nearly meet at the town walls. Looking at these islands, and remembering of what they are composed, we see how they are wasting away under the perpetually fretting influences of the sea and weather. But while their area is slowly diminishing, other isles in far-off summer seas are increasing in size; and so the great balance of compensation is perpetually maintained.

Here, too, from this lofty eyrie you will better understand and appreciate the energy and heroism of those bold Vikings who crossed the ocean from Scandinavia and occupied these storm-vest isles. No wonder, when we remember what they were, that their descendants should be born seamen. It was no mythical person of whom Byron sung, though his geography is at fault :

“And who is he? the blue-eyed northern child
 Of isles more known to man, but scarce less wild;
 The fair-hair'd offspring of the Hebrides,
 Where roars the Pentland with its whirling seas;
 Rock'd in his cradle by the roaring wind,
 The tempest-born in body and in mind,
 His young eyes opening on the ocean foam,
 Had from that moment deemed the deep his home.”*

* “The Island.” The youth alluded to was George Stewart. He was a native of the Orkneys, and a midshipman in the *Bounty* at the time of the mutiny and seizure of that ship.

We now descended the tower, pausing on our way at the request of the verger, to see him ring the chimes on four ancient bells, which have tolled the death of many an Orcadian. The bells are not harmonious, but the chimes, which are said to be the same as those heard by the monks of old, are quaint. The verger, however, was evidently more anxious that we should praise his manner of performing, than the bell music. Holding a rope in each hand, he pulled the two others with his feet, and thus rang out the ancient chimes.

Our thoughts, steeped in the far past, underwent a sudden change when, on leaving the cathedral, we came upon an itinerant theatrical exhibition, which was being erected under the walls of the sacred edifice. Had we been dreaming only of Norsemen and their deeds, and were we in an English country town? Not so; preparations were making for the annual Kirkwall Fair; a great event in the Orkneys, which floods the town with Orcadians and Shetlanders from even the most distant isles. Judging by a notice, of which the following is a copy, posted conspicuously throughout Kirkwall, you would say that the visitors in fair time were roystering fellows:—*“It is ordered by the Sheriff of the Orkneys, the Provost of Kirkwall, and Chief Magistrate of Stromness, that all Lodging-house Keepers, Publicans, and others, within the Burghs of Kirkwall and Stromness, receiving strangers during the ensuing Fair, shall*

make out a list of the names of such strangers and the dates of their arrival, and send them to the Superintendent of Police."

So you see that there are inquisitive police regulations in Orcadia as well as on the Continent.

We did not see the fair, but, attracted by a large placard announcing that an "Orcadian Exhibition" was on view in the Anchor Close, consisting of "300 stuffed animals and birds, also a large shark," we went in search of it. Gentry, the bill added, were to pay 6*d.*; work-people, 3*d.* We found the exhibition in a roomy hay-loft, liberally lighted by cracks in the roof. The proprietor told us that he was a Yorkshireman, that he had come to the Orkneys fifteen years ago on a natural history expedition, and that he liked the islands so much, and found so many interesting objects, that he had remained in them ever since. The gentlemen, he added, gave him leave to kill specimens for his museum and for sale; an exception being made in favour of the noble golden eagles of Hoy, which the proprietor of that island will not allow to be killed; all honour to him for this resolve. Mr. Hibbard, the name of the enterprising Yorkshireman, had, however, two eagles which he had killed before the order had gone forth to preserve them; descendants as he declared, of the famous eagle which swooped down from its eyrie on the Hoy cliffs and carried off a baby from its cradle,

which had been placed outside a house near Stromness. The infant, as you will remember, was recovered uninjured, and his grandson now lives at Stromness.

Besides the eagles, Mr. Hibbard's collection comprised specimens of all the Orcadian fauna, exceedingly well stuffed. Among the ospreys was one with a crow's head in its talons, which it had just struck off before it was shot. The shark was a specimen of the *Squalus borealis*, or Greenland shark. It had been captured in herring nets, and must have proved a troublesome prize. Whales, as well as sharks, are not uncommon in the Orcadian Archipelago, and as they have a propensity to run on shore when in shallow water, the Orcadians frequently obtain a rich prize of blubber. Sir W. Scott states that two hundred and sixty-five whales were captured one day when he was in the Orkneys; and Mr. Stevenson, in one of his engineering trips, saw upwards of one hundred and fifty of these animals in a bay at Unst.

On our way back to the inn we saw many of the doorways filled with pleasant-looking groups of young women plaiting straw. Orcadian straw is said to be tougher than that of the continent, but not so rich hued. The manufacture gives employment to a great many girls. About half a century ago 7,000 women were employed in the Orkneys straw plaiting, and about 20,000*l.* annually were derived from this source. The

straw of rye is preferred to that of wheat, being less brittle. Various woollen articles manufactured in Fair Isle may be purchased in Kirkwall. I bought a pair of thick knitted worsted gloves, covered with a very gay quaint pattern in brilliant colours. Sailors touching at Kirkwall on northern voyages buy these, and among the relics of the "Erebus" and "Terror," I recognised fragments of gloves, which had been obtained at Kirkwall by the crews of those ill-fated ships.

The Kirkwall women have the reputation of being pretty. Those that I saw were decidedly good-looking; more than one would not have disappointed the Scottish chieftain, who, as the story runs, having filled his brain with the ideal beauties of Runo-Forlo—described in Ossian's poems "as wild in brightened looks, her eyes wandering flames, amidst disordered locks"—saw a woman, when sailing near one of the Orcadian islands, whom he thought as beautiful as Runo-Forlo herself. Baffled in his attempts to land in order to obtain a nearer view of the island beauty, the love-stricken chieftain was blown by a fierce tempest back to his own land; but the stormy winds and waves do not seem to have destroyed or dimmed his memory of the beautiful girl of Orcadia. Nor had time any effect in cooling the chieftain's passion, which, as the story runs, increased to such an alarming degree, that two of his friends, fearing the consequences, sailed to the Orkneys

in order to procure the nymph for the disconsolate lover. After long search they found her, and the lady being nothing loth, was taken to the enamoured Scottish chief; but we may imagine his surprise and disappointment when the fancied prototype of the lovely Runo turned out to be a skinny middle-aged fisherwoman. Had the Kirkwall straw-plaiters whom I saw existed in his day, he would have fared better among them.

The men too are a fine race, bearing strongly the Scandinavian stamp, which extends from the Shetlands to the Ord of Caithness.

And, now, having pretty well "done Kirkwall," we dined, if not daintily, at all events "heartily," and between evening and night drove back to Stromness.

CHAP. XVII.

Return to Thurso.—The Fabulously Rich Lady.—Artificial Breeding Ponds.—Baby Salmon.—Salmon Fishery Laws.—Agriculture in Caithness.—Sheep-shearing Festivals.—Gay Shepherds.—Cattle Distempers.—Superstitious Mode of curing the Murrain.—The Need-Fire.—Baal Fire.—Magnificent Aurora.—The Merry Dancers.—Height of the Aurora.

FORTUNE favoured me on my return voyage to Thurso. Again I saw the grim precipices of Hoy lashed by the fierce waves; and again had I to hold on while the little tubby steamer reeled down the big water hills, and as the retarding influences had not become less, five hours elapsed from the time we left the bay of Stromness until we arrived in that of Thurso.

On my way to that town from Scrabster in the public car, the driver became very communicative, telling me the names of all the headlands and remarkable objects. He drew my attention particularly to Thurso Castle (where I was going to breakfast), and as the most important town-gossip, informed me with considerable solemnity that a lady—a very great lady, was staying with Sir George Sinclair; and so rich nobody could

say how much money she had ; a good lady too, for she had given large sums to the poor of Thurso. You will have no difficulty in giving a name to this kind lady, who wherever she goes leaves substantial proofs of her philanthropy and discriminating benevolence.

After a substantial breakfast I joined the castle party in a visit to Mr. Dunbar's ponds for the artificial production of salmon, situated about a mile from Thurso. In these we saw infant salmon glancing like minnows in the water. It is essential that the water should be taken from the river into which the young salmon will be turned when able to take care of themselves. Here a little runlet is conducted from the Thurso, and running over an inclined bed of pebbles on which the spawn is placed, falls into the ponds. Great success has attended Mr. Dunbar's breeding ponds, and many a lusty salmon that has graced a London banquet has probably commenced life in the little artificial basins near Thurso.

Those that we saw had been hatched in April 1859, and Mr. Dunbar informs me that they were put into the river last May.

This artificial breeding system is now in successful operation in various places in Scotland, but, observes Mr. Dunbar with great truth, if the salmon fishing laws were more stringent there would be no necessity for resorting to these troublesome artificial modes of breed-

ing this noble fish.* Mr. Dunbar, who is high authority of all matters connected with salmon, has favoured me with some remarks on this very important subject. He says:—

“Abolish all *bag and stake nets, as well as cruives; close early; protect well during close time;* and I venture to prophesy that in a very few years there will be ten salmon for every one now, and the price will be reduced from what it now is, viz., one, two, three, and four shillings per pound, to four, six, and tenpence per pound, seldom exceeding one shilling. The sea-coast proprietors will not agree to this. They say, What a hard thing to deprive us of our fishing opposite to our lands; but I say, We do not wish to deprive you of any right you may have; we only want to restrict you to the original system of fishing (net and coble). Use that as long as you think proper, but do not employ those destructive engines (bag and stake nets). These kill the fish every day and night of the week (Sundays not excepted); and when they do not kill, they frighten and stop the fish from going up the rivers, even in weekly close time, and in some dry seasons kill almost the very last salmon in the sea; so much so, that there is scarcely a salmon left

* As a proof of the falling off in the number of salmon taken in the north of Scotland, I may state that while in 1834 the barrel bulk of this fish sent from Aberdeen to London was 10,372, in 1859 it was only one-half this quantity.

to propagate their own species. Forty years ago such a thing as bag or stake nets were unknown. Now, go round the coast ; there is not a creek or bay in the sea, where nets can stand but there is one or more of those terrible engines at work. What a fearful persecution of this noble fish ; every animal in our kingdom has a guarantee that its life will not be sacrificed on Sunday. Not so with the poor salmon ; Sunday and Saturday are all the same. To be sure they are not killed on Sundays, but they are captured and kept in reserve for Monday morning, their certain day of execution. Now, if there was a weekly close time enforced by law for bag and stake nets, the thing would not be half so bad as it is. Many salmon which now are killed would find their way up the rivers, which would afford sport to the upper proprietors, and in due time larger numbers would be found in their spawning grounds propagating their species. It is well known that anglers will not kill one in ten that are in the river ; and it is also known that one sweep of the net takes more salmon than twenty rods kill in a whole season. The system of fixed nets is both injurious and unjust, and all those who have an interest in river fishing should unite to put an end to it. No wonder, however, that bag and stake-net proprietors get up a hue and cry about interfering with their nets ; for I know many bag and stake-net stations that, thirty years ago, brought no rent to the owners of the property

opposite them, which are now rented at one, two, five, seven, ten, and in one case fourteen hundred pounds a year. This is what I call a real transfer of property; while the river fishing, which thirty years ago brought similar rents to the above, are now rented at five and ten pounds, and in some cases bring nothing at all, being utterly worthless. How can the Legislature be so remiss as to allow such a wholesale system of plunder of the proper and legitimate owner, for the benefit of those who cannot show the least right or title to this species of property, and in hundreds of cases never even pay one sixpence for the protection of the very thing they so largely reap the benefit of? Away then with all bag and stake nets, and fixtures of every description; let the sea-coast and river proprietors have only the right of net and coble. Assess every one in proportion to the rental or value of their fisheries. For the protection of the rivers, close early, at least three weeks earlier than the law now is, and open as soon as spawning is finished; protect the fish just done spawning, and this is the whole legislation required to ensure an increase in the breed."

These remarks, emanating as they do from a person highly qualified by long experience to give an opinion on a question of such importance, possess great value, for all classes must feel interested in the preservation and increase of so noble and excellent a fish as the salmon.

I spent a very pleasant evening at the castle. Sir G. Sinclair kindly gave me some curious information respecting the past and present condition of Caithness. To his father, the well-known Sir John Sinclair, author of many agricultural works, the merit is due of having led the way in farming improvements, which have entirely changed the face of the country in the neighbourhood of Thurso.* He introduced the celebrated sheep-shearing festivals, of the first of which an amusing account has been preserved.

It took place at Thurso on the 1st July, 1791. "About fifty ladies and seventy gentlemen were present. They were received by Sir John Sinclair, Chairman of the Society for the Improvement of British Wool. In the centre of the green, specimens of various kinds of wool and dressed skins of Shetland sheep were exhibited, and 'particularly admired.' Sheep of various breeds from England, Scotland, Spain, Shetland, and Abyssinia, were also exhibited. The sheep-shearing began at two o'clock, and 'the dexterity with which it was performed was much praised.'

"The ladies were dressed in white muslin, with flowers and various-coloured ribbons, and each one bore a shepherdess's crook, decorated with taste and fancy." No one, it is added, attracted such admiration

* See his "General View of the Agriculture of the Northern Counties of Scotland," published in 1795.

as the Countess of Dundonald, "whose hat was decorated with wool from her own sheep, dyed by herself in various beautiful vivid colours, which had a fine effect." Several of the gentlemen were presented by her ladyship with cockades and other ornaments made of wool. "The gentlemen were dressed as their fancy dictated, but all had crooks on their buttons, and the majority wore coats of cloth made from their own flocks."

At four o'clock the company sat down to dinner in an elegant pavilion. The first toast given by Sir John Sinclair, who occupied the chair, was "The Royal Shepherd of Great Britain, and success to his Flock," and while the toast was drunk, the "Hind" frigate, which was at anchor in Thurso Bay, fired twenty-one guns. Then followed various other toasts appropriate to the occasion, and after tea the festival was wound up by a ball, which was kept up to a late hour.

What a pity that photography was an unknown art in those days; how pleasant it would be to have a faithful picture of those gay Corydons and their gayer Phillises!

This sheep-shearing festival may be considered as having put the seal of approval by the principal landowners in Caithness on sheep farming, which has since been carried out to an enormous extent.

Distempers among cattle were formerly very common in Caithness; now, however, improved management and

draining has greatly diminished cattle diseases. The murrain, or, as it was locally called, "the hasty," because the cattle died very soon after being attacked by it, was one of the most common diseases; so common and dreaded that it appears by county histories that many old women, reputed to have the power of curing the murrain, made considerable sums by the exercise of their deceptive trade. The cure was supposed to be effected by a *need fire*, and the manner of raising this is thus recorded:—

"Upon any small island where the stream of a river or burn runs on each side, a circular booth was erected of stone or turf, in which a semi-circular, or highland couple of birch, or other hard wood, was set; and a roof constructed upon it. A straight pole was set up in the centre of this building, the upper end being fixed by a wooden pin to the top of the couple, and the lower end in an oblong trunk in the earth or floor; and lastly, another pole was set across horizontally, having both ends tapered, one end of which was supported in a hole in the side of the perpendicular pole, and the other end in a similar hole in the couple leg.

"The horizontal stick was called the auger, having four short arms or levers fixed in its centre, to work it by; the building having been thus finished, as many men as could be collected in the vicinity, (being divested

of all kinds of metal in their clothes, &c.) would set to work with the said auger, two after two, constantly turning it round by the arms or levers, and others occasionally driving wedges of wood or stone behind the lower end of the upright pole, so as to press it the more on the end of the auger; by this constant friction and pressure, the ends of the auger would take fire, from which a fire would be instantly kindled, and thus the *need-fire* would be accomplished. The fire in the farmer's house, &c., was now quenched with water, a fire kindled from this *need-fire*, both in the farm-house and offices, and the cattle brought to feel the smoke of this new and sacred fire, which preserved them from dying of the murrain. In order to expedite the raising this *need-fire*, several gimlet holes in the ends of the auger were previously filled with bruised gunpowder and tinder." *

This superstitious performance was probably a vestige of the raising of the sacred fire of the Druids annually on the 1st of May. The ceremony was performed in Ireland as well as in Scotland, and the 1st of May is still called in Gaelic, *La-beal-tin*; the day of Baal's fire, or that dedicated to Baal, or the Sun.

The belief in the efficacy of the *need-fire* is exploded, but in more recent times it appears that in certain districts in Scotland a superstitious dislike was entertained

* Henderson's Agriculture of Caithness, p. 200.

against winnowing machines, because they were supposed to interfere with the elements.

Between 10 and 12 o'clock this night I saw a most magnificent exhibition of the Aurora. Few nights passed without our seeing this glorious phenomenon, but on this occasion the play of the fitful gleaming flashes was unusually grand and beautiful. The streamers filled a large area of the northern heavens, darting with excessive rapidity towards the zenith in feathery scintillations. The peasants, who call these lights the "Merry Dancers," maintain that they are accompanied by a noise like that of the rustling of silk or the movement of withered leaves, but the more trustworthy ears of stern, inquiring philosophy are unable to confirm this.

In a very interesting paper on the Aurora Borealis by the Rev. James Farquharson, published in the Philosophical Transactions for 1839, the author states that the result of elaborate calculations, based on careful geometrical measurements, shows that Auroras in Scotland are about 4,000 feet above the earth, and that the vertical extension of the fringe of streamers is about 3,000 feet. The height of Auroras, however, is greatly dependent on that of the clouds.

CHAP. XVIII.

To Sutherland.—The Southland of the Northmen.—Sidera.—Propitious Weather.—The Sutherland Mountains —Gorgeous Cloud Scenery.—The Stream of Forss.—Reay.—Sand-Side.—Caves of Gling-Glang.—A plentiful Repast.—Ancient Reay.—Water-spout.—Work for Antiquaries.—Mythical Zoology.—The Sea Serpent.—Mermaids.—The Schoolmaster Abroad.—Enter Sutherland.—Fleet of Fishing Boats.—Glen Hallowdale.—Straths.—Strath-Naver.—Strath-More.—Strath-Beg.—Melvich.—The Duke's House.—Vast Possessions of the Duke of Sutherland.—Excellent Map of Sutherland.—Sutherland Inns.—Small Amount of Accommodation.—Strathy.—The Two Churches.—Mistaken Ecclesiastical Views.—Violent Ministers.—Betty Hill.—Ben Hope.—Loch Monar.—Curious Superstition.—Tongue.

ACCOMPANIED by one of my Brawl friends, I left Thurso the following morning; and, shouldering my knapsack, turned my face westward. We are bound for Sutherland, the Suderland or Southerland of the Northmen; who, after having made themselves masters of the Orkneys, called the land south of them by the former name, and the most southern township or habitation in the county Suderha (the southern hall), corrupted to Sidera, a name still retained.

The morning was very propitious for walking. A slight

autumnal frost crisped the air ; and the atmosphere was so clear, that, when we gained the summit of the hill above Thurso, the great mural cliffs of Hoy were so distinct, that you would have supposed them to be only half a dozen miles distant.

We are fortunate to be thus favoured by weather; for when we lose sight of the Orkneys and of the blue belt of sea between them and Holbourn Head, the country through which we travel is not picturesque, brown rolling moorlands stretching far on every side. But we do not repine. Before us we see the Sutherland mountains, grand conical forms mingling with the clouds, and we know if we do not break down that we shall sleep to-night in the great Duke's county. And if the country be wild and barren, we have only to look up to see such cloud scenery as those born under blue Italian skies have no idea of. For now the wind, rarely at rest on this north coast, blows fresh from the west, bearing on its wings vast masses of vapour, which assume strange forms as they speed across the firmament. With such gorgeous cloud-land above us, wherein fancy may wander at will, now climbing Monte Rosas and Mont Blancs,—to which those on the earth's crust are but mole-hills,—now wandering through valleys mantled with golden sward, who will say that all is barren? With such influences above, we walked on in perfect contentment. But all, even in northern Caithness, is not dusky moor-

land. Four miles from Thurso the road bends towards the coast ; and, dipping, enters a charming little wooded valley, watered by the pretty prattling stream of Forss, which divides the parishes of Thurso and Reay. You must have lived for some weeks in Caithness to appreciate the beauty of this combination of wood, rock, and water, framed on the north by the sea. The vale of Forss is indeed a lovely little sylvan scene, and I was not surprised to see that a large landowner has selected it for his residence.

Four more miles across moorland and we reach Reay, a small village close to Sandside Bay. This is worth exploring, as the cliffs west of the bay are honeycombed with curious caves. One is called by the peasantry Gling-Glang, from the noise made by the waves dashing against its sides and vaulted roof. I cannot, however, confirm this, for a much stronger attraction than cliffs or caves existed in the little inn which we explored with the view of ascertaining whether breakfast was procurable, for we had had only a ghost of a breakfast before leaving Thurso. Happily, yes. We could have chops, herrings, or eggs. "All, and quickly," we replied ; and to hasten matters, we gained admittance to the kitchen and superintended culinary operations, gleaning meanwhile a little information from the landlady, who was nothing loth to be communicative. How her larder came to be so well supplied, was now made clear to us. Two sportsmen were staying in the house,

and provisions were abundant. We hoped so, for we made a fierce attack on those set before us; and we thought that the waiting-maid who brought us relays of herrings must have come to the conclusion that we were bent on making our meal do the double duty of breakfast and dinner.

Re-invigorated, we renewed our walk; but before getting under weigh we strolled down to the shore, to look at the situation of ancient Reay. For it appears (you will not find the circumstance mentioned in the Guide-Books) that there once existed a much larger place than the present village, and that it was situated between this and the head of the bay. An old poem mentions the Dun, or castle, of a great chief adjoining Reay, and this is described as having been a place of considerable note. A curious discovery made in 1751 confirms this. "In that year," says the Rev. Finlay Cook, "a waterspout fell five miles above Reay, and occasioned so great a torrent as to cut out a new channel through the sand between Reay and the shore sixteen feet deep, which discovered the remains of a town. The ends of seven houses built with stone were seen in a line, and the remains of several others, with some pieces of pavement. The stones, being of good quality, were carried off, and the banks soon falling, prevented any farther search. Picces of earthenware were found among the ruins."

Here is hidden treasure for antiquaries. Will no zealous member of the craft go and disinter ancient

Reay? Mythical zoology hangs about this place. Here, according to "credible witnesses," who of course declare that they could not have been deceived, the sea-serpent and mermaids have been seen. Respecting the former, we may dismiss him as being the ghost of the mighty and terrible Kraken of Norway, which the good, old, credulous Norwegian Bishop Pontoppidan describes as being a huge animal, with a body rising above the surface of the water like a mountain, and having arms like the masts of ships. This is the beast of whom Milton grandly sings :

"Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea."

It was to be expected that the Scandinavian belief in this monster would be imported with the Norsemen to the Orcades and the north coast of Scotland; and, in all probability, the accounts of the supposed sea-serpent have contributed to keep alive the belief that Bishop Pontoppidan's monster is not, after all, a fiction.

But the mermaids. Well, what can be said in opposition to the existence of these charming creatures, at all events at Reay, when witnesses come forward and deliberately describe mermaids which they have seen there? This: that said witnesses are very silly people, and that when they write such stuff they must expect

to be thought so. I have printed letters before me, emanating from persons who, from their social position at Reay, must have had considerable educational advantages; one is from a schoolmaster, in which mermaids are minutely described. Heaven help the boys taught by such a schoolmaster! "The forehead, nose, and chin" of the Reay mermaids, say these wisecracs, "were white, the whole side face of a bright pink colour. The head was exceedingly round, the hair thick and long, of a green and oily cast, and appeared troublesome to it, the waves generally throwing it down over the face; it seemed to feel the annoyance, and as the waves retreated, with both its hands frequently threw back the hair and rubbed its throat as if to remove any soiling it might have received."

We have walked two miles from Reay over continually rising ground, and passing a trench cutting the barren hill of Drumholsten north and south, we are in Sutherland. Hills frame the county where it joins Caithness, swelling as we advance to mountain elevations. And now we have an uninterrupted view of the sea. It is crowded with sails, not

"Silver sails all in the west,"

but tawny-hued, being those of herring-boats returning home from the Wick fishery, and among them is a large steamer with 800 fishers on board, bound for the western isles. Farewell now to level country; we are in the highlands, and shall soon be amidst giants. As we

progress, the population, nowhere thick in these parts, becomes thinner, the persons whom we meet on the road being mostly women returning, as we hear, from the herring harvest, and going to that of the corn. They carry small bundles, and walk with their heads curiously, and, as you would probably think, uncomfortably swathed with handkerchiefs. A long trudge even from Wick here, but many of them are going to the extreme west of Sutherland.

And now we descend to Glen Hallowdale, a charming vale, which opens out to the harbour of Port Skerry. The Hallowdale river flows through the glen or strath which penetrates the country for many miles, forming a belt of verdure amidst the sterility of the adjoining mountains.

These straths are oases in the deserts of North Sutherland, and are as beneficial to the peasant as they are lovely in the eyes of the tourist. The northern part of the county is bisected by several, extending north and south. Besides that of Hallowdale there are five others of great length, viz. Strath-Naver, which runs from the Loch of that name to the Bay of Farr; Strath Deerie and Strathmore from the roots of Ben More to the Kyle of Tongue and Loch Hope; Strath-Beg, whose waters flow from the precipitous sides of Arkle and Meall-horn and fall into Loch Eriboll; and Strath Dionard, the river of which drains the northern slopes

of the magnificent mountain of Foinhaven and falls into the Kyle of Duirness.

We cross the Hallowdale river in a boat worked by a chain, a sturdy girl turning the wheel ; and after halting for a few minutes to scan the river, which looks and is very fishy, and admire the beautiful vale, we climb the hill by a steep road leading to Melvich, a village on the hill slope, and inquiring for the inn, are shown a substantial stone house and told that it belongs to "the Duke" and is the inn. Yes ; all the hotels in Sutherland belong to "the Duke," as he is there called ; and when we remember that his vast possessions comprise in Sutherland 1865 square miles of land, and 38 square miles of water, or, 1,193,940 acres of land and 24,230 acres of water, you will admit that the inhabitants of his great county are warranted in regarding their chief as "the Duke." Why, is he not a greater territorial sovereign than many a German prince and dozens of Gross Herzhogs ? A county 60 miles in length and 56 in breadth, and all your own ! Where will you match this in German Principalities ?

The traveller in Sutherland has to thank the Duke for an admirable map of his county, constructed by his Grace's surveyors, Messrs. Burnett and Scott, which shows every locality of interest. But to make this practically useful to the tourist, a reduced copy should be published. However, it is very satisfactory to have

the power of consulting the large map at some of the inns, and you are the more able to appreciate this advantage, from the mapless state of Caithness.

Having walked twenty miles, a fair day's trudge unless you are a most greedy pedestrian, we halted at Melvich for the night, and had no reason to regret doing so, for the Duke's house affords excellent quarters; and, indeed, here I may say that all the inns in Sutherland are good. With few exceptions they are built of stone in a very substantial manner, and while solidity, a very necessary element in this rough-weather country, is observed, architectural elegance has not been overlooked. Generally, indeed, they seem more like pleasant villas than inns. I do not say that you will be allowed to depart without seeing and paying a bill, but the landlords, who are considerable farmers, are so unlike the usual race of Bonifaces, that you find it difficult to realise that you are in an inn. Then the parlours and bedrooms are so snug, daintily furnished, and clean, the latter in many cases with furniture provided expressly by the Duchess of Sutherland. A few years ago she visited most of the inns in the course of a yacht voyage, and wherever she perceived deficiencies in the furniture department, she ordered the necessary articles to be supplied from the Duke's cabinet-making establishment at Golspie. Add to all this that the fare, if not very varied, is abundant, good of its kind, and well cooked,

and that the price for breakfast, tea, or bed is 1s. 6d., and dinner from 2s. to 3s.; you will admit that this report of "the Duke's" houses in Sutherland is encouraging to those who may contemplate making a tour round that county.

But now comes the rub, and I feel that I should not be honest were I to omit telling you, dear reader, who may be tempted from my account to visit Sutherland, how you may be disappointed in these charming inns.

Where are tourists in Sutherland, as tourists now abound, to be accommodated? In the inns, you will answer, of course. Softly, softly, oh Paterfamilias; listen to me a little longer before you consent to the entreaties of those bewitching Hebes of yours to take them to romantic Sutherland. Engage rooms beforehand, and unless you have a quiver full of daughters you will, perhaps, be accommodated; neglect this precaution, and you and your belongings will in all probability be put to such shifts that you will wish yourself back in your snug villa near London.

The fact is, inns in Sutherland are not only few and far between, but when met with very unaccommodating in the matter of space. Two parlours and four or six bed-rooms is the usual amount of accommodation, and should you find these occupied there is no rival inn near to take you in. What is to become of tourists when they invade Sutherland, I cannot conjecture, for

here supply does not, and will not, follow demand; the Duke of Sutherland being resolved, as I was informed, not to build more inns. This determination proceeds probably from a desire to keep his vast county in a state of primitive wildness, deer being more considered than men. But as this opens a large question, upon which I may have something to say when I have seen a little more of the country, I shall not further allude to it at present.

You must also remember that the season for travelling in Sutherland is very brief, and therefore you are more likely to clash with fellow tourists than if it extended over several months. At most of the inns, too, one or more rooms are permanently occupied by sportsmen, which diminishes the accommodation available for tourists. Add to all these drawbacks that public conveyances in Sutherland are very limited in number and seats, the conveyances being merely open cars, and that you will rarely find more than one dog-cart for hire at any inn, and you will see that travelling in this large county, to those who cannot trudge it and rough it, is likely to be beset with difficulties.

We were up and off early the following morning. The country increases in picturesque beauty as you journey west. The road dips into frequently occurring glens, and rises to table lands, from whence you obtain grand views of far-stretching rocky headlands, each

wreathed with ocean foam, and deep blue bays, in which the sea still heaves with the roll of the northern wave.

We halted at Strathy, eight miles from Melvich, to breakfast. We had, it is true, broken fast at Melvich before we started, but after walking for eight miles in Sutherland, through the keen morning air, you are no man if you are not ready for a substantial repast.

Strathy, like all villages in the north of Scotland, possesses its two ecclesiastical and educational establishments. Two kirks, two manses, two school-houses, standing almost side by side, one set being Government establishments, the other rejoicing in the title of "Free." It is very sad to see this waste of money throughout Scotland, for one church is generally amply sufficient for the religious requirements of each parish, the population being in most cases quite inadequate to fill two.

This superabundance of churches arises from the old puritanical spirit, which entirely misapprehends the meaning of "Head of the Church." In this mistaken spirit, a Disruption minister writes:—"Could we barter our freedom for a bit of bread? Could we sell the rights of Christ? We were willing to resign churches, manses, stipends, but we could not agree that any power on earth should be the Head of the Church. It remained only that we should dissolve our connection with the State." *

* "Our Banner, and its Battles," by a Disruption Minister, 1859.

And thus, although the religion and form of worship are precisely the same in the two churches, the Scotch have voluntarily taxed themselves to erect 800 additional churches, manses, and school-houses. I attended service in the rival churches on several occasions, and could see no difference in the mode of worship. The Free Kirk Ministers that I heard were, however, always more energetic than their rivals, doing, as I have read of them, "good coarse country work," and occasionally in their wild, vehement denunciation of things obnoxious to them, whacking pulpit cushions and bibles very hard, or, as I have heard this muscular exhibition described, "dinging the guts out of the bible."

Beyond Strathy we entered rolling moorland, in which are many small lakes, gemmed with lovely lilies. The road winds among these for some three miles, and then turning seawards, runs parallel and close to the coast, dipping, about a mile from Farr, to the shore. We now passed round the head of a charming bay, in which the sea lay at rest, but you had only to look at the vast accumulation of sand through which the road struggles, to know how often it is vexed by storms. In many places the sand had been lifted into lofty hills, in others it assumed wavy forms, or was curved like snow wreaths.

Ascending on the opposite side of the bay, we passed

through Betty Hill, another hamlet perched on a commanding elevation, from which we obtained grand views of the now distinct mountains of Ben Laoghal and Ben Hope, and of lovely Strath-Naver, watered by a copious stream. The fertility of this strath is so great, that you regret to see it only yielding small patches of oats. But these are doubtless sufficient for the wants of the population, which is extremely scanty. Some years back we read that upwards of 1,200 persons resided in this strath. Now for twenty miles not a house is to be seen, except a few shepherds' dwellings. The hovels of the peasants near Betty Hill are extremely rude, and their occupants appeared to be far from prosperous.

Strath-Naver is interesting from being the locality of a superstition which clings to this part of Sutherland. About six miles from the entrance to the strath, in a secluded part of the valley, lies Loch Monar, the waters of which are firmly believed to have wonderful healing powers. The story runs that a woman who came from Ross-shire to live in Strath-Naver possessed certain holy or charmed pebbles which when thrown into water had the power of making it efficacious in diseases. One day when she was out, a man anxious to possess these stones assaulted her, but escaping from his hands, she ran to a lake in the vicinity, and exclaiming in Gaelic, "mo-nar, *shame*," cast the pebbles into the water. The

result may be guessed. The lake was straightway supposed to be endowed with curative powers, but it is somewhat remarkable that its hygienic efficacy is believed to exist during only four days in the year. These are the first Mondays in February, May, August, and November. During February and November, no one, according to the Rev. D. Mackenzie, minister of Farr parish, visits it, but in May and August numbers of people from Sutherland, Caithness, Ross-shire, and even from Inverness-shire and the Orkneys, make a pilgrimage to the Loch. The supposed benefits are not, however, conferred without further penance. You must be on the banks of the lake at midnight; and at one or two o'clock you must plunge three times into the waters, drink a small quantity, and throw a coin into the lake as a tribute to the spirit of the old woman, taking especial care to be fairly out of sight of the lake before the sun rises, otherwise all your labour will have been in vain.

We crossed the river by another chain-boat bridge, and then passing through a succession of really charming scenery, entered the thick woods which clothe the mountain slopes dipping into the lovely Kyle of Tongue. Through these woods the road winds, broomy braes and lichen-clad rocks set in rich fern on either hand, and amidst all this beauty stands another of the Duke's

houses, taking the pleasant form of an excellent inn, where, if you are fortunate in obtaining accommodation, you will be most comfortable. At least such was our lot, the more appreciated as Tongue is twenty-six miles from Melvich.

CHAP. XIX.

Beauties of Tongue. — Ben Laoghal. — Castle of Varrich. — Washing *al fresco*. — A Landing of Frenchmen. — Great Boulders. — The Kyle. — The Rabbit Islands. — Natural Salting Pans. — Seals. — The Lords Reay. — Ancient Manoir. — Cross the Kyle. — Lord Reay's Country. — The Reay Fencibles. — Loch Hope. — Loch Eriboll. — Huelim. — Delicious Herrings. — Old Mackay. — Grand Scenery. — Craignefelin. — Port Chamil. — Primitive Limestone. — Cave of Smoo. — Subterraneous Cataract. — Interesting Fossils. — Mr. Peach's Discoveries. — Sir R. Murchison. — Important Geological Researches. — Ancient Stratified Rock. — Nature of the Gneiss. — New Geological Doctrine. — Arrive at Durin.

WE had a storm during the night. Not that we personally had much experience of it, but on looking out, the brooklets of yesterday were swollen to the dignity of rivers, and the sides of Ben Laoghal were ribbed with cataracts which streamed down them like molten silver. How the parched country rejoiced in the rain! — how the green of the woods deepened, and the heather glowed with purple glory!

After an excellent breakfast — you will fare right well at Tongue, although the bread is brought from Thurso — we went out to look about us. Our impressions of last

evening were confirmed. The beauties of Tongue have not been done justice to. Indeed Sutherland generally has undergone very scurvy treatment at the hands of the guide-book makers. A stranger, ignorant of the grand and picturesque features of this country, would suppose that it was unworthy of being visited. Perhaps, however, because tourists are few in number, the compilers of these works think that praise of Sutherland would be labour lost.

The woods of Tongue, clothing the mountain slopes to the water's edge, are extremely beautiful. The Kyle, too, which seems like a fresh-water lake, running far amidst the folds of the mountains to the roots of mighty Ben Laoghal, is a lovely feature. But to see and enjoy the grand panorama of mountains, lakes, woods, and rocks, you must ascend to the ruined castle of Varrich. This stands on the summit of a promontory jutting far into the Kyle. A bridle road extends the greater part of the way, but if not afraid of a little wet, you can abridge the distance by crossing a small stream near the inn, which runs through a lovely rocky glen, fringed by indigenous birch. On our way up the stream, looking for a fordable locality, our attention was attracted by clouds of vapour ascending from the woods close to the water side. It proceeded from cauldrons of boiling water, which were surrounded by women, who, finding it involved less trouble to carry dirty clothes to the stream

than water to their houses, were washing, *al fresco*, by the river side.

Having crossed the stream, we passed over a tract of swampy ground, covered with bog myrtle, and then climbing a rocky steep, reached the Castle. The very name — Varrich — signifying the castle on an eminence, is suggestive of a wide range of view. Varrich has every appearance of having been a place of great strength, for though of small extent the walls are very thick, and of considerable height. History is silent respecting its builders and occupiers, but it was evidently erected for purposes of defence in connection with other ruined hill fortresses commanding the Kyle. Had these been perfect and in a condition to resist an attack, would the French have ever landed on the shores of the Kyle of Tongue?

What! I fancy I hear the indignant British reader say, did the French ever invade Sutherland? Not exactly, but in 1746 a ship full of a party of French on their way to assist the rebels ran for safety into the Kyle of Tongue, and, the party having landed, were captured by the peasants.

Seen from the crumbling battlements of Varrich, you will admit that Ben Laoghal, with its magnificent precipices, well merits the title of Queen of the Sutherland mountains. This noble mass occupies the centre of the great mountain amphitheatre, and rises in a series

of precipices to the height of 2,505 feet, terminating in four colossal splintered peaks like gigantic cathedral spires. The granite of which it is composed pervades a considerable portion of Tongue parish. You may see boulders of this rock stranded, as it were, on the hill slopes near the village. Old writers on Sutherland were sorely perplexed to account for the presence of these erratic masses, but in their days the glacial theory had not been received into geology.

Ben Hope, a grand dome-shaped mass, rises to the height of 3,040 feet, and contrasts in stern sublimity with the battlemented precipices of Ben Laoghal: and backing these noble mountains to the south are a host of other elevations whose heads mingle with cloud-land. Beneath, you have the wide-spreading Kyle fringed with green pastures and hanging woods, with its projecting headlands breaking the foam of the North Sea, and half encircling the islands of Eilean na naoimh (Saint's Island), Eilean na roan (Seal Island), and the Rabbit Islands.

The second, as its name implies, is a favourite basking ground of seals. On the former, traces of a chapel and burial-ground may still be seen. These islands, composed of conglomerate resting on sandstone, are indented by many fissures, through which the sea is frequently driven with great force. The spray on such occasions is blown upon the rocks, and evaporating

leaves saline matter in the hollows, which the peasants use to salt their fish.

Tongue is one of those favoured spots to which the line,

“There can be no farewell to scenes like thine,”

forcibly applies. If a lover of the beautiful, you will never forget the panoramic view from Varrich Castle, for we know what an excellent mental photograph a faithful memory can produce.

But we cannot linger longer ; so, descending the grassy slope, we return to our inn, one of the best in Sutherland, and turn our backs on the pretty village of Tongue. Our road lies through the woods adjoining Tongue House, which stands near the Kyle. This house, a good specimen of the old Scotch manoir, was the residence for many years of the great Lords Reay, to whom half Sutherland belonged. Donald, the first lord, who is said to have been possessed of almost superhuman physical strength, figures prominently in the history of the wars of Gustavus Adolphus. Leaving Tongue House, with its groves of beech, elm, and ash, a little to the left, we pursued the road, which is carried on the ridge of a long narrow tongue of land jutting transversely far into the Kyle, from which the parish takes its name. At the head of the Tongue stands a small house with a flag-staff near it. After much shouting we exhumed an old crone from the house,

who, when her fee of one penny was paid, produced a flag, which we hoisted as a signal to the ferryman at the other side of the Kyle. This done we walked to the end of the Tongue, from whence you have another excellent view of the surrounding scenery, though not so commanding as that from Varrich Castle. In a few minutes the ferry-boat, a rough craft, was alongside, manned by grisly weather-worn fishers. Favoured by a stiff breeze we flew across the Kyle pleasantly enough, but some puffs of wind which swept wickedly down from the mountain gorges, made us very willing to believe that it requires nice handling to navigate a boat across the Kyle in stormy weather.

On landing we ascended the hill-side, and were soon in the stern wilderness. Nothing can be greater than the contrast between the east and west banks of the Kyle of Tongue; the former all wood and verdure, the latter brown moorland and rock. We are now in Lord Reay's country; or, as it is called in Gaelic, Duthaich Mhic Aoi (the Land of the Mackays), extending from the river of Borgie to the Kyle of Assynt, comprehending an area of about 800 square miles. This is the country in which the famous Reay Fencibles were raised. Sir W. Scott says in his Diary that Lord Reay might have as easily doubled the number of men as he could have quadrupled the rental of his estate, by turning it into sheep-farms. But to effect this, adds Sir Walter,

“ Lord Reay would have to turn out several hundred families, who have lived under him and his fathers for many generations, and the swords of whose fathers probably won his lands.”

Scott's kind heart, we know, was all for keeping the men, even at great monetary sacrifice. Elsewhere he says, when discussing the question of getting rid of old tenantry in order to improve estates: “It is the hardest chapter in economics; and if I were an Orca-dian laird I feel I should shuffle on with the old useless creatures, in contradiction to my better judgment.”

You must not forget, when trudging through this wilderness, that you are indebted to the Duke of Sutherland for the excellent road which he made when he acquired the Reay Estates. Eight miles of waste, and we descended to the shores of Loch Hope, a lovely sheet of fresh water, more like a river, indeed, than a lake, for it is six miles long and only half a mile broad. Rocks and bosky braes fringe the east and west sides of the lake; the south extremity is terminated by majestic Ben Hope, which springs from the lake, while at the north the lake waters are carried to the sea by the River Hope. We crossed this river in a chain-boat bridge, and ascending the hill-face, passed across a belt of tableland, and then descended to Loch Eriboll. This is another of those fiords which form a distinguishing feature in Sutherland scenery. Loch Eriboll is ten

miles long, with a varying breadth of from one to four miles. Few seamen whose lives have been spent on the stormy waters of our North Sea are unacquainted with Loch Eriboll; for, enjoying the advantage of being one of the best anchorages in the kingdom, ships from the east, unable to double Cape Wrath, or baffled by gales in the Pentland Firth, put in here. And few contrasts, I imagine, can be greater than the Pentland Firth near Cape Wrath, lashed by a north-west gale, and tranquil Loch Eriboll, set in lovely scenery. This lake, indeed, is so beautiful that, were it near the beaten track of tourists, we should find (with the Duke's permission) a capacious hotel on its banks. Now the wayfarer must be satisfied with the humble inn on Huelim promontory. To this we made our way, passing over a shingle beach, until we came to a small house, at the door of which we were met by a weather-beaten but hale old man, whose rusty features were crowned by a cap ornamented by a grand plume from an eagle's wing.

In answer to our queries he informed us that we could have beds and something to eat. The "something" turned out to be fresh herrings caught by the landlord's sons, which justified the high praise accorded to the "herrings of Loch Eriboll; butter, potatoes, oat-cake, and jam; you must not expect bread in these parts. But unless very unable to rough it, if you love the beautiful you would willingly stop in worse quarters

than those at Huelim to enjoy an evening on the shores of Loch Eriboll. Adjoining the inn stands a rough picturesque fishing hut, before which nets were hanging from poles to dry. Beneath the hut the Loch forms a charming little bay, in which our landlord's fishing boats lay moored, and the long lake runs far up between precipitous cliffs and mountain buttresses. Near the head of the Loch, nestling amidst small islands, some dozen ships were lying at anchor, their sails hanging idly in the clear sharp sweetness of this north air; and at the mouth of the Loch, backed by grand mural-shaped "White Head," two others were making attempts to pass out into the Pentland Firth. The scene was extremely beautiful, and we sat down to enjoy it. Presently our old host Mackay joined us. What a fine fellow he is! Eighty years of age last summer, with an undimmed eye, and a memory which clings tenaciously to all the stirring incidents of his youth. I trust that I shall do him no injury by stating that he was the only person that I met in Sutherland who mourned over the passing of the great Reay country into other hands. But the Duke, the "good Duke," as I often heard him called, will forgive an old man of eighty, and a Mackay — of course claiming kinsmanship with his last chief — lamenting that the lands of the Mackays are in stranger hands. Were the Duke to build him a good stout house, in which he could entertain travellers with

comfort to them and advantage to himself, Mackay probably — travellers certainly — would bless the Duke for his liberality. As it is, the poor old fellow finds it a hard matter to make the two ends meet. His two sons, fine stalwart fellows, are his principal support. They coax little patches of ground on the shores of the Loch to produce oats and potatoes; but their principal occupation is fishing, as they generally find their bread upon the waters. A hard struggle doubtless for life have these dwellers on this wild lake, which through the greater part of the year is lashed by storms and inclement weather.

The following morning we resumed our journey. If time presses you can cross Loch Eriboll by a ferry from Ardneachie to Port Chamil. The distance is one mile and three-quarters, a tough pull in rough weather, but still far shorter than going round the head of the Loch, which is a twelve miles' walk. The scenery, however, is so grand that you will be abundantly repaid for making the *détour*. Rain during the night had given new life to the rills and burns, which spouted and dashed down the steepes, the peaty waters glowing with golden radiance as they passed over the quartz rocks. Three miles from the head of the Loch the stern character of the scenery is softened by slopes, chequered by pastures and oat fields, amidst which the hamlet of Eriboll is situated. Beyond this the road is carried under the

battlemented heights of Craignefelin, which frown above, while immediately beneath

——— “nor fen nor sedge
Pollute the pure lake’s crystal edge ;
Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink,
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land ;
For in the mirror, bright and blue,
Each hill’s huge outline you may view.”

Here lay the ships that we saw last evening, images of peace and repose, for the water was an unruffled mirror. The entire walk round the head waters of this noble lake reminded me of many parts of the famous Corniche road.

On reaching Port Chamil we ascended the hill side, and after walking about two miles came to that remarkable outbreak of primitive limestone, extending from the Kyle of Duirness to Smoo, which is supposed to occupy an area of about fifteen square miles. This limestone is surrounded principally by gneiss, porphyry, and granite, of which rocks the north-west of Scotland is composed.

If you have read and remember Sir Walter Scott’s account of the Cave of Smoo, you will be prepared to hear that our expectations rose high as we drew near this remarkable locality. On his voyage round the north of Scotland the great novelist visited the cave, and was so

highly delighted with it that the description of its wonders occupies a large portion of his too brief Diary.

I will not say that we were disappointed — for the Cave of Smoo is certainly a grand object — but I venture to think that had Scott seen the Adelsberg Caverns in Carniola before he visited Smoo, he would not have written quite so glowing an account of its wonders. The cave is close to the road, which in fact passes over it. A steep path leads to a creek between two lofty walls of rock, and when at the bottom you have before you a vast arch 53 feet high, 110 feet wide, and 200 feet deep. Above the crown of the arch there are twenty-seven feet of precipitous limestone rock, making the entire height to the summit 80 feet. The interior of the cave, which is even more lofty than its mouth, is supported by a huge pillar with a gigantic capital. Standing at the extreme end, the effect of the light is very striking, and as the evening deepened, for it was late when we visited it, the scene increased in solemnity. Like most limestone caves, that of Smoo has its stream. You hear it falling into a pool at the base of an inner-cave, and see it flowing out and into the creek. The noise of this subterraneous waterfall echoing through the caverns, adds greatly to the effect of the singular scene, and those who have not seen Adelsberg would probably be repaid by seeing the cataract itself. To do this you must engage boatmen, who charge fifteen shil-

lings for ferrying you across the little pool in the inner cave, besides another charge for lights, but whether in this case *le jeu vaut la chandelle* I cannot say, as we were satisfied by seeing the wonders of the great Cavern. The botanist will be pleased to find the delicate and beautiful plant, *Dryas Octopetala*, or mountain avens, mantling the slope at the upper end of the Cavern, and the geologist will look at the limestone of Smoo with greater interest when he knows that it contains curious fossils. This discovery was made in 1854 by Mr. Charles Peach, a self-taught geologist, whose labours in the palæontological branch of geology have been so successful that he has added considerably to the list of fossil zoophytes and echinodermata.

Originally attached to the preventive service on the coast of Cornwall, with slender means and charged with the cares of a family, Mr. Peach availed himself of the opportunities afforded him when officially visiting wrecks on wild headlands to examine the rocks. In these he has detected fossils overlooked by previous observers, and has enabled older geologists to assign to hard and crystalline rocks, the age of which was unknown, a definite place in the Palæozoic series.*

Mr. Peach's discovery of organic remains in the

* See anniversary address (1858) of the President of the Geological Society, on which occasion the Wollaston Purse was given to Mr. Peach.

Durness limestone, was deemed so important by our great geologist, Sir Roderick Murchison, that he twice revisited the north-west of Scotland, for the express purpose of again examining the geology of that district. On both occasions he was accompanied by eminent geologists; in 1858 by Professor Nicol, and in 1859 by Professor Ramsay.

The result of these visits is not only extremely interesting, but also highly important, because it involves no less a change in the geological map of Scotland than referring to the lower Silurian epoch a vast region which has up to this day been considered to be of a primary age, and anterior to palæozoic life.

And as we are in the district made geologically famous by Mr. Peach's researches, some account of Sir Roderick Murchison's labours and their results will not be out of place.

Mr. Peach's discovery of twenty-three well defined forms in the Durness limestone, comprising several genera belonging to the Lower Silurian rocks of Europe and North America, eleven being identical with American forms, led Sir Roderick to the conclusion that the red conglomerate and sandstone of the whole of the north-west part of Scotland is of very high antiquity; for not only does it underlie strata of the Lower Silurian age, but even the edges of the subjacent conglomerate and

sandstone have been eroded before the Silurian deposits had been laid upon them.

Sir Roderick also states that the most ancient stratified rock in Scotland, and, as far as he knows, in the British Isles, is the gneiss, which is exhibited in the north-western shores of Ross and Sutherland, where it forms the rugged basement of the whole stony superstructure. At Cape Wrath, and along the north-western coast, this gneiss has everywhere the same grey hornblende basis, traversed by many veins of bright-pink granite. It may be traced along the west shore of the Kyle of Durness; and near a little burn adjacent to the Ferry House the rock is charged with asbestos and actinolite.

Sir Roderick's visit last year to the Highlands enabled him not only to confirm his previous views, but to strengthen them. In a communication that he made to the Geological Society in November last, he says that Professor Ramsay and himself "not only saw no reason to depart from any of the views already published, but that they were enabled to strengthen them by laying down on a map a more correct outline of the formations than had hitherto been traced, by marking the principal faults, and by indicating clearly the transition upwards from the known Lower Silurian rocks into a superior micaceo-quartzose series (or the so-called "younger gneiss"), which is entirely dissevered from the

Old or Fundamental Gneiss. They further ascertained that, whenever eruptive rocks occurred, they did not interfere with or derange this ascending conformable Lower Silurian succession." Sir Roderick further expressed his opinion that the "mica slates, clay slates, and quartz rock of the southern Highlands, will probably be found to fall into the same Lower Silurian category as the rocks of Sutherland.*

These researches by our eminent Director-General of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, entirely upset the long entertained belief that the "great mountainous masses of red conglomerate and sandstone of the west coast of Scotland are detached portions of the old red sandstone, and Mr. Peach's palæontological discoveries have enabled Sir Roderick Murchison to define the great unfossiliferous conglomerate masses of Sutherland as of Cambrian age, the quartzites and limestones as Lower Silurian, and the overlying micaceous and gneissose schists and flagstones as also of Silurian age.

And now let us go to Durin. The inn is two miles from the Cavern. We walk briskly, for the night is closing, and we know if there be rooms unoccupied that we shall be made thoroughly comfortable by that excellent landlady, Mrs. Ross.

* See Sir R. Murchison's New General Geological Map of the Highlands, just issued (Quart. Jour. Geol. Soc., May 1860).

CHAP. XX.

A Pattern Landlady.—The North Sea.—Far-out Head.—Kyle of Durness.—The Midges again.—Foinnebhein.—Vast Sheep Farm.—Valley of Kerwick.—Grand View of the Atlantic.—Cape Wrath.—The Lighthouse.—The Tower.—Lighthouse rules.—Short and Long Days.—Bad Situation of the Lighthouse.—Pharcological Science.—Outside the Tower.—Magnificent View.—The Precipices.—Formation of Granites.—A Giddy Eyrie.—The Parph of Ancient Geographers.—Nature of Cape Wrath.—Measureless Caves.—The Surging Sea.—Numerous Wild Fowl.—A Storm on Cape Wrath.

YES, there was room. The inn, in fact, was guestless, and we met with a warm welcome from Mrs. Ross. Not that I wish you to suppose that Mrs. Ross would not at all times and seasons make you comfortable at Durin, but if you have travelled (and who has not in these days?) you know that landlords and landladies are very apt to measure their civility by the number of their guests. The tide of tourists had set southwards, and we had all the inn to ourselves; an advantage only to be enjoyed during the early or latter part of the season.

On awaking I saw the North Sea spread out before

me calm as a lake, and Far-out Head, which, as its name implies, stretches far into the sea, and does battle with the waves as they roll through the Firth.

As my friend's time was now running very short, in order to enable him to return to Tongue in the evening we hired a dog-cart from Mrs. Ross to take us to Cape Wrath and bring us back again. Under any circumstances, if you visit Cape Wrath you must return to Durin, as the road only extends to the Cape. So after an early breakfast, at which oat-cake did the duty of bread, we set off for the Kyle of Durness, which is about a mile from the inn. The time of high water rendered it necessary to take the dog-cart across the Kyle some hours before we started, and the horse had been ridden round the head of the Kyle, the ferry-boat not being adapted to take horses.

The Kyle of Durness is the most western estuary of the sea on the north of Scotland, nearly land-locked, and backed on the south by lofty mountains. It is a favourite resort of white trout and seals; companies of the *Phocæ Vitulinæ* may frequently be seen on the sandbanks at low water. The ferry (1,350 yards) lands you on the west side of the Kyle, in a charming little creek, festooned with a great variety of ferns and beech trees, which hang over the Kyle. Near this creek are the rocks which I mentioned as containing asbestos and actinolite. The scene is so beautiful that I sat down

while the horse was being harnessed to sketch it, but had scarcely opened my book before I was literally enveloped in a cloud of midges, whose attacks quickly put me to flight. Here, at all events, they were near water; indeed, I never saw them in such numbers nor so ferocious as on the Kyle of Durness; but all through Sutherland they are terrible scourges, rendering sketching a physical impossibility.

Nothing can be conceived wilder than the drive from Durness to Cape Wrath (eleven miles). The narrow road, excellent as usual, is carried across a vast tract of moor, so far from the coast that the sea is invisible, but while this is shut out you have grand views of Foinnebhain and Ben Spionnadh, lofty mountains south-west of the Kyle, that tower over the dusky moorland. Seven miles through a barren solitude of

"Heather, mosses, 'mong frogs, and bogs, and fogs;
'Mongst craggy cliffs, and thunder battered hills,"

and we came to a cabin tenanted by a shepherd, the only dweller between Durin and Cape Wrath. For all this district is a vast sheep farm, and I question whether the most enterprising agriculturist with cart-loads of chemicals and composts could turn the land to a more profitable use than grazing sheep. Two more miles, and the scene undergoes a change. The road plunges into the valley of Kerwick, from whence you obtain a glimpse of the sea and of a very curious pillar-shaped

rock, said to rise two hundred feet above the water. The remaining four miles to the Cape is inconceivably wild. The road, leaving Kerwick valley, continually ascends in wide curves up the steep side of the back of the mountain forming Cape Wrath. At length, when within a few hundred yards of the lighthouse, you emerge on a plateau, and see before you to the north and west the mighty Atlantic. This glorious ocean burst is alone worth going to Cape Wrath to see. You feel that you are at the end of a kingdom, and the termination of the road at the lighthouse strengthens this feeling.

Leaving the dog-cart at the stables, we walked to the buildings. These, which are surrounded by a high wall, occupy a flat area close to the verge of the precipitous Cape. They are very extensive, and appear unnecessarily large for the apparently simple purpose of showing a light; but when we remember that Cape Wrath is eleven miles from a village, and that the lighthouse keepers must be provisioned like a ship at sea, you will not think them too spacious for their requirements.

As usual in all British lighthouse establishments, that at Cape Wrath is a model of neatness and cleanliness. Our request to be allowed to see the lantern was immediately acceded to by the chief lighthouse keeper, who conducted us to the top of the tower. This as well as the rest of the building is constructed of

large blocks of granite, quarried from Clash Carnoch in the vicinity at great expense; the lighthouse having cost 14,000*l*. The tower is seventy feet high, and is provided with twenty revolving lights, displaying alternately red and white light every two minutes. The golden rules in the management of a lighthouse are, that the lamps shall be lighted every evening at sun-set, and kept constantly burning bright and clear till sunrise, and that the glasses of the lantern shall be kept scrupulously clean. For let the lamps burn their brightest, if seen through a glass darkly, the great object of the lighthouse would be defeated.

Cape Wrath lighthouse is worked by two men; one, the chief, is married and fortunately has a family, for in this lone corner of our island the prattle of little ones makes sweet music during the short winter days. A sheet suspended in the lantern room shows the hours during each day in the year when the lamps are to be lighted and extinguished; and you will see how long the summer days are in this northern latitude ($58^{\circ} 37'$), and how short they are in winter, by the order that on the 19th June the lamps are to be lighted at 9.53 P.M. and extinguished at 2.9 A.M.; and on the 18th December they are to be lighted at 3.44 P.M. and extinguished at 8.11 A.M. Two watches are kept during summer and four during winter, and the average annual consumption of colza oil is 800 gallons.

Great pains were taken by Mr. Stevenson and the Lighthouse Commissioners in 1814 to select what was considered a suitable locality for this most important beacon, the most important perhaps on the whole coast of Scotland, as it is intended to shed a warning light over the most dangerous part of that sea of tribulation, the Pentland Firth. Sir Walter Scott, who was with the Commissioners when the selection was made, tells us in his Diary that an advantageous point was chosen, and we see that no expense was spared to make the Cape Wrath beacon a shining light—"on the brow of night." Experience, however, shows that lights hung so high above the sea as that on Cape Wrath are not seen so well throughout the year as those suspended nearer the level of the ocean. The lights in the lighthouse on the Down, at the south-west of the Isle of Wight, were seen so badly that a new lighthouse has recently been erected at a lower elevation on the Needles; and I have the authority of a Lighthouse Commissioner for saying that the lighthouse on Cape Wrath is very far from answering the purpose for which it was erected. The fact is that pharology, with its dioptric and catoptric methods, has made great advances since the period when Cape Wrath lighthouse was erected, and the little sun, produced by magneto-electricity, which blazes nightly from the lighthouse on the South Foreland, sends forth such far-piercing rays that the luminous beams are flung

across the English Channel, far into France, and the light only sets to the beholder from the earth's convexity.

Having examined the machinery, we went on the gallery outside the tower.

Heavens! what a view. Though not sufficiently clear to the south-west to enable us to see the Butt of Lewis, the eye ranged south far down the coast, headland after headland appearing until lost in the dim distance, and eastward other ranges of precipitous cliffs stretching away fringed by rocky islands,

"salt and bare,

The haunt of seals, and auks, and sea-mews' clang,"

to the west — ocean, ocean, ocean — no land being between you and America.

But grand as are the views, your inquisitive eye will soon be attracted by the Cape itself, over whose mighty precipices you seem to hang. Six hundred feet of nearly vertical rock are between you and the sea. It is an awful scene, but from the overhanging nature of the precipice you cannot scan the rock face as you would wish. Have you a steady head and a firm foot? Then come with me. We descend the tower, and crossing the wall are at once on the edge of the precipice. Fortunately we have no crumbling rock beneath us. The gigantic waves rolling from the west, often baited to fury by storms, would soon overthrow Cape Wrath were it com-

posed of less durable material than gneiss.* So you need be under no apprehension of insecure footing. Crossing cautiously to the end of a projecting crag overlooking the precipice, we lie down, and grasping the rock, plumb the abyss with our eye, without a single intervening object between us and the sea.

Cape Wrath, the Parph of ancient geographers, is composed of a huge waved gneiss wall, interspersed so abundantly by rich pink granite veins that the face of the cliff glows with a roseate hue. In many places the precipice is 600 feet high. The base of this grand termination to a kingdom is set round with huge rocks, some perforated, others torn, splintered, and fissured into weird forms, and among and through these mighty waves roll and boil with appalling fury, while the caves,

“All measureless to man,”

roar and moan as the sea fills their vast vaults and surges out in foaming cataracts, which flash at intervals in the dark recesses of the rocks.

Above this wild confusion of waters soared hundreds of sea-fowl, and far down on the rock ledges were ser-

* In a very interesting paper by Mr. Sorby, on the Structure of Crystals and Rocks (*Journal of the Geological Society*, vol. xiv.), he states that the Cornish granites were formed under a mean pressure of 50,000 feet, while the granites in the north of Scotland were formed under a mean pressure of 76,000 feet.

ried rows of motionless cormorants, which seemed as if they had lately enjoyed an abundant fish dinner.

Seeing so many birds, I was led to ask the lighthouse keeper whether many were killed during storms by dashing against the lanthorn at night. To my surprise he answered in the negative, and added that the few birds killed were not sea-fowl, but land-birds, and principally larks.

From more than one projection did I peer down the stupendous precipices of this noble Cape, and when the waning day obliged me to turn away, I carried off from a far jutting rock a beautiful specimen of the roseate granite, which in the shape of a paper weight is now lying before me.

Never did I long more for a storm than here, for to stand on Cape Wrath and contemplate the war of wind and water under such influences must be a spectacle of rare grandeur. You may be glad to know that, although the lighthouse keepers are forbidden to give visitors a bed when the weather is fine, they are permitted to entertain storm-overtaken travellers. There are two or three very comfortable bed-rooms and a sitting-room provided for the convenience of the Commissioners of Lighthouses when making their official visit.

CHAP. XXI.

Part from my Companion.—Expedition to Far-out Head.—Sandy Wilderness.—Nature of the Head.—Grim Rocks.—Numerous Wrecks —A Boatman's reason for having bad Sails.—Flotsome and Jetsome. Ruined Chapel of Durin.—Quaint Mortuary Inscriptions.—Piratical Freebooter.—Summer Residence of the Lords of Reay.—Banamhorar-Chat; The Great Lady of the Cat.—The Free Kirkers.—The Government Kirk —Demoralising Effect of the Wick Fishery.

ON our return to Durin we partook of a hurried repast, and my friend returned to Tongue. The separation was by no means pleasant. Our travels in wild Sutherland, where tourists are few, brought us into close companionship, and we soon found that we had many sympathies in common.

Left alone, I devoted the evening to an expedition to Far-out Head, the extremity of which is four miles from Durin. The way for the first mile lies across a wilderness of sand, and then along the summit of the cliffs, which rise as you advance to the end of the Head, until they attain the elevation of between 300 and 400 feet. From the extremity of the Head, which is composed of micaceous and siliceous flagstones,

I obtained a glorious view of Cape Wrath, behind which the sun was setting in golden glory.

Long to be remembered is the hour that I spent on this lonely headland. During my walk I did not see a single living thing, and yet I did not feel alone with the wild waves around me, which were breaking with thunder tones on the grim rocks — terrible and fatal to many gallant ships, which, having struggled long in this tempestuous North Sea, have been dashed to fragments upon them. You see portions of their weather-worn ribs sticking among the rocks, like the bones of some great sea monster.

But wrecks on Far-out Head are happily now not nearly so numerous as they were prior to the erection of the lighthouse on Cape Wrath. In those dark days many a little fortune was made by what was called a providential wreck.

“How happens it,” said the late Mr. Stevenson to a grisly boatman on the north coast of Scotland, “that your sails are so bad?” “If,” answered the sailor, “it had been God’s wull that you hadna built sae many lighthouses, I wad hae had new sails last wunter.” But Flotsome and Jetsome are not yet myths. I slept at Durin in sheets made from the cotton cargo of a ship wrecked during the preceding winter on Far-out Head, and the counterpane was manufactured from the same material.

On my way back I made a slight *détour* to see the ruined Chapel of Durin, belonging to the old Augustine monastery at Dornoch. It stands near the head of the bay, where the waves from the great deep sink to rest as they roll up the sands, and is surrounded by a cemetery, in which I lingered until the fading light was too weak to enable me to decipher the inscriptions on the tombstones. Almost all the epitaphs contain allusions to storms or to the sea. Here are two that I copied:—

ANNE INNES, SPOUSE OF DONALD INNES.

“Ten }
1 } yeares the genuine copy of a virtuous wife
Clear is her prospect of landing safe from all the storms of Life.”

MARY, SPOUSE OF EDWARD LOCH.

“Here lyes my der spous, who lang was toss’d
On stormy waters, and by sad sickness crost
But now, by God’s good grace has gain’d a haven
And is at last most safely moor’d in heavin.”

We cannot commend the logic, spelling, or poetry of the epitaphs of these bereaved husbands, who, however, seem to take comfort by the belief that their wives are in the regions of the blessed.

But perhaps the most noteworthy inscription is that on the tombstone of the piratical freebooter, Donald Mac-Murshov-ic-cvin-mhoir, which he is said to have composed himself. It runs thus:—

“ Donald Mac-Murshov leir Iyis lo,
 Vas ill to his frend and var to his fo
 But true to his maister in veird and vo
 •
 1623.”

Near the ruined chapel stands a substantial manoir-like structure, interesting as having long been the summer residence of the Lords of Reay: now it is occupied by a substantial farmer.

On returning to my inn I found a cheerful fire and a substantial tea, while partaking of which Mrs. Ross chatted with me. It was pleasant to hear her praises of *Banamhorar-Chat*, or the great Lady of the Cat, the Gaelic title of the Duchess of Sutherland, and how she had spent five days in the little inn, and “behaved just like any other lady, not in the least proud.”

In answer to my questions, Mrs. Ross told me that the population of Durin are almost without exception Free Kirkers. She “was long loth to cast her lot with them, apprehending the Duke’s displeasure,” but now she was a happy woman, and she did not think that the Duke or Duchess “minded her shifting.”

The Government kirk, she added, “might well be shut up:” the same story you see everywhere. The people, according to Mrs. Ross, are very religiously inclined, with the exception of those who go yearly to the Wick fishery. The girls bring back about 8*l.*, but the money is dearly earned, for it appears that they come back terribly demoralised.

CHAP. XXII,

The Pleasures of a Good Landlady.—A Trout Breakfast.—Far off from Home.—What Great Britain would be were she as Broad as she is Long.—Start alone.—Scenery of the Kyle of Duirness.—Storm Clouds.—Valley of Grudic.—Ascend to Gualin.—Dreary Wastes.—Mysterious Figure.—One of the “Men.”—Nature of the Religious Doctrine of the “Men.”—Their Dress.—Cap worn by them.—Curious Particulars respecting them.—Their Fanaticism.—Power exercised by them over the People.—Their Ignorance.—Astonishment excited by Opera-Glasses.—Gualan House.—Glashven.—Refuge for Travellers.—Ptarmigan.—Stony Giants.—Heights of the Sutherland Mountains.—Rhiconich.—Poor Inn.—A Highland Hebe.

If all country inns were like that at Durin, and all presided over by such a landlady as Mrs. Ross, travelling would be a real pleasure. So I assured my hostess when she had fastened a button on my coat, declaring that she had stitched in her day for the Duchess as well as for the beggar.

Indeed, I should be most ungrateful were I to pass unnoticed Mrs. Ross's kindness to me. Hearing that I was fond of trout, — who is not? — she sent a lad to catch some, and my breakfast was graced by the presence.

of two beauties, red as salmon, and as delicious as they were lovely to look upon.

Well fortified, I buckled on my knapsack, shook Mrs. Ross by the hand, and bidding her a hearty farewell, turned my face homewards. For now my course lay south; but London is upwards of six hundred miles from Durin, and we have many a long Scotch mile to walk and ride before we shall be again in the whirl of the great Babylon. Ye Powers (of the Continent) what an island would this of ours be if it were but as broad as it is long! Six hundred and ninety-five miles from north to south; square that, shade of Cocker, and out comes the noble area of 483,025 square miles. But should we be a happier people if Great Britain were so vast? Not a whit. The panic party would, perhaps, not spend sleepless nights in terrible apprehension of the red breeches invasion, — or, rather, would not have spent so many — for now that all able-bodied men are gallant volunteers, the panic-ghost is laid — let us hope for ever.

My road lies along the east shore of the Kyle of Duirness. As far as its head waters, the scenery is varied and pleasing. Mountains broken by water winding far amidst their folds, and occasionally cottages with their little patches of greenery and cultivation, relieve the eye, and make you feel not utterly alone.

But beyond the head of the Kyle a total change oc-

curs, and all is barren wildness. The rocks stand out from the earth like staring fleshless bones, and the very heather seems to have a struggle for existence. The influences of the scenery were deepened by dark threatening clouds, drifting in troubled confusion from the west, before a mighty wind that roared through the valley of Grudie. Up this the road winds in a continuous ascent to Gualan, ten miles from Durin. The prospect was not encouraging, and expecting heavy rain, I walked fast, for there is no shelter to be had here; not a house shall we see for ten miles, probably not a living thing. But what is that in the distance, moving up the hill, flapping what look like huge wings? Any object having life, in these wastes, excites curiosity. I hastened on, and was soon near the mysterious figure, not less mysterious when more closely seen.

It was a tall bony man, with a large blue camlet cloak, lined with green baize, disposed in reefs round his shoulders; his head gear a rusty black hat of obsolete shape, beneath which protruded the edges of a dirty white nightcap; and his body clothes, black cloth that had long since seen their best and brightest days. Strange-looking bundles, of various sizes and shapes, were hung about him, and seemed to incommode him as much as the wine jars inconvenienced famous John Gilpin.

To encounter man or woman, boy or girl in Suther-

land, and pass on without speaking, would be to proclaim yourself a misanthrope.

A good day on both sides was quickly followed by conversation. We were both going to Rhiconich, where I purposed sleeping; we would go there together, and so we were companions for the day.

But who is your companion? you will perhaps ask. Well, dear reader, I can tell you now, though if you had put this question to me at the close of my walk with the wayfarer I could not have told you, so ill did I succeed in ascertaining the calling, business, or pursuit of the strange figure.

He was a "Man." Why, of course he was, you answer. Put on your spectacles, my friend, and look at that informing substantive again. Observe how it is embraced by two commas; which means in this case, that my companion belonged to the religious sect who call themselves "The Men"—and was therefore "a Man." And as you have probably never heard of these people, whose proper habitat is the north of Scotland, I will tell you something about them.

The peculiar feature of the sect is self-election. They repudiate all ecclesiastical discipline and authority, detest prelacy, liturgies, and Erastianism, and consider that they alone are judges of their spiritual progress, which is poured upon them by God's grace. All theological learning is held in utter contempt, and the language of

the most ignorant "Man," if he asserts that he speaks by divine inspiration, passes for gospel truths among their followers.

The "Men" wear, during summer and winter, a cloak, which they wish to be considered apostolic; black garments, if they can obtain them, and through Caithness and Sutherland, where they abound, a cotton cap or handkerchief. This possesses great significance. The more it approaches pure white, the more blameless and holy does the wearer desire himself to be considered, and, strange to say, is considered by the sect.

A very interesting pamphlet*, supposed to have been written by a Scotch Established Church minister, gives us some curious particulars respecting these "Men." "The most remarkable feature," says the author, "in the proceedings of the *Men*, is the meeting on Sabbath evening after the service in church is done. At those meetings great numbers of people congregate, young and old, male and female. The prayers and addresses are of an extraordinary and highly exciting kind, and are prolonged far into morning. It is too well known that much immorality is the consequence of such stimulants."

The great object of these spiritual mountebanks appears to be to excite the people who are foolish enough

* The Church and her Accuser in the far North; by Investigator.

to listen to them, to a frenzied hatred of all other religious sects. "One," says Investigator, "amid the breathless silence of a multitude of listeners, rose and declared that a word had been sent to him which he could not but speak, and it was, that whatever might be the marks of grace, none were to be found in those 'big parish ministers, who fed themselves and not their flocks; those idle shepherds, into whose flock the true sheep would not enter; those carnal worldlings, who, unlike the apostles, wore boots, (deep groans from the old women) and travelled in gigs!' (Here expressions of horror were heard in every part of the meeting). 'But oh ye devils, ye cannot make me silent; I will lift up my testimony against you in this meeting, and will warn the simple lest they fall into your snares.'"

Another "Man" drew up what he called his dying testimony, leaving a blank for the insertion of the date of his death. In this precious document are the following passages:— "I, Alexander Campbell, as a dying man, leave my testimony from first to last against the Reformed Presbytery; they are false hypocrites. I leave my testimony against the letter-learned men, that are not taught in the college of Sinai and Zion, but in the college of Babylon.

"I, as a dying man, leave my testimony against paying unlawful tributes and stipend, either in civil or ecclesiastical courts, not according to the word of God— if otherwise, they shall receive the mark of the beast.

“I, as a dying man, leave my testimony against the low country, as it is not kind to strangers.

“I, as a dying man, leave my testimony against men and women conformed to the world in having dresses, parasols, and vain head-sails, and men having whiskers, like ruffian soldiers, as wild as Ishmael, not like Christians, as Jacob-smooth.”

And that there may be no mistake respecting his unchristian antipathy to all other sects, he says—

“I, as a dying man, leave my testimony against Quakers, Tabernacle folk, Haldians, Independents, Anabaptists, Antiburghers, Burghers, Chapels of Ease, Relief, Roman Catholics, Socinians, Prelacy, Armenians, Deists, Atheists, Universalists, New Jerusalemites, Unitarians, Methodists, Bareans, Glassites, and all sectarians.”

After this, we draw breath, and thank God Alexander Campbell has no jurisdiction, spiritual or otherwise, over us. Why, the most zealous member of the Holy Office in its palmy *auto-da-fe* days, was a lamb compared to this “Man.”

The habitually frigid Highlander is easily excited by religious fanatics, and when you hear that the “Men” are regarded as divinely inspired, you will have no difficulty in believing that they easily eke out the *quoi vivre*. Going from house to house, praying in some, exhorting in others, they are rarely allowed to depart empty-handed, or at least unrefreshed. My “Man”

had been for an eight weeks' spiritual cruise through Caithness, making Wick his head-quarters, and was returning to his home, hung about, as I told you, with bundles, and how well his purse was lined I cannot say.

Although these "artful fanatics," as Investigator calls them, talk much of God and heaven, they are never, he says, above accepting food or raiment. Certainly while going about in apostolical garb, as they wish their cloak to be considered, they are not mindful of our Lord's injunctions to the Apostles to carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, nor to have two coats a-piece.

"What," said a Scotch lady, to a "Man," whom she found one day in her kitchen, "do the people give you?" "Whiles," was the answer, "they come doon wi' a dinner, and whiles wi' a supper, and whiles wi' half-a-crown." And "whiles," he might have added, without probably departing from the truth, with an old coat or waistcoat.

I had personal experience of my "Man's" influence. Being extremely thirsty, I said that I should like to fall in with a spring of good water. "Wait a while," said my companion, "there is a shepherd's house about half a mile from this, off the road, and we will get some milk there." On arriving at the dwelling the "Man" entered, and was received by the shepherd's

wife with a torrent of Gaelic, which, judging by the gestures accompanying it, evidently implied a hearty welcome. More, indeed, for the woman fell on her knees while the "Man" poured forth a long prayer in Gaelic. This over, she produced two bowls of creamy milk, for which no payment was demanded, and we departed.

As you may remember, it was not until I parted from my "Man" that I became aware of his calling; for while we were together he was by no means communicative respecting the manner of life he led. Twice or three times a year he went about, he said, for the "good of his health," but where he went I could not make out.

His ignorance was amazing, but this as we have seen is no bar to spiritual chieftainship, nor apparently is crime; for "Investigator" mentions a "Man" who, though sentenced to transportation for sheep-stealing, was not regarded as a black sheep by his sect.

My "Man" did not seem at all anxious to enlarge his very limited stock of knowledge. He had never been to England, had no wish to go there; but he should like to see the "devil's horse" — a locomotive engine.

One object greatly excited his wonder. This was my opera-glasses, which he was never tired of looking through, uttering exclamations of childish delight when,

by focussing the tubes, the landscape appeared nearer and clearer in the field of vision.

Such was my companion during my walk through the wilds of Gualan to Rhiconich. Ten miles from Durin the road attains its highest elevation at Gualan House, which stands on the shoulder of Glashven, a grand mountain. The scenery here is very Alpine; a little dash of snow—there will be plenty in a few weeks—would make you fancy that you were going over one of the Swiss passes. Indeed, Gualan House was built as a refuge for travellers, as the following inscription on one of its gables sets forth:—

“This house, erected for the refuge of the traveller, serves to commemorate the construction of the road across the hitherto almost impassable waste of the Gualan, as well as the whole line of way from Durin to Loch Assynt, which was made in 1831 at the sole expense of the Marquis of Stafford, forming a communication with the Loch Inver road, previously executed by his lordship in the years 1827-8. To record these facts, this inscription is placed by James Loch, M.P., his lordship’s auditor and commissioner, and by George Gunn, Esq., and George Horsburgh, Esq., factors for the Earldom of Sutherland and the Reay Country, for Strathnaver, Strathhalladale, and Assynt, under whom these works were begun and executed.”

“God bless the Marquis of Stafford!” (now Duke of Sutherland), exclaims the tourist as he walks along the Duke’s excellent roads; and if his Grace will only build a few more inns, wayfarers in his broad lands will have no reason to complain.

At Gualan House you may obtain a bed and coarse

fare. When I passed the best bed-room and a small parlour were occupied by a sportsman, whose success as a ptarmigan shooter was made apparent by ten or twelve brace of these birds lying on the floor of the passage.

Having partaken of a little refreshment, for which I paid, though I suspect my "Man" did not, we resumed our walk—pleasant now, for the day was very fine, and our way being down hill, new muscles were put in play.

Oh, the savage wildness of the country between Gualan and Rhiconich! The road winds amidst a chaotic jumble of huge rocks protruding far above the ground, which strew the valleys between the mountains.

We are now, indeed, fairly amidst the stony giants of the north of Scotland, whose conical forms piercing the clouds, invest them with an altitude not borne out by the results of the sober labours of the Ordnance Surveyors. The surveys of Sutherland have not been published, and as I have Sir Henry James' authority for saying that they will not be made public for some years, I think that I shall do the tourist a service by printing the heights, according to trigonometrical measurement, of the principal mountains in this county:—

	Feet.		Feet.
Ben Clibrig . . .	3157	Ben Horn . . .	1708
Ben Hutig . . .	1310	Ben Armin . . .	2332
Fashven . . .	1495	Ben Hie . . .	2862

	Feet.		Feet.
Cnoc-Ghuibhais . . .	975	Ben More (in Assynt) . . .	3235
Suilven	2396	Canisp	2780
Ben Stack	2363	Ben Spionno	2535
Carnstackie	2629	Arkle	2578
Sarwhal More	2548	Ben Hope	3040
Foinaven	2979	Glashven	2542
Ben Laoghal	2505	Queenaig	2673

Near Rhiconich purple sandstones cap the granite rocks; many of these are roseate-hued, and when set amidst patches of verdure, look like titanic gems on emerald. The streams which near Gualan were baby brooks, now rush down the steeps into and out of innumerable lakes among which the road winds, and all presently blending, flow out, a broad river, into Rhiconich Bay. At the head of this bay, in cheerless solitude, stands the little inn, by no means a good specimen of the "Duke's houses." Indeed, so exceptionally bad is it, that had I not been very tired I would have pushed on to Scourie, twelve miles farther. But the bed looked clean, and there were eggs and fish in the larder, and with these, tea, and oat-cake, one must be a dainty pedestrian who cannot get through an evening and night. Before putting down my knapsack, however, I asked the damsel, who turned out to be the landlord's daughter, whether her father could give me change for a 5*l.* note, as my stock of silver only amounted to four shillings and sixpence. Her father, she replied sorrow-

fully, was lying in bed very ill, which accounted, perhaps, for the disorderly state of the inn; she was sure, however, that there was no gold in the house, but equally sure that my supper, bed, and breakfast would not exceed the amount of my change. Monetary matters being thus satisfactorily settled, I cast off my knapsack and came to an anchor for the evening, and a pleasant quiet evening it proved. The herrings and trout were delicious, the bed very comfortable, and I was waited on by the prettiest girl that I saw in Sutherland. Each time that she entered the room she was followed by a pet lamb which had attached itself to her. I am not romancing, and if you go to Rhiconich this summer, you will, I am sure, admit that Sarah Bella M'Kay is a Highland Hebe.

CHAP. XXIII.

A quiet Walk.—Again in the Wilderness.—Oppression of the Sutherland Wastes.—A lonely Road.—Terrified Cattle.—Paucity of Birds. Ospreys.—Persecution of Birds.—Destruction of Wild Animals.—The Deer Forests.—Arguments in favour of preserving Deer.—The desire for Sport.—Enclosure of Commons and Heaths.—Treeless Forests.—East Forest in Ross-shire.—Destruction of Forests by the Romans.—The Black Mount.—Reproduction of Trees.—Farnham Heath.—Noble Mountains.—Ben Stack.—Arkle.—Lochans.—Glacial Action.—Roches moutonnées.—The Laxford.—Excellent Salmon River.—The Midges again.—Start an Adder.—Specific for the Bite of this Snake.—The Rough District.—Fishy Lakes.—Arrive at Scourie.

It is always pleasant to feel when you wake on a journey that there is no occasion to hurry. I had only twelve miles to walk to-day, so I breakfasted at nine and did not start until noon.

A turn of the road at the head of the bay placed a hill between me and the inn, and I was again in the wilderness. What became of the "Man," you may ask. I cannot say. He did not put up at the inn, so probably he went to the neighbouring hamlet of Rhiconich.

There is a very oppressive feeling walking mile after

mile in these Sutherland wilds without seeing a human being. The roads are even less travelled than that one in the Highlands which was so lonely as to lead a traveller to ask a man on the wayside breaking stones whether there was any traffic on it, or if it was at *all* frequented? "Aye," answered the stone-breaker, "it's no ill at that; there was a cadger body yestreen, and there's yoursel to-day." Occasionally I came upon scattered herds of black cattle, which had apparently wandered near the road from bovine curiosity to see the chance wayfarer; wild creatures all, and almost as fleet as deer. How wild you may conceive when I tell you that when I tried the experiment of opening my umbrella suddenly, it so terrified them that they dashed down the mountain slopes, and never paused until they became black specks in the distance.

Birds even, those delightful aerial companions that I expected to see in great numbers, seem to have forsaken Sutherland. One day I believe I saw an osprey, but with this exception I did not even obtain a glimpse of a member of the falcon family. What has become of them you may ask, for books on the natural history of the county lead you to expect many birds. Mr. St. John, in his "Extracts from the Field Book of a Sportsman in Sutherland," says that "the naturalist may here observe closely the eagle, the osprey, the wild goose, and many other birds;" and he gives a list of 156

varieties of birds frequenting this county. Near the sea you will, of course, see large flocks of gulls, but I am quite sure you will be disappointed if you expect to find many birds inland. But you will form no such expectation when you hear how they are persecuted. Mr. St. John says, "Why the poor osprey should be persecuted I know not, as it is quite harmless, living wholly on fish, of which every one knows that there is too great an abundance in this country to grudge this picturesque bird his share;" and then, with strange inconsistency, a few pages farther on he details at great length the pains that he took to get within shot of an osprey, and adds, "I shot him deliberately in cold blood as he sat."

Not satisfied with this murder, he took the poor hen's eggs, and on revisiting the spot a short time after he found that the male bird had got another mate, which had laid an egg. This was also taken. I note these facts with the greater vexation, because the deeds were committed on a loch near Rhiconich which I passed, and which is very accessible to tourists.

But eagles and ospreys, and, indeed, all birds in Sutherland, have long been warred against. In the latter part of the last century the gentlemen of Sutherland subscribed 463*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* for the destruction of birds and beasts of prey. In eight years there were destroyed 1660 foxes, 110 cubs, and 148 eagles. Five

shillings was given for each dead eagle and fox, and one shilling and sixpence for every cub. And now it is said, if you wish to have a deer forest in the highest state of preservation, you must destroy all the birds. This is done, and many noble eagles are annually poisoned, by putting small animals rubbed with strychnine near their eyries.

But birds are not the only animals made to give place to deer. To foster these beasts man, as well as sheep, has been banished. This is deemed by many persons to have been a move in the wrong direction, and much, as you know, has been said and written condemnatory of the Duke of Sutherland and other great Scotch landed proprietors who have brought about this change.

But we must not forget that the people in their new homes across the Atlantic, enjoy many more comforts than they did in Sutherland; a county constantly subject to harvest failures. I say this advisedly, having seen the Highlander in his snug log-house in Canada as well as in his miserable hovel in the Highlands.

And in a pamphlet lately published, in which the writer is particularly desirous to set forth the evils which, as he thinks, follow the displacement of the peasantry and introduction of sheep and deer, he says, "Some of the poorest Highland cottars were enabled to find their way to South Australia many years ago. There I saw them and knew them to be natives of the

Long Island by the dye of their clothes. I can bear witness that, if they brought any portion of their apathy with them into the colony, it soon vanished. Nutritious food, ample wages, the sure prospect of independence not too distant, and of an easy old age unvexed by care, revived and strengthened their minds and bodies. Lethargy and despondence gave way to activity and hope; they obtained the highest rate of wages; gave satisfaction to their employers, and soon were lost sight of in the mass of hard-working cheerful operatives. This is only one instance of many in Australia, where Highlanders have always done well."*

It is true that as you pass through the sea-board of Sutherland you see many green straths where families formerly lived; but we have the stubborn authentic census returns, which show that since the beginning of this century the population of Sutherland, notwithstanding evictions, has increased from 23,117 to 25,771; thus proving that, although the country districts are less populous, the population of the towns and villages, where greater comforts exist, has not decreased.

In an admirable article in the "Edinburgh Review" (vol. 106), on the Highlands, the writer says, "Not only are the Highlands, beyond any other district in the three kingdoms, in circumstances which most necessitate

emigration ; but the Highlanders more than any other section of the population derive benefit from the change." Thus, although sentimentalists may mourn that

" A London brewer shoots the grouse,
A lordling stalks the deer,"

it is quite certain that by far the greater portion of the vast moors and wastes in the Highlands are only adapted to feed wild animals, while the peasantry, who formerly were condemned

" To force a churlish soil for scanty bread,"

are now raising up mighty countries across the seas.

Nor, when discussing this question, should we forget that the existence of *feræ naturæ* leads to the expenditure of enormous annual sums in the Highlands, the greater portion of which, if deer-forests did not exist, would certainly be spent out of the country. For happily, although we are undoubtedly growing more addicted to luxurious habits, the love for athletic sports does not diminish, and if the Highlands no longer afforded deer-shooting, many of our wealthy men would visit other countries in search of nobler game than partridges and grouse. Thus, though geographers constructing maps of Scotland are warranted

" on pathless downs

" Placing *Red Deer* instead of towns,"

and we walk for hours daily as we pass through Suther-

land, amidst wild wastes, let us not repine. Indeed, for my part I rejoice in the fact that, while buildings are rapidly covering our little island, and commissions are enclosing furzy commons and breezy heaths, portions of Scotland will long remain in a state of nature, to delight the tourist, emancipated for a season from the smoke and din of cities. And if the Duke—the great Duke—will be kind to tourists, and erect a few more inns as occasion requires, I for one will not grudge him the possession and enjoyment of his illimitable forests, particularly if he will give orders that birds are to be preserved as well as deer.

It would certainly add not a little to the picturesque features of Sutherland if these so-called forests contained even a sprinkling of trees. But with the exceptional cases of corries being occasionally fringed with birch, the “forests” are absolutely treeless. This, however, was not always the case. Formerly, and not very long ago, the country was clothed with trees. Everywhere you may see the root and trunks of firs, some of which are sufficiently sound to be made into fences and gates.

The closing of the northern ports of Europe led to the cutting down of vast forests in Scotland; and Hugh Miller tells us that as late as the year 1820 he looked upon the last scattered remains of one of the most celebrated of the old pine forests of Ross-shire.

The Romans committed great havoc among the ancient forests. Marks of their axes are visible on many pine stumps over which the peat has accumulated. A few of the old trees may be seen on the Black Mount in Lord Breadalbane's deer forest, and if you have seen these, you may form some idea of the appearance of the country when it was covered with the great aboriginal woods. And even now very little pains would reproduce the pine forests. Mr. Darwin tells us "that where the great Farnham heaths have been enclosed, self-sown firs spring up in multitudes." In one square yard, he says, "I counted thirty-two little" trees; and one of them, judging from the rings of growth, had during twenty-six years tried to raise its head above the stems of the heath, and had failed."* It had been perpetually browsed down by cattle, and as soon as these were prevented attacking, the infant tree sprang up and flourished.

Well, as we have no trees to look upon, we must admire the mountains the more. And here they are around us. Foinaven, Ben Stack, and Arkle, so near and lofty that we walk in their shadows. Ben Stack is a noble giant, so precipitous that you long as you gaze at it to stand on its crest. You may think that I did so. By no means. Sutherland mountains are

very fond of coquetting with the clouds, and you will probably lose the view and your temper if you attempt to ascend them.

AlD now we wind among innumerable rocky hills, cradling gleaming lochans, in which the trout were making rings which quivered beneath the golden light of the setting sun. All these lakes seem to abound with trout, and you could fish many of them *chemin faisant* with great ease.

It needs no very close inspection to see how much this part of Sutherland has been under glacial action. Rounded rocks are very common on the bare hills, which resemble in outline the waves of a rolling sea. "The spectator," says Sir Roderick Murchison, "who, ascending to the summit of Ben Stack, looks westward, observes between him and the sea of Scourie Bay, a countless multitude of small lochs interspersed among the hollows of this brown-clad, barren, and rugged waste. On descending to examine the lower tract, he finds the surface frequently rounded off and polished like the *roches moutonnées* of the Alps; and observing numerous striæ or scratches usually divergent from the central mountains, and following the lines occupied by the principal lakes or maritime fiords; he can have no doubt that in the glacial period, the north-west of Scotland must have been very much in the present state of Greenland —*i. e.* the central mountains occupied by snow, and ice,

from which vast glaciers are protruded to the lateral fiords or bays." *

When seven miles from Scourie I came to the Laxford, a glorious salmon river flowing out of Loch Laxford. Lax-fiord is the Scandinavian term for salmon-firth, and this river still merits the name, for, according to Mr. Andrew Young, it is the second best salmon river in Sutherland. It is spanned by a bridge, backed by Ben Stack, and framed by rocks, garlanded by fern and birch. A lovely subject for a sketch, but, in my case, unsketchable, for I had no sooner sat down than up rose millions of midges, which "sent me reeling down the craggy steep, half mad. Perhaps it was fortunate that I was put to flight, for, as I got up, I disturbed an adder. This reptile bears a bad character in Sutherland, and I believe not without reason, for though its bite is not fatal, it occasions long and very painful swelling.

The peasants consider that the immediate application of a fowl's flesh, recently killed, is a specific for the bite of this snake.

Between Laxford and Scourie you pass through another tract of savage country, dotted with knolls of barren gneiss, justifying its Gaelic name, *Ceathramh-garbh*, the rough district. Numerous lakes, as usual, lie

* Quar. Jour. Geol. Soc. 1858.

cradled within the hollows; and Mr. Young, who has a practical knowledge of their fishy nature, advises sportsmen when proceeding from one salmon river to another, not to neglect fishing these lakes whenever opportunity offers.

Three miles from Scourie the road descends to a large loch, from whence a river flows into Scourie Bay. At the head of the bay stands the village of Scourie, where I slept, lulled to sleep by the Atlantic waves, which broke on the rocks beneath the inn.

CHAP. XXIV.

Comfortable Inn.—The great Duchess.—Situation of Scourie.—Island of Handa.—Small Farms.—The Englishman's Apple Tree.—Badcoull.—A Courteous Maiden.—The Doctor's House.—Proceed to Olney.—Archipelago of Islands.—Salt Pastures.—Assynt.—Numerous Lakes.—Vast Wilds.—Meet a Shepherd.—Collies.—Their wonderful Sagacity.—Assynt Ponies.—The Shepherd's Jealousy.—Stoir.—The Assynt Mountains.—Suilven.—Experiments to determine the Earth's Density.—Ben Nevis a good Mountain for this Purpose.—Loch Inver.—Excellent Inn.—Good Fishing.

THE tired tourist who sleeps at Scourie will be grateful to the great Duchess when he finds how much this noble lady has done for his comfort. She has furnished the bed-rooms at the inn with great taste, and supplied five new spring beds. The gentlefolks like them, said the hostess; but "eh, sir," she added, "in cold weather they dinna coom about ye."

If Scourie had a few trees it would be extremely picturesque. Even without these important adjuncts to scenery, you will admit that it possesses many charms. A little to the north of the bay is the small island of Handa, girt with majestic cliffs, the favourite breeding

rocks of thousands of sea birds. It is only within a few years that Handa has ceased to be inhabited. Some dozen families lived on the island, subjects of a Queen, who was always the oldest woman of the community. The village of Scourie is one of the neatest in Sutherland, and you are surprised to see so large and apparently thriving a population in so sterile a district, for the arable ground may be compared to thin veins running through extensive rocky areas. The landlord of the inn seemed very proud of a little patch of oats adjoining the inn, to which he drew my attention. I could not help thinking with what contempt a Lincolnshire farmer, accustomed to his fat fields, would look upon Sutherland rock farms. One is reminded of the reported reply of an Englishman who was expected to praise a Highland estate. "By ——," said he, "I have an apple tree in Herefordshire that I would not swop for your entire property!"

Your attention will be attracted at Scourie by a large house surrounded by a garden near the inn. It is occupied by the Duke's chief factor for the west of Sutherland; a gentleman of great influence, whom I heard highly commended for his kindness and benevolence. I can vouch for his hospitality, as I spent a very pleasant evening in his house.

I left Scourie at eight the following morning, with the intention of sleeping at the inn near the ferry of

Kyle Skou, but matters fell out otherwise. Having walked three miles along an excellent road, winding by many a tortuous flexure, among huge rocks, and by the side of small lakes, I came to Badcoul, a fishing hamlet at the head of a bay studded with islands. Here a consuming thirst seized me, and failing to find fresh water, I asked a girl who was herding cows on the hill side, whether she could direct me to a spring. "Come with me," was her reply, "and I will give you a drink." She led me into a house, and showing me into a snug parlour, desired me to sit down while she went in search of some milk. Presently she returned with a jug of delicious milk and a glass. Anxious to know to whom I was indebted for the refreshing draught, she informed me that I was in the Doctor's house, of which she had the care while the owner was from home, and that she was quite sure he would be pleased to hear that his milk was put to such good use.

While drinking, I heard incidentally that fishermen frequently go from Badcoul across the entrance of Kyle Skou, to Olney, and knowing that a road exists from the latter place to Loch Inver, I determined to try whether I could obtain a passage across the Kyle. By this route I should see the Assynt coast, and be able to return to Scourie by another road. The safety of the anchorage in Kyle Skou, with a great abundance of fish, makes it a favourite resort for fishermen, and

a curing house for salmon has lately been erected at Badcoull.

After some inquiries I found a couple of fishers who were going up the Kyle, and who agreed to land me at Olney for five shillings. Their boat was rough but strong; and favoured by a north-west-wind, we made the passage — about six miles — in little more than one hour. Our course led us among a multitude of rocky islands, which stud the coast and perform good break-water duty. Many of these islands were speckled with sheep, which thrive well on the herbage, here abundantly seasoned with salt. The view of the mountains from the Kyle is truly magnificent. They rise in mighty pyramids, generally detached, presided over by Ben More, the sovereign of the Assynt group.

My fishers complained greatly of the bad fishing season. The herrings had been extremely scarce. The failure of this fish is always a sad disaster to the peasantry of Assynt, because herrings and potatoes form their chief food.

On landing at Olney I was in the parish of Assynt, a Gaelic compound word signifying in and out, in allusion to the indented nature of the coast. The entire parish of Assynt, which contains 97,000 acres, is an alternation of patches of verdure, rocks, hills, mountains, and lakes. Nowhere, perhaps, within the same area will you see so many lakes as here. Every hollow cradles

a sheet of water ; some mantled with lovely lilies, others dark and plantless, and nearly all tenanted by trout. Here again you see traces of ancient forests which chronicles of apparent authenticity state were burnt by the Scandinavians.

Fourteen miles of almost unbroken solitude lie between Olney and Loch Inver. But as the road skirts the coast, you have frequent peeps of the sea, across which I obtained occasional glimpses of Lewis and Skye, where we hope to be ere long. This ocean companionship, and the murmur of the waves breaking on the rocks, render the solitude of this walk less oppressive than those through the north of Sutherland. I had walked five miles without seeing a living creature, when a man with a dog started up from the road-side and joined me. He was a shepherd, on his way to see his daughter in Ross-shire. During our companionship he told me that he lived in the north of Sutherland, and that the usual wage given to shepherds for the care of 1000 sheep is 15*l.* a-year, a house, grass for two cows, fifteen sheep, and all those that die from disease or inclement weather. Scotch shepherds are, as you know, greatly assisted by those wonderful collies of which so many interesting stories are told. The shepherd had one of these animals with him, a hero in his way, which had rescued many sheep from the snow, and knew the mountains where the sheep ranged as well as his master's house.

Sheep dogs are particularly noted for the ease with which they find their way home. Here is an interesting illustration of this faculty:—

“In the drover days, when the sheep and cattle tramped wearily day after day to London, in order to be eaten when they got there, instead of travelling in their open carriages, as they do now, upon the great iron roads of the land, the dog was often summarily dismissed as soon as he had escorted his charge safe to their doom. Master went home on the top of the coach; but Laddie must find his way back alone and on foot. And how about his rations by the way? Ah! that was all an understood thing. Laddie, alas! knew every public-house on the road, knew perfectly well where master baited and lodged, and was himself perfectly well known in the accustomed haunts. ‘Oh, here’s the drover’s dog come back: very well, give him his feed!’ and the expected bowl of porridge, sometimes varied by the luxury of a bone, was forthwith supplied. A short siesta followed; and then, stretching his tired limbs, Laddie was off again on tramp for his distant home.”

But perhaps a more extraordinary instance of the sagacity of these dogs is the following story from an old Inverness paper: “About two hundred sheep were pasturing on an island in the River Conan, when the river becoming flooded by heavy rain, the dry land was changed into a deep swamp, and all the sheep were in

imminent danger of being drowned. At this juncture a faithful collie was sent for and made to understand that the sheep required his aid. The sagacious dog immediately breasted the waves and swam to the island, drove the sheep to the only safe spot, and kept watch and ward round them for two days and nights, until the river subsided low enough to make the fords passable."

The collie's home-returning instinct appears to be possessed by the Assynt ponies. At least, I heard of one that had been driven from Assynt to Dunrobin, a distance of about seventy miles. After some days it escaped from the latter place, and found its way back to its former home, swimming on its way several rivers.

My shepherd proved a very agreeable companion. Unlike the "man" he was very communicative, and even made me a confidant of his domestic joys and sorrows. The former happily preponderated. Indeed, he had but one great grief. This was, that while he, being a Southron, did not know Gaelic, his wife, who was a Sutherland girl, spoke Gaelic much better than English; and it sometimes drove him nearly mad to hear her talking to men in a language that he did not understand. The green-eyed monster had evidently visited the shepherd.

Eight miles from Olney I came to Stoir, a cluster of fishing cottages which might almost be stowed away in the two churches flanking them. The coast here

consists of sand, harrowed into fantastic hillocks by the storms which harass Assynt.

Beyond Stoir the road bends eastward, and you have the entire range of the Assynt Mountains before you. Among these Suilven is very conspicuous. This mountain and Ben Stack from their great elevation and conical forms, were recommended by the late Dr. MacCulloch as being well adapted for determining the mean density of the earth.

But it appears that Colonel Sir Henry James, the present head of the Ordnance Survey, although admitting that Suilven is the most remarkable mountain that he has ever examined, does not think that either of the mountains recommended by Dr. MacCulloch would answer the desired purpose. For though Suilven, composed of red conglomerate in horizontal strata, springs insularly from a plain of gneiss to a height of 1,534 feet, the mass of the mountain is not large, and this objection applies equally to Ben Stack. Sir Henry James is desirous that observations should be made at Ben Nevis to determine the main specific gravity of the earth; for this mountain, besides being the highest in Great Britain, possesses other physical advantages.

I may mention before passing from this subject, that the mean density of the earth, as determined from the observations at Arthur's Seat, is 5.316, with a probable error of ± 0.07 , due to the estimated errors of the

astronomical amplitudes. Maskelyne's celebrated observations to determine the density of the earth were made on Schehallien in Perthshire in 1774. The result was 4.481.

Four more miles and lovely Loch Inver lay before me, glowing beneath the rays of the setting sun. Here amidst mountain sublimities and by the side of a salmon river, which will tempt you if a salmon-fisher to envy the Duke of Sutherland, is a charming inn. It was formerly kept by Mr. Dunbar, the present lessee of Sir George Sinclair's moors, and here he made those interesting zoological collections now at Brawl. The inn is at present in the hands of Mr. M'Kenzie, who, besides making you very comfortable, can let you have good fishing, for which, however, you will have to pay 10s. 6d. a day, the fish caught being Mr. M'Kenzie's property.

CHAP. XXV.

Beauties of Loch Inver. — The Duke's Marine Lodge. — Drive up the Inver. — Ben More. — Queenaig. — Loch Assynt. — Sea Trout. — Ardvrock Castle. — The Macleods. — Dare-devil Angus. — Excommunicated by the Pope. — Capture of the Marquis of Montrose. — Limestone Battlements. — Geology of Assynt. — Unapool. — Scotch Pearls. — Preservation of "Pearl Waters." — Cross Kyle Scou. — Edrachillis. — A Wet Walk. — Reach Scourie.

LOCH INVER is one of those places which you see with delight, remain at with pleasure, and leave with regret. A week might be well spent amidst its beauties, and if those terrible insect plagues that spare neither lord nor gillie were not omnipresent, the sketcher might fill his books with subjects.

The Duke has shown good taste by having built a yacht-lodge here, from whence you can almost step on board a yacht; and the Duchess has had many paths made on the hill slopes which lead to lovely scenes.

Alas! my holiday is waning, we have to visit Skye, and I cannot even remain a day here. I was tempted besides to take my departure on the morning after my arrival, by a farmer kindly offering to give me a lift in

his dog-cart as far as Loch Assynt, by which means I should be able to get back to Scourie, crossing the ferry at Kyle Strome in one day.

The drive up the Inver is enchanting. The road runs parallel to the river, which was now a full flowing stream with many pools, where salmon love to rest on their travels. Loch Assynt, six miles from Loch Inver, is another fine sheet of water, the scenery of which is considerably diversified by the nature of the rocks in which it is set. The upper end is terminated by grand mural Strom Chrubie, backed by majestic Ben More of Assynt and other lofty mountains. The limestone composing the lower part of these mountains forms noble terraces resting upon quartz rock. North of Loch Assynt the eye is arrested by precipitous Queenaig, formed of chocolate-coloured Cambrian rock and capped by white quartz of Lower Silurian age, and turning west we see the rugged cliffs of gneiss. The scenery of Loch Assynt is further enhanced by an abundance of birch clothing the banks, and by tiny green straths like bands of emerald running between the hills.

Here the *salmo ferox* and sea trout abound, besides their more humble brethren, river trout, which, if not so welcome to the angler, have the merit of being highly esteemed at table.

The north shore of Loch Assynt possesses considerable historical interest. On a peninsula near Ach-

more are the crumbling ruins of Ardvrock Castle, the "bannered home of the Macleods," when they possessed Assynt. One of that ilk, Angus, great grandson of the first laird, seems to have been a dare-devil sort of fellow. Among other iniquitous deeds, it is related that having quarrelled with a neighbouring family he burnt their chapel, hoping to consume the assembled worshippers. They fortunately escaped, and making the outrage known to the Pope, his Holiness excommunicated Angus. What a measure we have of Papal power in those days, when we learn that Angus not only quailed under his Holiness's excommunication, but journeyed to Rome, where he humbly implored the Pope's forgiveness. This was granted on Angus's undertaking to build three places of worship in Assynt, which, add the Chronicles, he honestly performed.

Grand times those for his Holiness with the triple tiara, when, as we see, he had power to shake a Highland chieftain in the far-off wilds of Assynt, and make him sue for pardon in the Vatican.

A descendant of Angus held Ardvrock Castle in 1650, and disgraced himself by betraying the Marquis of Montrose for the miserable recompense of forty bolls of meal. Montrose, hunted like a wild beast, had taken refuge after his last fight, known in Assynt as the battle of Craighoynechan, disguised as a peasant, in the wilds of Assynt; and when half starved, having, it is

said, been obliged to eat his gloves, was discovered by Neil Macleod, apprehended, and lodged in Ardvrock, from whence he was taken to Edinburgh and executed.

The castle was reduced to its present condition by lightning, a just judgment in the estimation of the peasants for Macleod's treachery.

Here I parted from the farmer, and leaving the lake struck north, following the road which branches from the highway from Inver to Golspie. This north road is the commencement of that long line of communication made, as you will remember, at the Duke's expense, through his vast property from south to north. Before it was constructed a foot-post traversed the country every six weeks.

On leaving the lake you plunge again into the wilderness, ascending continually for three miles. Majestic Queenaig with its limestone battlements is now a grand object. Words, indeed, are weak to do justice to the rock giants of this part of Sutherland. All are solemn and imposing, many from their mural character appear higher than they are. Respecting their geological features we can have no better instructor than our veteran geologist, Sir Roderick Murchison, who has devoted much time to the study of the geology of South Sutherland. He tells us that "in the promontory of Assynt and all along the shores of Lochs Inver and Enard, the fundamental gneiss is unconformably super-

posed at a little distance inland by masses of the Cambrian red sandstone, which, to the south of the Kyles of Strome, rise into the lofty peaks forming the chief beauty of the tract of Assynt, and constituting from north to south the detached mountains of Queenaig, Suilven and Canisp, each separated by lower tracts of fundamental gneiss, and thence extending into similar ranges in Ross-shire."

I halted at the little inn at Unapool for a luncheon of oat-cake, eggs, and butter, no fish being forthcoming, a disappointment seeing, as you will remember, that Kyle Scou is famous for many varieties. But though I got no fish I was offered a shell, or rather solicited to buy one, as I was leaving the inn. It was the shell of a fresh-water muscle, and contained a small pearl. Pearls as you probably know, are not uncommon in Scotland and Ireland. Twice they were offered to me in the Highlands, and frequently in Connemara, but the specimens were always lustreless and of small value. Long ago, however, large pearls appear to have been found in Scotland.

In 1621, James VI. issued a proclamation for the preservation of "waters wherein pearls doe breed," reserving for himself certain rivers noted for large pearls; and we are told of one in the "Succinct Survey of Aberdeen," found in that county, of such size and beauty that the provost of Aberdeen went expressly to

London to present it to the king, who rewarded him by a right royal gift.

I now crossed Kyle Scou ferry, and was again in Edrachillis among the gneiss mountains. My walk to Scourie from the ferry (eleven miles) was in the teeth of a furious west wind, accompanied by heavy rain, against which my umbrella afforded so little protection, that long before I reached Scourie I was wet through.

CHAP. XXVI.

The Scenery between Scourie and Golspie. — The Laxford. — Loch Stack. — Terms of the Fishing and Deer Shooting of the Stack Forest and Lake. — Luxuriant Woods. — The Reay Forest. — Peculiar Deer. — Forked Tails. — What becomes of the cast Horns of Deer. — Do Deer bury their Horns. — Their Habit of gnawing Horns. — Loch More. — Loch Merkland. — Loch Shin. — Civilisation again. — Lairg. — The Fishing in Loch Shin. — Drive to Golspie. — Strathfleet. A robust Village. — Large Farms. — Arrive at Golspie.

WHY, you may ask, did I return to Scourie when I might have proceeded from Loch Inver to the south-east of Sutherland? A pertinent question deserving an explicit answer. Because the scenery as I was assured between Scourie and Golspie is finer than that on the south road; and I was, moreover, told that to miss seeing Lochs More and Stack would be to leave unseen two of the most beautiful lakes in Sutherland.

The morning broke wildly; however, towards eight o'clock the dark clouds dispersed, and when I left Scourie there was promise of a fine day. I was the only passenger in the two-horse mail-car, that plies between Scourie and Lairg twice a week. As far as Laxford the road was familiar to me. Here we diverged to

the east, and entered an older line of road, two feet wider than the new north and south line, but still a narrow road, as it is only ten feet broad. We drove for three miles by the side of the Laxford, now a full river abounding with salmon pools, all, says Mr. Young, tenanted by lusty salmon. Indeed, his account of the fishing in this river is so tantalising, that if you are an angler you will long to make acquaintance with the salmon. And so you may, or at least might have done so last year, — but hear on what terms. The fishing of the Laxford and Loch Stack is let with the Stack deer-forest, at an annual rental of six hundred guineas, for which consideration you are permitted to kill twenty-five stags, twenty hinds, and as many salmon and white trout as you can catch. But besides the above direct payment you are required to maintain three keepers. The use of a cottage on the banks of Loch Stack, containing a sitting-room and five bed-rooms, with servants' rooms, stable, and kennels, is included in the rental. Thus, you see that before you are privileged to throw a salmon-fly on the Laxford you must pay a rental exceeding the income of many professional men, and it requires no great powers of calculation to discover that your Laxford salmon will cost you considerably more than salmon purchased at a fishmonger's.

We now emerged from the defile through which the Laxford flows, and skirted Loch Stack, as famous for

white trout as the Laxford is for salmon. Loch Stack is almost walled in between Arkle — whose broad foot is in the lake while its head is in the clouds — and Ben Stack, a grand cone of fundamental gneiss, at the base of which the road runs. Luxuriant birch clothes the lower slopes of Ben Stack, whose delicate sprays tremble in every breeze. Dark-green glens, lined with fern, scar the sides of the mountains, in which if you have far-reaching sight you will very probably see deer, for now we look upon the best deer-forests in Sutherland — Arkle being included in the famous Reay forest. Sixty thousand acres are appropriated to the deer in this forest, which exceed 5,000 in number. They are also said to be the finest in Scotland, averaging fifteen stone, and occasionally attaining the great weight of eighteen stone. The Reay deer have forked tails, a peculiarity it seems that they have long possessed; for in Sir R. Gordon's "History of the Earldom of Sutherland," written in 1630, he says: "In the Arkle forest, all the deer that are bred therein, or hant within the bounds of that mountain, have forked tails, three inches long, whereby they are easilie known and decerned from all other deer."

The present lessee of this grand deer preserve is the Earl of Dudley, Lord of the famous Glengarry Estates; but it would seem that his Lordship is not a very keen deer-stalker, for, much to the disappointment of the

renters of the adjoining deer forests, he had not fired a shot, nor, indeed, visited the Reay forest last year up to the period of my passing through Sutherland, the consequence of which was that deer stalked in the adjoining forests fled for sanctuary to the Reay forest.

A gentleman, who joined the car near Loch Stack, had, he told me, been deer-stalking daily for a fortnight without having had a single shot, although he had worked hard from early morn till night. Not thus, did the ancient proprietors of the land toil for deer. According to John Taylor, the Water Poet, who made a journey to Scotland, which he called a "pennyless pilgrimage," deer-hunting in the Highlands was practised on a very extensive scale. "The manner of the hunting," he says, "is this:—

"Five or six hundred men rise early in the morning, and disperse themselves divers ways, and seven, eight, or ten miles compass. They bring or chase in the deer in many herds (two, three, or four hundred in a herd) to such or such a place, as the noblemen shall appoint them. Then when day is come the lords and gentlemen of their companies ride or go to the said places, sometimes wading up to the middle through burns or rivers; and then, they being come to the place, lie down on the ground, till those foresaid scouts who are called the tinchel-men bring down the deer.

"After we had stayed there three hours, or there-

abouts, we might perceive the deer appear on the hills round about us (their heads making a show like a wood), which, being followed close by the tinchel-men, are chased down into the valley where we lay. Then, all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose, as occasion serves, upon the herd of deer. In two hours, with dogs, guns, arrows, dirks, and daggers, four-score fat deer were slain, which after are disposed, some one way and some another, and more than enough left for us to make merry withal."

If you have read works on the natural history of deer, you will remember that some writers assert that they bury their cast horns, while others deny that deer have this habit. It certainly is curious when we remember that stags shed their horns annually, and that although these are frequently very large, they are seldom found. Mr. M'Ivor, the Duke of Sutherland's factor at Scourie, who has had great opportunities of observing the habits of deer, assures me that they do bury their antlers, and he gave me one that had every appearance of having been recently cast, which was found embedded in the ground.

It is certain that deer gnaw cast horns, from their yearning, as is supposed, for phosphate of lime. This habit however, would hardly account for the vast numbers of horns which annually disappear. A more probable ex-

planation is that to allay the irritation occasioned at certain seasons by their horns, stags plunge them into soft ground, in which they stick. There is a lake near Fort William called Loch Chabar, or the Lake of the Horns, from the great number of horns existing in the soft black moss forming the banks.

The beauty of the scenery continues along Loch More, another fine sheet of water, about two miles beyond Loch Stack. Beyond this we come to Loch Merkland, a dark lake into which one of the buttresses of Ben Hope dips, not the Ben Hope of Tongue, but another of nearly equal altitude. Now the scene changes, and the drive along the entire length of Loch Shin, twenty-one miles, is through a mossy, treeless waste. When future Dukes of Sutherland take compassion on tourists, and build inns for their accommodation, some enterprising person will doubtless place steamers on Loch Shin. At the eastern end of the lake, savage nature gives place to cultivation, birch woods line the road, neat cottages chequer the woodland, and other indications of a larger population become apparent. At length you reach Lairg, a pleasant village close to the lake, possessing an excellent inn, much resorted to by anglers, who, for 10s. 6d. a day are privileged to thrash Loch Shin from morning till night.

The river Shin, says Mr. Young, who rents it from the Duke, and sub-lets it by the day or otherwise, is a

capital salmon river; and the lake, according to the same authority, is "perfectly full of trout of various kinds, from the *salmo ferox* of twenty pounds, to the yellow trout of half a pound; and a fair angler, on any day from the 1st May to the end of the season, may kill five or six dozen of trout, varying from half a pound to four pounds." If this statement be true, the number of trout in Loch Shin must be enormous, seeing that the lake is twenty-one miles long, with a varying breadth of from half a mile to two miles.

After a hurried repast, I continued my journey in a one-horse dog-cart to Golspie, fourteen miles from Lairg. The road passes through Strathfleet, a fertile valley, smiling with agricultural prosperity, a pleasant sight after long familiarity with the rugged mountains and brown mosses of West Sutherland. For, however much we may admire the majesty of barren mountains, all but very enthusiastic geologists must feel that they would not like to dwell amongst them; and we return to plains and valleys, swelling hills and varied woods, with the delight that we experience in re-joining dearly loved friends. Such at least was my feeling as we sped past corn-fields and pastures, good houses and snug farmsteads, creditable alike to landlord and tenant; and as we entered Golspie, a robust hearty village, swelling under the fostering patronage of the Duke to town-like proportions, the combined influences of the soft pastoral scenery, seen through the mellow

light of a delicious evening, and the pleasure that always attends the successful accomplishment of an enterprise, caused my spirits to rise to high exhilaration as I entered Mr. Hill's charming inn at Golspie, where, alas! they were destined to be suddenly depressed to zero.

CHAP. XXVII.

A Travelling Mishap.—Lose my Luggage.—A Friend in Misfortune.—Golspie. — Its Agrémens. — A Bridal Pair. — The Duke's Reading-room.—Dunrobin Castle.—Robert's Dun.—French Architecture.—Internal Decorations. — Old and New Castle.—The Queen's Apartments. — The Great Tower. — View from the Summit. — Geological Museum. — Oolitic Rocks. — Brora. — Manuscript by Sir H. Davy preserved at Dunrobin. — The Gardens and Pleasure Grounds. — Magnificent Thistles. — The Show Dairy. — The Duchess's Milk-Drinking Gallery.—Charming Walks.—Monument to the late Duke of Sutherland. — Phosphorescent Fish. — King Kenneth and his Nobles.

You may remember I told you that my portmanteau was to be sent by the mail from Brawl to Golspie. I had attached a very plain direction to it myself, and I knew that my friends would take care that it was duly despatched. Besides my travelling wardrobe, both large and valuable, it contained papers of considerable importance which I had brought from London, the loss of which would have been a serious misfortune to me. Conceive then my excessive disappointment and vexation, when, on inquiring for my portmanteau, Mr. Hill told me that it had not arrived, and that he did

not know anything about it. Concluding that my friends had forgotten to forward it, I despatched a letter by the mail which passes through Golspie to Thurso, in the night, requesting them to send it on without delay. I also wrote to the mail coach office at Inverness, inquiring whether my lost property was lying there, and having taken these steps, I waited the issue as patiently as possible. But, dear reader, if you have ever lost luggage, especially if it has contained papers of importance, have you not found, in spite of all your philosophy, that your thoughts are for ever straying after your missing property, particularly if you have no friend with you? But though alone, I was not absolutely friendless. The world is not that frigid unsympathising mass of humanity that some persons would have you believe it to be, and you would be singularly unfortunate if, even in the matter of losing your luggage, you failed in finding a friend. Certain is it that I found a kind one at Golspie.

Sitting alone in the coffee-room on the day after my arrival, musing over my loss, a gentleman from Wick came in, entered into conversation with me, learned my misfortune, and straightway offered to lend me any money I might require, at the same time expressing a desire to assist and advise me in tracing and recovering my portmanteau. Money I did not want, for I had not been quite so foolish as to leave my cash in my port-

manteau, but the offer of assistance was gratefully accepted.

It would be wearisome were I to recount the repeated disappointments I experienced when the mail arrived three successive nights without bringing my luggage. How I lay awake during the midnight hours, listening for the guard's horn heralding the coming mail — how, when at length I heard the blast, I huddled on my clothes, and sat with driver and guard in a small room before a large fire, hearing, while they were sipping hot coffee, the result of their inquiries along the road — for I had offered a very large reward for my portmanteau, which had been despatched by my friends. Suffice to say, that I ascertained that it had not been put down at any place between Brawl and Inverness, nor did it appear that it had been taken to that town; at least the mail coach agent knew nothing about it. How ardently I longed for the electric telegraph while waiting for these nightly mails, you may imagine.

In one respect, however, I was fortunate: Golspie is a very pleasant place, so pleasant, indeed, and beautifully situated, that with your mind at ease a few days might be spent very enjoyably at Mr. Hill's hotel. How highly it is esteemed, appears by the fact that *nouveaux mariés* repair there to forget all but themselves. While I was fretting about my loss, a couple in this condition occupied the rooms adjoining mine, and were, I take it for

granted, in such a state of bliss that the loss of wardrobes of clothes would not have ruffled their existence. But how is it with thee now, oh fair lady, whose bonnie smiling face cast sunshine on me when I caught glimpses of it? Let us hope that, although the *lune de miel* has waned, thou can'st not say, as Matilda did to King John,

“ I am not now as when thou saw'st me last ;
That favour soon is vanished and past ;
That rosy blush lapt in a lily vale,
Now is with morphow overgrown and pale.”

The inn at Golspie is very bookless, as it should be when lovers are the guests ; for what says the poet ?

“ My only books were women's looks,
And ” ———

Ah, well, I will not print the context ; but the good Duke has very liberally endowed a reading-room and library in Golspie, which is open freely to all comers. Here I read newspapers and books, and although not in a mood to enjoy sights with proper tourist inquisitiveness, I saw those of Golspie.

The chief lion is Dunrobin Castle, which, from the Dun or stronghold of Robert, second Earl of Sutherland in 1097 (whence its name Dun-Robin), has grown to the magnificent proportions which now excite our admiration and astonishment. In 1630 the “ Erle of Sutherland,” says Sir Robert Gordon, “ made Dunrobin

his special residence, it being a house well-seated upon a mote hard by the sea, with fair orchards, wher ther be pleasant gardens, planted with all kinds of froot, hearbs, and flours used in this kingdom, and abundance of good saphorn, tobacco, and rosemarie, the froot being excellent, and cheeflie the pears and cherries."

Recent alterations and additions have made Dun-robin an imposing castellated edifice, reminding you very much by its wilderness of turrets, peaks, steeples, and towers, of the ancient châteaux on the Loire. The Duchess of Sutherland kindly gave me permission to see the interior of the castle; a favour not, I believe, generally granted to strangers when the family are at home. There are no public rooms, as the guide-books state, but a bewildering number of apartments, many quaint in form, and all remarkable for the excellent and elegant taste displayed in their adornment. The decorations throughout take the shape of shells and thistles, interlaced with the ancient motto of the Sutherland family, *sans peur*. Great ingenuity has been displayed in linking or dovetailing the old and new buildings; and the passages and corridors connecting them present a great variety of exquisite architectural details, which were set off by a profusion of lovely flowers and plants.

But while the whole interior of this truly dycal residence attests the presiding direction of refined taste, it is in the Queen's rooms that the greatest pains have been

taken to combine elegance with regal magnificence. These consist of six apartments, lighted by beautiful oriel windows, commanding glorious sea views. They have been fitted up according to the Duchess's directions, and you see that while no expense has been spared to render them worthy of being occupied by a sovereign, care has been taken to make them thoroughly comfortable, and to avoid that glaring and gorgeous kind of decoration which may be very splendid, but cannot be pleasant to contemplate for any great length of time.

It must be a matter of regret to the Duchess that her efforts to do honour to the Queen, which all must admit are extremely successful, have not yet been rewarded by a visit from Her Majesty. And it is the more remarkable that the Queen has not been to Dunrobin, when we remember how near it is to Balmoral.

There are very few noteworthy pictures at Dunrobin; the portrait of Mary, Queen of Scotland, or as it is called the Orkney Mary, being the most remarkable.

The view from the summit of the great tower, 135 feet above the terrace, is very extensive, ranging over a vast tract of forest extending to the sea-shore; across the Dornoch and Moray Firths, divided by far-jutting Tarbat-Ness, and including in the distance the faint outlines of Ben Wyvis and the mountain ranges in Morayshire, Inverness-shire, and Aberdeenshire. From this

eyrie you see what a vast pile Dunrobin has become, and are willing to believe the castle showman, who tells you that the numerous fretted towers, pinnacles, and pointed roofs cover 180 bed-chambers, besides a multitude of reception rooms. The upper storey in this tower contains a great number of interesting geological specimens collected in Sutherland and arranged by the Duke of Argyll, who has gone deeper into the stony science than mere amateurship. Among them are many fossils from the lias and oolitic formation immediately under Dunrobin. Indeed, Dunrobin itself is a great fossil museum, being constructed of a peculiar band of white building stone running through the oolitic rock at Brora, five miles north of Golspie, teeming with fossil shells and casts of many large stems of plants of the oolitic period. It is worthy of remark that a MS. is preserved at Dunrobin, written by the late Sir Humphry Davy, in which he gives a very lucid account of the geology of Golspie and its vicinity, and in which particular allusion is made to the remains of marine animals found in the strata near Dunrobin and of the Brora coal-field.

It will add considerably to the interest of your visit to Dunrobin to know that from the lofty tower, looking north, you see the site of the richest oolitic field in Scotland. So rich was its flora that its remains form a large and productive coal field, from which 70,000 tons of coal were extracted between 1814 and 1826; and it abounded

with monsters, among which the Iguanodon, the Plesiosaurus, the Ichthyosaurus, and the Amphitherium were common.

When you have seen the Castle and descended to the terrace, the gardens are before you. In these I was allowed to wander where I pleased. Indeed, the pleasure-grounds are open to all comers; and you may walk at your will amidst glorious-hued flowers and lovely shrubs which fringe the sea-shore. The luxuriousness of the vegetation, in this northern latitude is most striking, including many plants which you would suppose could not flourish here. The flowers are grouped in harmonious hues, occupying gigantic beds and zones. Amongst them you will be struck by the colossal proportions and beauty of the ordinary Scotch thistle, fit emblem of a warlike nation. Full seven feet high is "his rarious crown of rubies," and he is so girt round with bristling spears that you have no need to be reminded of the motto, "Nemo me impunè lacessit."

On emerging from the gardens I came upon a very good imitation of a Swiss cottage prettily situated on a slope glowing with flowers, close to the sea. This is the Dunrobin show dairy, and near it is another Swissy structure where the cows are milked. One end of this building supports a gallery to which access is gained from the outside, and here the Duchess and her friends sit to see the cows milked. The gallery is fitted with

seats and shelves on which are trays and glasses, and from a cord which passes round a pulley hangs a small bucket, encircled by hoops of polished brass, into which the new milk is poured and hoisted to the gallery.

There are many charming walks and rides through the woods adjoining Dunrobin. One leads up a glen at the head of which there is a cascade; another conducts to the summit of Beinn-a-Bhragidh, a hill 1300 feet above the sea, surmounted by a colossal monument of the late Duke of Sutherland. But the walk that delighted me most was that along the sea-shore at the marge of the dense woods extending some miles north of Dunrobin. No Hercules or Venus of the forest, as Gilpin styles the oak and ash, are here, but great, solemn pines, which cover the earth with gloom.

Returning late one evening from this walk, with which I combined a search for fossils, I was startled by seeing a body of what appeared to be fire quivering at my feet. Stooping, I saw through the darkness that it proceeded from a large stranded skate, whose skin threw off phosphoric fire. This was so bright that one could understand how King Kenneth, who founded the Scotch monarchy, made use of similar phosphoric luminosity to awe his rebellious subjects.

It is related of him that, being desirous to go to war, he assembled them in a hall, and when it was dark ordered a person to appear suddenly before them robed in

fish skins, who, denouncing their want of energy, called on them in a supernatural tone of voice to immediately prepare for war. The oracle, speaking thus from phosphorescent flashes emanating from the skins, had such an effect on the terrified nobles that they forthwith prepared to do battle.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Leave Golspie.—Little Ferry.—Cross the Moray Firth to Burgh Head. — Tarbat-Ness.—Ultimum Pteroton of the Romans. — Burgh Head. — Old Roman Well. — Cliffs near Burgh Head.— Fossil Saurians.— Scotch Tortoises. — Nomadic Tinkers. — *Aives*. — Elgin. — The Cathedral. — Sacrilegious Outrages. — The Ordeal Pot. — Witch Drowning. — Inverness. — No Portmanteau. — Crime in Inverness.— A bungling Hangman. — Recover my Luggage. — A Landlord's Measure of a Traveller's Wealth. — Macbeth's Castle. — Inverness, Past and Present. — Seals. — Salmon.—Ancient Drinking Usages. — Dirt of Inns formerly. — Hairy Butter. — How the Old Lairds lived. — Craig Phadrich. — Loch Beaul. — Vitrified Forts. — Theories respecting them.

WHEN I had ascertained that my unfortunate portmanteau had not been left on the road, I started for Inverness. Three days weekly a small steamer plies from Little Ferry, near Golspie, to Burgh Head, where you are near the Aberdeen and Inverness railway. This route is shorter in point of time, pleasanter in fine weather, and considerably cheaper than that by the mail.

An omnibus conveyed a few passengers and myself to the steamer, in which we made a good passage. We ran

so close to the lighthouse on Tarbat-Ness that we could see the peculiar yellow sandstone of which this long spit is composed. Tarbat-Ness contains many ichthyolitic fossils, and here Hugh Miller found some of his rarest and most interesting lapidified treasures.

Burgh Head is a small fishing town, dirty and putrescent, despite the sea that washes the promontory on which it is built. It is supposed to be the *Ultimum Ptoroton* of the Romans; and while waiting for the omnibus to take us to Alves, I went to see a very interesting relic of that people. This is a subterranean bath, approached by a flight of steps cut out of the sandstone, and is still supplied with water used by the people in the neighbourhood. The figure of a bull and other relics were discovered on the plaster lining the walls.

Burgh Head and the neighbouring cliffs possess great geological interest, from the circumstance that the sandstones contain the footprints of reptiles, one of which, the *Hyperodapedon Gordoni*, is new. Professor Huxley, who has examined the remains of this animal, declares it to have been a saurian reptile, about six feet long.*

* The geologist intending to explore this district will find the way made clear for him by Sir R. Murchison's very lucid and interesting paper on the sandstones of Elgin in the *Quart. Journ. of the Geol. Soc.* for December, 1858. This also contains a large amount of information relative to the reptiliferous sandstones of Morayshire.

Sir R. Murchison does not tell us whether the footprints of these saurians, like those of other fossil animals in Scotland, show that the beasts were moving in the same direction. This, I remember, was a subject of grave discussion one evening at the Geological Society when the meetings were enlivened by the observations of the late Dr. Buckland. What could have possessed the animals — they were fossil tortoises, I believe, — to be all travelling in the same direction? That was the question; one, be sure, of great importance, at least you would have thought so had you heard the keen manner in which it was discussed. At length the Dean solved the problem. “You said, I think,” quoth he, “that the footprints indicated that the beasts were travelling from north to south?” “Yes,” replied the author of the paper, as gravely as if a barrister had asked him whether he had seen a man murdered. “Then,” said the Dean, “they were Scotch tortoises on their way to England to better their condition!”

You cannot be long in Burgh Head without being struck by the wild gipsy-like appearance of many of the persons you see lounging about. They belong to a nomadic tribe of tinkers, who inhabit the caves of Caussie, about two miles from Burgh Head, where they eat fish and other dinners by the music of the sea waves.

By some mistake we missed the first train to Inverness, and as the next would not pass for four hours, I

went to Elgin, which is only four miles from Alves, to see the ruins of what was once "the pride of the land, the glory of the realm, the delight of wayfarers and strangers, a praise and boast among foreign nations."

Thus writes Bishop Murray to King Robert III., of Elgin Cathedral; and the same bishop tells us that in 1390, on the feast of St. Botolph, King Robert's brother, the Earl of Buchan, but better known by his popular sobriquet, the Wolf of Badenoch, with a band of lawless and sacrilegious dare-devils, burnt the magnificent Cathedral, the parish church, eighteen canons' residences, and in short, all Elgin.

What an insight we have into the ecclesiastical machinery of the Church of Rome, when we find that this wicked and sacrilegious monster not only made peace with the Pope, but was interred with pomp and state in the Cathedral of Dunkeld! There you may see his effigy arrayed in panoply of mail, and read an inscription on his tomb, which lyingly asserts that he is "an Erle of happy memory." Religious zeal erected a second Cathedral in 1402, which was also burned by Alexander, third son of the Lord of the Isles, and who likewise obtained Papal pardon by costly presents.

The Cathedral was finally rebuilt in 1407, and it is the wreck of this structure that we now see—lovely in its decay, like all beautiful decorated Gothic architecture, and justifying even by its fragmentary remains its former

name — the Lantern of the North. It exhibits, indeed, a sad proof of what Johnson called “the waste of the Reformation.” But how little could the inhabitants of Elgin, of the last century, have felt that “a thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” when, with the glorious architecture of the Cathedral before them, they built the vile Grecian parish church that we see on the site of the ancient Gothic church of St. Giles’s, surmounting it by a Prince of Wales’s feather!!

Johnson, who, amidst much calumny and unjust aspersion of Scotland and Scotchmen, not unfrequently hit the truth, in his own stern, uncompromising manner, says with reference to ruined ecclesiastical edifices in that country: “The malignant influence of Calvinism has blasted ceremony and decency together, and if the remembrance of Papal superstition is obliterated, the monuments of Papal piety are likewise effaced.”

Elgin is too near the beaten track of tourists to render it necessary for me to dwell upon it; but before we leave the ancient ecclesiastical city, let me ask you to look at a pool near the town, whose waters rise and fall with the River Lossie. It is not mentioned in the guide-books; a remarkable omission, because it was in this pool that the reputed devil’s bairns, in the form of witches, were put to the test. It was called the ordeal pot, or order pot, and its associations with the River Lossie are set forth in the lines,

“The order pot, and Lossie gray,
Shall sweep the Chan-ry kirk away.”

As late as 1560, so-called witches were persecuted at Elgin, and here is a curious account of a poor old woman being made a martyr to gross superstition and ignorance:—

“The whilk day ane great multitude rushinge through the Pannis-port, surroundit y^e pool and hither was draggit, through y^e stoure in sore plight, y^e said Marjory Bysseth, wid her grey hairis hanging loose, and crying ‘Pitie!—pitie!’ Now, Maister Wyseman, the samin clerk who had stode up at her tryal, stepped forward and said: ‘I know this woman to have been ane peaceable and unoffending, ane living in y^e privacy of her widowhoode, and skaithing .or gainsaying no one—quhat have ye further to say agin her?’ Then thir was gret murmuring and displeasance among y^e peopel, but Maister Wyseman staunding firth agen asked, ‘Quhat have ye further to say agen her?’ Then did the friares agen repeate how that she did mutter her aves backwards, and others that the mankin started at Bareflet had been traced to her dwellinge, and how that the aforesaid cattel had died by her connivance. But she, hearing this, cried the more, ‘Pitie!—pitie! I am guiltlesse of y^e fausse crimes, never sac much as thought of be me.’ Then suddenly there was ane motion in y^e crowd, and y^e peopel parting on each side, ane leper

came down frae y^e house and in y^e face of y^e peopel bared his hand and his hale arm, y^e which was withered, and covered over with scurfs, most pyteous to behold; and he said, ‘At the day of Pentecost last past, thys woman did give unto me ane shell of oyntment with y^e which I anoynted mine hand, to cure ane imposthume, which had come over it, and beholde from that day furth until thys, it has shrunk and withered as ye see it now.’

“Whereupon the crowd closed round and becam clamorous; but y^e said Margaret Bysseth cried piteously, that God had forsaken her — that she had meaned gude only and not evil — that the oyntment was one gift of her husband, who had been beyond the seas, and that it was ane gift to him from ane holy man and true, and that she had given it free of reward or hyre, wishing only that it might be of gude, but that if gude was to be payed back with evil, sorrow, and grif, Sathan mot not have his owin. Whereupon the people did presse roun’ and became clamorous, and they tak the woman and drag her, amid mony tears and cryes to the pool and crie, ‘To tryal! — to tryal!’ and sae they plunge her in y^e water. And quhen as she went down in the water, there was ane gret shout: bot as she rose agen, and raised up her armes, as gif she would have come up, there was silence for ane space — when agen she went down with ane bublinge noise, and they shouted,

‘To Sathan’s kyngdome she hath gone’ — and forthwith went their wayes.”

I left Elgin at four o’clock and on arriving at Inverness, went without loss of time to the mail-coach office. My portmanteau had not been found, but answers had not yet been received to telegraphic messages that had been sent to Aberdeen and elsewhere respecting it. The mail-coach agent was not as obliging under the circumstances as I expected, but his want of courtesy was abundantly compensated for by a gentleman to whom I had a letter of introduction. With great kindness he not only went with me to all the hotels and coach-offices, but set the police at work to trace my lost property. The superintendent of police was very desirous to impress upon me, that it was not at all probable that my property had been stolen in Inverness. Crime in that town, according to his account, is very rare, and the hangman’s office as great a sinecure as it was a century ago. Captain Burt tells us he saw a man hanged at Inverness in 1742 in so bungling a manner, that he felt for the prolonged sufferings of the unfortunate criminal. But, he adds, “how could it be otherwise, when the hangman was eighty years old, and had not learned his trade for want of practice?”

As you may have felt some little interest in my luggage mishap, I may mention that my portmanteau was

forwarded to me from Aberdeen the day after I arrived at Inverness, but by what agency it got there I could not ascertain. Thus relieved of much anxiety, I doffed my well-worn and rather shabby walking-dress, and stepped into the world a new man in feelings and appearance. Lord Chesterfield wisely recommended his son, as you will remember, to be always well appparelled. The landlord of my hotel at Inverness, taking, it is to be presumed, the measure of my purse by my knapsack and dress, conducted himself in a different manner towards me when he saw that I was a man of property, though this, in his eyes, was limited to a black leather portmanteau. But he was not singular. For inn-keepers, as travellers know, are very apt to gauge a man's wealth by his mode of travelling. I remember a lady of fortune telling me that on one occasion, before railways had been introduced into Switzerland, she arrived at a very late hour at Geneva, with her aged father and a courier, and being unable to obtain rooms at the hotels, was at last under the necessity of appealing to the good nature of the landlord of one of the largest establishments, and entreated him to at least accommodate her father. Much to her surprise, the landlord now told her that entire suites of rooms remained vacant on the first floor, but that he never thought of offering them to parties who did not travel in their own carriages.

Of Inverness, that fair clean town, where Macbeth had a castle, of which Shakspeare's Duncan says—

“This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses,”

much might be written ; but here we are on the highway of tourists, and all the lions are fully chronicled in guide-books. By the light of Captain Burt's letters, written for the most part at Inverness, we are able to see how greatly the town and the habits of the people have altered during the past century. He says that it was an every-day sight to watch the seals from the bridge pursuing the salmon as they ascended the river ; now busy trade has banished seals, and almost salmon too : then, to get drunk at all entertainments was the rule, and not the exception. One gentleman, he adds, made it a point with his guests, that if they dined with him they were not to go away,—in other words, they were to drink until unable to stand. “As the company are disabled one after another, two servants, who are all the while in waiting, take up the invalids with short poles in their chairs as they sit (if not fallen down), and carry them to their beds.”

But Dean Ramsay, in his very interesting “Scotch Reminiscences,” gives if possible a more terrible picture of the drinking formerly prevalent throughout Scotland, when he tells us, on the authority of the late Mr. Mac-

kenzie, of a lad being kept in a house "to loose the neckcloths" of the drunken guests, to guard against apoplexy or suffocation. It is a noteworthy fact, that the liquor which stole these Scotchmen's brains away, was mostly claret. "We have," says Captain Burt, "one great advantage, wholesome drink, I mean French claret." The taste for this fine wine arose from the alliance, during many years, between Scotland and France. But in no respect has there been a greater change than in the inns, which were execrable a hundred years ago. "Your chamber," says Captain Burt, "to which you enter by stairs as dirty as the streets, is so far from having been washed, it has hardly ever been scraped. But most nauseous is it to see the walls and inside of the curtains spotted, as if every one who had lain in bed had spat straight forward, in whatever position he lay." This state of things was attempted to be justified by certain household words, such as "Muck brings luck;" "A clean kitchen is a token of poor house-keeping;" "If butter has no hairs in it, the cow that gave the milk will not thrive." To the practical carrying out of this, an English traveller once strongly protested; for, when a dish of particularly hairy butter was placed before him, he requested that in future the landlady would put the butter on one dish, and the hairs on another, and he would mix for himself. But travellers in those days had to put up with worse things

than hairy butter. "A gentleman," says Captain Burt, "stopped at a country inn in the north-west lowlands, and a large porringer full of minced collops was brought for his dinner; they were so musty that he begged the girl to ask her mistress if there was nothing else to be had. On this the landlady straddled into the room with her arms a-kimbo. 'Musty indeed! O the deill swall ye that I should say sae! It sits ye weel to be sae nice-gabbit, a fulthy butcher o' Dunblane as I ken weel ye age! Better folks nor you has lickit their lips after *that very collops* a month sinsyne, and mair 'at weel!' With that she thrust her fat dirty paw into the middle of the dish, clutched as much of the minced beef as she could grasp, which she conveyed to her mouth, dashed the remainder back into the dish, and telling him it was 'far o'er gude for him,' flung out of the room, and left him to dine with what appetite he might."

And if we consult the works of other writers on Scotland, we find that Scotch lairds, two centuries ago, fared little better than artisans do at present.

Fynes Moryson, who travelled in Scotland in 1617, states in his "Itinerary," that "the Scotch eat much colewort and cabbage, and little fresh meat." "Myself," he says, "was at a knight's house, who had many servants to attend him, that brought in his meat with their heads covered with blue caps, the table being more

than half furnished with great platters of porridge, each having a little piece of sodden meat. And when the table was served, the servants did sit down with us; but the upper mess, those sitting down above the salt vat, instead of porridge, had a pullet with some prunes in the broth.

“They vulgarly eat hearth-cakes of oats, but in cities have also wheaten bread, which for the most part was bought by courtiers, gentlemen, and the best sort of citizens. They drink pure wines, not with sugar, as the English, yet at feasts they put comfits in the wine, after the French manner, but they had not our vintners’ fraud, to mix the wines.

“Their bedsteads are like cupboards in the wall, with doors to be opened and shut at pleasure, so we climbed up to our beds. They use but one sheet, open at the sides and top, but close at the feet and so doubled.”

Now, thanks to the position of Inverness, its connection by railway, and the Caledonian Canal with the south, and above all its celebrity as a great sporting emporium, the hotels are excellent, and if you are daintily inclined, Morel, who has a large establishment in the town, will supply you with a profusion of delicacies.

Among the numerous fine views in Scotland, that from Craig Phadrick, near Inverness, takes high rank. From the summit of this hill you see a panorama of rare beauty and grandeur. Below, to the north, seen athwart

the dark pines mantling the slopes of Craig Phadrick, is Loch Beaully, its many bays running far amidst the folds of the hills, which, as you follow their outlines, swell into mountains, presided over by cloud-robed Ben Wyvis. To the west, are those curious volcanic hills, clothed with thick woods, rising like pyramids from the plain; to the south, long reaches of the Ness rushing seaward from its nursing mother, embosomed in wooded valleys; and to the east, Inverness and glimpses of Moray Firth. It is indeed a glorious view; and as Craig Phadrick is not a cloud-dwelling height, you are not likely to be disappointed in seeing it. Besides the view, it is well worth the trouble of ascending this hill to examine the vitrified fort on its summit, one of the most perfect in Scotland. You know, probably, that these forts consist of vitrified stonework, girdling the crests of hills remarkable generally for their steepness and commanding position. Succulent, luxuriant grasses, and vigorous weeds, which flourish on the conglomerate of Craig Phadrick, do not render it very easy to trace the vitrified ring of stones; but with a little care and patience you can detect it in many places, and will have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the rampart is artificial.

These vitrified forts have long been a great puzzle and perplexity to antiquaries. Many theories have been propounded to account for them. Originally, they were supposed to be the crater rims of extinct volcanoes; but

close examination showed that this hypothesis was as untenable as the Highland tradition that they were constructed by a gigantic tribe of Fions for the protection of their families, and burnt by enemies with such fury that the very stones sputtered and bubbled with intense heat. More probably these hill forts, constructed by the aborigines of Scotland 2,000 years ago, were used as stations for beacon fires, as well as for purposes of defence, and frequent intense heat would have the effect of vitrifying the rocks as we now see them.

Hugh Miller, who examined many vitrified forts, and particularly that of Craig Phadrick, with great attention, was of this opinion; and as a proof how a powerful fire kept burning for a long time will fuse a heap of stones, may be cited the fact that the bonfire lighted on the summit of Arthur's Seat in 1842 to welcome the Queen to Scotland, fused large portions of the basaltic rock.

CHAP. XXIX.

Leave Inverness. — The Caledonian Canal. — Fashionable Tourists. — Tame Sheep. — Gordon Cumming. — Oban. — Start for Skye. — The "Stork." — Kerrera. — Old King Haco. — Loch Linnhe. — Quart Castle. — Sound of Mull. — Tobermory. — Great Storm. — Snugly moored. — The Florida. — Sunk Treasure. — Arasaig. — Eig. — Muck. — Rum. — Sleat Point. — Skye. — Armadale. — Lord Macdonald. — His vast Territory. — The Wool Trade. — Curious Particulars respecting former Trade between Scotland and the Low Countries. — Soap Monopoly. — Sound of Sleat. — Loch Alsh. — Paba. — Broadford Bay. — Raasay. — Loch Portree. — Enterprising Sheep. — Portree Bay. — The Hill of Protection. — Portree.

IF it has been your good fortune to have voyaged from Inverness to Oban, *vid* the Caledonian Canal, on a fine clear day in that most comfortable steamer the Edinburgh Castle, commanded by Captain Turner, you will, I am sure, admit that it is one of the pleasantest excursions that can be made. For, while the lakes are not too broad to render the landscape indistinct, on the other hand, neither they nor the connecting links of canal are so hemmed in by mountains as to prevent an extensive range of vision.

After my lonely wanderings in Sutherland, it was

startling to find myself amidst a motley crowd of tourists. Where did they come from? But were they all tourists, I asked myself when, having obtained a seat on the quarter-deck, I was able to scan my fellow-passengers. Surely not. Can those ladies in gorgeous silks, crinolined to an extent that makes me tremble when I see the inquisitive wind-puffs revealing ankles and legs, and loaded with nuggety bracelets, chains, and brooches,—can these be tourists? Or those gentlemen near them with uncomfortable-looking coats, and boots that would fly to pieces before they had carried their wearer over half a dozen miles of rough road? Impossible; nor were they; for, as I afterwards ascertained, the majority were the fragmentary remains of the British Association, who, in the form of male and female *dilettanti*, were digesting the severities of science amidst the beauties of nature, before returning to their southern homes.

Well, notwithstanding that finery was a little too conspicuous, the party was pleasant, and, favoured by fine weather, the trip was delightful. Captain Turner was in his glory. From the quarter-deck he held forth periodically in true cicerone style as we steamed within view of remarkable localities, and filled the intervals by the most-impartial attention to the wants and wishes of unprotected females. Then we had sword dances on the deck, admirably executed by a nimble fellow who fiddled

while he capered; and the tediousness of passing certain locks was considerably lessened by the performance of some pet sheep which flocked round the captain when he stepped on shore, and exhibited an amount of sagacity that led you to think that they were dogs in sheep's clothing.

But the great divertissement last summer, during the long detention while passing the locks at Fort Augustus, was Gordon Cumming. As soon as we were within sight of the Fort he made his appearance, arrayed in full Highland costume, followed by his servant and a grand-bearded goat, and at the same time bills were distributed among the passengers, announcing that "his famous collection was on view at Fort Augustus, alongside of the Canal Locks, where, as there is a delay of about one hour in getting the steamer, through, visitors have ample time to inspect it." A clever contrivance this, Master Cumming: rent is cheap at Fort Augustus, and instead of carrying your curiosities to the public, they are carried to them. A large proportion of our passengers paid their shilling to see the Lion-Hunter's really interesting collection, but as I had already seen it, I preferred walking to the farthest lock with a few others. Re-embarking, we sped on to Bannavie, from whence we had a grand view of Ben Nevis, clear from base to crest, snow still streaking its precipitous sides, which would now soon

be coated by fresh wreaths, and then rattling in those huge omnibuses to the sea-going steamer, embarked, and after a rapid passage down Loch Linnhe, arrived at Oban at seven o'clock.

Here, while my fellow-passengers were wrangling about rooms, I took quiet possession of one that I had secured by writing before-hand; a precaution you will do well to take at Oban during the travelling season.

Having ordered supper, I went out to make inquiries respecting the steamers. The information promised well. A steamer would call at Oban on her way from Glasgow to the Hebrides in a couple of days, and another would go to Staffa, and Iona the following morning, weather permitting. The weather was propitious, and accordingly I went to those islands; but as their wonders and beauties have been frequently described, and are well-known, I shall not dwell upon them.

So let us start for Skye. The steamer from Glasgow was due at Oban at 7 A.M., and I was, of course, ready to embark. But she did not arrive until nine, and there was such a heap of merchandise to be taken in that we did not leave Oban until near eleven o'clock. For now we are off the tourists' highway, and we must voyage in boats adapted more for the accommodation of goods than passengers. Indeed, I was soon made aware that passengers in the "Stork" were a very secondary con-

sideration in the eyes of the skipper, compared with the piles of goods that encumbered the decks. And so deeply was the "Stork" laden, that when we got under weigh our progress was exceedingly slow.

Our first halt was off the north-west of Kerrera, to take some islanders on board. Here, say the chroniclers, old King Haco—the same, you will remember, who died amidst much religious pomp in Orcadia—sembled his fleet prior to the battle of Largs, that terminated Norse rule in Scotland.

Our progress across Loch Linnhe was still further delayed by a strong west wind, that had been blowing steadily all the morning, and was now rising fast to a gale. Sheltered by the south-east promontory of Mull we made better way, and presently steamed under Duart Castle and entered the Sound of Mull.

Grimly through the storm clouds loomed the shattered ruins of the ancient Scandinavian castles, and the battlemented steps, as we wound through the Sound. Fiercer raged the tempest and louder shrieked the blast when we steamed into the Bay of Tobermory; and all doubts respecting our further progress that night were terminated, by the captain ordering the anchor to be let go, and declaring that he would not start again until dawn.

Had it been fine a pleasant hour or two might have been spent on shore, but the storm and rain precluded

the possibility of landing, so there was nothing to be done but make the best of matters on board. The steward was evidently prepared for this alternative. His larder was abundantly supplied, and as the cabin passengers did not exceed half a dozen, we dined well, and over a pleasant game of whist I congratulated myself that the "Stork" was moored in the snug Bay of Tobermory, instead of attempting to beat round the formidable heads of Ardnamurchan. During the evening the captain pointed out the locality where the Florida, one of the invincible Armada, was wrecked. The disaster occurred just outside the Bay of Tobermory, where

"Loud the northern main
Howls through the fractur'd Caledonian isles."

This ship was supposed to contain a great quantity of specie, but all attempts to obtain the treasure by means of diving bells only resulted in the recovery of some brass and iron guns. Dr. MacCulloch states that the islanders, in their ignorance of chemistry, were greatly astonished and even frightened on finding that when the corroded iron guns were scraped, they became so hot that they could not be touched.

I slept so soundly that I was unconscious that we were under weigh, until woke by the heavy swell of the Atlantic. A protracted continuance of this would have been decidedly unpleasant, but in less than an hour the "Stork" came again to rest in the Bay of Arasaig, to

discharge cargo. Here we remained an hour, and then resuming our voyage, soon came under the shelter of the islands of Eig, Muck, and Rum, and when I went on deck we were running close under Sleat Point, the south extremity of Skye. A short distance north of this point the land forms a deep bay, lined by rich woods, amidst which you are surprised by seeing an imposing castellated mansion. This is Armadale, the residence of Lord Macdonald, descended from Somerled Lord of the Isles, possessor of nearly the whole of Skye. Indeed, his vast territorial possessions entitle him to be regarded as an island prince, for the coast line of his property is nearly 1000 miles long, and his tenantry and their families are computed to number about 16,000 persons.

The morning was so bright and beautiful, and the scenery so charming, that I had great reason to rejoice we had anchored for the night at Tobermory. Nor, when you are in the narrow sounds of the western isles, will you regret that your steamer is not an express boat, but rather be glad that you are afforded opportunities of seeing all the bays and creeks where villages exist.

You are indebted for many of these frequent stoppages to the wool trade, which has long been carried on in the Hebrides. This trade has formed a considerable feature in the commerce of Scotland since the period when a commission appointed by James VI., in 1616, reported against the exportation of wool, and in favour

of manufacturing it into plaids, stuffs, and kerseys. Previous to that time it was shipped to the Low Countries and elsewhere.

We learn some curious particulars respecting this foreign wool trade from the ledger of a Scotch merchant, named Andrew Haliburton, who resided at Middleburgh, and carried on business with Bruges and Antwerp, in the latter part of the fifteenth century. His books show that he sold wool on commission, for thirty-one marks per sack, equal to 6*l.* 18*s.*; and that the usual commodities shipped to Scotland were Claret, Rhenish, vinegar, Malvoisie, canvas, fustian, velvet, damask, satin, pepper, ginger, mace, cloves, and soap.* Scotland, it may be observed, long washed with Flemish soap. That much was not required is evident from the circumstance, that a person of the name of Uddart, to whom the monopoly of making soap in Scotland was granted in the seventeenth century, petitioned that the importation of soap from foreign parts might be prohibited, because, quoth he, "I can make soap enough for the use of all Scotland."

The Privy Council, we are informed, were at considerable pains to ascertain the character of "Mr. Nathaniel his soap," and believing that it was good, and that he could furnish the quantity needful, they granted the prohibition requested.

* Scotland in the Middle Ages, by Professor Innes.

The soap used at that period in Scotland is said to have amounted to about 400,880 pounds annually. In 1845 it is estimated that 27,000,000 pounds were consumed.

We remained half an hour in Armadale Bay, and the same length of time off Glenelg, a village on the Scotch coast. The Sound of Sleat contracts here to a narrow land-locked strait of great depth, the Admiralty chart showing soundings of 73 fathoms close to the shore. The Sound is bounded on the north by the grand mountains of Ross-shire, and on the west by the peaks of Skye. From the Sound you emerge into Loch Alsh, a magnificent sheet of water, also of great depth, and then steaming west, pass into the straits of Kyle-Akin, through which the tide sets with great rapidity. We now passed the entrance to Loch Carron, and to the south of Paba, a soft green isle that seems as if it had drifted from the south and had stranded in these northern waters. The verdant and level nature of this island is due to its belonging to the Lias formation, which here occupies a belt from Broadford to Loch Slapin, in which blue lochans alternate with marsh and moor.

We now swept into Broadford Bay, where we made another long stoppage. Our course now lay through the Sounds of Scalpa and Raasay, both so narrow that you can see the country on either side very distinctly. Huge rock ramparts, ribbed by emerald-like bands of

succulent herbage, dip into the sea, here so transparent that you can see far down into its green depths. Occasionally the ramparts recede, and you see little patches of oats that the islanders have coaxed the churlish ground to yield; far up amidst the clouds rise the serrated ridges of the trap mountains of Skye, and on your right the sandstone cliffs of Raasay, like titanic battlements. The west side of Raasay is grimly barren, but on the east nature is less sterile, and the hospitality of Raasay is not extinct. It was here, as you will remember, that Dr. Johnson was so surprised and pleased by the contrast between the savage barrenness of the island and the elegance and hospitality of Raasay House, that he said, "In Raasay, if I could have found an Ulysses, I had fancied a Phœacia."

When we had run half way up Raasay we opened a noble arm of the sea on the left, the entrance to Loch Portree. This is bounded on two sides by magnificent cliffs streaked by ribbon-like lines of verdure, produced by the grass growing on the rock ledges. Enterprising sheep, in what biologists would call their struggle for existence on these barren heights, may be seen eating their way on the dizzy shelves; a venture not unfrequently fatal to the animals, for they go so far along them that, not having the sagacity to retreat backwards, they topple down precipices in their ineffectual attempts to push forwards.

Portree Bay is worthy of its royal name. This was given in consequence of the ship in which James V. voyaged round Scotland having remained some time in the bay. This could harbour an immense fleet, being sheltered from every wind. Far above the mural cliffs that spring from the sea, rise grand mountains; that on the south is called Bein Inivaig, or the hill of protection or defiance, and that at the head of the harbour Aithe-Suider Fhin, or the seat of Fingal, from whence the Ossianic hero is said to have directed the chase. Fit framing this for an Hebridcan Genoa; but when you steam to the head of the bay, two miles from the mouth, you only see a small town, destitute of a single building of importance. This is Portree, built at the base of a craggy wooded promontory jutting into the bay. The steamer creeps alongside of this promontory, which dips vertically into the sea, here of great depth, and you land in the heart of the metropolis of Skye, under trees which throw their branches across the rocky path leading to the inn at the top of the cliff. It was just one o'clock when we landed, so that we had been twenty-five hours *en voyage* from Oban.

CHAP. XXX.

The Storr Rock. — Prince Charles' Cave. — Geology of the Storr Mountain. — Portree. — Its Condition. — Disquisition on Pigs. — Aversion of the Inhabitants to Pork. — Sillocks. — Meet a Frenchman. — His Love for "le Sport." — M. Neckar. — Proceed to Uig. — Trodda-nish. — Angus Fionn. — How to Strangle your Enemy. — Rain. — The Isle of Mists. — The Evil Eye. — Arrive at Uig. — Quiraing. — A stiff Climb. — Wonderful Rock Scenery. — The Platform of Quiraing. — Duntulm Castle. — The Kings of Skye. — A Black Villain. — Horrible Death. — Return to Uig.

ORDERING a late dinner, I set off with a gentleman to see the Storr Rock, about seven miles from Portree. I say about seven, for though this may be the distance by road, we curtailed it considerably by striking, steepchase fashion, across the moorland which slopes from the grand mural ramparts dipping into the Sound, to the flat interior valley between Stórr and Sligachan.

If you have a dislike to wet feet I cannot recommend this route, for the moorland is very moist, and it is quite possible, if you are not an expert "bog-trotter," you may make a deeper and closer acquaintance with soft mosses than you bargain for. But there is one advan-

tage in this over-moor route: you cannot miss your way, unless, indeed, you are so unfortunate as to be wrapped in mist. When a little above Portree you see the head of the Storr Rock above the line of cliffs, and it continues your faithful beacon to the end of your expedition.

Ascending continually, an hour's sharp walking brought us to the edge of the cliffs above the cave where Prince Charles remained concealed for some time during his adventurous life in the Hebrides. Had we been romantically disposed we should probably have made a pilgrimage to the cave; but neither of us had sufficient love for the Prince's memory to turn aside to see his marine villa. An hour more scrambling and we stood on the side of the Storr, gazing with wonder mingled with awe at the sublime scene before us. Some 500 feet of the mountain, which is 2343 feet above the sea, is vertical on the sea-side, and beneath this precipice the mountain slopes bristle with a congregation of fantastic peaks, pinnacles, and spires springing from a chaos of shattered rocks.

What, you will ask, wrought all this ruin, for these toppling crags and pinnacles were evidently once united. Geology will answer.

The north-west portion of Skye, from Portree to Loch Staffin, presents a range of grand sea cliffs, capped by trap mountains, that of Storr being the

loftiest. The structure of this section of the island has been ascertained to consist of the following strata, cited in ascending order. Lias, inferior oolite, middle oolite, imperfectly columnar basalt, estuary shales, Oxford clay, and amygdaloidal trap. Now it is this amygdaloidal trap, which, severed into fragments on the lower escarpments, appears in the form of those wonderful rock pinnacles and spires which we see at Storr and Quiraing.

The cause of this extraordinary mass of cyclopean ruins is, that between the amygdaloidal and columnar trap there intervene beds of soft shale and clay, which being acted upon by meteorological agencies, have been fretted away, while the trap has remained, and thus led to "the breaking up of the superincumbent mass, the retrocession of the main body of trap, and the isolation of the blocks and pinnacles, which probably become more numerous after every winter." *

But while we gaze wonderingly at the results of

"Fierce winds and lightnings, and the trampling waves,"

there is also much matter for wonder beneath our feet. Those oolitic strata teem with fossils, which once lived in the sea, but perished when the great plutonic outburst suddenly converted the sea-bed into dry land, and piercing the superincumbent strata, formed the great

* E. Forbes on the Oolites in Skye. Quart. Journ. of Geo. Soc. 1851.

and thick mass of trap composing the Storr mountain and its outliers.

The late Professor Edward Forbes, who went to Skye for the express purpose of examining the oolitic beds, declares that the "truly wonderful scenery of Storr and Quiraing far surpasses, for irregularity, any other rock landscapes in Britain."

But the views from Storr are not confined to these

"Craggs, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world."

Below, you see Raasay, and other Sounds, through which,

"by night and day,
The great sea water finds its way,
Through long, long windings of the hills,"

and around a vast panorama of mountain heights rising for the most part boldly from the water.

Our return to Portree, a descent all the way, was accomplished in a little under two hours, and on arriving at the inn we were right glad to find that our orders to have an abundant and good dinner were strictly carried out. Indeed, the inn at Portree is excellent in all respects; and could Dr. Johnson revisit Skye, which in his day was famous for its bad inns, he would, I apprehend, be perfectly satisfied with the entertainment provided by the host, John Ross.

In the evening, I strolled out to look at the town, or

village rather. The houses, though well built, do not convey the idea of being occupied by a prosperous people; paneless windows are common, and the furniture of the rooms that I saw was poor and scanty. Fish and agriculture are alike uncertain in their returns. "It is very rare indeed, in the parish of Portree," according to the Statistical Account of Scotland, "that there is even a favourable seed-time, and in harvest heavy rains and strong gales of wind prevail, and all the hopes of the husbandman are frustrated." No wonder under these circumstances that we find the writer adding, "No people on earth live on more simple or scanty diet than those in this parish. The greater number of them subsist on potatoes of the worst kind, sometimes with, but oftener without, fish."

Why is that useful animal the pig, which after doing pillow duty for Pat, pays his rent, and often gives him a bit of wholesome bacon, never seen in Skye, and indeed but seldom throughout the Highlands? With respect to Skye, the answer is easy. The population hold pork in Israelitish abhorrence, and not the most succulent sucking pig, nor the plumpest porker, possess charms for them. The same aversion was entertained by their fathers. Dr. Johnson says, "The inhabitants of Skye have pork and bacon in abhorrence, and accordingly I never saw a hog in the Hebrides, excepting one at Dunvegan." I wonder, if dear Elia's essay on roast

pig were rendered into Gaelic, would the Hebrideans have a curiosity to taste the animal? "Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundis edibilis*," quoth Lamb, "I will maintain roast pig to be the most delicate. The strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refuseth not his juices." I may, however, observe before passing from this porcine subject, that if chronicles are to be trusted, pigs were not uncommon formerly in the Highlands. We read that in 1492 a lawless freebooter, who had a very selfish idea of the rights of property, was ordered to "restore, content, and pay to the Sheriff of Cromarty, among other things carried off by him and his people, 200 swine, each swine being valued at 2s.;" and you will remember that when the three Hecates in Macbeth meet on the blasted heath at Forres, the second witch declares that she had been "killing swine."

"La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent," says Brillat Savarin, and I cannot help thinking that the introduction of pig into the Hebrides would be very advantageous to the people of those islands, who are continually subject to harvest failures. The Hebrideans have, however, one advantage denied to Pat. In whatever part of the islands they dwell, the sea is almost at their door, and every bay teems with fish. During the evening and morning that I was at Portree, hundreds of persons were catching

sillocks from the rocks, and from boats, as fast as the lines could be cast into the water. Nearly every fisher used two rods, and to each line several hooks trimmed with pieces of white feather were attached, so you may judge how large was the take.

As I was about entering my inn for the night, my attention was drawn to a strange-looking character attired in a fantastic sporting costume, standing in the doorway. He was evidently not an Englishman, but before I had time to speculate as to his country, he addressed me in French, asking whether I spoke that language. His joy when I answered in the affirmative was great, for his acquaintance with English was very slight, and you may be sure that French is an unknown tongue in Skye. Yet not entirely, for a gentleman lives near Portree whose native language is French, and it was to see him that my questioner had journeyed from Paris to the Hebrides. This foreigner is M. Neckar, grandson of the celebrated statesman of that name, and nephew of Madame De Staël. Upwards of forty years ago, distressed and disgusted by home politics, he left his country, and in the course of his wanderings visited Skye. The scenery and solitude of this island pleased him; he purchased a small house near Portree, and declining all offers of hospitality, has lived a hermit's life for many years, retaining, however, a love for science, to which he has been attached from a very early age. The

gentleman who addressed me was his nephew ; he had been paying his uncle a visit, and was now on his way home. We had a long chat on various matters ; and in answer to my desire to know how he liked Scotland, he frankly told me that it only possessed, in his estimation, two charms—yachts and grouse. To sail in a yacht, and to kill grouse, were in his opinion pleasures of a high order ; not that he had ever done the one or the other, but he had seen so many fine yachts, and had heard so much of *Le Yacht* and *Le Sport*, that he was quite sure that they must be perfect *jouissances*.

I sent my portmanteau to Sligachan by the mail-car, and joined my Scotch companion of the previous day in hiring a dog-cart to Uig, fifteen miles from Portree. Just without the town you pass the enclosed fields and flourishing plantations of Lord Macdonald's factor, and then enter the ancient Scandinavian district of Trodda-nish, the point, or territory of Trodda. The Scandinavians, who had large possessions in Skye, have left their memory in the island, but no trace of their language.

Nine miles from Portree a road branches to Kingsburgh, where the mansion stood in which Prince Charles was harboured before he went to Portree, and where Dr. Johnson met Flora Macdonald. No vestige of the house remains, but a few stunted trees mark its site. A short distance farther you enter that part

of Trodda-nish which belonged to Angus or Aonas Fionn, who figures prominently in Gaelic history as having slain the murderer of Donald Herroch. The incident is worth mentioning, on account of the curious manner in which Donald was killed. The story runs that he was invited to a feast at which, among other pastimes, leaping was proposed, it being known that Donald's agility would carry the palm of victory. Accordingly a leathern thong with a running loop was prepared, the loop being suspended over the place where Donald was to leap, while the other end of the thong was held in an adjoining apartment. Donald, unconscious of the trap, leaped to his highest, and at the moment that his head was within the noose the cord was tightened with savage determination, and he was strangled. The perpetrator of this deed went afterwards by the sobriquet, na Hellidh, or Paul of the Thong, and he it was whom Angus killed.

Four miles from Kingsburgh we came within sight of the Bay of Uig, surrounded by a great number of small farms and cottages. Here, alas! the rain which threatened to fall when we left Portree descended in earnest, and continued with only two days' intermission during the rest of my sojourn in Skye. Do not, however, imagine that I was very unfortunate. Far from it. To have two rainless days in Skye during the autumn is, let me assure you, to be fortunate. The

very name of the island signifies Cloud, the nursing mother of rain, and we know it is the isle of mists of the Gaelic poets. A meteorological register kept at Skye would, indeed, be but an almost daily record of rain, snow, and storm.

“When does the snow go?” said MacCulloch to a girl in Skye. “It never gangs till the rain comes,” was the answer; and so it would seem that, what with storm and mist, rain and snow, the Skyeians have but a sorry time of it. I certainly never saw such rain storms as buffeted me in this island. No wonder that, living amidst this eternal strife of the elements, the people are superstitious. In the parish of Snizort, through which we passed on our way to Uig, the people believe in the influence of an evil eye. Among the numerous superstitions, says the minister of the parish, there is nothing so much dreaded as this — so much so, indeed, he adds, they are in the habit of reciting some Gaelic lines as an antidote to the evil power: which are thus rendered:—

“Let God bless my eye,
 And my eye will bless all I see;
 I will bless my neighbour,
 And my neighbour will bless me.”

Through blinding rain and furious storm blasts we made our way to the little inn at Uig, which we reached at ten o'clock. The appearance of this inn was far from

prepossessing, and when I looked more closely into the domesticities, I was almost led to abandon my intention of sleeping there. For I should tell you that my companion purposed returning to Portree, in order to catch the steamer to Glasgow, while I boldly determined to push round Skye, despite adverse meteorological influences.

Fortunately there was no prospect of being asked to share the bed with any living thing larger than an insect; and as, happily, the most repulsive and disgusting variety of nocturnal pests does not molest me, I took courage and resolved to occupy the bed. Then, wrapping ourselves to the best of our power in our waterproofs, we set out for Quiraing under the guidance of a youth. It is an uninteresting walk of between six and seven miles over a bad road, but this is good compared to the path that awaits you at the foot of Quiraing. Here we experienced an unpleasant meteorological vicissitude. The rain had ceased falling for a quarter of an hour, when, just as we commenced ascending the mountain, the mist passed again into heavy rain through the medium of a drizzle. In fine clear weather the views, said our guide—to tantalise us, I suppose,—are bonnie; all I can say is, that what we saw was principally vapour and rain, for

“ So thick was the mist on the ocean green,
Nor cape nor headland could be seen.”

However, we hoped that as we ascended we should find a friend in the wind, which was evidently blowing furiously aloft.

It is a very stiff climb up Quiraing, over grassy slopes and débris-covered steeps. The guide-books say that in some places you have to creep on all-fours. The compilers of these publications may have done this, and so will you, perhaps, if you are weak-limbed; but if you are qualified to be a candidate for the membership of the Alpine Club, I do not think that you will creep at any locality on all-fours. Climb cautiously you certainly must if persecuted by such a gale as buffeted us, but there is no *mauvais pas* in the ascent to Quiraing. A lady will, however, find the undertaking difficult unless accustomed to climbing mountains, particularly if she attempts it over-crinolined and thinly shod.

One thousand feet surmounted, and you stand on the threshold of the wonders of Quiraing. Conceive a mountain very steep on all sides but one, and on this almost precipitous. Conceive further an opening in the face of the precipice, giving access to an area or elliptical platform, 300 feet by 160 feet, surrounded by huge obelisks and tower-like rocks, and you have some idea of Quiraing. It is, indeed, a most remarkable scene, and although I had heard much of its singularity, the reality greatly exceeded my expectations. The entrance to the area is guarded by an isolated pyramid called the

Needle, some 300 feet high. Beyond this stands the platform, the more curious as it is not only nearly level but clothed with succulent grass, enamelled with a great variety of wild flowers, while it is girt with innumerable pinnacles and battlemented cliffs, fretted into the most fantastic shapes.

“Look up,” says the good minister of the parish in which this great rock wonder is situated, “when you are on the grassy platform, and you will see the golden eagle soaring aloft in the blue firmament.” Alas! the eagles were all shrouded in mist, and we saw nothing but this and the storm-clouds drifting before the gale. But agreeable as a blue firmament and dry clothing would have been, I am inclined to think that Quiraing is one of those places seen to greater advantage when veiled in mist and gloom than lighted by brilliant sunshine. Nor should I omit to mention that the rain gives you innumerable water-falls, which spout down the precipices; sometimes, however, they are arrested midway by a sudden gust of wind, and impelled upwards in the form of spray.

If blessed with a firm head, you may try it at the platform of Quiraing to the utmost, descending the rugged clefts and chasms between the pyramids, or scaling their precipitous sides; but whether you climb the highest practicable eyrie, or descend to the lowest depth, no view is more striking or impressive than that from

the centre of the platform, whence you take in at a sweep the great rock battlements and the chaotic assemblage of riven mountain masses. Your geological studies at Storr will enable you to see at a glance that the same agencies which led to the formation of the pinnacles on the slopes of that mountain, have been active at Quiraing: the result, however, is grander here; and, indeed, the basaltic scenery in the north of Skye is on a larger scale than that of the Giant's Causeway, or Staffa, though the symmetry of the columns is not so great.

On a clear day you command a variety of sea views near Quiraing. Our range, in consequence of the mist was extremely limited. We caught glimpses of the vexed waves falling back foaming from the craggy headlands of Altavaig, and could discern the cliffs above the ruined castle of Duntulm. On their cloudy heights, as late as 1775, the chieftains of the house of Macdonald sat in state judging their people, and determining differences connected with the tenure of land. Duntulm Castle is said to have been the residence for many years of the piratical kings of Skye, and here it was that Uistean Mac Ghilliaspuig Chlierich (I hope that you are not reading this page aloud, for if you are you will assuredly break down at this name,) was put to death by his uncle Donull Gorm Mor, the reigning chieftain of Skye. The fellow deserved to be killed, as you will admit when

you hear the story, but not, perhaps, in the manner by which his death was effected. Said Uistean, etc. hit on what he conceived to be an ingenious scheme to deprive his uncle of his possessions; and to carry it into effect took a person into his confidence. When all was ripe for the execution of his project, he wrote two letters, one to his uncle full of kind expressions, calculated to lull him into perfect security; the other to his confidant, apprising him how he was to act. But fortunately for the uncle the letters were misdirected, and as may be supposed he lost no time in acting upon the information he thus accidentally received. The nephew, a powerful big-boned brute was seized, conveyed to Duntulm, thrown into a dungeon, left there until he was half dead with hunger, then given a great quantity of very salt beef, of which he partook largely. Thirst, raging thirst ensued: to appease this the prisoner seized a pitcher, which he imagined contained water. It was empty, and his uncle had the satisfaction of seeing his nephew die in writhing agony. So runs the story, vouched for by the bones of the poor wretch, which were found in the dungeon, and believed to be his from their great size.

It would be impossible, says the minister of Kilmuir, to relate all the feuds and differences that disturbed the peace of this part of Skye from the dawn of history to 1715. The people do not seem to have been at all

influenced by religious feeling. Kilmuir, or the Church of Mary, from *Cill*, a chapel, and *Muir*, Mary, might lead you to suppose that they had at least the light of the Church to guide them in the paths of peace.

Our trudge back to Uig was through continuous rain, blown by fierce gusts of wind in all directions. An umbrella was of course useless; and, indeed, so searching was the rain that my good waterproof failed to keep it out. However, I was better off than my companion, for I had a change of clothes at Uig, while he had to drive back to Portree in his wet garments.

CHAP. XXXI.

Bad Inns in Skye. — Want of Fish. — James VI. and the Goose. — Paucity of Books. — Dr. Johnson and Cocker. — Nocturnal Companions. — Rain again. — The Boatmen of Uig. — Cross Loch Suizort. — The Ascrib Islands. — Culdee Chapels. — The Fiery Cross. — Vaternish Point. — Admiralty Soundings. — Grishinish. — Scandinavian Names. — Adverse Meteorological Influences. — Wretched Hovel. — Dunvegan. — Curiosities of the Castle. — Scott's Visit. — College of Bagpipers. — The Macrimmons. — Their renown as Pipers. — Macrimmon's Lament. — Scott's Poem on Macrimmon's Fate. — Proceed to Sligachan. — Macleod's Maidens. — Coorse Weather. — Dr. Johnson's Account of the Country near Sligachan.

It would be well for the tourist in Skye if Lord Macdonald were as wealthy as the Duke of Sutherland. In this case his Lordship would perhaps provide good inns for visitors to his romantic island. Now, with the exception of those at Portree and Broadford, all the other inns in Skye are sorry taverns, where you must be prepared to rough it in bed and board.

With respect to the latter, it is tantalising at Skye to be always near the sea and have fish very seldom. When you ask for fish, the answer generally is that the sea is

too rough to enable the boats to go out,—a statement, by the way, that you cannot conscientiously contradict. Mutton, mutton, mutton, — on this the traveller must feed, happy if he can get a potato with his meat. Occasionally you are served with a fowl; but the bird is generally in such an emaciated condition, that you are inclined to say with James VI., when he was asked how he liked a wretched goose served with groats, that he should have liked it much better if they had given the groats to the bird before they had killed it. My experience of the inns in the north of Skye certainly did not enable me to endorse Dr. Johnson's remark, when feasting at Dunvegan, that he had come in at the wrong end of the island, but then my entertainers were humble publicans, his great lairds.

“Have you any books?” I asked the girl who waited on me, when, having finished my muttony dinner, I found myself with a long evening before me. She would ask her master; presently the latter appeared with half-a-dozen volumes that put a summary end to my hopes that he might possess some curious old works, such as you sometimes fall in with at a country inn.

You may generally know a book by its coat,—at least, if in the habit of seeing many, you will certainly obtain some notion of the nature of a work by its outward garb. In this instance it was impossible to mistake the

literary *pabulum* placed before me ; the books were clad in sickly green paper, and were trashy novels.

In this dearth of mental food I thought of wise Dr. Johnson, who, you may remember, provided himself with a copy of Cocker's Arithmetic, which he gave to a girl in Skye. On Boswell's expressing his surprise that Johnson should have bought such a book for his journey, the Doctor answered; "Why, sir, if you are to have but one book with you upon a journey, let it be a book of science. When you have read through a book of entertainment you know it, and it can do no more for you; but a book of science is inexhaustible." Was ever Cocker so honoured before?

How I should have spent my evening, seeing that I had no Cocker nor any other book of science with me, would, perhaps, have been perplexing, had I not had a copy of that unequalled mental *pièce de résistance* with me, — Shakspeare's Plays, which has been my companion during many solitary hours at inns, at home and abroad.

Thus proof against *ennui*, I read the "Tempest"; and while the storm raged without, and strange noises moaned within, I almost fancied that the winds

"Pronounced the name of Prosper,"

and that an Ariel-voice might be heard in the pauses of the gale.

When I woke in the morning I had reason to be thankful that I was proof against the attacks of at least one species of nocturnal animal; for I saw three make a slow retreat beneath the bolster, the stragglers probably of an army which had gone before. The nasty sight reminded me of a story told by Captain Burt of two officers who slept in the same room in a Highland inn. In the morning one began killing the least active description of vermin. "Zounds! what are you doing?" cried the other. "Let us first secure the dragoons; we can take the foot at our leisure."

Rain, rain; not a ray of hope in the murky heavens; such was the morning's prospect. In one respect, however, I was fortunate; the storm had passed off, and the wind was moderate. Thus there was a probability of getting across Loch Snizort; for to go to Dunvegan from Uig by the road at the head of this far-reaching estuary, lengthens the distance from fourteen miles to twenty-eight.

Before breakfast, I went down to the bay, and while looking at the sea a boatman accosted me, and asked whether I wished to cross the loch. When you have to make a bargain it is always in your favour when the offer of service precedes the request to be served. Here, at all events, a boatman was willing to take me across the loch. For four shillings, says the guide-book, you may hire a boat from Uig to Grishinish. Bearing this

in mind, I asked my man his price. Twenty shillings. Well done, boatman of Uig, thought I; you have doubtless long followed the advice of the Scotch proverb, "Grasp at the gown, you may clutch the sleeve." As you may imagine, we had a long bargaining bout, the upshot of which was that for eight shillings he and his companion, who had joined him in the midst of the bargaining, agreed to take me to Grishinish. The distance is about eight miles, and the wind was sufficiently favourable to speed us across in little more than one hour. A timid person would not have liked the passage. More than once the stout boat heeled over so much that the hissing sea lapped the gunwale, and midway we encountered waves with all the strength of the Atlantic in them.

Some thirty years ago Loch Snizort was famous for its herring fishery, these fish being caught in such numbers that long before they could be salted they became putrid. Now the fishery, according to my boatmen, is so unproductive as to be hardly worth prosecuting; another instance of the nomadic life of the herring tribe.

A little south of the headland of Ru Chorachan, which was girt at its base by foam, we sailed into somewhat smoother water, the Ascrib Islands acting as breakwaters. These islands, which, though small, are extremely numerous, are situated to the west of Water-

nish Point, and are exposed to the full fury of the ocean lashed by western gales. They are, for the most part, mere rocks, though one, the South Ascrib, is mantled by deliciously green sward. You can see from their precipitous outline that they have an igneous origin, and the depth of the water in Loch Snizort, close to the shores, is further confirmatory of this fact. The boatmen will tell you that this water is so deep as to be unfathomable, but the Admiralty soundings record a very different story. According to these, the average depth of the loch near the cliffs is about forty fathoms; a great depth, but still very different from the ideal abyss of the boatmen.

Some of these islands are covered with the ruins of Cills or Culdee Chapels, one of which still bears the name of Cladh-Mhanaich, or the Monk's burial-ground. The whole of this Vaternish district, indeed, abounds with ecclesiastical and military vestiges, for besides the Cills there are ruins of forts, which were erected within sight of each other, and from the summits of which tradition states that the Crois-tavaidh, or Fiery Cross, was displayed. This consisted of a large piece of wood dipped in the blood of a goat, lamb, or sheep, which when half burnt was rapidly circulated through the land as a signal of distress, and for the purpose of calling the people together.

I landed at Grishinish, a small hamlet of poor hovels,

but probably of metropolitan importance to the scanty population of this wild part of Skye. We are now in the ancient territory of the Scandinavians. The names of the majority of places terminate in "nish," a point or promontory, as Vaternish, the point of Vater; others in bost or burg, and sta or stadt; as, Orbost, Skeabost, Resaburg, and Monkstadt, Brunistadt, &c.

My walk to Dunvegan (eight miles) was far from pleasant, being chiefly remembered by the meteorological varieties of rain, mist, and wind. It requires considerable philosophy to plod on alone under such adverse influences, and prevent one's stock of cheerful spirits, which may not be large at starting, oozing out, while the rain oozes in. But if you go to Skye, you must expect more rain than sunshine; and you will do well to remember as you trudge along that the peasants you see are permanent dwellers amidst this bleakness and poverty, whereas you are but a wayfarer, and will soon be in lands where there is less rain and a greater abundance of God's blessings.

I was led to make these reflections after entering a hovel near the road-side, at the door of which stood an old woman, with a corrugated forehead and misty eyes. Being very thirsty I went in hoping, but scarcely expecting, to obtain a bowl of milk. The crone's knowledge of English was nearly as limited as was mine of Gaelic, but she comprehended my request, and made

me speedily understand that she had no milk, nor, indeed, apparently anything to eat or drink in the house but oat-cake and water.

A certain author, in his enthusiastic love for stone buildings, insists that there is "a marked element of sublimity in the rude and irregular piling of the rock walls of the mountain cottages of Scotland." If this is meant to include Skye, I venture to say that the hovels in that island should be excepted. At least I could see no element of sublimity in low structures of irregularly piled uncemented stones, forming walls terribly out of the perpendicular, suggestive of a proximate downfall. And, oh! the squalid misery of the interior of these windowless dens. That which I entered was grievous to behold. How the woman lived, whether she had relatives or friends, I could not ascertain, but by the state of the byre where the cattle were stalled, I presumed that she was not alone in her misery.

I reached Dunvegan in little more than two hours from the time of leaving Grishinish. Here a disappointment awaited me. I had journeyed to Dunvegan mainly for the purpose of seeing the castle and the curious antiquities, which are said to be shown to visitors, but on applying to see them I was informed that though still in the possession of the M'Leod family, they were not in the castle. As I could not see the relics, which I may mention consist of Rory More's

drinking horn and a flag, supposed to possess marvellous powers, I contented myself with a view of the outside of the castle. The original portion of the structure is so ancient that tradition even does not note its birth. To this Alastair Crotach and other chieftains made various additions. The result is a building which I apprehend the Inspector-General of Fortifications would not deem of any great use as a defence against an invading force, and recent alterations adapting it to the purposes of a residence have considerably marred its picturesque features. Here Dr. Johnson reposed for some days, or, to use his own words, "tasted lotus, and was in danger of forgetting that he was ever to depart;" and here Scott passed a night in what was reputed to be a haunted room. "I took possession of it," he says, about the witching hour, "but no ghost appeared;" if he had seen one, it would probably have appeared under the same circumstances that Hamlet saw the ghost of his father, "in his mind's eye," or as he saw the rocks called Macleod's Maidens, which are really not visible from any point within four miles of Dunvegan.

Among the historical memories attaching to Dunvegan is the establishment of a College or Institution of Bagpipers, under the auspices of the Macleods and direction of the Macrimmons, hereditary pipers to the Lords of Dunvegan. The Macrimmons are said to have cultivated the art of playing on the *Piob mhor*, or large

bagpipe, with so much success that they became celebrated throughout Scotland. Pupils from all parts of the Highlands went to Dunvegan to receive instructions from the Macrimmons, who were obliged to open a regular institution for teaching pipe music. A certain course of instruction was laid down, and after studying the prescribed number of years, certificates of excellence were given to the pupils. "Caves," says the author of the Statistical Account of Skye, "are still pointed out, where the scholars used to practise on the chanter, the small pipe, and large bagpipe." This, it must be admitted, was a considerate arrangement, for it would, I apprehend, be difficult to conceive anything more discordant or ear-torturing than a company of learners on the big bagpipes.

This bagpipe institution, though fallen from its high estate, was not entirely extinct in 1779, when Dr. Johnson was at Dunvegan. In his "Journey to the Western Islands," he alludes to the "College of Pipers," and says that his dinner was "exhilarated by the bagpipe at Armadale and Dunvegan."

But although the bagpipe college has ceased to exist, the memory of the Macrimmons is preserved in the Highlands by the well-known lament, composed by Lord Macleod's hereditary piper when the clan was about to depart on a dangerous enterprise. Macrimmon was impressed with a belief, verified by the event,

that he would be slain on this occasion. The incident forms one of Scott's miscellaneous poems, which thus opens :—

“ Macleod's wizard flag from the grey castle sallies,
 The rowers are seated, unmoor'd are the galleys ;
 Glean war-axe and broad sword, clang target and quiver,
 As Macrimmon sings, ' Farewell to Dunvegan for ever !
 Farewell to each cliff, on which breakers are foaming ;
 Farewell, each dark glen, in which red deer are roaming ;
 Farewell, lonely Skye, to lake, mountain, and river ;
 Macleod may return, but Macrimmon shall never ! ”

The “ Lament,” adds Sir Walter Scott, is but too well known throughout the Highlands and Isles, from its being the strain with which the emigrants usually take leave of their native shore.

The scanty promise of interesting scenery between Dunvegan and Sligachan (twenty-five miles), and the probability of wet weather, determined me to drive to Sligachan instead of sleeping at Dunvegan and walking there on the following day. Accordingly, after partaking of a luncheon dinner at the inn, which is clean and comfortable, I engaged a vehicle from the landlord, which he dignified by the name of dog-cart, and for the hire of which I had to pay twenty shillings.

I left Dunvegan at three o'clock, and, thanks to an excellent road and a good horse, we bowled along famously. It was as well perhaps that there is but little



to be seen in this drive, for my driver boy's phraseology was as obscure as the mists which surged in fitful gusts from the Atlantic, rolling up the long sea lochs, and curling over the cliffs like smoke. Through these I caught, when about ten miles from Dunvegan, glimpses of Macleod's Maidens, three remarkable basaltic pillars, rising vertically out of the sea, one to the height of about 200 feet, the two others to about 100 feet. Seen looming through the mist, the rocks assumed strange forms, justifying the designation of the peasants, who call them the Mother and her 'Daughters, from their fanciful resemblance to gigantic women clad in cloaks and hoods.

North of these rocks are Macleod's Tables, two mountains terminated by plateaus. They are marked on the Admiralty chart as being respectively 1589 and 1527 feet high, and are consequently only remarkable on account of their truncated summits.

At the head of Loch Earport, a continuation of Loch Bhracadil, we came to a mountain torrent, so swollen and furious that I wonder the fragile-looking bridge spanning it was not carried away. You would have thought that it drained a vast area, so large were the waters, but the head is only five miles from its outlet.

We now entered upon a wild sterile district, that seems to have undergone but little change since Dr. Johnson was in Skye. He describes it as "the place,

beyond all that he had seen, from which the gay and the jovial seem utterly excluded ; and where the hermit might expect to grow old in meditation, without possibility of disturbance or interruption."

The Doctor evidently saw it under unfavourable circumstances. The weather, he says, was one continued storm, and buffeted by the tempest, he breaks forth, "Skye half the year is deluged with rain. From the autumnal to the vernal equinox a dry day is hardly known, except when the showers are suspended by a tempest."

As my driver said, the weather is indeed "coorse" in Skye, and it became very boisterous, when, as the evening settled prematurely into night, we arrived at Sligachan.



G. Barnard, del.

GLEN SLIGACHAN.

M. & T. Harbord, lith.

CHAP. XXXII.

Sligachan. — An Unhappy Landlord. — Bad Weather. — Deer Stalking. — White Trout. — A Mountain Mere. — Rare Plant. — A One-legged Goblin. — Start for Camasunary. — Glen Sligachan. — The Cuchullins. — Mountain Torrents. — Scur-na-Gillian. — Hart o' Corrie. — The Bloody Stone. — Ancient Woods. — Blabhein. — Embark for Loch Scavaig. — Scavaig Bay. — Great Depth of Water. — Loch Scavaig. — Walk to Loch Coruisk. — Circuit of the Lake. — Geology of the Cuchullins. — Glacial Action. — Poised Rocks. — Scott's Explanation of them. — Dr. Johnson puzzled. — Hypersthene. — Its Composition. — Rounded Rocks. — Origin of Skye. — Awful Scenery of Loch Coruisk. — Return to Sligachan.

MY remembrance of Skye will always be more closely associated with Sligachan than with any other locality in Skye; for it was my fate to be a solitary denizen of the inn for four days, during the greater part of two of which I was kept close prisoner by bad weather. Sligachan inn at no period of the year can be a lively abode, but when the clouds, surcharged with vapours from the Atlantic, pour their contents on the Cuchullins, the steep sides of which are ribbed by innumerable waterfalls, you may suppose that its few eligibilities are very much at a discount.

It was not rain that fell, but periodical water-spouts that swept from the hill-tops down the glen with such force and fury that you would have believed you were in the zone of typhoons. A water-course through the glen, which, during fair weather, is a mere brook, was swollen to the dimensions of a mighty river, which rushed down, roaring, to the head of the bay. Add to these *desagrémens* that the inn is situated in the midst of barren moorland, treeless; and with nothing to break the sterile prospect but a bridge backed by Bein Glamair, which, during the greater part of the time that I was at Sligachan, was shrouded in mist, and that the house itself was extremely uncomfortable, and you will see that it requires considerable philosophy to support the *ennui* of a four days' residence at Sligachan.

How soon you can detect the influence of a clever and clean hostess, and that of the reverse. It was very easy to see that the domesticities of Sligachan were out of joint, for the landlady neglected her duty, and the landlord went about the house with a heavy heart. And no wonder, for when you hear that his wife was not allowed access to the liquor closet, you will understand that she was not fit for the office of landlady.

The day after my arrival was Sunday, and although the weather was as bad as can be conceived, I contrived, in the spirit of hoping and enduring all things, to get through the day. Twice, availing myself of the

retreat of the storm blasts in the gorges of the hills, I went out, but had scarcely walked a hundred yards from the house when the enemy was down upon me with a fury that sent me reeling back to the inn. Some hours were spent in ingenious devices to make the peat smoke ascend the chimney, and occasionally I found occupation in re-lighting the fire, which had been suddenly extinguished by a waterfall down the chimney.

But still, as you may suppose, the time hung heavy ; for although in a snug cosy inn you may be able to realise what Washington Irving calls a feeling of territorial consequence when taking your ease before the fire, I am quite sure, if you see Skye through such a medium of mist and gloom as I did, you will have no desire to be the possessor of an acre of land in it. Of course I held long parleys with the landlord ; but he being a Ross-shire man, and a recent dweller in Skye, knew but little folk or local lore, and indeed he had no inclination to talk of anything but his own sorrows. To a request for books he produced three volumes, near relatives of those at Uig, and thus I was again driven upon my own resources. You will perhaps wonder why I should have remained so long in such gloomy quarters. The answer is easy. The Cuchullin Hills and their lakes are the great lions of Skye, and it was to see these that I was principally induced to visit that island.

The morning of my second day dawned with better

promise, and I took comfort when, on looking out, I saw half-a-dozen gillies with noble deer-hounds, rifles, and telescopes, followed by a gentleman in Highland costume, moving up the glen. This was Lord Middleton, to whom Lord Macdonald has let all his deer-shootings in Skye. But before I had dressed, mighty wave vapours tumbled about the mountain crests, the storm blast swept through the glen, accompanied by the roar of many waters, and rain descended in torrents.

The weather was too rough for deer-stalking, so Lord Middleton and his gillies returned, and while sheltering in the inn I had a chat with his Lordship. He told me that deer have greatly increased in Skye during recent years, but that the precipitous nature of the mountains and corries renders it extremely difficult to stalk them; while the rain and mists are so frequent and dense that you are often unable to detect your vicinity to frightful precipices. However, there are men to whom such difficulties enhance the pleasures of deer-stalking, and who, even in barren Skye, would consider a hole amidst dripping rocks a pleasant lodge for the night.

There is some good white trout-fishing in the river running through Glen Sligachan, which Lord Middleton kindly placed at my disposal; but, as you know, I was tackle-less; and indeed the river was far too high to render fishing possible.

Once during the day, when half blinded and choked

by the peat smoke which invaded the room, despite all my endeavours to coax it up the chimney, I went out. It was evening, and the wind, that had been howling and roaring all day, was now blowing in fitful gusts : on high, piercing the vapours, you caught glimpses of the shattered peaks of the Cuchullins, rose-hued or deep purple as the setting sun burst through or disappeared behind the heavy clouds. Rain was still falling, but it was now possible to make a waterproof serve the purpose for which it was intended ; so I walked to a lake about a mile from the inn, set in the dreary moorland near the roots of Bein-na Meal, for the purpose of collecting a specimen of that rare plant the *Eriocaulon septangulare*, which grows in the lake. The specimen that I obtained is now before me, and could you see its withered, attenuated appearance, and know what trouble it cost me to obtain it, and what a ducking I got, you might perhaps imagine that I was a very zealous and enterprising botanist. All I have to say is, if you did, you would make a very great mistake ; but I am one of those who do not like to be beaten in an enterprise even so apparently simple as obtaining a plant. But let me tell you that culling a flower is not always an easy task. The Tyrolese chasseur dares great peril to gather for his sweetheart the lovely Edelweis (*Graphalium Leontopodium*), esteemed for its exquisite purity of colour, and which flourishes on the most inaccessible mountains in

Tyrol and Bavaria. Well, I incurred no risk to obtain my curious though not pretty plant, but I got very wet, for it grows some distance from the shore.

There is probably no wilder spot in Skye, nor in the western islands, than the wastes in which this little lochan is set. You feel as you pass through them that summer has never smiled on the land. No wonder that the islanders regard them with superstitious awe, and declare that they are haunted by the malignant one-legged goblin, Ludag, who, revelling in stormy weather, takes amazing hops on his one leg, to the infinite terror of the passing traveller.

On the third morning my prospects brightened. Not only was there no rain, but there was a promise of a fine day. Accordingly, after a hurried breakfast, I mounted a pony, and accompanied by a guide started for Camasunary, from whence I purposed taking a boat to Loch Scavaig. The ride through Glen Sligachan is one of the roughest that I ever saw. Path in any definite sense of the word does not exist, the way lying amidst a wilderness of rocks which have fallen from the riven peaks on either side of the glen. The gloomy grandeur of this defile is almost overpowering. Nowhere is the influence of mountains greater; for the Cuchullins are not only lofty, attaining in some instances an elevation of upwards of 3000 feet, but their forms are particularly solemn and impressive, while their dark grim sides, torn,

furrowed, and honeycombed by the tempests of ages, awe the beholder. Nor are they generally silent. Every mountain is many-tongued with foaming cataracts, which dash down their sides, making a murmur as rills on high, swelling to thunder tones when, the innumerable water-courses uniting, form the raging torrent which sweeps down the glen.

No dwelling of any kind breaks the spell of savage sterility, the sole occupants of the wastes being deer and a few goats. The first mountain on the right, after passing Sligachan, is Scur-na-Gillian, and that on the left is Marscow. The first has the reputation of being the highest of the Cuchullins, its height, according to Professor James Forbes, being 3216 feet. We are now fairly in the midst of a congregation of splintered peaks of wonderfully wild forms, some standing clearly out, backed by deep blue sky, others steeped in ever-changing mist which curls round their heads. Half-way to Camasunary you come to the entrance of Hart o' Corrie, a dark purple glen. The jaws of this gloomy gorge are set round with huge rocks; one, which is much larger than the rest, is called the Bloody Stone, from a shepherd having lost his life there. The view up Hart o' Corrie is considered one of the finest of its kind in the Cuchullins, and certainly it would be difficult to find a combination of wilder scenery than it presents. Two miles more, and the gloomy sterility is somewhat re-

lieved by two tiny lakes gleaming in the glen, Loch na Aanan, the Lake of the Ford, and Loch na Crioch, the Lake of the Wooded Valley: a strange misnomer this, you think, when you look around upon the treeless waste; but if you examine the mosses, you will find that the name was not inappropriate, for they are full of the roots and stumps of trees, showing that this now sterile and storm-vexed island was once covered with wood. Indeed, the word Cuchullin is said to be derived from Culin, Gaelic for holly, which was once abundant in this part of Skye.

Beyond the lakes the glen again contracts and you pass through a grim gorge, Blabhein on the east, not strictly one of the Cuchullins, and Sgor-na-strith — the Hill of Dispute on the west, an outlier of the Cuchullins separating Camasunary from Loch Coruisk. At the mouth of this gorge you come upon Camasunary, a little oasis in the desert, where the storm-stricken traveller will find shelter and a shake-down in a farm-house at the head of a sandy bay. Not far from the farm is an establishment for reclaiming drunkards, where it is to be presumed the total abstinence system can be enforced with complete success. The farmer is proprietor of one small boat, which fortunately I found disengaged, and hiring it and four men, I left my pony in charge of the guide and embarked for Loch Scavaig. The wind, which was blowing from the west, swept in fitful gusts through

the Sound of Soa and the gorges of the Cuchullins, which tower in grisly grandeur round the head of Scavaig Bay. No amateur boating will do here, and it was easy to see that my men, experienced as they were in the navigation of these stormy waters, were frequently perplexed by the furious blasts which often blew at the same moment from every point of the compass.

Scavaig Bay is divided into two basins, both surrounded by wonderful scenery, but it is at the upper end of the west basin that the glories of the Cuchullins culminate. A sharp pull swept our boat within this inner loch, and in a few minutes we were in still water. This basin is surrounded on all sides but one with mural basaltic cliffs, above which you catch glimpses of the peaked Cuchullins. A waterfall foams down the precipices on the left, making perpetual music as it dashes into the bay. This is extremely deep, the soundings giving an average depth of 120 fathoms in the centre, and as much as 50 fathoms beneath the precipices.

My boatmen landed me near the mouth of a river that dashes brawling into the bay, and assuring me that I could not miss the way to Loch Coruisk, I started for the famous lake. No, indeed, you cannot miss the way, for you have but to scramble about 300 yards over rocks to see the gloomy lake. The distance between this and Loch Scavaig is about three-quarters of a mile, and the whole way lies amidst huge rocks tossed about

in wild disorder. At length I stood on the shores of Loch Coruisk, and it needed but a glance to see that its wonders have not been exaggerated. Here poets and painters have honestly confessed their utter inability to describe or paint the scenery. Scott, it is true, gives a powerful and truthful picture of Loch Coruisk in the "Lord of the Isles;" and in one of his prose works he says that the mountains of Glencoe are a jest compared to those surrounding Scavaig and Coruisk; but his gifted pen fails to do justice to the dread majesty of the scene, though he yields the prize

"Of desert dignity to that dread shore
That sees grim Coolin rise and hears Corrisken roar."

It is rather an arduous undertaking to go round Lock Coruisk. The circuit is between two and three miles, and with the exception of a little grassy plateau at the head of the lake, the sides consist of great rocks, among and over which you have to worm your way. The circuit occupied me more than two hours, but I was in no hurry to accomplish the undertaking. For, besides the succession of wonderful scenes that present themselves as you advance — now passing beneath tremendous precipices dipping into the lake, and now climbing over rocks out of which houses might be fashioned, you cannot fail to be struck by the remarkable character and forms of the rocks. These are

very peculiar, so much so, indeed, that although you may hold all the 'ologies in supreme contempt, do not, I pray you, think of visiting the Cuchullins without making yourself, to some degree, acquainted with the geological features of those mountains, which will greatly enhance the pleasure of your visit. For you are not only in the presence of some of the most sublime scenery in this varied world, but also of wonderful phenomena.

Look at these rocks. See how they are rounded, and how many of them hang poised on the mountain slopes. You will see two of these faithfully represented in the accompanying general view of Loch Coruisk. Scott's observant eye noticed them, though he knew not what motive-power placed the rocks where they are:—

“Huge terraces of granite black
 Afforded rude and cumber'd track;
 For from the mountain hoar,
 Hurl'd headlong in some night of fear,
 When yell'd the wolf and fled the deer,
 Loose crags had toppled o'er;
 And some, chance-poised and balanced, lay,
 So that a stripling arm might sway
 A mass no host could raise,
 In Nature's rage at random thrown,
 Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
 On its precarious base.”

We do not think less of the poet because the terraces are not granite, nor because the curiously-poised stones did not topple down, as he describes, from impending

heights. Dr. MacCulloch, who devoted a long time to a geological examination of the Cuchullins, was also extremely struck by the remarkable and seemingly unnatural position of these rocks. He says, "The bottom of the valley is covered with rocky eminences; of which the summits are not only bare, but often very narrow, while their declivities are always steep and often perpendicular. Upon these rocks the fragments lie just as on the more level ground, and in positions so extraordinary that it is scarcely possible to conceive how they have remained balanced on the very verge of a precipice. One, weighing about ten tons, has become a rocking stone; another, of not less than fifty, stands on the narrow edge of a rock, an hundred feet higher than that ground which must have first met it in the descent." *

The interest of these phenomena is greatly increased when we consider the nature of the rocks. By far the largest portion of the Cuchullin group is composed of hypersthene, a metallic rock consisting of glassy felspar, hornblende, and oxidulous iron. It abounds with hexagonal crystals of great lustre and beauty, and is of adamantine hardness. In many localities it is intersected by claystone veins, which must have been squirted into it when the hypersthene was in a state of intense

* Description of the Western Islands.

liquidity ; but, according to Professor Forbes, the mass of these veins is never great, nor do they affect the general condition of the excessive hardness of the surface of the rocks. What, then, caused these phenomena ? Professor Forbes shows clearly that the force emanated from the centre of the Cuchullins ; and as the area of these mountains is but small, it is certain that there is no space for the gathering of a sufficient body of water to move the blocks that we see suspended on the hill slopes.

The explanation is easy. Ice, which, as we know, in the form of mighty icebergs, yearly transports huge masses of rock from Greenland and deposits them at the bottom of the sea when the icebergs become stranded, was the agent that polished the surfaces of the rocks in the valleys and gorges of the Cuchullins*, and transported the blocks that we see poised on their slopes. So evident, indeed, are the traces of this glacial action, that Professor Forbes declares "that it would be quite impossible to find in the Alps, or elsewhere, these phenomena in greater perfection than in the valley of Coruisk."† Nor are they confined to this valley. The

* Sir Charles Lyell was so fortunate as to see this mighty operation of nature in the act of being performed on the shores of North America.

† See his "Notes on the Topography and Geology of the Cuchullin Hills." This paper was drawn up for the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and has been reprinted in Black's excellent Guide to Skye.

entire area of the Cuchullins abounds with evidences of glacial action, for though striations are not apparent, we see on all sides the rocks rounded and smoothed in a manner entirely different to what would be effected by ordinary meteorological agency.

“The sight of these beautiful swelling forms,” says Professor Forbes in his paper, “so unnatural to the rock, so opposed to its common method of weathering, and in such palpable contradiction to the untractable resisting character on which I had wasted many and many a fruitless blow of the hammer, filled me with a kind of amazement, which the entire absence of any ostensible agent for so great a work, or even any evidence of its action in the accumulation of triturated material, which these surfaces must have parted with somehow or another, but which is nowhere now to be seen, increased to the highest pitch; and I owned to myself that nothing I had seen in the Alps surprised me so much as this, or seemed to require more the interposition of a peculiar agent.”

That agent, as we see, was ice, which in the form of glaciers filled the valleys, ravines, and gorges of the Cuchullins, just as we now find glaciers filling the gorges in the Alps. How many ages have passed since the period when the climate of Skye was sufficiently cold to nourish glaciers — who can tell? Here is food for thought, and when you contemplate these wonderful

mountains and think of their natural history, do not forget that they were born amidst the most intense volcanic throes, when the whole of Skye was a huge cauldron of molten rock.

When I had completed the circuit of Loch Coruisk, I sat down where I could take in the vast sweep of dark precipices overhanging the lake. The clouds, here never or rarely at rest, were drifting grandly amidst the serrated peaks, which towered aloft like huge distorted cathedral spires. Not a living thing was visible, and, in striking contrast to the motion above, the bosom of the dark lake was dead and still.

The influences of the scene were, indeed, so awfully oppressive that they became painfully overwhelming, and I felt as if a load had been removed from my mind, when, descending from my craggy eyrie, I turned my back on the sable waters of Loch Coruisk, and joining my boatmen, returned to Camasunary, and in the evening to Sligachan.

CHAP. XXXIII.

A Second Expedition to the Cuchullins.—Start for Sgor-na-Strith.—Wet Mosses.—Ignorant Guide.—Small-pox Rock.—Enter the Mists. A Shepherd's Reproof.—The Mists Disperse.—Grand View of the Cuchullins.—Ascent of the Cone of Sgor-na-Strith.—The Summit, of the Cone.—View from the Summit.—The Monarch of the Cuchullins.—An Inaccessible Peak.—Work for the Alpine Club.—Residence of the King of the Isle of Mists.—Plutonic Activity.—The Cuchullins, Past and Present.—Claystone Veins.—A Luncheon amidst Hypersthene.—Ride Back to Sligachan.

My expedition to Loch Coruisk whetted my desire to see more of the Cuchullins, and when seated on the marge of the grim lake, gazing upwards at the giant peaks above the wreathed clouds, I resolved — weather permitting — to ascend one of them the following day; and, if possible, that between Loch Coruisk and Loch Scavaig, from the summit of which I felt certain there must be a grand panoramic view.

You will believe that I did not much expect to be favoured by fine weather, and you will therefore conceive how fortunate I deemed myself when, on looking out the following morning, I saw the Cuchullins almost cloudless. My determination was quickly taken. En-

gaging my guide and pony of yesterday, I took counsel with the landlord, and started about eight o'clock with the purpose of ascending Sgor-na-Strith, the Hill of Strife. This is by no means one of the highest Cuchullins, but, on the contrary, below their average height, the Admiralty chart marking it at 1627 feet, little more than half the elevation of the highest mountains of this group. But the position of Sgor-na-Strith is admirably adapted for obtaining an excellent view of the Cuchullins, besides possessing the advantage of enabling you to look from its summit on Loch Coruisk and Loch Scavaig, and far over the sea and islands to the south.

As far as Loch-na-Crioche we followed the track which we took yesterday, but here we turned to the right; and though by no means partial to guides, I am bound to say that were you to undertake this little expedition without a guide, the probability is that you would lose your way, and find yourself floundering in the wet mosses, which I assure you have such capacious maws that many would swallow you and your pony in a twinkling.

Beyond acting as guide and carrying provisions, my lad was useless; for though his life had been spent amidst the Cuchullins as a shepherd, and occasionally a deerstalker, he was ignorant of the names of all the mountains excepting those close to Sligachan; but indeed, had he known them, his Gaelic pronunciation of the long-tailed words

would have perplexed me sorely. Fancy, for example, a rough-throated, wild young Gael pronouncing this name, Sgor-na-Panachtich,—Small-Pox Rock. On leaving the lake we began to ascend the trackless mountain-side, which soon became so steep that I thought it would be impossible for my pony to climb it. But the Skye ponies, though by no means lovely to behold, are wonderfully strong and sturdy, and mine plodded bravely on, picking its way among the rocks, and across glittering torrents, in a manner that showed it to be an adept at mountain climbing.

Through the glen the weather had been "most propitious, but we had hardly ascended 500 feet ere we were shrouded in mist, which rolled through the gorges and wreathed the peaks. My heart fell, I confess, when the scene thus suddenly changed, and I thought of Dr. MacCulloch, who states that he made seven attempts, during five successive summers, to ascend the Cuchulins, and was on each occasion baffled by the adverse weather. However, having gone so far, I did not think for one moment of abandoning the enterprise, for my guide knew the way, and occasionally I saw through the mist small isles of blue, which gave promise that the day might yet be fine. Now, had we not had oceans of rain, and almost constant mist, one might have been less disposed to growl at any prospect of the weather not keeping its morning promise, but the island was

running over with water, and no shepherd would, I apprehend, have reproved me had he heard me grumbling, as one is said to have rebuked an English traveller in the Highlands, who complained of the weather. "What ails you at the mist, sir? It wats the grass and slockens the ewes, and it's God's wull."

An hour's scramble brought us to the top of a kind of col, or plateau, overhanging Loch Coruisk, from which the cone of Sgor-na-Strith and other of the Cuchullins spring. You cannot ride higher than this col, and if you are not strong limbed, I do not think that you will be able to surmount Sgor-na-Strith. Fortune favoured me at this juncture. The mists that had been assuming all manner of forms—now settling like a huge vapoury platform beneath the hill tops, and now, harried by gusts, driven into the ravines and gorges, where they curled and writhed in seeming agony—were at length fairly put to flight by a mighty wind which bared the vault of heaven and left the Cuchullins standing up in their grim barrenness, cutting the blue sky with their rugged outlines and serrated crests. As you may suppose I made the best of this golden opportunity, and leaving the pony in charge of the boy guide, who honestly told me that as he had never ascended Sgor-na-Strith he could be of no use to me, I set off alone. How deceptive is the appearance of all mountains, and especially so when shrouded in mist! Sgor-na-Strith,

seen from the valley, appears but a short climb from the col, now towered some 600 feet above it. But what, you say, is a 600 feet climb. A bagatelle, if the slope is gentle, but 600 feet of precipitous scaling, frequently up nearly vertical rocks, with but narrow coigns of vantage, is, let me tell you, hard work, and requires strong limbs and a good head. And when this comparatively low Cuchullin interposed such difficulties, I no longer wondered that Dr. MacCulloch did not ascend one of the higher Cuchullins when the weather was unpropitious. But though these mountains are very precipitous, the nature of the rock of which they are composed gives you a pleasant consciousness of security as you scramble upwards. The slightest foot or hand-hold is secure, and the narrowest ledge of hypersthene would support a weight of many tons. So, without any apprehension of uncertain footing, I clambered up, and in about half an hour stood — no, I could not stand, for a hurricane was blowing, but crouched on the summit of Sgor-na-Strith. All my expectations were realised, and I was the more delighted by the success of my enterprise, because the idea of ascending this peak was my own; neither friend nor guide-book having given me a hint respecting its great advantages as an eyrie.

Rising almost precipitously from the sea, and forming the promontory between Camasunary and Loch Sca-

vaig, the view seaward is unimpeded — and what a view is this! To the east and west, mighty headlands, girt with adamantine rocks, break the fierce waves, which expire foaming and moaning at their base; and to the south, between these headlands, stretches an apparently boundless sea, across which the crests of the isles of Rum and Egg fling their shadows. More immediately beneath is the Isle of Soa, Loch Scavaig's breakwater; and turning our eyes inland, we look down upon Loch Coruisk, into whose dark waters we think we could cast a stone, so vertically do we seem to hang over them. Indeed, sitting astride this rock-eyrie, one leg dangles over Loch Coruisk, the other over the Bay of Camasunary, with its little green strath blending with the golden sand.

Now, turning to the north, and sweeping the horizon from east to west, what do we see? Peaks, and pinnacles, jagged crests and fantastic outlines; a wilderness of weird shapes, dark, solemn, and awful. Giant Sgor-na-Gillian is there, the monarch of the Cuchullins; and hear it, brother members of the Alpine Club, another peak a little to the south, laid down by enterprising Captain Wood on the Admiralty chart as being 3212 feet high, and *inaccessible*. At a recent meeting of this Club, the excellent president drew the attention of the members to certain peaks of continental mountains deemed inaccessible, but here, according to the Admi-

ralty surveyor, is one in the British Islands, nevertrodden by the foot of man. Surely some bold member of the Club will scale this Skye peak ere long, and tell us that it was but a stroll before breakfast. Nearer we see Sgor-Dubh-ni-dabheinn shouldering himself into notice, and dark, solemn, mysterious Blabhein springing wall-like from the glen to the impressive height of 3019 feet, and terminating in a ridge in some places only a foot broad. .

Conceive these mountains if you can, — rib them with gleaming waterfalls — paint them with ever-changing hues, and fill the intervening spaces with gorges, ravines, and glens, dashed with purple gloom, and abysses filled with steaming mist, and you will have some idea of the wondrous Cuchullins. Sunshine occasionally illumines their rugged crests, but the darkness of eternal night dwells in their gorges. No wonder that one of the great heroes in Ossian should be associated with them, nor that Dunscaich, which is not far distant, should be the traditionary residence of the King of this Isle of Mist.

You cannot look long at these peaks without, apart from your knowledge of their igneous nature, coming to the conclusion that they were fire-born. Yes, you stand here in one of the great centres of plutonic activity in Scotland, where during many ages the now solid earth-

crust heaved and trembled as molten masses rose under the influence of igneous agency, while steam jets and long imprisoned gases roared and shrieked as they escaped from the deep. Then, all fierce fire and fury; now, all still, cold, and lifeless. The very birds seem to shun the grim Cuchullins; and with the exception of tiny lichens nestling in hollows, you see no signs of life.

I remained more than an hour at the top of Sgor-na-Strith, and only then descended because the cold and high wind would have rendered a longer abode on the peak extremely unpleasant. The time, however, was sufficiently long to enable me to photograph all the prominent features of the view on my mind; and though I know how feebly I have sketched the outline even, I hope that what I have said is sufficient to lead you, when you visit Skye, to devote two days to the Cuchullins, one to Loch Coruisk, and the other to the ascent of Sgor-na-Strith. Of course it is labour lost to attempt the latter unless the weather be favourable, but do not be deterred from starting by mist, which is often dissipated as quickly as it robes the mountains.

On rejoining my guide I made a fierce onslaught on the provisions; and though there is no reclining breast-high in heather on the Cuchullins, I greatly enjoyed a rest within the hollow of a grand mass of hypersthene.

Then I made a geological expedition; and, with Professor Forbes' lucid description of the Cuchullins in my hand, was enabled to observe many interesting peculiarities in the formation of the group that I should otherwise have probably overlooked; and when I had satisfied my curiosity, I remounted my pony and returned to Sligachan.

CHAP. XXXIV.

A Thunder-Storm.—Drive to Broadford.—The Admiralty Surveyor.—Rain again.—Miserable Hovels.—Roofs used as Manure.—Deer.—Loch Ainort.—Broadford.—Scene of Boswell's Drinking Bout.—Grave of Scandinavian Pythoness.—A Skye Terrier.—Kyle-Akin.—A Rough Ferry.—Drive to Balmacarra.—Loch Carron.—Reraig.—Comfortable Inn.

WE had a rattling thunder-storm last night. A thunder-storm in rainy Skye preceded by no sultry weather, but on the contrary by cold and high winds, here was a meteorological phenomenon! The morning broke angrily; gusts of wind screamed through the house, and breached the doors with a force that no fastening which they possessed was proof against. What matter; let it blow and rain! I have seen the Cuchullins—aye, seen them well—and were it ever so fine I must linger no longer here.

At noon the mail car arrived from Portree; and, making myself and portmanteau as waterproof as possible, I took my seat beside a gentleman on the lee side of the car, and we started. My travelling companion was Captain Wood, to whom we are indebted for the only authentic chart of the coasts of Skye, of which I

have made great use. He told me that the survey of the shores of this storm-vexed island was a most arduous task, involving great time, labour, and even danger. Frequently he had to wait for weeks to obtain peeps of the mountain peaks, in order to make his triangulations, and often his surveying ship has been blown out of the Sounds into places of great peril. Indeed, it seems to me that this labour, so different to a survey carried on in summer seas, should, like service in the Arctic regions, be remunerated by double pay.

We had not driven far before the rain descended in blinding showers, which continued with but little intermission through the day. Our road lay along the slopes of the hills dipping into Loch Sligachan. Near the entrance of the loch are some score of dwellings which, until I saw human beings emerging from them, I did not imagine for a moment were built to shelter humanity. The walls, constructed of uncemented stones, were scarcely six feet high, and they were unprovided with windows or chimneys. The roofs consisted of rough thatch, which, when saturated with soot, is removed, and serves as manure. Little patches of blighted oats and potatoes surround the huts, but so unpropitious is the climate, that these crops rarely arrive at maturity. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive a harder struggle with nature than these poor people have to submit to for bare existence. Captain Wood,

who has had many opportunities of seeing them, assured me that their condition is most miserable. Who would not wish to hear of these poor peasants being removed to a more genial soil, though it were across the Atlantic?

The distance from Sligachan to Broadford in a straight line cannot be more than twelve miles; but by the road, so numerous are the windings and hills, it exceeds eighteen miles. In fine weather this must be a very interesting drive; and the ascents are so steep, that you have many opportunities of walking and seeing the ever-changing views. These, alas, were so dimmed by mist, that it was not easy to appreciate their beauty; but even under this unfavourable medium, as we wound through the folds of the mountains we obtained grand peeps of the Cuchullin's piercing the mist clouds. The drive was also frequently varied by our coming upon herds of deer at the mouths of the corries near the sea-shore, to which they were attracted by the succulent salt herbage growing in those localities.

Between Loch Ainort and Broadford the road skirts the Sound of Scalpa, passing along the slopes of Beinn-na-Cailleach, which are fringed with indigenous birch and mantled with numerous varieties of fern. We arrived at Broadford at three o'clock, and were allowed an hour to dry ourselves, or rather to make the attempt, before a large fire in the kitchen, drinking meanwhile

excellent toddy ; so excellent, indeed, that if that upon which Boswell got drunk when he and Johnson were the guests of the Laird of Corrichatachin, it must be admitted that he had at all events the temptation of good liquor. Corrichatachin House is in ruins, but the memory of its hospitalities survives. Bozzy, you will remember, admits that when Dr. Johnson had gone to bed, he and three others drank four bowls of punch. Two of the party then retired, but Bozzy and the other kept it up until five in the morning, by which time it is to be presumed they were as drunk as they could well desire. Boswell awoke, as was fitting, next day with a terrific headache, and at one o'clock Johnson burst in upon him, exclaiming, "What, drunk yet!" "His tone of voice," says the great man's Umbra, "was not that of severe reproach, so I was relieved a little." "Sir," said I, "they kept me up." "No, you kept them up, you drunken dog." And do you not remember how penitent Boswell opened his Prayer Book, and how he read in the Epistle of the day — it was Sunday — "And be not drunk with wine, wherein there is excess." "Some," remarks Boswell, "would have taken this as a divine interposition."

Broadford after Sligachan is a paradise. It is situated on the bight of a semicircular bay beneath a hill, on the summit of which there is a cairn, marking, according to tradition, the grave of a Scandinavian Pythoness

who gave instructions that she should be buried on the top of a hill in the current of the south-west wind, setting to Norway. The inn is very comfortable, and there is a group of neat houses with shops, to which the islanders east of Portree resort to supply their household wants, and hear how the great world of Scotland wags. A shop where useful commodities and gossip are retailed must be a great boon to the Skye peasant. "It turns," said Dr. Johnson, "the balance of existence between good and evil. For to live in perpetual want of little things is a state not indeed of torture, but of constant vexation. I have in Skye had some difficulty to find ink for a letter; and if a woman breaks her needle, the work is at a stop."

We renewed our journey with steaming clothes, but warmed and greatly benefited by the toddy. The road between Broadford and Kyle-Akin runs parallel to the shore, but does not present many features of interest. We had driven about a couple of miles when I missed Captain Wood's dog, a Skye terrier, which had travelled with us from Sligachan. It was a charming little animal of the true breed, now very rare in the island. I expressed my apprehension that it might be lost. The Captain, however, had no such fear. The dog, he said, was known all over Skye, and was frequently in the habit of staying behind, when it would wait for the next mail car, in which it always got a lift;

and when it came to the ferries, the ferrymen invariably took him across.

At five o'clock we arrived at Kyle-Akin, the principal ferry between Skye and the mainland. Here ensued a scene of terrible confusion, arising from pouring rain, a fierce wind, a bad embarking place, a small boat, and a tide that swept through the Sound like a mill-race. We were, however, ferried across safely with no further inconvenience than being drenched with salt as well as fresh water, and we resumed our journey to Balmacarra on another car. The drive from Reraig Point to Balmacarra is lovely. You pass close to Loch Carron for five miles under rocks garlanded by mountain ash, fern, and heath; and then turning east, drive through woods alternating with cultivated fields, which increase in luxuriance as you approach Balmacarra. Cheering sights these after the gloomy grandeur of Skye, and even more cheering was it to see the inn at Balmacarra, which very justly ranks as one of the best in the Highlands. Captain Wood left the car at Reraig, where he resides, so I was the only traveller, and there were but two tourists in the house. These were young men who had been walking through Ross-shire amidst pouring rain, so that it appears Skye was not singular in being drenched during the past week.

CHAP. XXXV.

Reminiscences of Skye.—Angling near Balmacarra.—Dornie Ferry.—Row up Loch Duich.—Æolus' Wind-Bags.—Beautiful Scenery.—Shiel River.—Salmon Pool.—Catching a White Trout.—Travelling Companions.—Aberdeenshire Farmers.—Grand Mountains.—Insurrection in Favour of the Stuarts.—Forest of Cluany.—Remains of Ancient Forests.—The Foot Postman.—Tomandoun.—Loch Garry.—Birch Groves.—The Glengarrys.—The Last Glengarry.—His Highland Pride.—Curious Adventure that befell Him.—Invergarry.

A good supper and an excellent breakfast obliterated all sense of fatigue, and I felt when I woke in the morning that I could have climbed the highest of the Cuchullins with ease. And there they were in long serrated ridges looming in the distance, high above the mountains which frame Skye on the north. It was pleasant, while looking upon their gloomy masses, to feel that they were added to my stock of mountain memories; and although the weather had not been kind to me in Skye, I did not look back upon my visit to that island with the same feelings to which Dr. Johnson gave expression when he returned from the Hebrides. "Of these islands," he says, "it must be confessed that they have not many allurements, but to the mere lover of naked nature. The inhabitants are thin, pro-

visions are scarce, and desolation and penury give little pleasure.”

The site of Balmacarra is charming. The inn, a large irregular stone structure, stands close to the marge of a bay of Loch Alsh, backed by hills covered with woods which shelter it from the north wind. Immediately opposite are the broad waters of Loch Alsh, bounded by Skye on the west, and on the east by the mainland of Scotland. It is a place where you might spend many days with great pleasure; and the landlord will enable the angler to fill his creel within a short walk of the inn.

I greatly enjoyed a stroll through the woods of Balmacarra House before breakfast, returning by a path carried over the rocks above Loch Alsh; and after an abundant repast the landlord drove me to Dornie Ferry, five miles from Balmacarra, on the shores of Loch Duich. Here I hired a boat and two men, who for seven shillings agreed to row me up Loch Duich. This is a salt-water lake of great depth, which runs up between the lofty mountains of Sgur-an-Airgoid and Sgur-mhic-Bharrach to Glen Shiel, twelve miles from Loch Alsh. Happily the weather was highly propitious. The high winds during the preceding days seemed to have collapsed Æolus' wind bags, for there was

“ No stir in the air, no swell on the sea,
The ship was still as she might be.”

The loch was indeed like a mirror, reflecting mountain and cliff with their exquisite fringes of hanging trees, bosky braes, and gushes of green verdure. The time, I think, is not far distant when Loch Duich will be frequented by many tourists, who will linger lovingly on its shores; now these are nearly in a state of nature. Mr. Matheson's house at the upper end of the lake is the only habitation of importance. A few fishing huts stand on slopes, allowing access to the lake, and a couple of shooting lodges nestle in dells, but these do not mar the wildness of the landscape.

I saw more sea-birds on Loch Duich than in any other part of Scotland. Every creek was occupied by cormorants and gulls, fishing with apparently good success; while razor-bills and guillemots were disporting themselves in the middle of the loch.

The scenery increases in grandeur as you approach the upper end of the lake. This is bounded by majestic mountains, whose heads were bathed in roseate hues, while their breasts were steeped in purple gloom. The landing-place is about half-a-mile from the inn. On your way you cross Shiel river by a one-arch bridge, spanning a pool which, if an angler, you will linger to look at, for a more fishy piece of water I never saw. I hung a long time over the parapet gazing at it, speculating where fish were lying, and feeling confident that a fly cast at the edge of a long zone of tawny foam would prove irresistible.

The inn was untenanted by traveller or tourist, and I was again left to my own resources for the evening. My first consideration was dinner, in ordering which I begged that fish might be included among the dishes. To my surprise I was told that there was no fish. "What!" I exclaimed, "no fish, with such a river as the Shiel at your door. Were there no fish in that?" "Yes, certainly there were, but there was no one to catch them; for the landlord's son, who was the only angler, was ill." Nowhere did I lament the absence of my rod and tackle more than here; for often as I thought during my walks in Sutherland that I could have caught a dainty dish of trout, here I felt certain that I could have captured a basket of heavy fish. "Have you a rod?" I asked. "Yes," replied the landlord; and presently he appeared with a rod and tackle which a boy might have been proud of, but which an experienced angler would probably have deemed worthless; however, as the landlord assured me that the pool abounded with white trout, I determined to try my fortune. Accordingly, I put up a fly which my host recommended, and which was carefully preserved between the leaves of a well-worn Gaelic grammar, and went down to the pool. One cast—two—three—and then, just where I expected, the line of foam was severed, and a beauty showed his silvery side. Hurrah! he is hooked hard and fast; and despite a wheel-less reel and a rod that bends in angles, I land my

prize, and contemplate him with pleasure and admiration, for he is a well-fed white trout of nearly two pounds. Be sure that I lost no time in transferring him to the fish-kettle; and he turned out so good that I strongly advise you, should you visit Glen Shiel, to make the landlord provide you with white trout. I give this counsel with the greater confidence, because I sent his son some flies as a return for the use of his tackle, and I hope they will lure many a white trout out of the Shiel river this summer.

I made a few more casts, but did not catch another fish; a result, I apprehend, more due to the badness of the rod, which would not throw the fly more than a few feet from the bank, than to the want of fish.

While speculating in the evening how I should continue my journey to the Caledonian Canal—for walking was out of the question, now that my impedimenta included my portmanteau—the landlord informed me that two gentlemen in the neighbourhood purposed starting in the morning for Inverness, and that they would be very glad to join me in hiring his dog-cart. This suited my plans precisely, and I was gratified to hear before I went to bed that the necessary arrangements had been made for our journey the following morning.

The guide-books, which frequently over-praise scenery, to the tourist's great disappointment, have not rendered

justice to Glen Shiel. During a stroll around the inn, I saw much picturesque scenery through which the Shiel winds; and as the fishing of this river belongs to the landlord, the angler tourist will find Shiel Inn, which has been lately enlarged and improved, excellent quarters.

My travelling companions were terribly early birds. Soon after dawn the landlord roused me, and before six o'clock we were *en route*. They were Aberdeenshire men, and had been visiting a farmer friend a few miles from Glen Shiel. Farmers themselves, the picturesque features of the country had no charm for them; the perfection of a landscape being in their eyes fat, fleshy fields heavy with crops. Greatly to my surprise they held up farming in Aberdeenshire as the best in Great Britain, the crops being according to their account heavier, the pastures more luxuriant. "What!" said I, "superior to those in Lincolnshire?" where I believe the excellence and abundance of the agricultural produce are unparalleled. They saw that I knew very little of farming, which indeed is true enough; but when they were so eloquent in favour of their own county, and desirous of impressing me with its agricultural productiveness above all other counties in Great Britain or Ireland, the caustic judgment of Dr. Johnson, who it must be confessed had a very unjust dislike to Scotland and Scotchmen, recurred to me. "A Scotchman," said he, "must be a

very sturdy moralist who does not love Scotland better than truth : he will also love it better than inquiry ; and if falsehood flatters his vanity, will not be very diligent to detect it."

It is to be presumed that when the prejudiced traveller uttered these severe words he had been obliged to listen to a long outpouring of national vanity, from some Aberdeen farmer perhaps, who insisted that they did not know how to grow corn in England. You see that I had no prospect of meeting with sympathy from my companions in my admiration of the scè'ry, which is really very grand, in the gorges of Glen Shiel. It was in this glen that Johnson was first strongly impressed with the majesty of mountains. "I sat down," he says, "on a bank, such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had, indeed, no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air was soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me and on either side were high hills, which, by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well I know not, for here I first conceived the thought of this narration." *

The late rain gave a voice to every gorge, through which torrents rushed, and many waterfalls streamed

* Journey to the Western Islands, p. 57.

down the face of the cliffs, fed from the lofty heights of Sgur-Ouran and Sgur-na-Carnich. My farmers, though indifferent to the charms of the scenery, were alive to the historical interest of Glen Shiel. They drew my attention to a mound near a waterfall on the right of the road, about two miles from Shiel Inn, where an attempt to create an insurrection in favour of the Stuarts was most effectually put down.

It occurred in 1719. The Stuart cause was espoused by the Macraes, supported by adherents of the Seaforths, commanded by William, Earl of Seaforth, some Spanish troops, and a small party headed by the notorious Rob Roy. The Highlanders fought with their accustomed bravery, but they were obliged to succumb to the superior discipline of the King's troops. The estates of the Earl of Seaforth were forfeited, and the Earl was obliged to leave the kingdom. But with that love for their chieftain that characterised Highlanders in those days, the Earl's tenants not only refused to pay their rent to the factor appointed by the Commissioners of the Forfeited Estates, but murdered the factor's son, and paid their money punctually to the Earl's factor, Mr. Murchison of Auchtertyre—an ancestor of the eminent geologist of that name—who transmitted it to the expatriated Earl in France.

As you approach the head of the glen, the scenery becomes wilder, and on arriving at the top you enter a

vast tract of mountain, unchequered by a single habitation. We are now again in deer-land, the forest of Cluany, through which the road is carried, being one of the best deer preserves in Scotland. It is rented by Lord Cowper, whose gillies we passed just as we were entering the mountains. The sight of these vagabonds, as the Aberdeenshire farmers called them, greatly incensed my companions, who were loud in their invectives against deer preserving. In their opinion no land, however mossy, was irreclaimable; and in support of this view they stated that the country through which we were passing was formerly clothed by luxuriant forests, which were at all events more profitable than deer. The community perhaps might benefit by reconverting these wastes into forests, but it is doubtful whether the landlords would derive so large a profit from timber as they do from deer. The remains of trees are very conspicuous throughout this district; trunks of pines and other trees in excellent preservation skirt the road for many miles. In the midst of the wilderness, twelve miles from Shiel, stands the little inn of Cluany, where you will find a shake-down and rough fare. Here our driver stopped to feed his horse, and we walked on. And a long walk it proved, for the road, a short way beyond Cluany, traverses a lofty mountain, which took us upwards of two hours to surmount. My companions, who were in a great hurry to get home, were impatient at

this slow progress, but as the day was fine I greatly enjoyed the walk. The mountains were arrayed in glorious hues, cascades streamed down the precipices, and the ravines glowed with the bright berries of the mountain ash, and the orange and scarlet of the now fading leaves of the indigenous bird cherry.

While sitting on the parapet of a bridge near the summit of the mountain, a strange kilted figure came up, and in very guttural English — Gaelic is still extensively spoken in this district—asked me what time it was. On being informed he sat down beside me, and, in answer to my questions, told me that he was the foot-postman between Balmacarra and Glen Shiel, and that he had obtained leave to visit a relative near Tomandoun. On his beat he said that he knew the time to a minute, as he had walked thirty miles every alternate day on the same road for nineteen years, and, excepting when stopped by snow, was never more than five minutes behind time. He did not think that his health had suffered from this long trudge, though occasionally in winter he felt the work rather severe; nor did he think that he could walk so much if his legs were confined in trousers, for he had tried them, but was obliged to return to the kilt.

From the top of the mountain we rattled down to Tomandoun, a continuous descent. Here stands another house of refuge for the storm-stricken traveller,

and here we dismissed our driver and hired another dog-cart to take us to Invergarry, eleven miles distant. Immediately beyond Tomandoun the scene changes; dense woods clothe the slopes around Loch Garry, in which the birch is very conspicuous; this tree happily not being here yet turned into bobbins for winding cotton. As we descend, the luxuriant profusion of fern and wild flowers that garlanded every rock became more striking; springs gushed from the braes, and the lake gleamed through the woods.

Loch Garry is another charming lake, which, lying out of the beaten tourists' track, is rarely visited and but little known, and yet it is within a few miles of Loch Oich, one of the feeders to the Caledonian Canal, and within a short walk of the excellent inn at Invergarry. We are now in the country of the once powerful and famous Glengarrys, who for many generations maintained feudal state in their territories.

The last Glengarry, who considered himself the legal representative of the Lord of the Isles, had such a passion for everything appertaining to ancient Highland habits, that in the indulgence of it he sometimes became an object — though unjustly — of ridicule. He had as supreme a contempt for the plodding industry of trade, as was expressed by Rob Roy when Bailie Nicol Jarvie proposed to make his sons weavers. "My sons weavers! *Millia Molligheart*, but I wad see every

loom in Glasgow, beam, traddles, and shuttles, burned in hell fire sooner.”

The attempt made by what he called “pawky Lowland lairds” to assume the dress and bearing of ancient Highland chieftains, greatly annoyed him. An amusing squib in the famous *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, with reference to this outburst of Highland patriotism, contains these lines :—

“ Fat Teil hae you to do wi’ kilts? gae wa’ and get your claes on,
Get out, ye nasty Lowland poys, and put your preeks and stays on ;
Ye shanna wear your claes like me, I look on you as fermin ;
Ye hae nae mair o’ Highland pluid than if ye were a Cherman.”

But the most notable adventure of this eccentric chieftain occurred when he appeared in Westminster Hall on the occasion of the coronation of George IV., clad in full Highland costume, with his arms, including two pistols, which are said to have been very conspicuous. Be this as it may, a lady who was present, terrified by the warlike appearance of the mighty Highlander, took it into her head that he was going to shoot the king and the rest of the Guelphs in order to bring in the Stuarts. Full of this notion, she set up a shriek, which alarmed the entire assembly, and insisted on Glengarry being immediately arrested. Garter King at Arms came forward and begged Glengarry to give up the much dreaded pistols, but he refused, declaring that

they were not loaded*, and that they formed an essential portion of his national garb. At length, however, he yielded to Garter's entreaty, saying, "You, as a soldier, may have them, as the honour of an officer and a man of family will be safe in your hands; but positively no other shall take them." Glengarry was so deeply offended that he wrote a long letter to "The Times," which was published. In this very curious communication, Glengarry states that he travelled 600 miles (no small undertaking in those days) for the express purpose of attending the king's coronation; that "he dressed upon that magnificent and solemn occasion, in the full costume of a Highland chief, *including, of course, a brace of pistols;*" that Lady A——, seeing one of his pistols in his hand, exclaimed, "O Lord, O Lord, there is a man with a pistol;" that he was immediately surrounded, and asked by a gentleman to deliver his pistol. "Need I say that, as a Highland chieftain, I refused his demand with contempt."

However, as we have seen, he did give them up, but it is evident not without a great sacrifice of self-respect, for he adds:—"I have worn my dress at several conti-

* It may be noted as a sign of the times, that when an account of this extraordinary fracas ran the round of the papers, a Highlander declared that the Scottish chieftain could not be Glengarry, as the pistols were not loaded. "By Gote," said he, "it is not Glengarry, for she's *aye* loaded."

mental courts, and it never was insulted before. Pistols, sir, are as essential to the Highland courtier's dress as a sword to the English courtier's, the Frenchman, or the German, and those used by me on such occasions are as unstained with powder as any courtier's sword with blood; it is only the grossest ignorance of the Highland character and costume which could imagine that the assassin lurked under their bold and manly form." He concludes his letter by assuring the British public that "George IV. has not more faithful subjects in his dominions than the Highlanders, and that not an individual witnessed His Majesty's coronation who would more ardently and cheerfully shed his heart's blood for him than his humble servant,

ARD-FLATH SIAL-CHUINN MAC-MHIC ALASTAIR,"
 "which," he adds, "may be Anglified Colonel Ronaldson Macdonell, of Glengarry and Clanronald."

Poor Glengarry, did this grievous insult hasten thy end? He died in 1828, and his estates have passed into the hands of a stranger, Lord Dudley being the present proprietor of Glengarry. Perhaps the acquisition of this property by the great dealer in coal and iron would have been considered another insult to the majesty of Glengarry. He was, however, spared this sorrow, and died before his beloved land was overrun by Cockney kilt-wearing sportsmen.

We arrived at Invergarry Inn as the evening was closing. This, as I have said, is a most comfortable house, and it is situated amidst scenery that will make glad the heart of a landscape painter.



CHAP. XXXVI.

The Grounds of Glengarry.—The River Garry.—Loch Oich.—Castle of Invergarry.—Rock of the Raven.—Down the Caledonian Canal.—Last Flight of Tourists.—Loch Lochie:—Bannavie.—The Last Coach.—A Strange Journey.—Whisky in Living Barrels.—Pass of Glencoe.—Tyndrum.—The Glens of Glencoe and Sligachan Compared.—Loch Lomond.—Luss.—Conclusion.

SIX HUNDRED MILES lie between Invergarry and London, a distance that a few years ago would have taken a large slice out of one's holiday time to travel. Now you may leave London in the morning, sleep that night in Glasgow, the second at Oban, and the third at Invergarry. Or you may journey from Glasgow, *vid* Loch Lomond and Glencoe, to Bannavie, and from thence up the Caledonian Canal to this sweet resting-place.

A morning's ramble through the lovely grounds of Glengarry, open freely to all comers, confirmed my impressions of the beauty of Invergarry. Indeed, I know few walks more charming or varied than that through the woods by the rapid river Garry, to its outflow in Loch Oich, and along the lake shore, to the ruined castle of Invergarry, the ancient stronghold of the Macdonells.

You have probably seen it as you have sped over Loch Oich, but that fitful view of its grey towers above the dark green woods gives you a very inadequate idea of its extent and picturesque features.

It stands on a rock bearing the Gaelic name of Craggan-an-Phithrick—Rock of the Raven, the emblem of the Macdonells, and the five remaining storeys of the shattered fabric attest its former importance. Alas! no ravens now frequent the rock, for the surrounding mountains abound with deer, and where these are, as you know, keepers are careful not to allow eagles and ravens to exist.

Looking at all the wealth of beauty that culminates around the mansion belonging to the Earl of Dudley,

“ A lovely rural seat of various views,”

you may think that if such a house were yours you would spend the summer there, and have no desire to rent deer-forests in Sutherland, particularly as there are an abundance of these animals near you. But not so thinks the noble proprietor of Glengarry, for last summer the house was occupied by parties to whom he had let his shootings.

I had to drive to the head of Loch Oich, four miles distant, to embark on board the steamer. Here I parted from my farmers: they proceeded by land to Inverness, I to Bannavie with punctual Captain Turner, who went

through his course of lectures with natural illustrations as usual; with this difference, however, that his audience of passengers did not now amount to a dozen, the last flight of tourists hastening home like myself. And it is time to leave the Highlands; the wind blows harsh over Loch Lochie, and Ben Nevis is already streaked with snow.

I left the steamer at Bannavie, passed the night in the excellent hotel, supped with one tourist, an American, who was in raptures with the Highlands, and had seen them leisurely and well, and the next morning dressed by candle-light and left by the huge van-like coach for Loch Lomond, *vid* Glencoe.

It was its last journey for the season, and a strange journey it was. For at every place between Bannavie and Loch Lomond where we stopped, we took up various articles belonging to the coach establishment: brushes and buckets, horse-cloths and harness, with an enormous quantity of whisky contained in living barrels, said barrels being the ostlers. The fact is, the coach was returning to its winter quarters to be laid up in ordinary until the ensuing season; and as no passengers were expected, everybody considered that he had full license to get drunk.

How the coach got through Glencoe is a mystery to me. I walked, and arrived at King's House long before the coach reeled up to that lonely abode. Here more

ostlers full of whisky were taken up, with the result, of course, of increasing the drunken confusion of everybody ; and so we galloped down that long hill across the shoulder of the Black Mount, and through Lord Breadalbane's forest, to Tyndrum, scattering, to the dismay of their shepherds, thousands of sheep that were being driven to Falkirk Cattle Tryst, and which whitened the road for many miles. That the coach, with its motley and tremendous load, arrived whole at Tyndrum, is highly creditable to its builder, for so erratic were its motions that I momentarily expected to find myself sprawling on the road, and see the vehicle break up into innumerable fragments.

Pray do not, dear reader, imagine that because I hurry you so quickly through famous Glencoe, and the many beauties between that grim glen and Loch Lomond, that I was insensible to the gloomy grandeur of the first or the loveliness of the latter. Far from this ; for, as you see, I had abundant leisure to observe the pass, and to compare it with Glen Sligachan, which exceeds Glencoe in gloomy grandeur. But you have probably made this journey ; and if not, you have read more than one account of the scenery of this part of Scotland, and I am therefore unwilling to write about places so well known and so frequently described.

The night was falling when I embarked on board the steamer on Loch Lomond, but my voyage was brief, for

I left the boat at Luss, spent the following day, which was Sunday, very pleasantly at that charming little village, and on Monday plunged into the busy world of Glasgow, fit prelude to that of London.

We must now part, dear reader, for my holiday is over. I hope you think that it was profitably spent. That it abounded with pleasure, not unmixed with instruction, I well know. Let me, in conclusion, trust that those hours have been pleasant during which you have kindly accompanied me in^{""} my Highland wanderings.

THE END.



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