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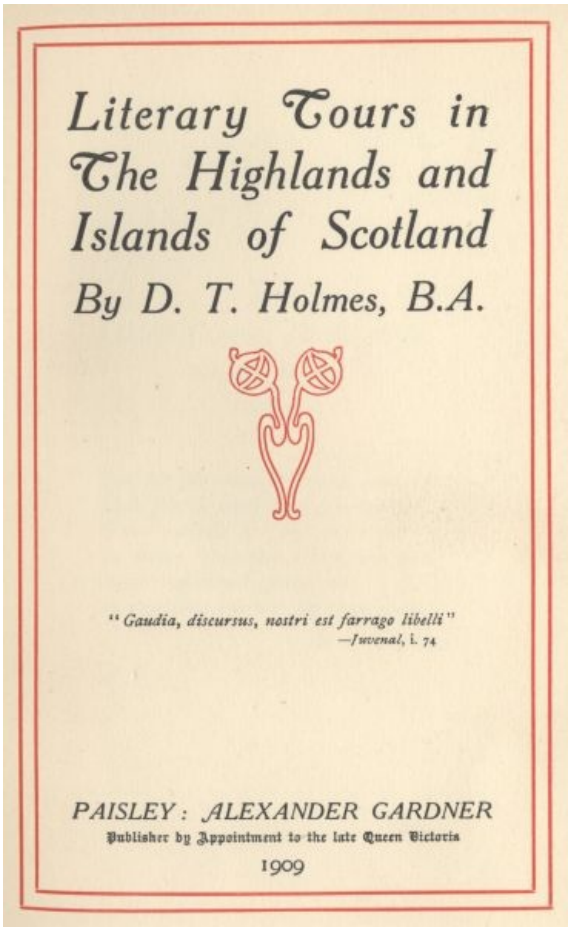
LITERARY TOURS



Literary Tours in The Highlands and Islands of Scotland

By D. T. Holmes, B.A.

"Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli"
—*Juvenal*, i. 74

PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER
Publisher by Appointment to the late Queen Victoria
1909

To
James Coats, Junr., Esq.,
Ferguslie House, Paisley.

You, but for whom I'd never been
Much further north than Aberdeen;
Whose mandate sent my willing feet
To realms of heather, broom, and peat:
Accept this record of my tours
As something less my own than yours.

D. T. HOLMES.

PREFACE.

White stands the long Kilpatrick row
Of hills with deep and dazzling snow,
And eastward, in a glimmering haze,
Stretch to the Forth the Campsie Braes.

But see! beyond the Clyde, a stain
Of smoke that runs across the plain,
And flecks for miles the vivid gleam:
It is the tireless steed of steam.

An old acquaintance! Ben and Strath
Daily behold his thunderous path,
That ceases not, until he feels
The breeze of Mallaig cool his wheels.

And Memory, fondly gazing back
On many a journey by that track
Of splendour, would, at home, retrace
The charms and lore of every place;

Yea, pass, in thought, to storied Skye,
Where all the glens in glamour lie;
And, lightly scorning gust and spray,
Leap o'er the Minch to Stornoway.

And many a northern beach besides,
Splashed by the foam of racing tides,
Rises in thought: from here to there,
Let Fancy's coinage pay the fare,—

Fancy, that wafts us o'er the main
To utmost Thule and home again,
Through mingled din of sea and sky,
Even in the twinkling of an eye.

D. T. H.

Ingleholm, Bridge of Weir,
16th January, 1909.

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LITERARY TOURING.

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VILLAGE LIBRARIES.

At pretty frequent intervals, during the last four years, I have sallied forth from my home in Renfrewshire, north, south, east, and west, to some of the most remote and isolated nooks of insular and provincial Scotland, on a mission so uncommon as to justify the writing of a book of impressions and experiences. The Highlands and Islands of Scotland are, of course, visited every summer by a great host of excursionists, who go thither to fish, play golf, lounge, climb hills, and otherwise picturesquely disport themselves. A few earnest devotees of science spend their {10}
holidays botanising in the glens, scanning the geological strata, looking for fossils, measuring the outlines of brochs and prehistoric forts, or collecting relics of Culdee churches. My journeys were undertaken for none of the objects named: they were entirely connected with *libraries* and *lecturing*, and, being undertaken mainly in the months of winter and spring, they have given me the opportunity of noting a great many interesting particulars that the summer traveller, bent on recreation or science, cannot be expected to notice.

I do not think any finer gift could be given to a village community than a collection of useful and entertaining books. The libraries with which my work was connected were sent, free of charge, to strath and glen, and nothing was asked in return, except that the volumes should be well housed and delivered to the people to read by some local librarian. You will find these libraries in all the townships of the Hebrides, from Ness in Lewis, down the long chain of islands, to Islay and Jura.

About thirty of them are established in the Shetlands, and as many in the Orkneys. Scores of little villages in Aberdeen, Ross, Sutherland, Argyle, Bute, and Perth, have been gratuitously supplied with them. The same is true of many a weather-beaten, quaint, red-tiled little fishing-village along the shores of the Moray Firth. In the barracks of Fort-George, Inverness, and Dingwall, the soldiers can solace their leisure hours by delightful, patriotic, and instructive reading, furnished to them without money and without price. Even in quiet, pastoral Roxburghshire, at a spot near {11}
the birthplace of Dandie Dinmont, you will find one of these serviceable collections of books.

It is a pleasure to me to be able to say that I have visited a great number of the districts mentioned, for the purpose of speaking to the people in a familiar and non-academic way on some of the books which have been presented to them. In this way I have spoken to about 40,000 people, the majority of whom had never previously been present at a discourse on a literary topic. Most of them had, of course, been in the habit of attending religious services and election meetings: but neither of these is the very best preparation for a literary evening. Some of my experiences have been intensely amusing, and I do not think any lecturer has ever, as regards rough roads, inclement weather, and amazing votes of thanks, had quite the same joys and sorrows as I have come through. I have often laughed (good-naturedly, I hope) at what came under my notice, but I am not so conceited as to suppose that the hilarity was always on one side.

DIFFICULTIES OF TRAVEL.

It can very easily be seen that he who proposed to visit all the above districts would have some hard and continuous work in prospect. Even on the mainland of Scotland there are many villages of difficult access. The nearest railway station to Durness on Loch Eriboll is Lairg, sixty miles away. Gairloch in Ross-shire is thirty miles distant from the railway station of Achnasheen. In the great county of Aberdeen there are a good many villages that can only be reached by long and {12}
tiresome driving in a mail coach. At different parts of the Moray Firth little townships lie huddled at the foot of precipitous cliffs, and, at first sight, seem inaccessible except by sea. To one accustomed to the sumptuous equipment of the Clyde steamers, even the journey to the shrine of Hugh Miller at Cromarty is pleasant only in good weather: a wee, puffing, hard-wrought steam-launch takes a slant course of five miles from Invergordon to Cromarty pier, accomplishing the journey in forty-five minutes. The fare between the two piers is one shilling, and there is no extra charge for the use of the cabin, which is reached by a perpendicular and very slippery ladder, and would be better suited for philosophical reflection in a gale if the crew did not use it as a store-room for engine-grease and old oilskins. In the Outer Islands, Watt's machine is, of course, unknown, and many of the roads which imaginative cartographers have inserted in their maps, will perhaps be finished when the last trump is about to sound.

Railway travelling, too, is attended with some inconveniences in winter. The Glasgow-Inverness train, for example, may, on the coldest night of the year, break down at Dalnaspidal; and in such a case the passengers will have to sit, entertained by howling blasts, till a fresh engine comes up from Blair Atholl. Such an experience was once mine, and I always think of it when I read the ninth ode of Horace's first book. Outside were the great snow-sheeted mountains, and the moon was gazing in blear-eyed compassion through a screen of haze. From end to end of the train {13}
resounded the rhythmic beat of cold-footed passengers striving to bring some warmth of blood to the toes.

In Grantown-on-Spey, I got an uncommon surprise one February. There had been some snow in the Lowlands, but at Grantown the fall had been excessive, and the roads were encumbered. On arriving at the station, the travellers saw a sleigh waiting to convey them to the hotel. The conveyance suited the weather admirably, and the horses seemed to be enjoying the fun. No wheeled vehicles were to be seen: even the milkmen sleighed their commodity from door to door. "*If we had a brace of grand-dukes and a bomb or two, we could fancy ourselves in Russia*," said the facetious hotel-porter. He asserted that it was well for the country when abundant snow came down early in the year. It seems that Grantown is apt to suffer from drought in a hot summer following on a rainless spring. A copious fall of snow early in the year is retained in the mountains, and ensures plenty of moisture during the months of heat. Moisture is needed in summer, for the population is trebled then, and most tourists require a little water, sometimes, to qualify their potations.

It is evident from what I have said, that the pedantic and vexatious system adopted by Euclid in his Elements of Geometry could not be employed in arranging the chapters of this book. The stern consecutiveness of that immortal but unpopular author would be out of place in describing journeys which might have been taken in the reverse order without much difference in the results. {14}

LITERARY SOCIETIES IN THE HIGHLANDS.

Winter with its long nights gives leisure to the remote glensmen and crofters. The distractions of the town are not there to take their minds away from study and meditation. Books may not be abundant, but what literature is available is eagerly fastened on and thoroughly digested. In the Lowlands we skip over our books and know nothing thoroughly. The Highlander, with his limited means and choice, is forced to peruse and re-peruse, even though he has nothing more lively than Boston's *Fourfold State*, or Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*. But he knows well what he has so often read, and is quite competent to discuss and criticise his little row of volumes. A few of the Highland townships have literary societies in which every variety of subject is debated:

the meetings are usually opened with prayer, but not always closed in that way. There is a tiny clachan, some twenty miles distant from Ullapool, on the side of a hill, in view of the grotesque peaks of Suilven, which has a most flourishing literary society—with president, vice-president, rules, minutes, and committees. Not once, but twice a week does this society meet, and when the full moon is propitious for a clear journey home through the morasses, the debates are often unduly prolonged and the chairman's summing-up luxuriantly prolix. How many politicians of note in London have been raked fore and aft in that little schoolroom! What measures and enactments, plausible to the unthinking metropolitans, have been cut and slashed there, while the conscious moon, gleaming in at the window, strove vainly to disperse the loquacious throng! {15}
Listen to the chairman's modest remarks: "*I do not wish*," he says, "*to embarrass the Government, but....*" Unthinking Asquith, here is a man who does not wish to embarrass you; he could do it, but he is merciful! You may breathe freely, you and your Cabinet, for spite of your slips and blunders, the Ross-shire crofters will not turn round and rend you. They do not wish to embarrass the Government; but have a care: their eyes are on you, and forbearance has its limits. Think not because they live remote from train and telegraph, that you are immune from their censure. Far from it! Round the hill-side at a stated hour every day, in shine or shower, gust or calm, comes the mail-coach of King Edward VII., bringing its pile of letters and newspapers. I see the little throng of village politicians, eager-eyed, peruse the latest parliamentary news. There they get all the needed pabulum for the next political debate. If the answers to Mr. Galloway Weir have been shifty and evasive, it will go hard with the Government to-night in the little schoolroom, and the plaster will fall in showers of dust from the ceiling as the iniquities of our rulers are ruthlessly shown up. I should not like to feel the rough side of that chairman's tongue.

A library of representative English works, presented to a remote provincial society like the one I speak of, is a centre of unspeakable entertainment and instruction. The *entertainment*, during the long nights of winter, when the natives gather round the ingle and someone reads aloud, is a very palpable addition to the joys of life. The *instruction* is perhaps slower in coming, but is none the {16}
less sure. Only by comparison of books can their relative value as literature be determined. Bigotry and narrow-mindedness in literature and religion are almost always the result of ignorance. In the Highlands it is oftenest the local teacher who is the librarian, and the books are accommodated in the school. The teacher is thus able to make his instruction in literature vivid and interesting to his senior pupils; he can authorise a pupil to take a particular volume home and require an essay to be written on it within a given time; and he can, in school, read aloud typical passages of good prose to supplement the limited extracts of the class text-books. The books have been selected (i.) to form useful reading for adults; (ii.) to supply suitable pabulum for literary societies; (iii.) to aid the schemes of the Education Department in connection with what is called the "Supplementary Course of Instruction in English Literature." The selection of the books for the use of senior scholars has been, as a rule, easy enough. Dictionaries of the French and German languages, good atlases, and works of reference have, in most cases been included. [1]
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GAELIC BOOKS.

In selecting the books specially intended for the perusal of the older people, an attempt is made to meet the needs of the various localities. In the bi-lingual districts there is always a shelf of Gaelic books, such as the original texts of Norman Macleod's exquisite sermons, M'Rury's religious compilations, Macleod's clever poetry *The Lyre of the Grove*, Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, and Magnus Maclean's manuals of Celtic Literature. There being a distinct dearth of comely Celtic reading that the ordinary native can understand, arrangements have been made for the translation into Gaelic in several volumes by competent scholars, of extracts from Mr. Lang's *True Story Book*, and from other sources.

The regrettable thing about Gaelic is its hopelessly bewildering spelling. The sounds are pleasing and melodious in a high degree, but they hide themselves behind most peculiar disguisements of print. Most people will admit, I think, that a language which spells Avon, *Amhuinn*, and Rory, *Ruaridh*, would benefit greatly by a visit from Pitman. The utility of sane phonetics was brought home to me very forcibly by a story I heard from a gentleman in the west of Skye. This gentleman is an excellent English scholar, can speak Gaelic but is unable to read it. He got a letter once {18}
from St. Kilda composed by an islander who spelt Gaelic by ear and not according to the awe-inspiring orthography of the dictionary. The gentleman, who could not have made out the letter had it been spelt correctly, was able to read it as it stood, without the slightest hesitation. If a more rational spelling were generally adopted, an immense number of Lowlanders who are interested in philology, would study the grand old tongue, were it only to understand the numberless place names of Celtic origin that occur in British geography.

What I have said about Gaelic spelling explains the inability of a large percentage of the population to read a book printed in the native idiom. What is the use then, it may be asked, of translating the *True Story Book*? The answer is obvious to one who knows the Highlands. In the Outer Isles there are many old people who know no English and whose only literary solace comes from listening to others reading. At the evening *ceilidh* a competent reader of Gaelic can usually be found. Then, again, we are likely to see, in the near future, a notable revival of interest in the old language, consequent on the efforts of the *Mod*, and on the recognition of Gaelic by the Department as a fit subject of study in the Highland schools. Such a revival, to be lasting in its effects, must be enforced and sustained by a constant supply of pure and interesting Gaelic books, both native and translated. Religious books there are in abundance, thanks to the zeal of
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the Protestant clergy. Needless to say, the compilations of the Dean of Lismore are as unintelligible to the modern Gael as Cynewulf is to a London cab-driver. I should like to see a round dozen of good English novels put into Gaelic by translators who knew the idiom thoroughly.

The fervour displayed at Highland gatherings, admirable as it is from a sentimental point of view, is apt to grow cold at the prospect of laborious work to be done. It is not creditable that the great majority of Gaelic speakers are unable to read a page of Gaelic print. Nor is it creditable that those who can both read and speak, do so little for the interpretation of the literature. Blackie's books and translations are still among the best, and Blackie was a Lowlander, was born, indeed, in the Saltmarket of Glasgow. My frequent visits to the north and west have convinced me that another difficulty in the way of a possible resurgence of Gaelic is the lack of a recognised standard of colloquial speech. The language is split up into many dialects, each possessing its own special idioms and vocabulary. A Glasgow firm of printers not long ago conceived the idea of printing post-cards with Gaelic greetings: they found that every city Highlander they consulted had either in grammar or turn of phrase some special way of framing the sentences. "Grand Gaelic to-day!" is an exclamation sometimes heard at the door of a Highland church in town, and indicates that the minister who has officiated comes from the same strath as the person speaking.

A moderate amount of encouragement to Gaelic is all that can reasonably be expected from the Government, seeing that the prime duty of the schoolmaster everywhere is to impart a sound knowledge of English.[2] {20}

HAPPINESS AND GENIALITY OF NATIVES.

What has struck me most in my travels by land and sea, is the extraordinary amount of happiness, geniality, and good humour that still exists in the world. There is a substantial amount of felicity in the majority of men. Every one knows the sentence of Emerson: "Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of empires ridiculous." I like to give concrete examples of philosophic maxims, and I should particularise Emerson's dictum thus: "Bard Macdonald of Trotternish, Skye, whose only cow came near being impounded by the Congested Districts Board in order to pay for the price of seed-potatoes furnished to him by the said Board, having good health, makes the pomp of empires ridiculous three hundred and sixty-five days every year." Bard {21} Macdonald is a very poor man, yet he has contrived to hitch his waggon on to a fixed star. He lives in one of those low thatch-roofed bothies that, with the accompanying croft, are rented at from £2 to £4 a year. He has a wife and a large family. Yet, tormented as he is by present poverty and past arrears, he eyes the future with serenity. I heard him sing a Gaelic poem of his own composition, containing twenty-five verses of intricate versification, and at the conclusion he was far less exhausted than any of the company. Then, again, Torquil M'Gillivray, schoolmaster of a rainy township on the sea-edge of one of the Skye *nishes*, has tranquillity of mind as great as any of the Seven Sages ever enjoyed. He is perfectly contented with his lot of rural dominie, and when I, in my presumption, ventured to speak critically of certain social conditions in his beloved island, he rebuked me by crooning tenderly the following lines:

"Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome,
I would see them before I die,
But I'd rather not see any one of the three,
Than be exiled for ever from Skye!"

We all know what a unique poetical gem Wordsworth composed after he heard a Highland girl singing at Inversnaid. I witnessed many fine examples of concentrated joy which might have resulted in metre if I had not had the presence of mind to pull myself up and refrain. One was at Acharacle, where in front of a croft a young fellow was dancing the Highland fling with such {22} whole-souled and consuming zeal that I stood transfixed with wonder and awe. He was alone, and I came suddenly upon him at a sharp bend of the road. He threw his legs about him with such regardless glee, that for a moment I was afraid one of them would get unfixed and come spinning through the air to hit me. I watched him like one fascinated for fully ten minutes. When at length he saw me, the glory flowed suddenly off his legs; he subsided into a country bumpkin, and beat a hasty retreat indoors. "If Greek dances were as artistic as this one," said I, "and if the lines of each chorus had a reference to the diversity of the steps, it is little wonder that God in His providence should have sent us so many commentators to explain the mysteries of ancient scansion."

Another instance of natural and spontaneous bliss came under my notice about two miles along from Kinlochewe, on the banks of Loch Maree. It was a glorious, sun-illumined spring morning, and every crevice in the rough flanks of Ben Slioch was mirrored in the unwrinkled surface of the noble loch. Ben Eay had a bright covering of Nature's whitest, softest lawn. No sounds were heard except the low droning of a vagrant bee, the whizzing of a sea-mew's pinions, or a bark from this croft answered by a bark from that other a mile away. Suddenly the repose of the morning, in which a pedestrian could hear the echo of his own feet, was startled by the voice of a girl singing. For a moment I thought of the *Lorelei*; but it was soon evident where the notes were coming from. A maiden of ten or twelve was sitting in front of a cottage that faced the lake, {23} combing her long, black hair that glistened in the morning rays, and pouring forth such exquisite trills as might have made Orpheus envious. The whole beauty of ben, loch, and sky seemed to be gathered up in that child's song. I had been wandering along in the sparkling air and feeling that

something ought to be done to intimate to Heaven that it was a heavenly morning. The girl felt so happy in the gracious gift of another blue day that her nature responded at once in a spontaneous burst of melody. I was very grateful for her vicarious hymn of praise—

"Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense."

OBAN TO GAIRLOCH.

It is impossible for anyone who has a fair supply of the uncurdled milk of human kindness to sail from Oban to Gairloch and not be struck with the heartiness and good humour of the native population. Such a trip is rarely accomplished without some memorable incident or some outstanding impression. The landscape is doubtless magnificent, but the people one sees on the way are infinitely more interesting. No one, I am sure, can fail to observe the well-groomed, fresh, and imperial aspect of the pier policemen. The general polish of their boots and belts, the self-satisfied, Parnassian smile that never comes off, the spotless gloves, the muscular frame, {24}
combine to make up a splendid type of impressive Law grounded on Strength. I am ashamed to employ the term "policemen" to a body of officials who command such instantaneous respect. These men are King Edward's Highland satraps, and they both know it and feel it: law in the North is never undignified or unkempt. Then, again, the captain of the steamer is a man whom it is impossible to regard without veneration. All Macbrayne's men are fine fellows; they look well as they stand in stately fashion on the bridge: yet many a scowling sky of torrential rain they have to face, many a time have their beards been shaken by the hurricanes of the Minch. If you speak to a ship-captain, you are certain to get the utmost civility and politeness. It is true that most of them have several sets of vocabularies: to passengers they are urbane and choice of speech; but they have, within easy reach, another set of phrases, which they find of service in addressing delinquent mariners.

A student of Virgil in making the trip I have alluded to above, would run the risk of recalling the passage in which the poet suggests that the big island of Sicily was at one time connected with the mainland, but that some huge convulsion of nature disjoined the twain and allowed the Mediterranean to come roaring in a channel between. The scenery of Western Scotland stirs the imagination to suppose that some similar catastrophe permitted the sea to mangle the fair uniformity of a prehistoric coast, submerge the low-lying lands, and leave a great number of islands lying in lonely fashion out in the watery waste. Heavy weather, truly, it must have been {25}
ere Coll, Tiree, Rum, and Eigg were sundered from the mainland by the Atlantic flow.

All the islands I mention (save Tiree) can be seen from the deck of the *Gael* during the earlier part of the daily passage of that boat from Oban in the summer season. Tiree is off the main tourist track, but a few antiquarians are now finding it worth their while to go and dig there for relics of byegone civilisation. A friend of mine, a zealous and erudite F.S.A., has spent many a pleasant holiday in Tiree, and has come back with loaded trunks of valuable prehistoric remains. Certain artists go out to the island regularly in order to transfer to canvas some of Nature's most impressive aspects of cloud, wave, and crag. Nor let me forget the doughty members of the *Faith Mission*, who evangelise this and others of the outer isles, and sing such sweet melodies to the natives as would melt any "Wee Free" heart, let alone an ordinary heart of stone. Tiree has long been famous for its schools and for its intelligent inhabitants; as a consequence, the libraries have been enthusiastically welcomed in its townships, and are regarded by the teachers there as a new and valuable adjunct of education. I have often heard it said that Tiree produces more ministers than any other district, of like population, in the Celtic part of Scotland. The Duke of Argyll does not allow any licensed house on the island, but he has not as yet suppressed the *Fingal* and the parcels post. Should His Grace ever unbend so far as to permit the temperance hotels to obtain the licence, learned men might flock in greater numbers to Tiree, and dazzle {26}
themselves and the world with further antiquarian finds.[3]

Rum has not been dowered with a Paisley library, and I regret to say that the natives have the reputation of not keeping the Sunday with ostentatious strictness. Eigg, the little island contiguous, is a little heaven below. The missionary there well deserves a word of commendation: the island of Muck is under his spiritual supervision, and with a sandwich and a sermon in his pocket, he often sets sail, scorning gust and current, to preach to his parishioners in that tiny islet.

WINTER SAILING.

The summer tourist knows Skye very imperfectly, for he goes there in a commodious steamer and traverses the island at a season when the days are long and the weather benign. No one should vaunt of knowing Skye unless he has seen it in winter also. It is the small *Lochiel* that, in the dark days of December, bears the passengers along the chilly Sound of Sleat, and through the narrows of Raasay, into the haven of Portree. At such a time there is something fearsome and weird in the aspect of the coast, as seen from the cabin window of the brave little boat as she battles and {27}
plunges along in the teeth of the north-eastern gale. Her progress is slow, for when passengers are few Macbrayne wisely economises his coal. The long-stretching hills of Raasay (on the highest of which Boswell danced a jig) are white from head to foot, and gleam through the

darkness of the afternoon, vivid and ghostly. As Raasay House, with its lamp-lit windows shining in a snowy recess, is approached, the engines slow down, and through the howl of the wind can be heard the plashing of oars. The broad waves swirl and seethe cruelly around the ferry-boat and toss it about at all angles, up and down, on crest and in trough, till you fear it will end its struggles keel upwards, and send the mail-bags down among the mackerel. But the boatmen know their trade, and so do the dripping, top-booted seamen of the *Lochiel*. Amid much running and shuffling and casting of ropes and animated bandying of (I fear) strong expressions in Gaelic sung out upon the night, the ship's ladder is cast down and the boat tied thereto. In a few minutes the transfer of mails is over, the ladder up, and the small boat leaping back to land. (I speak of December 22, 1904). A new passenger has come on board and is seen to descend the cabin stairs to unfreeze his fingers over the tiny stove. Half-an-hour's heaving still remains before Portree. A lady who has been on the border-line of squeamishness for the last hour, hurriedly leaves the cabin, probably to see if her luggage is all right. Good news at last for all! Portree is visible, and its lights are twinkling on the height. The moon comes graciously out, silvering the snowy shoulders of Essie Hill. What a contrast is this moonlit haven, with its background of {28}
terraced lights, to the rough surges outside. Glad indeed is everyone to set foot on the pier and trudge through disregarded slush to the warmth of home or hotel. We are told by our island friends that all Skye is under snow and that the roads are impassable. No mail-coach has ventured to Dunvegan for two days and in other directions, the postmen, turned cavaliers, have gone off on horseback with their letters. (Let me say in passing, that a red-bearded Highland postman, clad in post-office livery and seated on a sheltie, is a sight which any artist would go a hundred miles to see.)

Winter sailing may at times be as pleasant as a cruise in June. At 8 A.M. in the snug cabin, the breakfast-table, with its tea, ham, eggs, and sausages, is a welcome piece of scenery, and the genial talk of the captain and his colleagues is far better than pepsine as a digestive. After breakfast, a pipe on deck is a necessity. Who that has once seen Ben-na-ceallich all white to the feet and softly veiled with airy mists, but wishes he were a Turner to paint, or a Shelley to sing? The sail from Broadford to Kyle on a calm, cold, snow-dazzling morning is (if one is wrapped and coated well) absolutely majestic. The sun pours, if not warmth, at least light and heat on the hundred bens of the mainland and the breeze aiding, wakens a multitudinous smile on the glittering face of the cold waters.

I never take this trip without thinking of such books as *The Brave Sons of Skye*, which gives a record of the brave men born in the misty island who have come south and distinguished {29}
themselves in many a different walk in life. It is a most inspiring thing to reflect on the dauntless way in which genius treads the stony road that leads from poverty to glory. There is not a district in Skye but has its great man, who forms the subject of conversation round the peat fire when the winter winds are blowing down the strath. "From Log Cabin to White House" is the American way of putting it: in Scotland we might say "From Crofter's Cot to Professor's Chair."

A CROFTING VILLAGE.

The sight of a crofting village is at first rather surprising to one accustomed to large towns. The low roofs are not far from the ground. Often, while driving, if you turn a corner swiftly, you run the risk of being thrown out of the trap on to one of the chimneys. It does not take much imagination, especially in the dim dusk, to transform a low-thatched cot into some weird animal that might begin to walk along the hill-side at any moment. So irregularly grouped are the townships, dropped here and there, as it were, that you might fancy the houses had begun at one time to run a race with each other, and in the middle of it had suddenly stopped. Dr. Johnson complained that the windows were fixed into the walls and could not, in consequence, be opened to let in the air. That fault exists to some extent still: I have been told, however, that peat reek is very purifying, and that its thick fumes make short work of any noxious germs that might lodge about the nooks of the interior. Great changes are gradually coming over many of the clachans, {30}
changes not loved by an artist or a devotee of the picturesque. Instead of thatch, held down by ropes weighted with heavy stones, there is often to be seen a roofing of tarred cloth or corrugated iron. Romance might attach itself to a roof of thatch, but corrugated iron, with its distressing parallelism, could never awaken a genuine lyric note. Further, it does not make a very comfortable seat, whereas thatch is soft. Now, children in the Highlands are rather fond of sitting and even playing on the roof: thatch is less cruel on bare feet than iron is.

HORRORS OF THE MINCH.

I have alluded to the distresses of winter voyaging to Skye. But there are other routes worse, notably that from Tarbert in Harris to Lochmaddy, which is a perfect Tartar of a trip. When the wind is high and contrary, the traveller (if he can stay on deck and maintain an interest in the scenery), beholds a sight of extreme grandeur. The waves are to be seen all along the Harris coast leaping up to a terrific extent with an unbroken line of foam extending for miles. So much does the boat romp and dance, however, that most passengers forsake the deck and retire inelegantly below. When a man lies in a stuffy cabin wishing himself wedged into it to prevent the perpetual rolling to this side and to that, and hearing the desperate thud of the Minch flinging itself against the port-hole, a series of vivid panoramic pictures pass before his mental eye. Home appears so lovely and reposeful: faces of friends on shore arise, transfigured by the glow of love: {31}
the squeamishness and retching he endures seem to the sufferer a special and direct judgment on him for impiously endeavouring to find pleasure otherwise than by the practice of the

domestic virtues. Disquieting memories of bursting boilers surge up to the surface of the mind, and old catches like the weird ballad of Sir Patrick Spens lilt themselves to the clank of the staggering ship's machinery—

"The anchor's brak and the tapmast lap,
It was sic a deadly storm,
And the waves dashed into the gude ship's side
Till a' her planks were torn."

The romance of the sea is apt to vanish as you look out upon a wilderness of foaming water, tossing the boat like an insignificant toy, drenching the bulwarks and vehemently smiting everything in its riotous anger. Neptune seems a mere blind force without reverence or mercy for the works of man. It is good for a boy of romantic disposition to cross to the Long Island in a gale: it will effectually cure him of all desire to take up the profession of pirate. What a sad moment for such a youth when he sees his breakfast where it shouldn't be, and reflects that he has not the staying power of Sir Ralph the Rover!

I regret to say that I have no specific to give as a preventive for sea-sickness. Even the Phœnicians who had time, during the intervals of their hardy voyaging, to invent the alphabet, were unable to devise a remedy for the *mal de mer*. Custom does not create immunity, for even {32}
the mighty Nelson, who had a life-long acquaintance with the ocean, was afflicted with sea-sickness to the end of his days. In France there exists a *Ligue contre le mal de mer*, commenting upon which a French journalist says: *Avec une ligue on est toujours assuré d'une chose: à défaut de progrès, qu'elle nous fera peut-être attendre, elle fera des congrès: et c'est du moins une consolation que de pouvoir discourir de son mal.*

He that will to Cupar maun through Fife, and he that has business in the Lews must brave the billows of the Minch.

NOTES ON LEWIS.

The great island of Lewis, formerly so distant from Edinburgh and Glasgow, can now be reached in fourteen hours by one who leaves the latter city at 5.40 A.M. The old route was very tiresome and circuitous: the traveller had to proceed to Inverness, take the Dingwall and Skye line to Strome Ferry, and then sail over the Minch to Stornoway. The opening up of the West Highlands by the railway to Mallaig has changed all that. At Mallaig pier, when you leave the train, you find the connecting steamer ready to set off, at noon, for its journey to Stornoway, where it arrives about eight in the evening.

I don't think anyone would want to stay more than a week at a time in Stornoway. The town itself is just like the fishy part of Boulogne-sur-Mer, only more so. There is a pervading odour of mussels, bait, and herring, and the gulls go flapping overhead in crowds everywhere. If the {33}
tourist remained a week in the place, he would go every day to the Castle grounds. Here, if anywhere, is the paradise of the Lews. There is a profusion of dells, burns, glades, ivy-grown bridges, and far-extending vistas over sea, moorland, and town. As with a knife (so precise is the division) the well-wooded policies are separated from the barren and disheartening moor. When one gets to the highest point of the grounds and gazes over the long, tiresome slopes of the island, one's belief in *design in nature* gets a sudden stab. A man will think long and sore before he arrives at any *raison d'être* for including such a wilderness of bogs in the scheme of creation.

The men of the island are, in the main, shrewd, resourceful, and intelligent—qualities fostered by their constant fighting with the sea. "The young fellows here," said one of the hotel-keepers to me, "will either make a spoon or spoil a horn. They come to a decision speedily and put it into practice at once. It is hit or miss with them, usually hit. At sea, in a gale, there is no time for parliamenting; and Lewismen act on land with the swift decision that is needed in a tempest." All round the coast are fishing-villages, thickly populated by these intrepid children of the tempest.

Fishing is a precarious industry, and often fails. The harvest of the land may fail at the same time as that of the sea: in such a case the plight of the islanders is sad indeed. During the last five years, the trade of weaving has been wisely fostered by the Government, so that in future, when sea and soil are churlish, the loom will to some extent supply the lack. The Duchess of Sutherland {34}
and the Congested Districts Board have done excellent service in encouraging the tweed-weaving industry all over the Long Island. Her Grace, some years ago, made a progress through Lewis and addressed the people by means of an interpreter, on the advantages of such industry in their homes. She also instituted exhibition sales of work in the big cities of the south, with the result that large quantities of cloth were sold and a precious publicity given to the scheme. Depots for receiving the cloth from the workers are now established in Stornoway and Harris. The Congested Districts Board advance money without interest for the purchase of looms, provide an experienced instructor to supply the people with new patterns, and give an adequate supply of dye-pots free of charge. This instructor goes over the whole of Lewis and Harris, spending month about in each, erecting new looms and modernising old ones. There is a large carding mill in Stornoway, where the natives can have the wool expeditiously carded in the most approved modern style. An industry thus fostered and supervised is bound to succeed.

Educationally, the Long Island is making great progress. Higher education is almost entirely centred in the Nicolson Institute, Stornoway, a school admirably conducted and finely equipped. The pupils of marked ability in the elementary schools of Lewis come here to continue their

higher studies, and, in many cases, to prepare themselves for the University. I have seen specimens of a magazine, annually put forth by the senior pupils of this school, and containing many interesting essays and poems, grave and gay. The English of the essays was remarkably {35} good, and contained here and there some piquant suggestions of Gaelic idiom. The pupils read French well, probably because their native Gaelic contains such a rich reservoir of nasal sounds to draw upon.

HIGHLAND DOCTORS.

I have a great respect for the medical gentlemen who have taken up their position in remote districts of Scotland, and devote themselves to the healing art under most disadvantageous circumstances. The distances are incredibly long and dangerous in winter: I have in my mind an insular doctor who has a deal of midnight boating to do in glacial weather, and whose bills are often paid not in coin but *in fleece newly off the sheep's back*. As the population gets smaller, the doctor's work becomes more laborious and less remunerative. The institution of district nurses has been a great success, and I wish there were more of them. A sympathetic and competent *nurse* is a valuable asset in a crofting or seafaring community. In one district of Mull, recently visited, I found that the nurse was also the village librarian. She was quite at home both with lotions and literature, and could recommend a poet or prepare a poultice with equal skill. The ante-room to the village hall was her dispensary: it seemed to me remarkably complete, and to have as scientific an odour as any city pharmacy. I was glad to see that the Clan Maclean was so well supplied with the resources of modern civilisation. {36}

In every one of the village libraries there is a copy of Black's *Medical Dictionary*, a most useful compilation, written in clear and simple language, and detailing all the commonest remedies. Many rural teachers and clergymen have considerable skill in coping with illness. Every country minister should have at least a smattering of medical knowledge.[4]

HOTELS AND ANGLERS.

Wherever the angler goes, you find a good hotel. Uist is low-lying and barren, with nothing to attract the eye—no tourist would go near the place for anything it has to show in the way of scenery. But as it has hundreds of small lochs, full of fish, ardent anglers go thither from all parts of the British Isles; and so at Lochmaddy and Lochboisdale the hotels are not merely good, they are excellent. The recording angel is kept busy, during the season, in taking a note of all the myths told there by the fishers in the evening over the whisky and soda.

There may be heard, at night, in most hotels in the Western Isles, the riotous scampering of rats overhead and along the walls. In Lochmaddy hotel there used to be an old frisker (perhaps he is {37} living still) that gave great entertainment, though no one ever saw him. He lifted a stone, evidently with his mouth, ran a yard or two with it, and then dropped it with a great clatter. The game was a pleasure to him, for he would practice it for half an hour at a time. The anglers who frequented the hotel called him *the mason*.

I have got into conversation with innumerable knights of the rod, and can sympathise to a slight extent with their enthusiasm. Nothing seems to take hold of a man so irrevocably as Walton's mania. Travelling by night in the north lately, I looked out into the dusk from the carriage window and beheld a bright flash of lightning, and by the gleam thereof saw a midnight maniac with his rod silhouetted against the vast inane. How few fishers nowadays, except perhaps Mr. Andrew Lang, can write their experiences in good marrowy English—

> The quaint loquacious wits of long ago,
> Whose ease was never broken by the shrill
> Whistle of engine panting round the hill,
> Could by the brook where fishful waters flow,
> Spend the long hours in angling to and fro,
> And hooking lusty trout and salmon, till
> The low-descending sun and evening chill
> Would send them to the merry ingle-glow;
> Then, after fit refection, pen and ink
> Would consecrate on paper all their feats
> In rippling phrases flashing with the blink
> Of forest glades and living water-sheets;
> The race is poorer now than it was then:
> We have no anglers that can wield the pen.

{38}

I believe the best region in all Scotland for trout is the wild and picturesque county of Sutherland. In the district of Assynt alone there are 150 lochs, fine sheets of water most of them, lying about among the hills. Half-way between the two seas and just on the borders of Sutherland and Ross, is the cosy wee hotel of Altnacealgach, with a well-stocked loch at the door, from which hundredweights of trout are taken every year. The air that blows about the house is to that of London as champagne is to dish-water.

There is a close connection, as I said, between the frequentation of a district by anglers and the excellence of its hotels. Where there is no great influx of tourists, the hotel accommodation is decidedly poor. I remember one inn, at a cold windy clachan on the west coast, which only stress

of weather and dire necessity would make a man enter. Dirty stone steps, worn and crumbled in the centre, led to an upper room which had apparently not been swept out for a year or two. Not even the city of Cologne in Coleridge's time could have produced from among its imposing catalogue of stenches anything to match the complex ensemble of that malodorous inn. There was stale fish intil't, and bad beer intil't, and peat reek intil't, and mice intil't, and candle grease intil't, and the devil and all intil't. Though I was the only visitor, I feared I should not have the bed to myself: so I e'en wrapped myself in my Highland plaidie (after the minimum of disinvestiture), and stretched my limbs on an arthritic settee, with intent to sleep. No sleep came till the quaffing roysterers of the clachan had ceased fighting under the moon outside, about 2 A.M. namely. {39}
Rather than stay two nights in such a place, I boated out early next day into the mid-channel of the Sound of Mull, and clambered up the sides of Macbrayne's *Lapwing*, which took me to Oban.

RECENT BOOKS.

The most charming of recent works on the Outer Islands is that one of which the preface was written in Jerusalem. I refer to the volume of Miss Goodrich Frere, a lady whose vivacity, fervour, and picturesque style are deserving of unqualified praise. All the libraries in the bilingual districts contain the book, and few are so often asked for. In conversation and publicly I have often given myself the pleasure of recommending it, alike to Highlander and Lowlander. My admiration for Miss Frere's talents makes me wish that one or two of her prejudices had been less glaringly displayed. She speaks, for example, with something like scornful reproach of Lochmaddy, because the habit of taking afternoon tea is common in that township. It would have been more to the purpose if Miss Frere had issued a general warning to the people of the Hebrides not to drink tea as black as porter, and, above all, not to boil it. The pale anæmic faces one so often sees in the north and west, the mental prostration and actual insanity so alarmingly on the increase in the Long Island, are unquestionably due, in great measure, to the abominably strong tea that is swilled in such quantities there. A Tarbert doctor told me that the medical profession now talk quite familiarly of the Harris stomach just as drapers talk of Harris tweed: {40}
the former is, he averred, as weak and devoid of tone as the latter is strong and of good texture. This doctor was called up at two one morning to attend a patient in one of the moorland townships. At that hour, away over there on the gusty rim of the Atlantic, the natives were all afoot. People were talking to each other at the doorsteps; lamps were lighted inside, and tea that had been boiling for hours among the red peats, was being imbibed with infinite gusto. This, the doctor assured me, was the normal style of living.[5]

Talking of North Uist, Miss Frere shows indignation at the invasion of southern ideas, and thinks that everything is being vitiated by the taint of Lochmaddy. Lochmaddy, characterised in so droll a way, is a tiny township with a Sheriff Court, a church, a few well-built modern houses, a school, and an excellent hotel. Cleanliness is a welcome feature of the place, and I am sorry to say that the same can not be said of certain crofting villages not far distant. I expect that the visits of the Government Sanitary Officer, whom I met at Lochmaddy, and who knows his business well, will ultimately work an enormous amount of good. That gentleman gave me such unsavoury details regarding the conditions of life in certain of the townships as made me hope that the "taint of Lochmaddy," that is to say, the cleanliness and civilised life of that village, may more and more {41}
become evident throughout both the Uists. Improved sanitation would allow heaven's breath to circulate through the low-lying cots and prevent them from being hot-beds of malignant disease.

One feature of Miss Frere's book which does honour to her fine sympathy, but which is not ethnologically justifiable, is the persistent attempt to draw a sharp racial distinction between Highlander and Lowlander. The truth is, that no part of the Highlands is purely Celtic: the population is a welter of Picts, Gaels, Norsemen, Danes, and Saxons. The Lowland blood is, in like manner, a bewildering blend, there being no uncontaminated Anglo-Saxon district in any single county of Scotland. Mr. J. M. Robertson's clever book, *The Saxon and the Celt*, seems to me to dispose finally of certain fallacies that Hill Burton and others have light-heartedly written on the subject of racial characteristics. The conditions of life, the ungeniality of sea and soil, the wild and grand aspect of nature, influence thought, feeling, and character at least as much as blood and heredity.[6]

Another delightful book on the Outer Hebrides is that written by Mr. W. C. Mackenzie. Proceeding in the order of chronology, the author gives a vivid series of historic summaries (enlivened by many a piquant episode and humorous touch) of the Long Island from the earliest {42}
times. The wanderings of Prince Charlie, and the condition of the country after Culloden, have never been better told than in Mr. Mackenzie's narrative.

MILITARY.

I hinted at the beginning of this chapter that the barracks of the Highland regiments had been supplied with extensive libraries for the use of the soldiers during their leisure hours. Fort-George, the erection of which was directly due to the Highland rebellions, has been presented with two fine libraries, and I am happy to say that the men greatly appreciate the gift. I happened to be in the vicinity of Fort-George when the Duke of Connaught was conducting an official inspection. The little town of Ardersier, which is some two miles from the Fort, was gay with bunting for the ducal visit. The books at the Fort are under the charge of Sergeant-Major Markham, an able elocutionist and one who, in his own sphere, does an immense amount of good. He gets the young recruits to band themselves together in social clubs, organises games and

entertainments for them, and encourages them to read and study. The philanthropic Sergeant-Major was engaged in typing a catalogue of the books when the genial Duke came upon the scene. His Royal Highness was astonished to see such a magnificent selection of reading matter at the disposal of the soldiers, and eagerly asked for information as to the origin of the boon. His curiosity was satisfied, and when he heard that the same donor had given appropriate libraries to {43}
the garrisons at Inverness, Dingwall, and Kinbrace, he exclaimed, "Such a gentleman is indeed the Soldier's Friend."

Since the Duke's visit, a small library of books has been sent to the children's school at the Fort. The population of this military community, containing as it does a great many married men with their wives and families, is fully equal to that of Ardersier, and necessitates a separate school. I was struck with the pronunciation of the children in this part of the country. Many of the Fort children, having mothers from the other side of the Border, speak with an unmistakable English accent and are rather unscrupulous with respect to the aspirate. The town of Inverness, which is at no great distance from Fort-George, has long been famous for its clear and unprovincial English speech, a fact which Johnson (oddly enough) thought due to some of Cromwell's soldiers having settled there.

Dr. Johnson devotes two pleasant little paragraphs to describe his visit to Fort-George and his entertainment there by Sir Eyre Coote. I have always admired the Doctor's sly way of avoiding a description of the Fort: "I cannot," he says, "delineate it scientifically, and a loose and popular description is of use only when the imagination is to be amused."

In spite of the menace of Fort-George, the Highlanders fondly cherished the memory of Charlie for many a year. To no subject even now do their descendants listen with such rapt attention as to his tragic story. I have heard indeed of a Highland minister who was so displeased at the homage paid to the Prince's memory by some of his flock, that he threw at them the {44}
unanswerable question, "What will Prince Charlie do for you at the day of judgment?"

I have had the curiosity to ask some of the Session Clerks of country parishes that were in the line of the insurgents' advance or retreat, if any references to the rebellion appear in the minutes of the year 1745. No references appear, as a rule, for that year; but, under 1746, there are brief accounts of church discipline being exercised in the case of a few illegitimate births,—the paternity being ascribed usually to *ane sodger*.[7]

At Inverness and Dingwall there exist similar libraries of great range and excellence. The men show an interest in Miss Marie Corelli's works that is rather astonishing. Their hard and strenuous drill does not deprive them of a curiosity to know something about *Barabbas* and *The Sorrows of Satan*. Sir Conan Doyle and Dr. Neil Munro are also great favourites, and deserve to be.

A large number of the Inverness recruits come from the Long Island. They almost invariably require to be taken to the hospital a week or two after their arrival. Change of diet and new modes of life seem to upset them at first. For those who have a mind to improve themselves, there are abundant opportunities. The reading and recreation rooms are well appointed and {45}
comfortable. Altogether, the regular life, physical drill, and healthy tone of the barracks must have a most beneficial effect on the men.

I am bound to say that I do not greatly admire the English style of the gentleman who composes the War Office placards that one sees at railway stations in the north. These are meant to allure country labourers to join the army, but the following piece of fatuous rhetoric must surely act rather as a deterrent than otherwise:—"Are you, the descendants of those who conquered India and carried the colours of the Gordon Highlanders through the Peninsula and at Waterloo, *content to sit at home, or be satisfied with dull labours in the fields or at the mills*, whilst the ranks of your own regiment are filled by strangers from the South?" I heard two freckled rustics, with difficulty and labour hard, spelling out the phrases of the foregoing sentence at the little station of Fyvie. They did not seem at all impressed by the fervent interrogation nor by this picture of prospective delights: "*Many of your countrymen have seen the wonders of the Indian Empire and enjoyed the soft calm of Malta, and of Ceylon, the Paradise of the Ancients.*" It does not evince much knowledge of a ploughman's mind to seek to awaken his martial ardour by old myths about the Garden of Eden; nor is it specially alluring to him to mention, as the acme of glory, that he may distinguish himself so much as to gain "*thanks from both Houses of Parliament*." Such weak and watery declamation won't do for a country that has had thirty-eight years of compulsory education. If our War Office wishes to rouse patriotic feeling, it should cease {46}
to contrast "the dull labour of the fields" with "the soft calm of Malta": the veriest clown would not be caught by such chaff. It would be more to the point to send gratuitous copies of *The Barrack Room Ballads* to all the village libraries.

MORAY FIRTH.

My various visits to the shores of the Moray Firth have convinced me that a man may enjoy the majesty and terror of the sea without embarking on a boat at all. All he need do is to take a ticket to Portsoy in the month of March, when the wind is snell and the clouds low. I have never seen a more grim or cruel-looking coast than that which stretches for miles east and west of Portsoy. One shudders even at the thought of those detestable, razor-edged rocks, tilted up at all angles, with the tide for ever boiling and hissing about them. Neither by land nor sea, at many parts of the coast, can you get to what might be reasonably called a beach. The so-called shore-road is

high up on the hills, and gives a good view far out over the billows, but does not take the traveller's feet near the water at all. Ill-advised would he be who should strive to guide his skiff from the outer firth to any chance cove on the shore, for the uncouth crags, huge and sombre, would have no mercy on any timber jointed by the hand of man. Perhaps the summer sun would give a gentler appearance to the rocky and wave-beaten shore, but I am certain Mr. Swinburne would prefer to see it in March. {47}

The town of Portsoy in itself cannot be said to have much comeliness; the streets are irregular, the houses dismal, and the shops few. God has, as is meet, the best of the architecture, most of the churches being graceful and well-spired.

About twenty minutes by rail from Portsoy is the trim and typical fishing village of Portknockie, high-raised on a hill, and with little protection from any wind that Aeolus may send out of his cavern. The population comes near 1,600 souls, and it is rare to find a native who is not called by one of the following surnames: *Mair*, *Wood*, *Munro*, *Pirrie*. I believe such a dearth of appellatives is the invariable rule in the fishing villages of the North Sea. To counteract the confusion that would inevitably arise, an agnomen or "tee-name" is usually appended. The Portknockie tee-names are *Mash*, *Deer*, *Doodoo*, *Bobbin*, and *Shavie*. Examples of postal addresses are—

John Wood (Bobbin), Portknockie.
Duncan Munro (Doodoo), "
Samuel Pirrie (Shavie), "
Daniel Mair (Mash), "

I don't envy the young minister who, fresh from Lucian, has to read with solemnity a roll of such communicants.

Between Portknockie and the sea-town of Cullen is a charming stretch of links and sea-sands. Over the broad Firth, as one looks north-west, may be faintly seen the hills of Sutherland and Caithness.

It is pleasant to read books amid the scenery in which they were conceived, and among the people they portray. Those who spend their holidays at Cullen would act wisely in reading George {48} Macdonald's novels there. No one has drawn the character of the Moray Firth fisherman so lovingly, beautifully, and sympathetically as he. After reading such a tale as the *Marquis of Lossie* one looks upon places like Portknockie and the sea-town of Cullen with different eyes. The toilers of the deep that go forth on the waters from these seaboard shires are serious and moral men. Contact with the sea and the presence of danger at all hours, have made them alert, keen, and dexterous. Most of the crews carry a box of choice books with them for their odd hours of leisure when they go to the Yarmouth fishing. Let a stranger get into conversation with one or two of these hardy heroes, and he will be surprised at their intelligence and wide interests. He will certainly conclude that the young fisherman, Malcolm Macphail, whom Macdonald introduces in the novel mentioned, is no exaggeration, but true to the life.

The sea-town of Cullen consists of some hundreds of houses closely huddled together just at the edge of the sea. The rank odour of wreck, tar, fishing-gear, and bait, pervades the air, and is effectually kept from corruption by the searching sea-breezes that are ever blowing. When not engaged on the water, the men are busy mending their nets, stitching their sails, making fast the seams of their craft and tarring the big inflated floaters that support the lines. They are quite ready to chat with a stranger and discuss their methods of working, their gains, mishaps, and partnerships. {49}

When the fishing season is over and the crews are known to be on the way home, the excitement among the women is intense. No Bourse ever tingled more feverishly with rumours and sinister fears than Sandhaven or Rosehearty or Seatown at such a crucial time. Costly nets may be riven, boats may be stove in by untoward accidents, or worse than all, fathers, husbands and brothers may be drowned on the road home to their loved ones. Rarely does a season pass without bringing sorrow to the heart of some waiting wife or sister.

The joys, hopes, and fears of these maritime townships have been worthily made vocal by Dr. George Macdonald. He has done this with a grace and an artistic conception that raise his stories to a very high rank in pure literature. I am afraid Macdonald is not much read by the present generation: his stories are too long, too philosophical, perhaps too poetical, for the taste of to-day. Every book of his is saturated from beginning to end with the religion of the Gospels—a religion of love, beauty, tolerance, and sympathy.

I am happy to say that I saw Dr. Macdonald once and heard him speak. His venerable aspect and chaste elocution made a powerful impression on all who heard him. His discourse could not be reported in cold print, for the flash of the mystic's eye, the human kindness that emanated from his whole being, and the felt emotion of his every tone could not be reproduced by any artifice known to the printer.

The Forfarshire fishwives have quite a Dutch mania for cleanliness. On Saturdays they give their homes a complete overhaul, and the men are driven out of doors during the ceremony. What man {50} could stay at home when his wife, supplied with a mop and a big pail of soapy water, is sousing the floor and the walls? Furniture is scrubbed and dusted, glass ornaments, porcelain hens, and shell-boxes have to be carefully wiped, grates and fire-irons must be rubbed to a glittering polish. These industrious women, panting with the enthusiasm of work, enjoy Saturday more than any

other day of the week. The enjoyment springs from various causes. There is first the delight that comes from a vigorous exercise of the muscles. This pleasure is heightened by the knowledge that the work is for a good end, and that on Sunday the house will be resplendent, immaculate, and peaceful. It is not to be denied that the feeling of satisfaction at having evicted the husband is also an important item. When he comes home from discussing politics with his co-mates and brothers in exile, she will not fail to jibe him on the general worthlessness of his existence, and accuse him of intemperance.

AMONG THE MINERS.

A fishing village has a picturesqueness and a kinship with Nature and the hills, utterly lacking in a mining locality. The squalid rows of the latter, arranged in wretched, heart-breaking symmetry, are an offence to the landscape. Mud and filth cumber the door-steps, runnels of malodorous water ooze along the rows, ragged and ill-kempt bairns tumble about like little savages. A pitiful sight it is to see the black squads of colliers returning to their homes after a day in the damp bowels of the earth: greasy caps with little oil-lamps attached, wet, miry clothing and grimy {51} faces, all make up a most saddening spectacle. The wages given to these poor fellows are miserably meagre, considering that after the age of forty-five, their limbs are stiffened with rheumatism and their lungs the seat of chronic asthma. It is not surprising that miners should be intemperate, and that their recreations should rise no higher than dog-racing and cock-fighting.

It is very unpleasant to think that so much good bone and muscle is being ground and destroyed by work so brutalising and unnatural. Coal must be brought to the surface for the wants of civilisation, and in the process the collier is destroyed, body and soul. Society needs constantly to be reminded of its duties towards those who, in Helot fashion, clean the drains and work the mines. Those duties involve more than the distribution of tracts.

I had the opportunity of speaking to a crowded meeting of miners in the county of Stirling quite recently, and was immensely pleased with the behaviour and close attention of the audience. Before the speaking began, the proceedings resembled a University Graduation Ceremony, that is, there was a great deal of whistling, cat-calling, and rowdy merriment. The audience kept on their caps, and many of them, disdaining the use of chairs and benches, squatted against the walls in the position so dear to subterranean workers. Once the lecture began, the resemblance to a University gathering ceased, for the colliers behaved like gentlemen. What subject, it may be asked, could possibly interest an assembly of illiterate miners? It so happens that, in Scotland, we {52} have a great number of working-men poets, who have, in a homely but very graphic way, voiced the feelings of the labouring classes, and given fit expression to every joy and sorrow that men experience in this mortal round. These hodden-gray bards furnish abundance of material for giving even the humblest and most untrained mind a few glimpses of what is meant by literature. Burns has a broad and brawny humanity that appeals to all men, and, besides Burns, there are scores of major and minor warblers that are interesting, quotable, and full of grace.

The wild and unruly manners of some mining districts, even at the present day, may partly be explained by remembering that up to the end of the eighteenth century, colliers were serfs and, as such, were not allowed to leave the mines and seek work elsewhere. When a pit was sold, the workers passed as a matter of course into the hands of the new proprietor. The son of a miner was compelled to follow the father's occupation.[8] Slavery fixed a brutalising mark on generation {53} after generation that is not yet entirely erased. In the first half of the nineteenth century the knights of the shuttle—intellectual, disputatious, and lyrical—looked down with infinite contempt on the ignorant and boorish slaves of the pick. Poetry has, in consequence, little to say about the digger for coal. The song of "The Collier Laddie," attributed to Burns, is one of the very few pleasant pieces of verse associated with the miner.

The Scotch mining villages of to-day contain a queer juxtaposition of nationalities, and the proportion of native colliers is becoming less and less. Thousands of Irish families from Ulster and Connaught are now settled permanently in the counties of Lanark, Stirling, and Ayr. The alien Pole, too, is to be found in the same regions uttering melodious oaths learned on the banks of the Vistula. To complete the welter, huckstering Orientals may be seen gliding about among the rows of houses, fulfilling prophecy and selling highly-coloured pictures of the Virgin Mary.

HAND-LOOM WEAVING.

The miner is still with us, but the weaver is almost obsolete in the Lowlands. You must search diligently for him. In Laurencekirk (a quaint village of one long street, in the shire of Forfar), and in similar out-of-the-way nooks, can still be faintly heard the music of the hand-loom. I went recently into a weaver's shop in Laurencekirk, and found three old men and one aged woman plying their shuttles. The oldest of the men was born four years after the battle of Waterloo, and {54} there he sat, like a vision of the vanished years, striving to weave a few more yards of drugget before going to rejoin his contemporaries of the reign of George III. He told me there were once seven hundred hand-loom weavers in the place, and "*that young fellow*" said he, pointing to a wrinkled carle of eighty on the loom behind, "remembers it as well as I do."

The industry of hand-loom weaving, which, a century ago, made every town in Scotland resonant with the din of shuttles, is thus almost a thing of the past, and the men who engaged in it have gone the way of their shoe-buckles, knee-breeches, and seventeen-hundred linen. Yet weavers were typical of all that was intellectual in Scottish life: every shop was in its way a miniature

university, and every weaver a man who believed himself capable of giving Pitt a lesson or two on the management of the war, and Dundas a few hints on political economy. They had, indeed, far clearer views on politics than most of their legislators; from their ranks at a subsequent period the Chartist agitators—regrettably extreme as they were—were largely recruited; and it is not too much to say that the minds of many of our leading accredited reformers took the ply from these politicians of the loom. These men who, in a way so characteristic of Scotland, managed to make high-thinking subsist on homely fare, can never quite fade from memory while their tuneful poetical exponent, Tannahill, is read and enjoyed. In his works we have a page out of the past; and as we read his life and poems, we behold the Scotch village as it was a century ago; we see the old houses with their outside stairs, the antique boulder-paved cross, and the assemblies of {55}
aproned craftsmen discussing news much older than their ale.

In Broadford, Skye, there is an old crofter who, in his early years, worked at the loom with Alexander Bain, late Professor in the University of Aberdeen. Half a century ago, John Stuart Mill said that Bain's erudition was encyclopædic. From long residence in France, I know that few British philosophers are better known than Bain (whose name the French amusingly pronounce to rhyme with *vin*). This old crofter tells how he used to chaff the future professor for invariably having a book in front of him as the shuttle was plied. Bain, by slow and careful work, overcame prejudice, and secured a high position among the leaders of thought. Long ago, those who had to sit for the London degrees used to regard him as the greatest thinker in Europe. When he retired from the examinership at London, students lost some of their old veneration for him, and when he married a second time, a Miss Barbara Something, they even ventured to make a logical joke on him, and say that he had been fascinated by *Barbara's perfect figure*. I know that many pupils of our public schools, in love with football more than syntax, often regretted that Bain ever composed his *English Grammar*. No book (unless perhaps Morell's *Analysis*) has ever been more cordially execrated, and no book ever more richly deserved it, for though, like Aberdeen granite, it is stately and impressive, it is also ruthless, cold, and implacable. The draught may be wholesome and medicinal, but there is no honey on the rim of the cup. {56}

PROFESSOR BLACKIE IN THE HIGHLANDS.

One hears a great deal of Professor Blackie in the North and West, and no wonder. He was a laughing, jocular, impressionable man, who hobnobbed with landlords and amiably slapped drivers and policemen on the back, throwing a Gaelic greeting at them as he did so. His faculty for writing poetry is seen in many a guidebook; Oban, Inverness, Pitlochry, and numberless other places, have had their beauties celebrated by this animated writer. He was a good friend to the Highlands—studied Gaelic most arduously, translated some of the finest of the Celtic bards, worked assiduously for the establishment of a Celtic Chair in Edinburgh, spoke many a good word for the crofters—in fact, did everything well except what he was paid to do, viz., teach Greek to his students. Grave D.D.'s could not understand or condone his cantrips. I have been assured that on one occasion, when Professor in the College of Aberdeen, he actually *stood on his head* before a class of students. Mr. Barrie has given a very amusing and quite unexaggerated account of the Professor's normal demeanour in Edinburgh. Blackie's text books of *Greek Dialogues* are full of the most waggish remarks.

The landlady of Kinlochewe Hotel gave some lessons in Gaelic to this convulsive old scholar. He would come in with a Celtic Bible below his arm, and, opening the sacred volume, read a chapter or two at a terrific rate of speed, and whistle triumphantly when he had finished. Highland folk did not care to converse with Blackie for three reasons: (1) he spoke too quickly for the leisurely {57}
and composed conversation of the Gael; (2) his pronunciation was bad, and people did not like to tell him so or correct him—(no one ever pronounced Gaelic to perfection who did not get the language with his mother's milk); (3) he was fond of using literary words, taken from the older bards, in his ordinary conversation; now, such words are obsolete in every-day talk and quite unfamiliar to crofters and cottars. In the Highlands, Blackie's English was better understood than his Gaelic.

Blackie was undoubtedly a very able scholar—not, indeed, of that minute burrowing kind famous in Germany, but rather of the class that delights in the literature and vivid force of a language. He *spoke* Latin and Greek, and held views on the teaching of these tongues that seemed more eccentric in his time than they do now. He declared that the linguistic achievement of which he was proudest was his mastery, such as it was, of the language of the Gael.

It affords me pleasure in the retrospect to think of old Blackie at a distribution of prizes to school-children in a town of the West some years before his death. During the chairman's opening remarks the merry old man continued to whistle like a mavis. When the chairman sat down, Blackie embraced him and called him fellow-sinner. Some recitations followed from the children, one of which was Burns's "Address to a Haggis." When the young elocutionist came to the lines—

> "Till a' their weel-swall'd kites belyve
> Are bent like drums."

{58}

Blackie rolled in his chair, held his sides and uproariously expressed his approbation. Then came the distribution of prizes, during which the Grand Old Boy made some pun or quaint remark on each of the children's names, as he presented the books: *"Miss Minnie Morrow*: never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day; *James Glen*: be a real genuine *Glen* all through life, not a *valet* or flunkey; *William Lindsay*: Willie, my lad, imitate your ancestors at Otterburn: 'The Lindsays

flew like fire about till a' the fray was done'; *Mary Black*: black but comely like the daughters of Jerusalem," and so on, in a bird-witted, half-daft way that the audience contemplated with benevolent wonder.

NOTE ON INVERNESS SURNAMES, ETC.

Let me mention here a very useful and interesting piece of philology that was done by Dr. Macbain in 1895. That eminent scholar, working on the *Inverness Directory*, analysed the names occurring there, explained them on sound principles of etymology, and gave percentages of Celtic and Saxon surnames in the Highland capital.

Roughly speaking, the *Directory* of 1894-1895 had 5,000 single entries, and *750 distinct surnames*. Of these surnames, only 110 are pure Gaelic. About 70 per cent. of the natives are, however, supposed to be of Highland descent.

Dr. Macbain points out that certain Highland clans have names that are not Celtic: *Grant* is from the French "grand"; *Fraser* from the French "fraise," a strawberry (the Frasers have a strawberry in their coat-of-arms); *Chisholm* is English and means "gravel-holm,"—the Anglo-Saxon *ceosol* {59} (pebble) is preserved in *Chesil Beach* and *Chiselhurst*; *MacLeod* signifies "son of Ljot"; and *ljotr* is the Norse word for "ugly." *Campbell* is probably Norman-French, though Dr. Macbain suggests *cam-beul*, Gaelic for "crooked mouth." In olden times an external conqueror would sometimes subdue a district, and call the natives after his noble self.

The commonest names in the town are Fraser, Macdonald, Mackenzie, Macintosh, Ross, Cameron, and Munro. About 1,200 of the population have one or other of the first three names. The Frasers are an easy first, and form more than 9 per cent. of the population.

John, *Alexander*, and *William*, are the commonest Christian names in Inverness. "It is remarkable and indeed regrettable," says Dr. Macbain, "that the Gaelic Christian names (Donald, Duncan, Kenneth, Murdoch, and Angus), are not higher in the list."

The name of the first recorded inhabitant of Inverness (A.D. 1200) is Geoffrey Blount, a feudal warrior no doubt (French *blond*). In the thirteenth century we have the names *Noreys*, *Grant*, and *Hay*. In the fourteenth century the leading name is Pilch, derived from *peluche*, the French for "plush." In the fifteenth century, *Reid*, *Vaus*, and *Cuthbert* are prominent citizens. *Vaus* is said to mean "of the vales," *i.e.*, *de Vallibus*; *Reid* is Scotch for "red"; and *Cuthbert* is pure Lowland. Evidently the leading men were aliens and interlopers. {60}

CHAPTER II.

MUSIC, SPEECHES, AND LITERATURE.

Scotch a reading nation—Hardships of students in old days—Homer in Scalloway—When education ends—Objects of chapter—Music—M.P.'s—Rural depopulation—Its causes—Emigration—Village halls—The moon—A lecture in Islay—Mental and material wealth—Real greatness—A Highland laird on literature—Varieties of chairmen—"Coming to the point"—Moral obligation—Compliment to Paisley—Oratory at Salen—Lecture in a dungeon—Surprises—A visit to the Borders—Tarbolton—Scotch language—Choice books—The essayists—A Banff theory—Goldsmith in Gaelic—*Biblia abiblia*—Favourites for the road—Horace—Shakespeare's Sonnets—Xenophon—French literature and journalism—Romance and Augustanism—Victorian writers—Celt and Saxon.

SCOTCH A READING NATION.

I think it was Mr. Holyoake, the veteran lecturer, who, in a volume of reminiscences, declared he found the audiences in Scotland more intelligent than elsewhere. I cannot draw such comparisons, for I have not spoken often south of the Tweed; this I can say with assurance, however, that no one need hesitate to address an audience of Scotch peasants on a topic of literary interest. Predestination and such religious trifles may stir them to disrespectful heat, but pure literature invariably draws forth their cool and critical attention. Probably no nation has ever devoted so much attention to books, and, as the result of this characteristic, Scotland, {61} considering its size and population, has produced far more than its proportion of eminent men. At the Reformation epoch, when the comforts of a Lowland cottage would be little in advance of those in a present-day Uist croft, writers like George Buchanan and his fellows of the *Deliciæ Poetarum Scotorum* made the excellence of Scotch scholarship known in every university of Europe. Buchanan was really a typical Caledonian man of genius—open-eyed, sagacious, patriotic, and cosmopolitan—and I can strongly recommend the occasional perusal of his Latin Psalms to all modern readers who wish to keep their feelings of reverence fresh and prevent their Latin quantities from getting amorphous.

HARDSHIPS OF STUDENTS IN OLD DAYS.

Those who think highly of the Scotch intellect, point with pride to the fact that for many a year the Prime Minister, the leader of the Opposition, and the Archbishop of Canterbury all hailed from the North. For my own part, I am chiefly interested in cases where eminence has resulted from the cultivation of literature on a little oatmeal. A few months ago, I had the pleasure of chatting, over a cup of tea, with the suave old gentleman who combines the postmastership of Dunvegan with the office of factor to the Macleod of Macleod. He held me spell-bound for an afternoon as he narrated in graphic language the hardships of the Skye students in former times. Many a Skye youth, I was told, bent on studying the humanities at Aberdeen, would mount his sheltie, traverse thereon the rough roads of his misty island as far as Kyleakin, cross the ferry {62} there, ride on east through the ben-shadowed track of Glen Moriston, and finally bear down on the streets of the Granite City. There the o'erlaboured sheltie would be sold to pay the matriculation fees.

HOMER IN SCALLOWAY.

Many little out-of-the-way townships in insular Scotland contain scholars who would find themselves quite at home among a set of college dons. In the course of my travels in Shetland I came to the tiny village of Scalloway, and while standing on the pier gazing alternately at the confusion of sea and island, and at the grim old ruined castle where Earl Patrick, the wicked viceroy, once resided, I heard a conversation on geology being carried on between a tall and brawny shopman and some sailors. The latter, who were on board a ship, shouted their replies over a few yards of water to the shopman, who was on the pier near me. I was interested in the men's talk, which had to do with the subsidence of the land at this part of the coast. One of the sailors alleged that his grandmother's cabbage-patch was now covered by the water on which his boat was floating. The big shopman, turning to me, quoted the well-known passage of Tennyson (everyone can repeat it) of the sea flowing where the tree used to grow. "O Earth, what changes thou hast seen." This quotation led to a literary talk in which he remarked that of all poets he preferred Homer. "What translator do you like best?" I enquired. "Blackie's," he replied, "as being the most faithful to the original. But I rarely read a translation, '*I prefer Homer in his own* {63} *Greek.*'" This remark made by one whose fingers were glistening with herring-scales, came to me as a pleasant surprise. Later on in the day, I visited his house and saw his fine library and his splendid selection of classical books. Not many teachers of my acquaintance have a better array of the editions of Homer. He was not one of your ignorant collectors who know only the outside of what they buy. He had read over the whole forty-eight books of the text again and again, and could discuss knotty passages in most interesting and original fashion. His memory was evidently an excellent one. He informed me that most of his reading was done in the early morning, and that he found five hours' sleep quite adequate. I have a most agreeable recollection of my interview with this self-taught scholar. I believe there are many like him in not a few outlandish nooks of Scotland,—men who read books not for any material advantages that result from their studies, but simply and solely for the intense pleasure that comes from communion with the masterminds of bygone generations.

Travel in remote districts of Britain reveals the fact that our provincials, whenever they have the chance, are a studious and thoughtful race. The isolation and monotony of life in many parts are bound to drive men to study and reflection if the means for these are at hand. Sisyphus himself had hardly less variety of occupation than some of our shepherds whose work on the hills involves long absences from social intercourse. To such men (whose life is suggestive of a repeating decimal) the access to an ell or two of good books often means mental salvation. {64} Nothing is so melancholy as to find a countryman of brains who has never had the opportunity of cultivating his mind in such a way as to eliminate prejudice and widen the range of interest.

WHEN EDUCATION ENDS.

I am sometimes inclined to think that many of our rural clergymen, intent on shielding their congregations from pestilent doctrine and latitudinarism, are actuated by much the same spirit as the Sultan Omar when he set fire to the great Library at Alexandria. The Bible is no doubt the best of books, and it may be that the Confession of Faith comes next: but when these have got their share, there still remains the religious duty of educating the intellect by a wide perusal of the inspired apostles of secular literature. A Highland teacher, who presided at one of the lectures in the north, expressed himself very appositely thus on the subject of education: "The supposition that education is over when a boy leaves school, is far too prevalent," he said. "Education properly considered comes to an end when the last breath of life is drawn. Edward Young in his *Night Thoughts* says: 'Were man to live coeval with the sun, the patriarch-pupil would be learning still.' Young was undoubtedly right: some of the most forceful and penetrating lessons of life are given to us long after we have cast our text-books into some dusty corner, never to be opened more. In our early days, we cannot choose our own teachers, and there is often a good deal of force and constraint. The delightful thing about our education in mature life is that we have the selection of our own masters. There is no compulsion whatever. I am {65} convinced that for everyone of us there is some one author whose works will act as medicine for the mind and be an unfailing tonic in all conditions of the soul."

OBJECT OF CHAPTER.

I intend to devote this chapter to a description of a few of the speeches delivered by some of the

speakers at such literary evenings in various parts of the country. After I had said my say, I sometimes invited an expression of opinion. Almost invariably someone responded to the invitation, with the object of asking a question, expressing dissent, or intimating concurrence. I do not recollect a single meeting out of hundreds that could be called monotonous. It did not in the slightest detract from the interest of a meeting that many of the remarks erred on the score of irrelevancy. The attention never flagged from first to last, and it was no uncommon thing for the proceedings to last for over three hours. In giving typical speeches delivered by crofters, lairds, tradesmen, and clergymen, I mean to indicate to the reader *the subjects that are of interest to our provincial population, their attitude to questions of literature and social life, and incidentally the great amount of humour that still exists in the world*.

MUSIC.

The free and unconventional character of these meetings was perhaps seen best of all in the musical part of the proceedings, which was always arranged locally. Usually the songs were well- {66}
known Highland or Lowland airs, in many cases so exquisitely rendered that it was quite evident there had been much previous preparation. When my opinion was asked beforehand, I invariably recommended national melodies. It was always a treat to get a Gaelic song or two well rendered. At Acharacle (a little place at the far end of Lochshiel) Mr. Rudd's piper gave some fine Highland tunes, which evoked great enthusiasm. Personally I prefer the pipes to every other instrument, for this reason, that even if I don't understand all the music, I can appreciate the scenic effects. The Acharacle piper was a fine specimen of the Celt, and his get-up was glorious:

> "He screwed his pipes and gart them skirl
> Till roof and rafters a' did dirl."

Sometimes the phonograph formed part of the musical programme. I do not approve of this demoralising instrument except to a very limited extent. The cylinders usually gyrate with records of fatuous music-hall songs, unedifying coster-airs and farcical speeches. The *vox humana* interpreting national melodies is infinitely better. What vigour and illustrative expression the islanders can throw into their songs! I have but to shut my eyes to see the policeman of Staffin interpreting "The Bonnie House o' Airlie." When his big, manly voice threw out the terrible threat, "*I'll no' leave a staunin' stane in Airlie*," his eyes shot fire, his teeth gleamed, and his ponderous fist came thundering down on the table in front of him.

I still remember with infinite pleasure the strains of Mr. Cameron's Poolewe Choir, heard in Gairloch school-house. That energetic and complaisant conductor brought his clear-throated {67}
minstrels over to the meeting in a brake. It was a luxury to see them with their white robes and tartan sashes, while in front of them stood their genial leader clad in kilts. The Gaelic *Mod*, which is now a regular institution in the land, is bound to do splendid service towards keeping alive the fine old music of the North. The Poolewe Choir, I am happy to say, won much distinction at the *Mods* of both Inverness and Greenock. *There is great need for choirs, and great need, also, for innocent songs of a secular character.* Before I spoke to the people of Eigg, I requested the teacher to arrange, if possible, for a musical programme. The reply staggered me: "No man, woman, or child in this island would for a moment even dream of singing a worldly song. We are all converted here, except a few benighted Catholics. The vain, fleeting joys of this world are as dross to us. The missionary has a modulator, and he trains the young men and women in the sol-fa so that they may sing Sankey's hymns in all the parts." I was dreadfully floored by this answer, and could only mutter mechanically, "*Dross*," "*Missionary*,'" "*Modulator*," in a vain effort to seize the situation. Conversion I understood and approved of, but where, in the wee island of Eigg, were the vain, fleeting joys? There is no public-house in the place, and little temptation of any kind. The most disquieting item of all was the modulator: I have not seen one for a long time, and am not sorry, for there is nothing which so spoils the appearance of a wall nor anything so dismal as practising scales. A compromise was come to, and it was arranged that some Gaelic readings, {68}
containing a dash of religion, should take the place of songs, and give some variety to the evening's proceedings.

At some of the meetings there was perhaps an *excess of realism*. Bottom, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," wishing to avoid excitement and fear among the ladies when he is acting the part of Pyramus, says: "Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear." I thought of Bottom's extreme delicacy when I was present at a meeting in Tomatin not long ago. An outstanding feature of the evening's proceedings was the vividly dramatic rendering of the song, "Macpherson swore a feud," by the local postman. The latter, a big, burly man, was extremely formidable in his Highland attire. When he came to the verse dealing with the untimely decease of Macpherson, he whipped the dagger out of its sheath, flourished it as in act to kill, and terrified some of the lady visitors by his vivid suiting of the action to the word. They were as much astonished at the flash of the *skian dhu* as the Commons were when Burke threw a dagger on the floor of the House.

A musical treat is sometimes got in the most unexpected places. I was particularly struck with a children's glee-party in Jura (a rough island known chiefly for its sterile Paps). The bairns admirably rendered Ben Jonson's delightful ditty, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and the {69}
Shakespearian song, "Where the bee sucks, there suck I." In such islands a musical teacher is a valuable asset. Let me add that all the libraries have been gratuitously supplied with fine

collections of Scottish music.

At Acha, in the island of Coll, four sturdy farm-maidens, ruddy with health and robed in white, gave various English and Gaelic airs in admirable style. A divinity student sang a *coster song* (think of this in an island of craggy shores, gulls, wild-swans, and curlews!), and on being encored, he gave a "Cradle Lullaby," and by gently swaying a chair backwards and forwards on the platform, he strove to illustrate the movements of childhood's earliest receptacle.

A military gentleman—an ex-major—in proposing a vote of thanks, one evening, to the singers, said he had sung a song but once in his life, the occasion being his admission to the Royal Engineers, thirty years before. It was a standing law in that body that every novice should sing a song or drink a mixture consisting of whisky, ink, and cayenne pepper. He chose the former alternative, and at the end of the first verse the Royal Engineers had all left the room in a demoralised condition!

M.P.'s.

At one of the meetings in Argyleshire, I had the joy of speaking under the chairmanship of the glib and able Mr. Ainsworth, M.P. for that county. Among the votes of thanks was one for the chairman: it made a profound impression upon me, as much by its form as by its substance: "I hope, Mr. Ainsworth, that you will take better care of your health in future (hear, hear). No, no, {70}
you are not taking care of your health at all (laughter). We all expect you to be Prime Minister, and that is the reason we would like you not to roam about so much and undermine your constitution (cheers). You are always travelling. You are like the Wandering Jew. No! you are like a little bird on a bough. To-day, we see you on a tree near the door; to-morrow, we see you on a tree a hundred miles away" (great cheering). Mr. Ainsworth kindly promised that, in view of his destiny, he would cease to range around the country so indiscriminately.

Unfortunately, I have never met Mr. Galloway Weir, but I have heard much of the zeal of himself and his agents. The following story hinges on the fact that *Weir* and *wire* have the same pronunciation in Lewis. An old illiterate crofter came to record his vote by word of mouth, and told the polling sheriff: "I will vote for the right man, yes, yes, it's the right man I will be voting for this time." "That may be," said the sheriff, "but unless you will tell me his name, you can't vote." "Well, if you must know," said the old man, handing the sheriff a stocking-wire, "*I will be voting for the man that has the same name as that*."

RURAL DEPOPULATION.

The mention of that eminent politician brings to my mind the frequent references made at these meetings to the painful subject of rural depopulation. Everyone regrets the exodus of young men from the country to the town, a practice which depletes the rural villages and deprives the land {71}
of the strong arms that should find employment in working it. The ministers are not without hope that the rush city-wards may be checked by improving the conditions of country life, rendering it more attractive to the young, and enlisting the aid of Government in the scheme of small-holdings. Motives of health, morality, and patriotism, are all concerned in the fostering of a hardy peasantry. Everything that makes country life attractive to young men must operate to make them regret to quit it. I wish I could reproduce textually all the strong and astounding speeches I have heard in the Highlands on this subject of depopulation.

"We often hear," said a farmer, "that it's healthy men and women that make up the true wealth of a country, and if that is true, Scotland, for all its increase of riches, is every year growing poorer. How can the people left in the glens continue to propagate a hardy race, if all the young healthy bloods leave for the cities and settle there? I am afraid that both brain and brawn will continue to get feebler among us, unless the Government give some kind of inducement for the peopling of the land with bien, self-respecting men *that have a bit land of their own*. It's impossible to get farm-hands round Tayside nowadays, and it's not to be wondered at. Suppose a young man stays here, what prospect has he, what incentive has he to work? At the age of seventeen he has earned the highest wage he will ever earn. Thereafter his life is a slow, monotonous serfdom; he has no hope whatever of rising, he is doomed to live from hand to mouth all the years of his {72}
existence. But put before that young man the hope that he can *become the owner* of a morsel of land, however small, and you put life and pride into him. He will work in that case with intelligent purpose, knowing that every penny he saves is to be employed in making him a landed proprietor, and every detail of experience he gains will tell in the future for his direct benefit. Our young fellows don't really want to leave the land and go to die prematurely (as a great many of them do) in the slums of Glasgow and Edinburgh. They go to the cities because there is at least *a chance* of bettering their lot there, a chance which is entirely lacking at home. Some of them go away to the colonies and thrive as farmers there. I rejoice to hear of such success; but I rejoice with trembling when I think how much of Britain's best manhood has to leave her shores to till Transatlantic fields, while so much land at home remains unoccupied. By and by, if you want to see a good specimen of the Highlander, you will have to go to Canada. Sooner or later, and the sooner the better, the vigorous action of Government will be demanded to remedy the present iniquities of land-tenure, and to put a stop to the compulsory degradation of those who till the soil."

ITS CAUSES.

The present seems to be an opportune time for directing public attention to some remarkable changes that are taking place in the population of the rural districts of Scotland. A great deal of speaking and writing has been expended of late years in lamenting the depopulation of the country. Young fellows do not like the monotony of village and farm life: they prefer the stir and {73} excitement of the cities. Such things are not to be wondered at. Town life has always had an attraction for those whose energy requires a wide scene of action. Energy and ambition go together, and it is the possessor of such qualities that makes the successful city man. The country does not give scope enough for their adequate display.

The railway train and the inventions of modern times are both answerable for a certain amount of depopulation. I believe the condition of farm-hands has been markedly improved of late years. They have now a shorter day, higher wages, better food, and superior house accommodation. Mechanical appliances have made farm-work lighter and more agreeable. The drudgery of the threshing flail is now unknown; the hook and the scythe have given way to the reaping-machine: in every way hand labour has been lightened. But it is precisely this machinery that lessens the need for large numbers of agricultural labourers. It is also notorious that shoemakers, tailors, and blacksmiths, are not so much required in the country as they used to be. Ready-made shoes and clothes are brought by rail from the city, and local tradesmen are reduced in numbers.

EMIGRATION.

There seems to be in our day a competition among the Governments of the New World, which of them can lure away the greatest number of our peasantry. The latest candidate for our rural youth is the State of Virginia, the legislature of which has voted a large sum of money to pay the {74} expenses of two delegates, who are at work in the East of Scotland, hunting for likely emigrants. These Virginian delegates—Mr. Koiner and Col. Talliafer—paid the passage-money of over a hundred stalwart lads from Lochtayside in the autumn of 1906.

No one who has the opportunity of travelling through Scotland can fail to be struck by the absolute frenzy for emigration that exists everywhere. There is a constant stream of emigrants from all our agricultural counties to the wide plains of Canada. That great colony is being "boomed" in a most energetic way. In Sutherlandshire, I saw a large van, with placards and specimens of Canadian produce, being driven through Strath Halladale, to tempt the crofters over the deep. I have also, at the railway stations in the North, beheld heart-rending scenes of parting as the young fellows said good-bye to their parents and friends:

"Who could guess
If ever more should meet these mutual eyes."[9]

{75}

VILLAGE HALLS.

In most of the places I have visited, the school-house is the only available hall for public meetings. Now, a school-room, with its small, cramped seats, its lack of platform, and its defective ventilation, is not well adapted for large gatherings. No man likes to speak *up to the waist in audience*, under a low roof, and in stifling air. If less money were spent on needless church-building, every district in the Highlands might have its hall for purposes of recreation, reading, and lecturing. As it is, the churches should everywhere be used far more than they are for secular gatherings of an elevating kind. Religion suffers greatly from the closing of churches to concerts and lectures.

The kindness of local lairds is nowhere more pleasantly shown than in the giving of funds towards the creation of village halls and recreation rooms. The little village of Alness has a splendid Working Men's Club, furnished with everything requisite for pleasure and profit—smoking-room, billiard-room, and reading-room. This Club owes its existence to the generosity of Mr. Perrins—known everywhere for the excellence of his famous condiment—who has an estate in the vicinity. Kiltarlity and Beauly have, for similar instances of discreet bounty, permanent reason for blessing the name of Mr. Phipps. Other instances that occur to me are the spacious Dunbar Hall in Auldearn, due to the kindness of the family of which the genial Sir Frederick Dunbar, Bart., is the present representative, and the Astley Hall in Arisaig, named after the family so long associated with that charming West Highland village. {76}

It must not be supposed that the natives do not thankfully welcome such work on their behalf. Many of the townships, it is true, have had libraries and halls for many a year, and have established these entirely on their own initiative; but outside help and enterprise stimulate local effort in a way often impossible otherwise, as the natives themselves admit. At Nethy Bridge, a fine hall, with club-room, has been recently erected, largely owing to the enthusiasm of a London lady resident in the vicinity. She was distressed to see the young fellows of the place loafing aimlessly about at night, and proceeded to organise some rational amusement for them. Her philanthropy has been greatly appreciated. At Kilmartin, the jubilee of Queen Victoria was signalized by the erection of the Poltalloch Victoria Hall—an enterprise in which laird and crofter alike willingly co-operated. It is in this hall that the Library is established. Mr. Dixon, the erudite historian of Gairloch, set aside the profits of his book to help in furnishing the reading-room at Poolewe, in Wester Ross.

When a rural community has a library and a place to meet in, a literary society is, as a rule, soon formed. Such a society, founded for an elevating and educational purpose, forms a common

meeting-ground for all sects, schisms, and parties. I am aware that in most towns of any size there are such societies in connection with the special churches. In the Highlands it is better to eliminate the denominational element, for the very good reason that, the population being small, no one of the too numerous churches would furnish a representative enough roll of members. I {77} was charmed to find that the little town of Portree, of which the population is not much more than eight hundred, has a fine literary society, established on the broad and rational lines I have indicated. As might be expected from the intellectual advancement and strong literary bent of the inhabitants, the lectures given and the subjects discussed at the meetings of the Portree society are of a more erudite nature than anywhere else in the West Highlands. Most of the Portree clergymen and professional men are on the list of members.

THE MOON.

Very few city people pay much attention to the moon: in the country that luminary has to be constantly deferred to when arrangements are being made for social meetings, dances, or lectures. When many of the audience have to come six, or even ten miles by land or water, light is needed, and light from above is best. It increases a lecturer's pride to be told that the plashing of oars over there on the argent face of the waters is an indication that some of his audience are coming from the other side of the loch. At the conclusion of many of the lectures, I have seen half a dozen traps, boats, and bicycles speeding away merrily in different directions. But for the bright moon, the audience would have been limited to the immediate neighbourhood of the place of meeting.

It has often happened that my hotel was as much as seven miles from the lecture hall. As closed carriages are rare in certain districts, and as it frequently rains—when it is not snowing—in the {78} West and North of Scotland, I had many good opportunities for gauging my powers of endurance. The road from Killin to Ardeonaig is a fair example of a Highland highway:—

> "Rough, hilly roads, that stain the spokes with mire;
> Thick folds of ebon night on loch and law;
> The moan of breezes wailing through the shaw
> Like the weird plaints of an Æolian lyre:
> And intermittently through the clouds, the fire
> Of lightning streaks the night with glitter and awe,
> And lapses swiftly in the dismal maw
> Of darkness, 'mid the din of thunder dire.
> But to relieve the sad night's sullenness,
> And clear the heavens for the timid moon,
> The straight-descending rain riots like hail
> For a fierce hour, in prodigal excess;
> Anon the clouds unmuffle, and the pale,
> Thin crescent of Diana gilds night's noon."

The place of meeting at Ardeonaig was on the shores of Loch Tay, and the main road from Killin is high up and does not go near the water at this point. After alighting from the machine, I had to descend to the loch-side by a steep, miry, and circuitous road through a wood. As the "thin crescent of Diana," alluded to above, was not adequate to light my footsteps here, I struck some futile vestas, which the dripping leaves at once extinguished. Two elders, swinging lanterns and calling me by name, by and by divided the night in my vicinity. Their appearance was welcome, for the torrential rain had made the track one continuous slippery quagmire. The hospitality of the Ardeonaig minister speedily banished all recollection of the "sad night's sullenness."[10] {79}

A more trying, because a longer, drive is that from Kilmun to Strachur, by way of Loch Eck. In the leafy month of June, nothing could be finer; but in a winter blizzard, one's appreciation of the glory of nature is somewhat less than rapturous. I mention the Strachur meeting because it was graced by the presence of a large contingent of local volunteers in civilian attire. The War Office ought to know that the inclement weather prevented these warriors appearing in their uniform.

A LECTURE IN ISLAY.

The westerly leg of Islay contains one or two places that have public libraries sent from Paisley: Portnahaven and Port Charlotte on the sea, and Gruinart inland and more to the north. It is a weird experience to drive along the shore road from Bridgend on a night of pitiless rain, and see the heavy mists broken every now and then by the far-reaching flash of the Portnahaven lighthouse. Equally weird is it to lecture in a school with no lamps (as happened at Port Charlotte). At eight o'clock I could see the faces of the audience well enough, but by and by the room became quite dark, and I seemed to be addressing an audience of silent and attentive {80} ghosts. After I had finished, a Phantom arose in the far corner of the room and proposed a vote of thanks; and thereafter a Voice somewhere pronounced the benediction. Then there was a movement of feet, and the shadowy spectres trooped out into the night. The foolish virgins had no oil in their lamps; in Port Charlotte, there was neither oil *nor* lamps.[11]

SOME SPEECHES.

MENTAL AND MATERIAL WEALTH.

I never heard the difference between mental and material wealth more forcibly expressed than by an old Perthshire shoemaker. "Supposing," said he, "that I had fifty pounds in my pocket at the present moment. What a wild supposition, but good enough for an illustration! What inference would you draw from me having that sum of money? This, namely, that no other person in the universe has the same fifty pounds. The same pair of boots cannot be worn by two persons at the same time. The same guinea cannot be twice spent by the same man. It is different with spiritual things, and with works of art. Scores of people can simultaneously enjoy a great painting or a fine piece of music: *my* enjoyment does not interfere with *yours*, indeed, it is more than likely that my enjoyment will be greatly increased from knowing that other people are enjoying it as I am. Then {81} again, you can't eat the same loaf of bread twice: but you can return a hundred times to the same song, poem, or picture, and like them better the hundredth time than the first. A pathetic old tune does not lose anything in being sung by generation after generation. It is always as good as new. Like the widow's cruise of oil, it can be used without being consumed. These facts show that works of art—good books, good poems, good music—are, in a certain sense, immortal and divine. A hundred years ago, our ancestors sang 'Bonnie Doon'; we, to-day, sing it with undiminished fervour; a hundred years after this, the song will be fresh. Aye, and a humorous American writer thinks some of us will hanker for it in heaven:

'Perhaps in that refulgent sphere
That knows not sun or moon,
An earth-born saint would long to hear
One verse of Bonnie Doon.'"

REAL GREATNESS.

The Rev. Chairman of this meeting emphasised the shoemaker's remarks in the following admirable words: "I often wonder what is really the greatest thing ever done by a citizen of this country of ours, by a man of English speech. If we agree with our worthy shoemaker and his way of thinking, we shall not look at the big accumulation of guineas as an indication of greatness. Certain commercial men (who ought to know better) seem to think God has sent us into this lovely world for the sole purpose of piling up as much money as possible, and then, by death, leaving it to others to spend. *That* can hardly be considered our reasonable service. Life is not so {82} low-pitched as that. The best work of man does not admit of being put into an equation with cash. The greatest feat, to my mind, an Englishman ever performed was the writing of *Paradise Lost*. How much did John Milton get in money for his incomparable epic during his lifetime? *Five Pounds*: and if he had got five million pounds, the recompense would have been absolutely inadequate. History, however, has indemnified Milton for the neglect and poverty he endured. He has shot up into stature while those of his contemporaries who bulked largest in the eyes of the world have dwindled and shrunk into insignificance in comparison with him. The witty, dissolute king, Charles II., is now seen to be a wretched pigmy: Milton, who died in blindness and political disgrace, is the real king of that era, overtopping all the rulers, cabals, and intriguers. So, too, in Scotland, Burns is the giant of *his* period. During Burns's life, the Earl of Dundas was to all intents and purposes king of the country. He could say to whomsoever he pleased, '*Friend, come up higher; be you a Sheriff, or Lord-Lieutenant, or Justice of the Peace*.' Dundas is pretty well forgotten by this time: probably he will by and by be remembered solely by Burns's description of him: *That slee, auld-farrant chiel Dundas*. Kings and men of temporary renown do well to keep on good terms with the men of letters."

It is always a great treat to hear a working-man who has the power of utterance deliver a speech in a straightforward and unrhetorical way. There is *always* a pith and vigour about such {83} deliverances quite unattainable in a formal harangue. The magnates of the little Fife villages are specially notorious for their gift of the gab: when Bailie M'Scales or Provost Cleaver gets up to speak, no one has any inclination to fall asleep.

A HIGHLAND LAIRD ON LITERATURE.

Max O'Rell has told us that his chairmen sometimes took advantage of their position to push their claims for the Town Council. I have not had the time at my disposal curtailed by any such municipal oratory, though, occasionally, my remarks on literature have seemed to the chairmen to stand in need of supplementing. One gentleman, in proposing a vote of thanks, pulled a copy of Bacon out of his pocket and read the whole of the famous essay on *Studies*. Another managed to bring in a lengthy dissertation on radium! The following speech, delivered by a Highland laird of a poetical turn, is noteworthy: "I am very fond of poetry," he said, "and yet I turn with a very languid interest to the writings of modern poets like Watson and Davidson. The verses of these gifted singers are for others, not for me. The truth is, I don't want any more lyrics and such like sugar pellets. My brain is already stocked with a plenteous supply on which I browse in weal and woe, which I almost think I personally composed, and to which I have attached a great many emotions and extraneous incidents known to nobody but myself. My old poetic favourites have been lying in various corners of my brain for forty or fifty years; I know every turn, rhyme and rhythm of them; and as they have served my need and alleviated my sorrow so long, I do not {84} intend to give them many fellow-lodgers more. I do not know at what particular time literary nausea sets in, but Solomon had it when he said that of the making of books there was no end. No doubt his father David had primed him well in boyhood in the Psalms, and Solomon, feeling (like many others since) that the paternal psaltery met all his need of literary stimulus, would

turn wearily from the heaps of presentation copies of new verse sent by the rising poets of Judæa for their sovereign's inspection. When a new book came out, Charles Lamb re-read an old one,—an excellent practice and one which has the additional recommendation of economy. It is not an unpleasant thing to find yourself falling back on old favourites and losing interest in the current hour. I knew a happy old gentleman whose reading was confined to Walter Scott. Every evening the lamp was lighted in the trim snuggery, and the appropriate *Waverley* taken down from the shelf. For such a man to begin a new novel would have been as irksome as travelling in a foreign land."

I am bound to say that I have great sympathy with the sentiments I have quoted from the speech of this kilted critic. If it were possible to retain the elasticity and adjustableness of the mind till the end of life, new authors would perhaps fix our attention as much as the old. But only a limited number of articulate-speaking men, such as the omnivorous Professor Saintsbury of Edinburgh, preserve their appetite tireless and intact. The Professor, like a literary Livingstone, can grapple {85} with the most arid and dusty libraries, and is the envy of all scholars; but, alas! the majority of us have to take something less than the whole of knowledge for our province.

It must not be supposed that all the remarks made at these meetings were like those I have quoted. An airy irrelevancy was quite as common as the serious note.

VARIETIES OF CHAIRMEN.

I have had experience of hundreds of chairmen, and admired most of them. It is rather a painful thing to have one who is utterly unversed in speaking. I remember being introduced in the ante-room to the chairman of the evening, and, big bucolic giant as he was, he seemed fearfully perturbed. His hand trembled, his lips were ashy-gray, and his laugh was a nervous grin. "I am not much used to this sort of thing," said he, with a poor attempt at mirth and a furtive movement of his hand to his waistcoat pocket, where he had his introductory speech. "All you have to do is to introduce me," I hinted; "you needn't say much." On the platform he shook so much that the whole structure quivered. He rose, and was received with loud applause. Happily he did not read his speech, but simply pointed to me and said, "G-g-go on." He sank in his chair, while runnels of sweat coursed down his cheeks. I admired that chairman more than one in Caithness, who, after angling for the honour of taking the chair, grew so terrified towards the hour of meeting, that he went to bed and sent word he couldn't be present owing to flying pains in his leg! In country {86} districts, reluctance to take the chair arises from a man's fear of making himself ridiculous; once he cuts a poor figure in public, discredit is for ever attached to his name.

Highlanders as a rule make excellent chairmen. The superior gifts of the Celtic mind, in imagination and wealth of florid expression, nowhere show themselves to better purpose than when compliments have to be paid. Then again, the kilt is very impressive on a brawny chairman's legs: it commands attention and respect at once. I have little knowledge of colloquial Gaelic, though I have studied the grammar, and have some skill in reading. A little Gaelic goes a long way in stirring the soul of a Highland audience. Often I have heard a kilted chairman quitting his English for a little and giving the audience a mellifluous Ossianic sentence or two. The effect was electric: eyes gleamed, breath came quick and fast, the souls of the hearers seemed to have tasted a tonic. Spoken Gaelic is akin to the elements: it has a mystic affinity with the winds that sough around the flanks of the mountains and along the surface of the lonely lochs. There is perhaps not much business precision about it, but for preaching, praying, and poetry, it is a splendid medium.

In Arran, a jovial chairman thus introduced me: "Before I left home, I thought of a great many nice things to say as a preface to the remarks of our friend from Paisley. (Here he coughed violently.) Unfortunately, I am unable to bestow these tit-bits on the audience owing to a *kittlin'* in my throat. Instead of saying what I meant to say, I think I had better tell you a story. A {87} minister one Sunday had occasion to be highly displeased with the precentor, who broke down twice in quite a simple psalm-tune. 'Excuse me, minister,' said the precentor, 'but I've got a kittlin' in my throat this morning.' '*Kittlin'!*' hissed the holy man in scornful wrath: '*it's mair like a big tom-cat*.' Ladies and gentlemen, after these few and decidedly imperfect remarks, I resume my seat, merely expressing the hope that our friend will feel himself as much at home here as the deil did in the Court of Session."

Another chairman in an adjoining island, while engaged in tremulously reading his introductory speech, came to a sudden stop. An irreverent youth shouted, "*Is that a blot?*" After the laughter provoked by this query had subsided, the chairman said: "I feel to-night like a square pin in a round hole, or rather, like the Irishman who, when asked if he was dead, replied, '*No, I'm not dead, I'm only spacheless.*'" Having said these words with a weird attempt at mirth, the chairman sat down too hurriedly, and struck his head so violently against the back of his chair, that the noise of the impact was heard in every part of the hall.

I may hint to anyone who lectures or preaches in the Highlands, not to adopt a patronising attitude or make it appear that he is talking down to the audience. Such a feature would be at once detected and deeply resented. A well-known Professor lectured to a Bute audience on Electricity, and out of ignorance, spoke in a very elementary way to the audience, defining the simplest terms, and interspersing a great many "*you know's*" and "*you see's*." The chairman, in proposing a vote of thanks, slyly remarked: "We have listened to-night to a very good discourse, {88} and I'm only sorry there are so few young people here. Next time the Professor comes to speak to us, I hope to see all the school-children in the hall, for the lecture to-night was admirably adapted

to their capacity."

COMING TO THE POINT.

A very loquacious lawyer proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman in the following fashion: "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "it is often a very difficult thing to come to the point. When I was at College, I consented once to write an essay on 'The Progress of America,' the subject being one of my own choosing. I wrote twenty-five pages of preliminary matter, and at the end of my writing, I found that Columbus was not landed. As my essay was to bring my hearers up-to-date on American progress, I became nettled at my failure to *get Columbus ashore* and went round canvassing among my friends to secure a substitute. No one would relieve me, so I was forced to slaughter an aunt. I was wired for, by arrangement, on the day before the meeting, and responded with great alacrity, knowing that there would be no funeral. Without wasting more words let me on *this* occasion come to the point, and ask you to accord to our worthy chairman a very hearty vote of thanks for the brilliant way in which he has kept us all in order this evening."

MORAL OBLIGATION.

A minister of a western parish thought it his duty, in the course of his introductory speech, to make some jovial remarks on the subject of conscience and moral obligation. "A student of my {89} acquaintance," said he, "went to Arrochar on Loch Long by excursion steamer. At mid-day, being thirsty, he *drifted thoughtlessly* into the hotel and asked for a cup of tea. With this beverage he washed over some dry biscuits he had brought with him from home. Imagine his surprise on being told that the cup of tea would cost him two shillings. Bang went not one sixpence but four! He looked at the maid and his breath came quick and fast; but he counted out the money nevertheless. Having occasion to visit the bathroom to cool his throbbing brow, he perceived a razor on a little shelf near the mirror there. At once he pocketed this razor and made off, whistling *Scots Wha Hae*. He had recouped himself for the overcharge on the cup of tea. Strange to say, every time he shaved with the stolen razor he feared some impending calamity. He knew enough Greek to be aware that Ajax committed suicide with the very sword that hero got from the enemy. Whenever the student disfigured his chin and reddened the lather with a new-made gash, he felt in his inmost soul that a Nemesis was being wrought out. *By this simple tale, my friends, one may see the sovereign power of conscience, which, though dormant for a time, invariably asserts itself and flogs the culprit.*"

COMPLIMENT TO PAISLEY.

The following remarks made by a speaker at one of the meetings are worth citing: "I do not wish our Paisley friend," he said, "to go back to the banks of the Cart under the impression that we are {90} not a very literary people up here in Ross-shire. On the contrary, we are clean gone on literature. Just look at our syllabus! One night we have a discussion on Shakespeare. Eh? What do you think of that? Shakespeare no less! Next night we deal with *an equally great poet—Tannahill*." (No doubt the speaker meant to compliment Paisley in thus comparing the author of *Lear* and *Hamlet* with the poet-laureate of the loom.) I have heard Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Pollok's *Course of Time* clashed together in the same ludicrous way. I was dreadfully nonplussed on one occasion by hearing a speaker strongly recommend the audience to give their days and nights to the study of Bunyan and M'Cheyne. "Bunyan by all means," said I to myself, "but who is M'Cheyne that one should be mindful of him and put him for importance alongside of the immortal tinker?"

ORATORY AT SALEN.

I shall never forget a vote of thanks proposed in my hearing by the excellent doctor of Salen, a pleasant little place situated on a V-shaped creek of Loch Sunart. I never expect to meet a more genial or more humorous man than the doctor, on this side of eternity. He knows the roads of gusty Ardnamurchan better than any other living man, and, night and day, by sun and by moon, in weather of clear blue, and under the eddying blinding flakes, he is ever on the move. He found time to come to the meeting and propose a vote of thanks to the donor of the library. Everyone listened intently to him as he stood there in his professional frock-coat,—a thin, wiry, twinkling- {91} eyed gentleman. "If the donor by any chance," said he, looking at me, "should ever sail up Loch Sunart in his yacht, and land among the people of Salen, to whom his books have given such pleasure, I should advise him not to stand too near the edge of the pier, for fear some of the grateful natives might push him over into the loch, *in order to have the pleasure of saving his life!*" This unexpected sally convulsed the audience, and gave a gay and rollicking touch to the speeches that came after. Mr. M'Gregor, a farmer from Resipol, broad and brawny, rose to make a few remarks. The schoolhouse was very hot and close, but he disdained to throw off the thick and ample Highland cloak which he had on, and which he had worn all day at the Oban Cattle Show, and on the deck of the boat that had brought him thence. Mr. M'Gregor had been much struck by my remarks on the knights of King Arthur, and their custom of sitting at the Round Table, to avoid questions of precedence. He spoke to this effect: "I do not wish the lecturer to go back to Paisley under the impression that Salen is not a very bye-ordinary and consequential place. We have a fleet of yachts out there, the like of which is not to be seen *between this and Manch-oo-ria*. We have a blacksmith that can preach and quote Scripture as well as any D.D. in the land; my friend the grocer over there, will give you such bargains as you could never get in

Sauchie-*hall* Street; and we have a choir here that might give the angels singing-lessons. I am a very modest man, but I would like to say just a word about this Round Table business. The {92} lecturer says the Table was round so that every knight might be at the head of it. That's the theory, but what's the fact? I'll tell you. *One of King Arthur's knights was an ancestor of mine, and his name was M'Greegor*.[12] Now, wherever M'Greegor sat, that was always considered the head of the table." This contribution to Arthurian criticism was delivered with such force, faith, and genial glee, that no one, considering the powerful muscles of the speaker, was disposed to question it. (Mr. M'Gregor's eulogy of Salen did not comprise a reference to the local hotel, which is conducted on the Gothenburg system. It is comfortable and snug, but not whole-heartedly patronised by some of the natives, as they consider the system is an un-Celtic innovation, and believe further that every drink they take is written down in a big book with an alphabet on the edge of the leaves to facilitate reference).

LECTURE IN A DUNGEON, Etc.

I have an agreeable recollection of my stay in Saddell, on the coast of Kintyre, as the guest of Colonel Macleod, son of the never-to-be-forgotten Dr. Norman Macleod. The Colonel was born in 1820, was present at the Eglinton Tournament, and is, to-day, in spite of his eighty-eight years, {93} hale in body, sound of wind, and perfectly clear in the intellect. He is a walking encyclopædia of all the social and political changes that have come about since the accession of Victoria. He is also an authority on live stock, and it is intensely amusing to see his horses scampering from the far-end of the field when they see him, in the hope of getting some of the bits of sugar he always carries in his pocket for their benefit.

The school-house being badly situated for the convenience of the people, the meeting was held in the *dungeon of the old castle*, a spacious and airy place quite near the beach. Altogether, I reckon this meeting as the drollest in all my experience. There were no windows in the overhanging vaulted roof, and the long stone stair leading to the ground above, was filled with the audience that could not get accommodation below. The aged Colonel presided over about one hundred prisoners, and humorously remarked that the table at which he was standing, was really a *patent incubating apparatus*, under which four dozen of Mrs. Macleod's chickens were coming to maturity. He hoped these embryo fowls would not interrupt the lecture by any unseemly remarks. At the risk of wearying the chickens, I spoke for an hour and a half, dealing in the course of my remarks (to be as apposite as possible) with the dungeon scene in "The Legend of Montrose," where Dugald Dalgetty squeezes the windpipe of the Duke of Argyll.

In one little village hall in Kintyre, I was much perturbed by some of the placards that had been placed on the walls. The hall had been used for evangelical purposes, and there, facing me, in {94} yard-long type, was the dreadful command, *Get right with God*. To speak on Hood and his puns with those colossal letters burning their message into your soul, would need nerves of steel. I have not nerves of steel, and I felt dreadfully incommoded by the bill. For the space of five minutes I might occasionally forget it, and then, in the midst of some light and skittish quotation, my eye would light upon it, and the verses would come feebly and falteringly off the tongue. *Vox faucibus haesit.*

SURPRISES.

My narrative would be lacking in completeness if I did not frankly confess that I have sometimes met with humiliations of a kind to wring the heart and call forth a sigh. In one nook of the north I stayed in the manse of an excellent clergyman, an eloquent preacher, but austere and extremely devout. He took the chair at the lecture, which was very well attended. Before the meeting began I was told that a local gentleman wished to ask me *an important question*. This was good news for me, as I thought the inquirer might have some literary difficulty which it would be profitable to handle in the course of my remarks. The anxious enquirer proved to be the local hotel-keeper, who, in a deadly earnest whisper made the following request: "You have a big meeting," he said, "and it's not likely there will be such a number of people so near my hotel for many a long day. *Would it be asking too much of you to finish up about half-past nine and give the audience time to* {95} *sample some of my commodities before departing homewards?* It's chiefly the minister I have to fear; for if he suspects I wish to do business, he'll prolong the vote of thanks till after the stroke of ten."

One of my compensations in wandering Scotland thorough has been the heartfelt but rather naïve way in which some of the provincials have expressed their gratitude. "*I've paid half-a-crown for worse*," said an old man of Ross to me, shaking me warmly by the hand and believing he was uttering a most delicate and hyperbolical compliment. (Now, during my remarks, I had noticed this man taking copious pinches of snuff to enable him, as I suspected, to sit out the meeting.) Another rustic, this time an Aberdonian, was impressed by the number of authors mentioned and the copious citations from their works. "Heavens!" he cried, "what a memory that man has! That's the kind of partner I should like to have at whist: he would never forget the cards that were out."

I know not whether to laugh or weep when I think of the occasion on which the following charmingly irrelevant remarks were made to me: "We are all proud of our village library and *even prouder of the feeling that prompted such a gift*. I am reminded," the speaker went on to say, "of a cousin of mine who got a present of exquisite fruit (preserved in wine) from a friend in a distant part of the country. He wrote to the donor saying, 'Your fruit is delicious: I like it very much; but I like even more *the spirit in which it has been sent*.'" {96}

A VISIT TO THE BORDERS.

In order that these pages may fitly represent all the districts of Caledonia that I have traversed as an uncommercial traveller, I should like to give a short sketch of how I reached Tweedside by way of Lanark, at a season when the Glasgow people were beginning their Fair holidays. Winter, as I remarked, is the time I prefer for travelling, but untoward circumstances have now and again compelled me to be on the move when "mid-summer, like an army with banners, was marching through the mid-heavens."

I may say at once that it is a great trial to leave Glasgow at that particular date. The city pours forth its myriads at such a time. The stations are surging and heaving with throngs of men, women, and children, all in a hurry and all impatient. Families by tens and dozens are swarming about. How pathetic it is to see the father with one child in his arms and two clinging to his coat-tails, while the mother (poor bedraggled soul) is vainly striving to quieten a squalling fourth! Some children have lost their parents, and grope about underneath, nipping the legs of tourists to attract attention and get hold of the right father; others fall among bales of strawberries that were pulled yesterday in the fresh country air, but are now being trampled into gory pulp. Even in the fetid and dust-laden air, rendered almost unbearable by the hot sunlight that blazes through the overarching glass of the station roof, Cupid twangs his arrows, and soft eyes speak love to eyes that speak again. Suddenly the train arrives, and on the already crowded platform {97}
lands the human freight of twenty carriages—a fresh addition to the welter and confusion worse confounded. What a wealth of language one hears! Cyclists tinkle with bell and horn to secure the needed lane of passage. Porters, in desperate madness, throw wooden boxes down and rope-tied trunks of tin with little sympathy for injured knees and fiery corns. The train just in will shortly leave with a new load of passengers. A rush is made for the vacated seats: in tumbles the surging crowd without regard for the class of ticket they have purchased. A score of occupants per carriage is about the average; many swarm into the guard's van, where they are regaled with pandemoniac odours of ancient fish and decaying vegetables. The heavy train at length steams out into the open, and in an hour's time Lanark is reached. "*God made the country and man made the town*" is the involuntary reflection of the city man as he steps out of the train and breathes the fresh air of the hills.

From Lanark to Peebles, by road, is thirty miles. The track is excellent, and if the wind is not adversely strong the joy of cycling the distance is difficult to parallel.

On this route, no lumbering vehicles, laden with heavy merchandise, tear up the soil into ruts. No cab-drivers cast sarcastic remarks at you from their high perch. The only annoyance comes from the cast-off nail of a horse-shoe or the sharp splinter of a macadamised stone. The air is as fresh as on Creation's morn. Up hill and down again one can hurry on without ever touching the brake. {98}
For the first ten miles, the stately bulk of Tinto dominates the landscape. What a splendid range of scenery the eye could grasp from the high vantage-ground of its summit in clear weather! As one approaches the base of the big hill, the road turns sharply to the east, and you feel about your ears innumerable breezes that blow along from the little glens leading down from Tinto's breast. By and by, the clean, trim, little town of Biggar appears. (The inhabitants are proud of the fact that John Brown, author of the beautiful story, *Rab and his Frien's*, was a native of the town.) One notices the name of Gladstone prominent above the shops, and it is a fact that the ancestors of the Grand Old Man were, in the days of yore, denizens of those quiet hamlets. After a short rest here, we (for you are with me, *ami lecteur*) shoot on and pass the sleepy street of Broughton, lying clear and radiant in the slanting rays of the sun. Here is the ideal spot for a country clergyman in love with Hebrew roots and gardening and quiet contemplation. Soon we strike the tiny waters of the infant Tweed, prattling and gushing up and bubbling clear over its snow-white pebbles. Now the breeze of gloaming blows more snell. Away low in the west the sun begins to gather golden clouds in pomp around his setting. A gorgeous glimmer, gold and red, is thrown over the whole sky. Keeping close beside the ever-widening stream, we dash through little clachans on the bank, beneath long, over-arching avenues of trees, and past the gates of ivy-mantled homes of blessed outlook. Here a croquet party stops playing, for the grass is getting {99}
wet with evening dew, and there, in the river, and up to the knees in it, are half a dozen anglers sweeping the wave with their spurious fly. Peebles is not far off, and the quiet nooks of the high road are filled with pedestrians. The entrance to Peebles is exquisite. The long rows of trees, the situation of the road high above the river in the dell, combine to make an eerie blend of sound from sighing leaves and gurgling waters. An old Border peel, Needpath Castle, stands near the straggling outskirts of the town, and proves, by its choice situation on the knoll, that our cattle-reiving ancestors were quite alive to the advantages of a good view. It was a stirring quarter here in the days of the old Scotch kings. The deadly thrust of lance has reddened every burn in the wide Borderland. Every brae has had its gory bicker.

On this *tournée* I had the pleasure of giving a lecture on "Scotch Ballads," at a little village not more than half a mile from the birthplace of Dandie Dinmont. The place was full of sturdy, firm-knit Borderers, descendants of the dare-devil troopers who wrought such devastation along the Marches when the Stuarts reigned in Holyrood. Fresh, ruddy faces, coloured by breeze and sun; hard, keen, inquisitive looks; intelligence such as comes from knowledge of nature, hereditary quickness and good circulation of blood: all these could be instantly seen by glancing round the audience. (How insignificant a mere bookworm or scholar feels among a company of brawny Liddesdale farmers!) During the lecture, it was easy to note by the grim smile on their faces, their flashing eyes and the way they gripped their big sticks, that the old stirring rhymes of fight {100}
struck a sympathetic chord in their hearts. Now and again, during the address, one could see the

lips of the listeners moving in soft repetition of the lines, as some typical quotations were being made.

It is not likely that there has been much change or influx of population in these districts for centuries. The alertness and intelligence of the natives must be to some extent an inheritance from the generations of strenuous clansmen whose blood flows in their veins. Life in a historical district is bound to have an ennobling effect on a man, especially if he feels knit to the past by lineal descent from the historical actors. A glamour of romance clings to hill and glen. The dalesman you meet on the highway can tell you all the lore of his parish, giving dates and citing illustrative lays. It is pleasant to find that the stories of the Borderland are still known where they first took birth, and that the local names, which to students instantly suggest delightful bits of rhyme, have also to those who dwell near them, a romance that is borrowed from the olden time. [13] {101}

Anyone who has travelled in the shires that run along the Cheviots and the Tweed, will conclude that poetry and romance may ever find a home there. The hills, with their green pastoral slopes and abundant leafage, are a delight to the eye in fresh spring and tinted fall. The sound of the streams, as Ruskin has pointed out, is sweet and rhythmic to an extraordinary degree, combining with the sough of the winds to form an undersong of Nature's own melody. As the traveller drives or cycles along the roads, he now and again gets such impressive vistas of long-stretching waterways, wooded to the brink with graceful trees, as grave themselves on the memory for evermore. For rock, crag, and dashing linn, the northern Highlands are supreme; but in the green Borderland, there is a more sedate and proportioned beauty. Nature is none the less attractive for losing somewhat of her wildness and austerity. {102}

TARBOLTON.

In the agricultural lowlands of Scotland it is not rare to come upon little villages that seem entirely left behind by modern progress. Not long ago my work took me to Tarbolton, a quiet, uneven village in the heart of the queenly shire of Ayr. The railway company has treated the place very badly: a full fifteen minutes' drive is needed to reach the town from the station. It is as if the company said: "Make what you can of our line, ye insignificant Tarboltonians; our trains are in a hurry to get from Ayr to Muirkirk; be thankful if we set you down only three miles from your home." If it is not wet, the drive is a grand one. Five miles to the right, Mauchline shows its red complexion on the green hillside, and awakens lyric memories of Burns's imperishable mouse and share-torn gowan. Over the pasture lands on the right come freshening winds that hint of the heaving Firth not far away. The road pursued by the coach meanders among all that is best of rural and pastoral scenery, for coaly Annbank, defaced by the exhumed entrails of the earth, is happily on the rear. At a turn of the road, a majestic spire, that of Tarbolton Parish Church, suddenly stands before the view of the traveller, and suggests Eternity even when tolling the hours of Time. Soon the village is reached, and one is in a position to form an idea of eighteenth century Scotland. The main street is built with that irregularity so charmingly illustrative of the evolution of the builder's art. Old cots roofed with thatch take the mind back to the time when George I. was defending the faith and maltreating his wife. Side by side with such are trim two-storey houses with all modern elegancies. {103}

I have a pleasant recollection of this interesting village, not merely from its associations with Burns (which Mr. T.F. Henderson in a dainty little book has recently recounted anew), but also from the fact that the natives keep alive the literary traditions of the place in quite a worthy way. The local baker has written a fluent volume of Essays dealing with village incidents and worthies, which proves, as Mr. Barrie says, that life in every stage, if truthfully portrayed, is intensely interesting, and that every window-blind is the curtain for some tragedy or comedy.

THE SCOTCH LANGUAGE.

Very fine Scotch is still spoken in the rural districts of Ayrshire, and most of Burns's dialect words are in daily use, at least by the older generation. The Education Department has most wisely given encouragement to the study of Lowland Scotch, and I do not see why a special grant should not be given for special excellence in that department. Some national movement for a complete Dictionary of Modern Scotch with explanations in up-to-date philology ought to be organised.

During the lifetime of Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Jamieson published the famous *Scottish Dictionary*, which still holds the field as the most elaborate compendium of the Lowland dialects. Looked at in the light of modern science, the derivations are often absurd and fanciful. Jamieson's love for Gothic parallels led him constantly astray. Nevertheless, his dictionary, as amended by various revisers, remains a stately monument of industry and a necessary adjunct in the study of the Scotch language. {104}

In our own day, Dr. Murray of Oxford has compiled an illuminating grammar of the language, indicating the various dialects of the Lowlands and their geographical areas. Local antiquarians have also written out lists of words special to particular counties. Dialect books, such as the entertaining *Johnnie Gibb of Gushetneuk*, as well as Mr. Barrie's delightful sketches, have put excellent specimens of provincial speech within the hands of a wide circle of readers. A good dictionary of modern Scotch, dealing with what has been written during the last two centuries, would be a very useful and a very interesting compendium. It would show that a great many

expressive words employed by thirteenth century English writers are still in use on the Scotch side of the Border.

There is no denying the fact that book-English will soon push out the relics of the old Scotch tongue. Burns will soon be read by lexicon, even in the shire of Ayr. Men now write poetry in Scotch as boys at Eton and Harrow write Latin verses, the result in both cases being, as a rule, hideous and artificial doggrel. The little book, *Wee Macgregor*, written in what may be called the Scotch Cockney dialect, was a brave and amusing attempt to phonograph the talk of a Glasgow boy of the lower middle class. The unlovely speech employed by the author is, happily, quite unlike the careful and deliberate speech of the educated citizen of Glasgow or Paisley. The main {105} differences between the educated Scot and the educated Englishman are that the vowel sounds of the former are pure and that *r* and *h* have a real value in most words where these letters occur.

It seems to me a *very undesirable* thing that a uniform system of pronunciation should be aimed at in every country of the British Isles. So long as clear and expressive enunciation of English is attained, intelligible differences of vocalisation, pitch, and even of vocabulary, are allowable, and at times positively charming. Monotony is the bane of life.

CHOICE BOOKS.

"Whether the books are borrowed books or no
That show their varied stature row on row
Along your walls, there will I truly find
The image of your character and mind.
Light, flimsy novels suit the flying train
Or *Western Isle* excursions of Macbrayne,
Where, dazed by gleaming firths of visible heat,
The torpid soul disdains substantial meat;
But oft-read volumes, to which men recur
The whole year round, bespeak the character."

The above lines, written by some unknown poetaster, indicate that it is the book we read over and over again that has the greatest potency in our education. I quite agree with the author, and I love to behold the well-thumbed pocket-edition that speaks to the eye of much handling and frequent perusal. There are very few books *worth* reading once that are not worth reading oftener. Hobbes used to say that if he had read as much literature as the majority of men, he {106} would have been as ignorant as they. In that remark what depths of meaning lie! The sage of Malmesbury attributed his success in philosophy to his habit of judicious selection—to the fact that he concentrated his attention on those authors who were likely to help the development of his powers. Selection is more required now than in Hobbes's time. Few men would care to read more than a hundred books through in a year, and yet there are twenty thousand volumes added annually to the shelves of the British Museum.

THE ESSAYISTS.

It has been my privilege, during the last three or four years, to examine with more or less care something like four hundred bookcases, containing works on all departments of literature. *I am inclined to turn away in disgust if the Essayists are not patronised.*

Those delightful Essayists! Happy is the man who has his shelves full of them—writers who talk sense with wanton heed and giddy cunning, who spread their souls out on paper, who disarm hostility by taking you completely into their confidence. Addison, with the roguish gleam in his eye as he is calculating the number of sponges in the cost of a lady's finery; Goldsmith, in his London garret, talking of the ludicrous escapades of the Man in Black; Lamb luxuriating in reminiscences of Old Benchers. All these splendid, unsystematic delights, mingled with the breezes of byegone summers and the sunsets of long ago! Old ghosts whisper you their secrets; you hear the brush of sweeping garments that have been moth-eaten these hundred years. {107} Crowded streets of people appear before the eye of fancy—London in the days of Anne and the Georges. In the company of such wits, there are no slow-moving hours: you have in them friends who never need tire you, for should the slightest tedium intervene, you may, without offence, stop their flow of conversation. Our living intimates are prone to drynesses and huffs; but these old prattling wits ever welcome us with a smile of affability.

A BANFF THEORY.

While speaking of Essayists, I ought to mention a peculiar Banffshire theorist who addressed me in the following words: "Give me an old set of *Blackwood* in the Kit North days, and I can easily forego your pinchbeck stories and propagandist novels of to-day. I put the most interesting period for reading at *sixty years ago*, and I think Scott must have known the charm of that number when he gave the alternative title to *Waverley*. It is pleasant to know how the world wagged when your grandfather was a ruddy egg-purloining rogue of five. When I read farther back than a century, I feel imagination flagging—the Merry Monarch is not much more to me than John the Baptist. But the men of the forties stand out clear and distinct. If I have never seen an out-and-out fiery Chartist, I have at least seen some smouldering specimens—men with much

of the eloquence and a little of the enterprise of the original five-pointers. It may be that as I grow older, my most interesting historical period will move with me, keeping always at a distance {108} of sixty years from the present, until, when I get within hail of the Psalmist's stint, I shall be most interested in childish things." These words rather staggered me, and set me thinking of geometrical *loci*. A man holding such views would find it difficult to obtain a bird's-eye view of history.

GOLDSMITH IN GAELIC.

If I had an adequate knowledge of Gaelic, combined with plenty of money and leisure, I should set myself the task of translating the whole of Goldsmith's Essays and Tales into that language, for the benefit of those who had no English. It would be a great feat if one could impress on the modern Celtic mind the conviction that piety and diversion are by no means incompatible. Goldsmith's *Auburn* introduces us to the most delightful prospect on earth: a simple village community, unacquainted with luxury and uncorrupted by vice. The inhabitants are full of health and joy—they till the soil and gain ample satisfaction for their unambitious wants. Life passes along bringing a pleasant succession of happy hours. After the labours of the day, the young people dance merrily on the green, and the old folk look on and regret that their own legs are too stiff to keep time to the fiddles. Certain Highland landlords might also read with advantage the exquisitely pathetic lines in which the poet pictures the desolation and ruin of the rural paradise, and perhaps conclude therefrom that, when glen and strath are depleted of their inhabitants, and these latter driven over the seas to seek a foothold in strange lands, it is the very heart's blood of {109} Britain that is being drained away.

On the whole, probably no English writer has given such genuine delight as Goldsmith, and such genuine instruction too. Ineradicably frivolous, culpably negligent of the morrow, whimsically vain and living all his days from hand to mouth, he had the faculty of drawing upon himself the pity, and even the contempt, of his associates. But in the eyes of posterity, his happy-go-lucky life is amply redeemed by the work he has left behind him, for *it* is pure and good. His river of speech flows ever on shining like molten gold. No man of his time possessed the adroit knack of bright writing in a more eminent degree. The pawky humour of his side-hits, the blending of light and shade in the process of the narrative, the beauty and melody that can be noted even in the sound of the sentences, combine to delight the judgment, the ear, and the fancy. Though the *Vicar of Wakefield* is a prose production, it produces all the effect of a poem on the affections of the heart. Of wit, properly speaking, it is as full as any volume of *The Spectator*; with humour it is flooded from beginning to end; and in those pathetic delineations of life which no one can read without being profoundly touched, there are few poems so rich.

BIBLIA ABIBLIA.

In many (indeed most) houses I have visited, I see in the bookcase large publications in six or seven well-bound parts and as good as new, dealing with subjects of little interest to anyone who breathes the vital air of heaven. Such titles as *Science for All*, *The Thames from its Source to the* {110} *Sea*, *The Queens of England* are among the commonest on the boards of the books I allude to. The presence of these editions indicates that the possessor at a certain period of his life was shy and could not say *no* to that limb of the Evil One—the book-canvasser. The latter individual is the forerunner of the colporteur, who will bring you, if you wish poetry, an edition of the works of Shakespeare which is peculiarly ill-adapted for holding in the hand and reading. The print is large, the page is in size like a miniature wall-map, and the illustrations are got up with an easy defiance of archeology. The annotations, though stolen, are distinguished for extreme futility. After you have begun the purchase of such a book, shame and chagrin drive you to attempt the study of it; but it is of no use, and on each occasion of the very regular advent of the colporteur, you are inclined to swear horribly, after which a period of extreme dejection supervenes when you recollect the many fine things you could purchase for the half-guinea periodically expended. The knowledge of human nature displayed by the man who books the order surpasses anything in the works of the analytical philosophers. Every artifice of attack is his, and he knows how to play on all the emotions so ably and exhaustively catalogued in the manuals of Professor Bain. I believe a gay and chaffing rejoinder is what he can least overcome. Suggest to him that you are far gone in poverty and offer to *sell* him a few of your own books. Frequent exercise will confirm your principles, until finally, when you see one of the book-canvassing tribe, you will foresee half {111} an hour's innocent amusement.

Certain of the points he so feelingly brings before you may no doubt awaken a responsive echo in your own bosom. You are well aware, for example, that your knowledge of the Queens of England is culpably imperfect. You know you are never likely to go in steadily for the study of constitutional developments, and so are led to admit the reasonableness of tackling history from a lighter and more entertaining point of view. Again, as to the River Thames, one must really grant that a considerable amount of self-complacency and internal sunniness would result from the ability to contradict your friends as to the length in miles of some of its minor tributaries. In science, too, you are no Kepler or Linnaeus, and there is something satisfactory when pedants talk of orbits, planes, bulbs, or beetles, in being able to say that *you have a big book at home that tells all about those things*.

Many people buy books, not because they have a present need for them, but on the chance that at some time in the future such volumes as they see for sale will solve a doubt or answer a need.

The precise doubt or the pressing need rarely arises. I met a Celt who had bought a copy of Josephus in most irritating type, in the hope that it would help him to confute a Roman Catholic on the Power of the Keys. Then again, people of a wavering and bird-witted type of mind are constantly changing the subject of their interest: this month they are attacked by the *furor poeticus*, next month it will be a *furor botanicus* or *politicus*. Each separate frenzy means {112} expenditure. When Browning is the temporary subject of the mania, a host of expository books on that poet have to be purchased, all of which are duly consigned to the topmost shelves when the soreness of the fit is past. There is also a tendency to purchase, because on the chance opening of a book you light on something that pleases the whim of the moment. It is a thousand to one that when you have bought the book you will not find another item worth perusing in the entire contents. This tendency to buy a book in a panic may be neutralised by remembering the story (whether true or not) of Defoe, who is said to have boomed the languid sale of the dreary *Drelincourt on Death* by means of a spicy little ghost story as introduction! Buy in haste, repent at leisure.

SECOND-HAND BOOKS.

It is a much pleasanter sight to my eyes to see a bookcase with second-hand books in it, for these are almost always bought to be read. In a teacher's house near Elgin, I recently saw a most remarkable collection—a veritable ragged regiment of books: single volumes of Plutarch, unexpurgated plays by Farquhar and Mrs. Behn, Civil War pamphlets, and rows of oddities. Mr. Forbes (the owner) was at one period of his life assistant in Falkirk, and every Saturday morning, rain or shine, he proceeded to the city of Glasgow, for no purpose but to roam through the dusty byeways and side streets in quest of bookstalls. He knew all the dealers by name, and they {113} welcomed him, for he never left them without a purchase, however slight. It was a saying of his that while it took half-a-crown to purchase you two hours' amusement at a theatre, for a couple of shillings, or even less, you might divide out a whole Saturday most enjoyably in the old book-shops. He simply rioted in haggling over a threepenny piece. Even old Henderson feared him. This Henderson was a thirsty old bookseller who kept a shop at the corner of Cowcaddens and Ingram Street, and whose leading speciality was second-hand family Bibles, with the former genealogical leaf riven out and replaced by a clean sheet pasted in for the family of the next purchaser. To him, sitting enthroned on a pile of Bibles, Forbes, entering, spake: "Have you a copy of the *Lives of the Twelve Cæsars*?" "Aye, aye," said old Henderson, with a gracious smile; "*thirteen* if you like." The copy of Suetonius was produced, and "How much do you want for Suet.?" queried Forbes. "Half-a-crown," said old Henderson. "I'll give you ninepence," said Forbes. "Make it one-and-six," said the bookseller, rising from his Biblical throne, "and the book's yours." "I'll give you a shilling and a half of whisky," retorted Forbes. "Say a whole glass and the shilling, and we'll do business," quoth the vendor of volumes. This was agreed upon, and the two retired into the nearest dram-shop to conclude the bargain. Every Saturday evening, Forbes came home by the last train, carrying his bundle of volumes. He was careful to fumigate them for the purpose of destroying any microbes, and finally would sprinkle them with *eau de Cologne* to {114} make them tolerable to the nose. On Sunday, he enjoyed the luxury of desultory reading.

Like Mr. Forbes, I enjoy a ramble among these old shops, and can say, as he said to me at parting:—

> "I love the trundling stall
> Where ragged authors wait the buyer's call,
> Where, for the tariff of a modest supper,
> You'll buy a twelvemonth's moral feast in Tupper;
> Where Virgil's tome is labelled at a groat,
> And twopence buys what tittering Flaccus wrote;
> Where lie the quips of Addison and Steele,
> And the thrice-blessed songs of Rob Mossgiel;
> And some that resurrection seek in vain
> From the swart dust that chokes the lumbering wain."

FAVOURITES.

I have often been asked: "You who are so much on the move, who have had so much train-travelling to do, what books would you recommend for a long railway journey?" I do not know that one man's likes and dislikes in reading are of value save as showing his own limitations, yet there are certain books of which I never tire. I never leave home without the following books handy for perusal: (i.) The *Odes of Horace*, (ii.) The *Sonnets of Shakespeare*, (iii.) A French novel and a few copies of the Paris *Matin*, (iv.) A Greek book of some kind, (v.) Pope or Addison, (vi.) Some Victorian classic. The list is varied enough, and has furnished me with much of the material for my speaking. {115}

HORACE.

The pleasant thing about Horace is that his odes are so short: you can read one in a few minutes —shut your eyes and enjoy the mental taste of it—try to repeat it, and, if you fail, consult the original—then, finally (as Pope and many others have done), endeavour to find modern parallels. Suppose, *e.g.*, you are reading, as is likely, the first Ode of the first Book, you might find present-

day resemblances like the following:—

Curriculo pulverem.

What mad attractions sway the world!
Some are unhappy save when whirled
In motor cars that madly race,
To leave a stench in every place,
And maim those foolish folk that stray
Abroad upon the king's highway.

Tergeminis honoribus.

Yon babbling wight, of sense forlorn,
Who thinks himself a Gladstone born,
Although a bailie, still must strain
To gain himself a Provost's chain.
And, after that, the worthy prater
Aspires to be a legislator;
Dreams of St. Stephen's, where he sees
Himself hobnobbing with M.P.'s.

Patrios agros.

But Farmer Bob is somewhat saner—
He minds his stock and is the gainer;
Content to pass his life amid
The scenes that his old father did. {116}
With hose in hand he cleans the byre,
And saves himself a menial's hire;
But gives his girls an education
That may unfit them for their station.
But don't ask Bob to tempt the tide,
Even on a turbine down the Clyde;
Neptune and Ceres don't agree,
And farmers hate the name of sea.

Mox reficit rates.

When Skipper Smith (whose usual goal
Is Campbeltown with Ayrshire coal)
Is labouring thro' Kilbrannan Sound,
He sighs for Troon and solid ground,
And swears, if he were safe on shore,
He'd never be a sailor more.
But once on shore—he thinks it dull,
And soon begins to tar the hull
And caulk the timbers of his ship:
"I'll try," he says, "another trip."

Lene Caput.

Some love to mangle turf: I see
Them drive their balls from sandy tee,
And think their day's delight begins
When they are up among the whins.
Some elders, full of godly zeal,
Turn crazy about rod and reel;
And ministers, reputed wise,
Take service with the Lord of Flies
(Beelzebub), and like the work
Better than prosing in a kirk.
{117}

Conjugis immemor.

Sir Samuel Crœsus (noble wight!
Who paid so dear to be a knight)
Forsakes his lady for the hills,
And aims at birds he never kills.
Too late in life he shouldered gun,
Breathless he toils beneath the sun,
Sips whisky every other minute,
Until his flask has nothing in it;

Then, at the end of strength and tether,
Falls tipsy in the blooming heather.

Praemia frontium.

But as for me, my wants are few:
£3,000 a year would do;
A villa built upon a height,
With ample view to left and right;
A garden with a sunny seat,
A grassy lawn with borders neat.
Inside, a study furnished well
(Like a true scholar's citadel)
With books and pipes and easy chairs;
Here, in despite of worldly cares,
If I should write a verse or two—
A lyric that a *judge* like you
Could read, without once yawning, through—
I'd be as proud as any man
That scribbled since the world began.

Horace is thus fit for all times and conjunctures, and is the most modern of all the Latin writers—

"Horace still charms with pleasing negligence,
And without method talks us into sense."

{118}

The translation of Horace's Odes into modern speech is generally admitted to be one of the most difficult tasks to which a versifier can apply himself. And yet there is no task so often essayed. It is a common saying in France that, when a lawyer quits the bar and retires, he is certain to publish a new translation of Horace after a year or two's studious ease. M. Loubet, we know, is a zealous devotee of the Sabine bard. Not the least droll of Mr. Gladstone's many feats was the publication, shortly before his death, of a translation of Horace's Odes, a translation wholly worthless indeed, in spite of the writer's immense scholarship, but valuable as showing the fascination exercised by Horace over the most austere and ecclesiastical of minds. It seemed strange indeed to see the great statesman turn aside from his study of Butler and the Fathers of the Church, in order to put into English verse the gay, and often scandalous odes, of an old Pagan epicure. Mr. Morley, who revised the translation, must have smiled as he read the old man's rendering of—

"*Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa.*"

It is a fact, I suppose, that poetic translations of Horace are rarely read, save by scholars, and the verdict is almost always unkind. Yet an excellent anthology could be compiled by selecting the happiest renderings of the most talented translators. Dryden's paraphrase of III., 29, has been uniformly praised, and was a great favourite of Thackeray's. Cowper's nimble wit and classic taste are seen in his translation of II., 10, an ode beautifully rendered also by Mr. William Watson. Sir Theodore Martin and Connington are always readable, Francis is uniformly insipid, {119}
and Professor Newman, with his metrical capers, absolutely absurd. Pope's "Imitations of Horace" are so brilliant, that no student of English literature can afford to neglect them. Pope's method of replacing ancient allusions by modern ones, was employed by Johnson in some magnificent renderings of Juvenal, and no doubt suggested to our Scotch vernacular poets a mode (still popular) of translating Horace into Doric speech. Our Scotch bards preferred, as a rule, to work on the Odes, and they succeeded best when they departed most widely from the Latin text.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS.

The same blessed quality of brevity that attracts one in Horace is to me one of the recommendations of Shakespeare's Sonnets. I am glad the mystery of them is never likely to be discovered. From frequent perusal of them in the train, I know the majority by heart, but despair of finding any cryptogram in them.

The cord on which these exquisite beads of poetry are strung is of the most flimsy and frayed character. In other words, the characters are all bad, and the verses that laud them are of the utmost brilliancy and fascination. The poet himself supplies material that would justify us in stigmatising his friend as a heartless and dissipated rogue. He also lets us know that the pale-faced lady was an unwholesome and treacherous minx. Yet he addresses the one in language that would be too laudatory for Sir Galahad, and the other he idolises and insults by turns. {120}

How strange it is that the poet, while lingering fondly over the doings of these two un-moral persons, should give utterance to some of the most impressive lines in English literature! Certain of the sonnets pierce the heart as with an arrow: such are those that deal, in broad and pathetic fashion, with the ceaseless flux of all things human, the grim realities of the grave, the ruthless sequence of earthly events, and the measureless melancholy of the reflecting mind. The effect produced is often like what we experience in reading Ecclesiastes or Omar Khayyam. "Golden lads and lasses must, like chimney-sweepers, turn to dust."

Though Shakespeare is dolefully impressed by the decay and destruction of all material things and by the evanescent nature of beauty, he has no doubt whatever of the immortality of the verses he is writing. He vaunts as boldly as ever Horace did—indeed, in words that suggest the *Exegi monumentum* ode—that his verses will outlast the proudest works of man. It is a sorry anti-climax to such a boast that the poet harps on the immortality of the dissolute youth as a consequence of the sonnets having an eternity of renown. Was there ever such a puzzling and unworthy association of ideas? The puzzle is rendered more perplexing still by the fact that Shakespeare took no pains to enlighten posterity as to the identity of the youth he praises, or even to supervise the publication of the sonnets. Thorpe's piratical edition was full of misprints, but Shakespeare, so far as we know, took no notice of it, and made no attempt, by giving the world a correct and authentic version, to secure what his verses declare him to be anxious to {121}
bring about, viz., the renown of his friend among generations to come. For us the youth still exists, no doubt, but not as an historical character. *He takes his place among the creatures of the poets imagination, and is far more of a shadow or phantom than any one of them.*[14]

If we suppose the sonnets to be connected with real life, it is not easy to understand why the radiant youth, "the world's fresh ornament," "only herald to the gaudy spring," etc., should need such an amount of persuasion to marry. Seventeen sonnets of great poetical beauty and felicitous language are devoted to this object. It is an exquisite treat to read them as works of art, but taken literally they are unspeakably absurd. No sane man would draw out such lengths of linked sweetness for the purpose named; nor would any youth, however credulous, *take the sonnets at their face value*. Shakespeare is merely practising his art, and we may be perfectly sure that these "sugared" sonnets (as Meres calls them), if they did circulate among the poet's private friends, were regarded as rhetorical exercises. They are intensely interesting, as showing the {122}
overpoweringly dramatic nature of Shakespeare's genius. Being impressed with the desirability of perpetuating beauty, he is driven to express the idea in the conventional form of a sonnet-sequence. The result is an exhaustiveness of treatment, a wealth of imaginative ornament, and a dramatic vividness of presentation that makes the reader marvel how so much could be made out of so little.

XENOPHON.

There is one Greek book, of which I have gone through three or four copies by carrying it about in the pocket for my *moments perdus*. I refer to the *Economist* of Xenophon, a gem of a book, and one on which I have often lectured. The title is not an attractive one, but the body of the work is charming in the highest degree, and gives a better notion of ancient Greek life than any other book in existence. Ruskin, who had an unerring instinct for good literature, got two of his disciples to put the book into English, himself furnishing a preface of characteristic insight and brilliancy. He might well do such homage to the old Greek soldier, for the *Economist* contains teaching remarkably like what is to be found in certain of the chapters of *Unto This Last*. A reader cannot fail to be struck by the wonderful modernness of Xenophon's writing, his love for the country, his simple and genuine piety, his soldierly directness, and his practical common sense. Here is a delightful sidelight on Greek family life, written twenty-three centuries ago, but which might have been spoken yesterday: "*My wife*," says one of the characters, "*often puts me on trial and takes me to task—When I am candid and tell her everything, I get on well enough,* {123}
but if I hide or disguise anything, it goes hard with me, for I cannot make black seem white to her."

The *Economist* is an ideal volume for the country calm: it will not deliver up its best to you in the city; but if it is leisurely perused while hayrick fragrances are in the air, while butterflies are fluttering round the lawns, and while the flow of a clear-gushing brook chimes with your fancy and the quiet tone of the old Greek's musings, then (be sure) the mellow sweetness of the "Attic Bee" will be adequately enjoyed.

It is a great pity that life is so short, that there are only twenty-four hours in the day, and that, owing to the general scarcity of money among the intellectual portion of the community, the possession of free-will is a pathetic fallacy. Nobody, in these bonds of time and space, can do precisely what he would like to do. Mr. T. P. O'Connor once said that, if he were master of his fate, and his feet in every way clear, he would at once proceed to Athens and learn Greek. I can conceive no keener or greater joy than that: it is the wish of a genuine lover of letters. At the age of ten, I came upon an old copy of Pope's *Homer*, and have been in love with Greek literature ever since. The cares of this world, including rates and taxes, prevent me likewise from proceeding to the City of the Violet Crown, but there are plenty of cheap copies of Homer to be had in Scotland, and it is no disadvantage that some of them have the translation printed on the opposite page. {124}

So many things have to be learned at school now, that Greek is being pushed out. In future, it will be a University subject solely. That is a great pity, for although there are fine translations of the Greek authors in English, these are not so much read as they ought to be. Greek itself would be much easier to learn if editors would write fewer and shorter notes.[15]

FRENCH LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM.

I am always delighted to see French books on the shelves of a rural library. I notice Dowden's *French Literature* in many a Highland bookcase; and I am sure it will please that erudite and

most excellent professor to know he has hundreds of students who never saw his face. Everybody should learn the French language: I don't know a better intellectual investment. French is rich in precisely those qualities that English lacks. It is not necessary, for proof of that statement, to read Gautier, Bourget, or Hugo. A daily paper from Paris supplies all the proof required.

I freely admit that the French newspaper seems, on first acquaintance, to be a wonderful and puzzling affair. It is never dull or tiresome, or glum. You may have your dearest susceptibilities {125} wounded by it, but you won't fall asleep as you read its columns. Humour trickles from paragraph to paragraph; wit coruscates in the accounts of the most ordinary police cases; and abundant of dexterous literary workmanship is to be found in the leading articles. In spite of such admirable qualities, there is an element of frivolity, a lack of seriousness (I speak of the typical Boulevard sheet) that is at first rather shocking to a British reader. He finds grave subjects treated with a fineness of touch and a lucidity of reasoning at once charming and full of edification: but, lo! a pun trails accidentally off the journalist's pen, or an odd collocation of ideas jostle each other in his brain: the writer at once stops his instructive reasoning; he goes off the main line and careers bounding down some devious side-path of entertaining nonsense. Our home papers are almost uniformly staid; they are written conscientiously, laboriously, commendably. But, after all, the French are right in trying to inject as much entertainment as possible into the daily record of mundane things.

I regret to say that the majority of French newspapers do not give their readers a quite fair or accurate account of events happening outside of France. French topics, as is right, have the bulk of the space, and foreign events are usually treated in a very prejudiced and perfunctory way. The Frenchman's enthusiasm for home politics does not leave him much emotion to spare for the rest of the world. Political life with him is always more or less in a state of turmoil. There is usually some scandalous *affaire* afoot or impending, to which political import can easily be given. {126} Many of the most talented editors, being members of the Chamber, import into their articles much of the heat and unreasoning vehemence engendered by the violence of direct debate. There has always been a feeling since the *great* Revolution that *others* might follow, and that one or other of the royal gentlemen of this or that disestablished race might, by some cyclone of popular or military sympathy, be blown back to power in Paris. Unluckily, there are far too many parties in France, far too many nicknames, badges, and shibboleths. The language of political discussion is bitter, and heated beyond anything the cooler Anglo-Saxon would tolerate. And yet, amid all such electric discharges of wordy rancour, the French nation goes on its way rejoicing, not a penny the worse, making wines, silks, and fashions, for an ungrateful world.

There is now, and always has been, a strange sympathy between France and Scotland. A Scot learns French, as a rule, easily. One of the striking differences between dialect Scotch and book English is precisely the peculiar French ingredients in the former. For three hundred years the two countries were allies, and the advantages to England may be gathered from the remark of King Henry V. in Shakespeare's play—

> "For you shall read that my great-grandfather
> Never went with his forces into France,
> But that the Scot on his unfurnished kingdom,
> Came rolling like the tide into the breach."

{127}

GIL BLAS.

One French book that has solaced my leisure (in train, steamer, and trap), is that altogether delectable volume *Gil Blas*. It would be worth learning French to be able to read the book in the original. The characters are non-moral reprobates who lie, rob, and drink with the most unaffected sincerity. Vice loses all its grossness, and becomes intensely entertaining. The tone of the confessions is at once subtle and naïve, tragic and trivial, comic and pathetic. The humour is absolutely colossal: many English books, alleged to be humorous, do not contain, in their entire bulk, as much humour as a single chapter of this great work. For brilliancy of style it stands very high, and few authors, either in France or elsewhere, have attained such admirable clearness, precision, and pith. Read *Gil Bias*, say I, if you wish to appreciate the possibilities of the French tongue, and taste all the delicate flavour of its racy idiom.

ROMANCE AND AUGUSTANISM.

There is a well-known text of Scripture, "In my father's house are many mansions" which, with a slight turn, might be applied to the House of Literature. There is room there for every pure and beautiful expression of human thought and emotion. Romance and Augustanism have both the right of entry.

I am glad to see that Alexander Pope, the cleverest of our English bards, is still a popular favourite wherever I go. It would be a pity if this were not so, for he is head of the guild of Queen {128} Anne wits, and no one of them can rival his instinctive delicacy, careful workmanship, and crystalline lucidity. His skill in the coining of impressive aphoristic couplets is unrivalled: it is almost as good as a novel addition to truth to find an old maxim supplied with the winged words of such a consummate verbal artist. Pope is a writer who appeals directly to all readers, for he never hides poverty of thought in a cloud of vague words.

In Pope and his fellows we miss the lavish magnificence and unchartered freedom of the spacious

times of great Elizabeth. Instead of Spenser's amazing luxuriance of matter and metre, we have a neat uniformity and trim array of couplets, which suggest the constant supervision of the pruning craftsman. Compared with the Elizabethans, Pope's time has less wealth but more careful mintage, less power but more husbanding of strength, fewer flights of imagination but finer flutterings of fancy, little humour but abundance of clear and sparkling wit. *It is not a difficult task, by means of suitable selections, to bring home to an audience of crofters the salient differences between the poetry of Pope and of Spenser.*

It is also easy to show to any audience that the quality which pleases to such a high degree in poems like the *Highland Lass* and *Yarrow Revisited*, there is a romantic charm and thrilling magic which Pope never could produce. A line or two from one of the poems cited has a far more potent effect over the affections of the heart than the gorgeous declamatory rhetoric of *Eloisa and Abelard*. But it would be foolish to suppose that because Pope has not the passion for nature {129}
nor the glow of self-oblivious benevolence, he has not highly educative and estimable features. He should not be censured for what he never meant to supply: we should rather strive to cultivate catholicity of taste by extracting from his poems the information and enjoyment they are so well able to furnish.

The Prologue of Pope's *Satires* is, of course, the best introduction to a systematic study of the works of this writer. That poem is the masterpiece of Pope's volume, and exemplifies better than any other piece the striking and brilliant qualities for which he is so famous. In perusing it, the reader soon discovers that he is in presence of a work which is the result of incessant and prolonged labour, and which, consequently, deserves patient study. The works of a great technical artist require such elaborate treatment if the force of their genius is to be adequately felt.

VICTORIAN WRITERS.

If any man proposes to stay a month among scenery of hill, mountain, and lake, I should advise him to slip a copy of Wordsworth into his pocket, and read therefrom an hour daily; not hurrying over the pages, but turning aside, now and again, to take in the glory of pinewood, heather, and linn. In no volume, ancient or modern, can a tired man find such soft and genial balm for his weariness as in the calm pages of the Rydal singer. The poet is at his best in the broad region of natural religion. He looks round on the beauties of the world with that solemn awe a man feels in the hallowed precincts of a mediæval temple. The grandeur and mystery of the world throw him {130}
into a kind of enchantment: his own soul and that of the universe touch and commune with each other. In his rapt verses we feel some of that mystic thrill felt by a devotee in the open sanctuary of the Almighty. No man ever interpreted Nature in such inspired strains as William Wordsworth. What supremely delights the lover of scenery is that this poet's muse can overwrap the exact and detailed knowledge of Nature with a superb mantle of idealistic glory. He saw and understood the harmony of Nature's forms and colours through all the seasons: at the quiet ingleside he meditated on what he had seen and heard, enshrined these in verse, and added to them the warmth of his own devout and sensitive soul. There is no exaggeration in Arnold's tribute:—

> "He laid us, as we lay at birth,
> On the cool, flowery lap of earth,
> Smiles broke from us, and we had ease;
> The hills were round us, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sunlit fields again.
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,
> Our youth returned; for there was shed
> On spirits that had long been dead—
> Spirits dried up and closely furled—
> The freshness of the early world."

Of Wordsworth and his successor, Tennyson, it is impossible to speak save in terms of affectionate gratitude. God looked kindly on Britain when he sent two such men to minister to us. Tennyson did more than all the bishops of the Church of England to stifle crude infidelity and {131}
equally crude religious bigotry. There is not a single line he ever wrote of which in his last days he had need, from the point of view of truth and morality, to be ashamed. He increased the world's stock of happiness by poems which have been the solace of men and women in the hours of darkness and doubt, which have led men to rise to nobler things on the stepping-stones of their dead selves, and which, I am certain, his grateful fellow-countrymen will not willingly let die.

It is not the least of Tennyson's claims to our gratitude that his genius was sensitive alike to the beauties of Celtic and of Anglo-Saxon verse. It would be difficult to overpraise his masterly rendering of the "Battle of Brunanburh," a vigorous old poem he found in the *Saxon Chronicle*. Equally fine is his "Voyage of Maeldune," founded on a Celtic legend of the seventh century. Those who wish to know what is meant by Celtic glamour should read the last-named poem without delay.

CELT AND SAXON.

Between the literatures of the Celt and the Saxon there are, indeed, well-marked differences. The Anglo-Saxons were a set of enterprising pirates, who drove their keels over the misty ocean, came to Britain and took forcible possession of it, dispersing or enslaving the original possessors.

They left a literature which is, in many respects, highly interesting, but is in the main devoid of sunshine, humour, and sprightliness. The old poem of "Beowulf," with its rough and sturdy {132} verses, all splashed with brine, contains very few figures of speech: it is a poem, but not markedly poetical; it is solid and impressive, but not beautiful. Now, no one can read Celtic poetry, even in translation, without being powerfully struck by its refined beauty and mystic romance. The metaphors and similes are somewhat too abundant. The typical Anglo-Saxon has a firm grip of the world, but is not poetical enough; the Celt, on the other hand, is probably too much of a dreamer and a poet—he sits on the hill-side (forgetting sometimes to till it) and muses on fairies, second-sight, and enchantments. St. Paul used the right word in speaking to the old world Gaels, *i.e.*, Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath *bewitched* you?" (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανε;)

Combine these two races in the right proportion, and you get an admirable blend. It is not for me to say where the just man made perfect is to be found, the man in whom the elements—practical and poetical—are mixed in such exquisite proportion, that Nature might stand up and say, "*There is a man*." What is certain, is that there is a very pronounced strain of Celtic blood coursing through the veins of the average Scotch Lowlander. Few Scots have to rummage far among their ancestry before they find a piece of tartan: such mixture of genealogy probably accounts for much that is best in their composition.

The supposition that the Scotch race-combination is Celt and Saxon, and only that, is of course erroneous. There is a very marked Scandinavian element both in the east and the west of the country. In the year 1600 A.D., the Norse tongue was spoken all over the Long Island from the {133} Butt of Lewis to Barra. Certainly, in Lewis and Skye, an enormous number of the place-names are Scandinavian, and date from a time when the sea-kings had dominion over the islands of the West. Many fascinating problems of ethnology continue to occupy the attention of investigators, and are not likely to be settled for a long time to come. One thing is abundantly clear, viz., that purity of race and speech does not exist in any county of Scotland: everywhere there is a mixture of blood and language.[16] {134}

CHAPTER III.

ECCLESIASTICAL.

Sectarian feeling—Typical anecdotes—Music and religion—Ethical teaching in schools—The Moderates—A savoury book—The Sabbath—"The Men of Skye"—The auldest kirk—The Episcopal Church—An interlude of metre—The Christian Brethren—Drimnin in Morven—Craignish—A model minister—Ministerial trials in olden times—An artful dodger—Some anecdotes from Gigha—Growing popularity of Ruskin.

SECTARIAN FEELING.

In a small country township, all the influences that operate to divide men into sects and parties are keenly and continuously felt. To a dweller there, it is well-nigh impossible to keep out of the arena of strife. Now that there is so much confusion and division in religious matters, strong feeling is more easily stirred on any secular subject that may happen to arise for discussion. If the Wee Frees, for example, desire a new road in a certain direction, the United Frees will probably deride the scheme and unanimously petition against it. Their antipathy to each other becomes envenomed by their persistent proximity: if you are a villager, you cannot get away from your adversary—in the morning, when looking out of the window, you see him tilling his croft, mending his nets, or washing his face in a tub at his front door. The fact that he is there is an {135} obstacle to your peace of mind. If you did not see him so often, you would more readily come to believe that he possessed a conscience and some shred of principle and decent doctrine.

In a distant seaside town a library had been procured, and (though doctrine was not at stake at all) a most virulent debate at once arose as to where it should be housed. The United Frees voted for the school; the Wee Frees called aloud for the post-office. It would require the pen of Dean Swift (who did such justice to the strife between the Big-Endians and Little-Endians) to recount in appropriate style the intrigues and stratagems of the rival religionists. The local teacher did not wish the books in school *because* the proposal came from the enemy. He was powerfully supported by all the young fellows of the place, whose reverence for him, born of recent severe whackings, was limitless. This teacher had an eloquent and vitriolic tongue, and delivered himself thus: "What have I not done for the island? What have these reprobates ever done? Who was it that got the frequent Macbrayne connection with the mainland? *I did.* Who got up the concert to buy seats for visitors coming north from Glasgow? And yet for every blessing I give them, I get ten curses. *But I'll choke them yet.*" It was needless for the United Frees to demand a plebiscite—or, as they called it, a *ple-biscuit*—the dominie was too forceful, persistent, and phraseful for them, and at the public meeting he laughed down a teetotal opponent by singing out: "Sit down on your seat, man; *it's the drink that's speaking, no' you!*" {136}

No matter what the subject may be, there is usually a smack of ecclesiasticism in the ordinary give-and-take of conversation. I cannot illustrate this better than by giving the Lewis man's reply

to an enquiry as to *how his wooden leg was behaving*. The enquirer was a newly-elected United Free elder, while he of the timber toes was a staunch Disruptionist. "Well," said the latter, "my wooden leg is not unlike a U. F. elder; it's not exactly perfection, but, considering everything, we must just be putting up with what we can get." This was said at a time when the Wee Frees were in a big majority in certain parts of the Highlands, and when, as a consequence, United Free elders had to be selected out of diminished congregations.

TYPICAL ANECDOTES.

The venerable Lord Halsbury, so well known for his judgment in the great Church case, resided, shortly after the decision, in the neighbourhood of Forres. Men plucked each other by the sleeve as he passed along the street, and pointed with awe to the keen-witted lawyer who had caused such a kick-up in the realm. His most innocent doings were watched. One day he went into a book-shop and made a purchase. When he came out, in rushed a brace of theologians to enquire what he had bought. It turned out that he had purchased a copy of *Comic Cuts*. The news was all round Forres in an hour's time, and caused much consternation. "What great men do, the less will prattle of," and it is so difficult for the former to act up to their heroic rôle. {137}

How thoroughly our dear native land has enjoyed its theological battles! Will there ever be a truce to the long wars of faith? One cannot see much ground for a too sanguine hope. After a library had been given to a little village in the West, I paid the usual visit to the place, and requested a free expression of views as to the suitability of the books that had been given. One venerable old native, with eyes of fire, called out: "*This Paisley Library has one fatal lack: it contains no works on controversial divinity.*" I ventured to hint that perhaps the omission was intentional, but that he absolutely refused to believe.

Coming through the Sound of Mull one blustery November day, I heard a most animated discussion on the question "Has the Deity unlimited Free Will?" The disputants had all the appearance of sensible crofters—they certainly talked more intelligibly than most commentators on Kant. Some of the ship's crew joined in the talk in such a way as to show that they understood perfectly well the question at issue. Every member of the ring was wet (the rain was coming down in torrents during the whole argument), but neither "Ayes" nor "Noes" would admit defeat. When the boat touched the terminus of Tobermory, much still remained to be said, and the amateur theologians retired to sum up in a local bar-room. The incident is characteristic, and could have happened in no other country but Scotland. Presbyterianism has made the Scot somewhat too disputatious, but it is surely better to see a man interested in religion than in nothing at all. {138}

Talking of the union of the Free and U.P. Churches, I am reminded of a laughable tale told of a Hebridean minister. "Themselves and their Union, I say, themselves and their Union," he remarked; "I will have nothing to do with it. I was born Free, ordained Free; I have lived Free, and I will die Free." "But what about the stipend, Angus?" said his wife, douce and cautious woman. "Ah, the stipend! Well, if I lose my stipend, you will have to put on a short petticoat, strap a creel on your back, and sell *fush*." "And what will you do, Angus, when I'm away selling *fush*?" "Oh, I will stay at home and pray for a blessing on your efforts."

The use of Scriptural expressions undoubtedly gives great force to the language of every-day life. As is well known, certain classes in cookery have recently been established in a few northern villages. A Highland minister, in publicly commending these classes, remarked, with a rueful grimace: "I *do* wish such classes as these had been in existence when my wife was young; for, as it is, every dinner she serves up to me is either a *burnt offering or a bloody sacrifice*!"

The following story comes from a minister in the neighbourhood of Loch Awe. "A clergyman of my acquaintance was stationed in a poor parish near my own, and he called on the local laird for financial aid to help on some of the church schemes. This laird was a well-known philanthropist, but the call was made at the wrong psychological moment, for he chanced on this particular day to be in a very bad humour. He listened to the minister with great impatience, and at last, {139} bounding to his feet and pointing to the door, he shouted: 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee: in the name of Beelzebub, rise and *walk*!'"

It was my unfortunate experience to witness a great amount of sectarian strife in the north and west during my various visits. Sometimes my prospective chairman was unable to preside, owing to his having taken part in a doctrinal scuffle, and having his coat torn, and his church captured. These fantastic doings are in no way edifying, and are extremely shocking to our national pride.

Theologically, many districts of the Highlands have not advanced beyond the stage occupied by Lowland Scotland in the time of Burns. In certain parishes, the communion is dispensed in the open air, in the way familiar to readers of the "Holy Fair." Sky overhead, grassy turf beneath, solemnity, sobs, and sighs all around, certainly make up a most impressive whole. The sermon is unmercifully long—two hours, at least: probably, if translated into English, and shorn of repetitions, it could be given in one-fourth of the time. If you or I, dear Lowlander, should stand on the outside of the crowd, and appear more curious than devout, we should certainly be alluded to in the sermon as *those wicked people*. The discourses are no gilt-edged harangues dealing with the "larger hope," and larded with quotations from Tennyson and Browning. They are, on the contrary, full of Tartarean sulphur and strange fire, and rich in grotesque illustrations, of which this is a sample: "My friends, crowds of loathsome fiends are sent by the Prince of the {140} Power of the Air to tempt us to our destruction. They hang over us waiting for their opportunity,

just like a regiment of black crows hovering over a potato-field."

I am afraid that crude Calvinism, as preached in certain parts of the north, is nothing less than monstrous. The good God, beneficent Father of us all, is unrecognizable when eternal reprobation is represented as the inevitable fate of the vast majority of His children. In time, no doubt (and the sooner the better), the results of modern theological thought will penetrate into the uttermost nooks of the land.

MUSIC AND RELIGION.

It is not easy to see why religion should be associated with gloom and disheartening ugliness. The long-drawn music of an Old Testament psalm is not without a certain doleful impressiveness, but the human soul needs occasional stimulus, even on Sundays, of something less lugubrious. Certain congregations hate hymns: they consider them carnal and uninspired. As for organ-music in a church, that would be *praising God by machinery*, a preposterous and intolerable approximation to Popery. Not long ago, a poor crofter in a Hebridean township, came to his minister, requesting that good man's offices for the christening of a child. The crofter in question was the possessor of an asthmatic old concertina, and the clergyman, before the rite of admission to the visible church could be performed, insisted on the annihilation of the ungodly instrument of music. The minister, in person, visited the croft, and disabled the concertina with a hammer. {141} The child was then christened, and the clerical zany strode off victorious, feeling he had done a good day's work for Heaven. "Who ever heard of the Apostle Paul playing on an organ?" was the question once propounded by Dr. Begg. The argument was a splendid *reductio ad absurdum*, and resembles the old reason for the reluctance of the peasantry to eat potatoes, because no mention was made of them in Holy Writ. But songs and music are filtering into the glens, in an official way, by the agency of the Scotch Education Department. Musical drill is a feature of the school-room, and it is a joy to think that such is the case. Some of the old folk, however, look on astounded and shocked; they shake their heads, and would, if they could, abolish such frivolity. "Why all this singing and tramping?" said a Skyeman to me once. "What good will all the songs of the world do to a man when he comes to his death-bed? I would rather, this very moment, sit down in a public-house, and drink till I was intoxicated, than screech and howl these worldly airs." Life was not so absurd in the days of the Catholic ascendency. But human nature is slowly asserting itself, and the days of the glum tyrannical zealot are assuredly numbered.

ETHICAL TEACHING IN SCHOOLS.

In some districts of the North, the inspectors have considerable trouble with certain teachers of the devout type who, from conscientious scruples, refuse to read to the children anything in the nature of a fairy tale. While examining a class in a remote Sutherland school, an inspector {142} requested the schoolmaster to narrate to the children, in Gaelic, the story of Little Red Riding Hood, and get them thereafter to put it into English. But the teacher most emphatically refused: "No, no, I cannot do that: it is all a lie; wolves do not speak; *no animal speaks*." The inspector, to refute him, unwisely alluded to the Scripture account of Balaam's ass in the twenty-second chapter of Numbers; whereupon, the dominie nearly swooned at the impiety of comparing that inspired animal with a secular beast like Grimm's wolf. For some time after, the inspector was bombarded with anonymous letters, accusing him of habitually *sitting in the scorner's chair*. He was terrified lest some Member of Parliament, eager for a grievance, should be got to move the adjournment of the House of Commons, with the righteous object of directing the attention of Government to Little Red Riding Hood and the naughty inspector of schools.[17]

The question of religious teaching in schools is capable of an easy solution, and we in the south have come pretty near solving it. The best solution is to have no dogma at all in the school-room. The Catechism and Prayer-book are excellent in their way, but the school is no place for them. We have a very complete and extensive organisation of churches in the land, and an army of {143} officials ordained to teach doctrines and tenets: let them take up the inculcation of creeds and rites, but don't let us perplex the school children with catechisms and metaphysical definitions. It is easy to make a distinction between morality and doctrine—a distinction which is alike clear and reasonable. Morality is an earthly and secular affair, and has to do with matters of elementary honesty such as every responsible citizen of a free country ought to practice. Religion is a higher affair, dealing with our relationship to the unseen: it is outside the province of the teacher, and should not be thrust into the school programme along with history and geography and grammar. Morality is of this world: religion of the next. Let everything be kept in its proper place. As to that division of duty which deals with right conduct, there is no controversy whatever. *Thou shalt not steal*; *thou shalt not bear false witness*—these, and the like elementary rules of conduct, are universally admitted to be right, for they are the groundwork of society. Take these away, and the world lapses into chaos. The following virtues are capable of being taught in schools:—(1) a strict adherence to the truth; (2) the application of the golden rule; (3) cheerful obedience at the call of duty; (4) reverence and respect for everything noble and great in the history of the world. These can all be taught, and are actually taught, by every conscientious teacher in the country. They constitute not the whole of duty, indeed, but the most difficult part of it—certainly all that need come into the realm of pedagogy. {144}

THE MODERATES.

Ami lecteur, have you ever heard of the *Moderates*? If, by chance, you have dipped into the

interminable controversies that gyrated round the Disruption year, it is probable you may have heard more than enough of them. One gets the impression that they were an unimpassioned, easy-going, anti-brimstone, but highly estimable body of men. They were blamed for preaching morality and not the penetrating mysteries of the faith. In "The Holy Fair," Burns gives us an inimitable picture of the moral philosopher in the pulpit:—

"But hark! the tent has changed its voice,
There's peace an' rest nae langer,
For a' the real judges rise—
They canna sit for anger.
Smith opens out his cauld harangues
On practice and on morals,
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

"What signifies his barren shine
Of moral powers an' reason?
His English style and gesture fine
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's richt that day."

I confess to a certain liking for Smith. He knew what was good for the Holy Willies and the other "chosen samples" and "swatches o' grace" in his auditory. Like a sensible man, and like the {145}
Apostle James, he laid more stress on "practice and on morals" than on lip-worship and faith. "Faith without works is dead" is a dictum that needs to be incessantly emphasised, and nowhere more than in certain ultra-orthodox localities of Scotland at the present day.

The Established Church is, with few exceptions, a negligible denomination in the Hebrides. For some reason it is regarded as the modern representative of the Moderate or Broad type of Calvinistic Christianity, and, as such, an abomination to the zealots. To show what a poor hold the Establishment has in Lewis, it is enough to remark that there are in that island only 183 Auld Kirk communicants out of a population of 32,947. Figures almost equally striking could be given for the Presbyteries of Uist, Skye, and Glenelg. The chief occupation of some parish ministers in insular Scotland must be that of killing time. I once met one of these reverend gentlemen in one of the hotels in Stornoway. He seemed to take a pleasure in running contrary to all the darling prejudices of the islanders. Dancing he approved of; he did not believe in prefacing his prayer or homily with a sanctimonious whine; and he actually was willing to admit that a few Catholics might get to heaven. An equally glaring fault—in the eyes of bigotry, I mean—was that he *dropped into poetry* at stated times, and sent his Gaelic verses to one of the Highland newspapers. The Parish Church buildings, in many localities of the West Highlands, are in a
woeful state of disrepair. They have a prevailing odour of must and damp; the seats are hard {146}
deal, unkind to the human anatomy; doors and windows rattle and shake during the service; creeping things move along the walls; sometimes the floors are nothing but the uneven and unconcealed Scottish earth. In such churches, there is some credit in being devout.

A SAVOURY BOOK.

An outstanding member of the clan Macdonald, for some time minister at Applecross, deserves a cordial vote of thanks for a savoury book he has written on the social and religious condition of the Highlands. He is not a bit scared by the Darwinian theory of evolution. "We have a good deal in common," he says, "with the brute creation, and have no cause to feel ourselves degraded on that account. The lower animals, not excluding the much-despised monkey, are specimens of divine workmanship which *reflect the highest honour on the skill and power of the Maker*." Could any admission be more handsome or candid than that?

I have learned a great deal from Mr. Macdonald's cheery and broad-minded volume. He is strong in history, and has had, it would seem, access to information that is closed to the general eye. There is a glorious simplicity in his views on Caledonian ethnology. A roguish prince, Gathelus, son of the king of Greece, migrated to Egypt, and married Scota, daughter of that Pharaoh who persecuted the Israelites. The various plagues "that o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung," terrified Gathelus, and he flitted in hot haste to Spain, and called his followers Scots, to please
his wife. Later in life, he sent his son Hiber to Ireland, where the lad settled, and named the {147}
island after his noble self, Hibernia. Scots continued to pour into Ireland, *viâ* the Bay of Biscay, and finally, under Simon Brek, subdued the entire extent of the Green Island. In 360 A.D., they came over to Argyllshire, and aided the indigenous Picts (who were also Celts) against the legions of Rome. This is so compact and clear an account, that I wish it were true. The way in which sacred and profane history are blended strikes me as singularly able.

Mr. Macdonald has an intimate knowledge of Celtic superstitions, and always castigates the right thing. Certain diseases of the brain were, till quite recently, believed to be curable if the afflicted man could procure a suicide's skull and take a drink out of it. Mr. Macdonald rightly dwells upon

the absurdity of such a specific, but confesses that one might as well try to "bale out the Atlantic" as eradicate the foolish pagan notions that still linger in the glens.

Ministers have a great deal of captious criticism to stand, if we may judge by Mr. Macdonald's anecdotes. They are blamed for terminating their discourses *with a silver tail* (*i.e.*, intimating a special collection). The sermon itself is not immune from cruel jests, as the following report of a parishioner's criticism will show: "A minister is like a joiner. The joiner takes a piece of wood and shapes it roughly with the axe. Then he applies his rough plane, and smooths it down a bit. After that, he takes his fine plane; and, lastly, he rubs it with sandpaper, and finishes it with polish till he makes it appear like glass. And so with the minister: he works his sermon, from sheet to sheet, with pen and ink, till he makes it at last so smooth *that a flea could not stand on it*."[18] {148}

THE SABBATH.

I was not a little surprised during my attendance at Highland churches to hear the ministers devoting much strong rhetoric to the sin of Sabbath-breaking. Taking the air on the first day of the week for quiet meditation and the good of one's health, has always seemed to me a laudable practice, but in many Highland parishes, a Sunday stroll implies ungodliness, even although the stroller may have attended one or more diets of worship earlier in the day. Such a state of matters is preposterously absurd, and, to my thinking, quite irreligious—it at least tends to make hypocrites. Some years ago, I spent a week in a typical insular village, lodging in the local inn. It was noticeable that on Sundays, the front blinds of the house were never drawn up. When the church-bells tolled the hour for public worship, the solemn devotees could be seen (through holes in the blind) pacing along, looking fixedly at the toes of their boots. The landlord of the house {149} thought it no sin to observe the passers-by, so long as he could do so in a clandestine way. He had no desire to mend the blind.

The restfulness and peace of a British Sunday is a blessed thing, as every Briton who has been long resident abroad, will readily admit. There is, however, a reasonable medium to be found between the unnatural Calvinistic Sabbath (with its limited view of the world through a torn blind) and the Continental Sunday, gay with skipping and junketing. Within recent years, to some extent owing to the bicycle and motor-car, the Sabbath has become rather too animated and bustling. The change is perhaps not entirely regrettable. The terrible Sunday dulness of some of our large towns has been, of late years, rendered less oppressive by the opening of museums and art galleries. I heard a man of fifty confess that in his boyhood he prayed fervently once, and only once, a week: the prayer in question was said on Sunday evening, and consisted of a heartfelt ejaculation of thanks to Heaven that the holy day was over for another week.

Church-going is a splendid and salutary practice, and every man who does not base his life on some religious sanction, is leading a mutilated life. There is such a thing, however, as ecclesiastical dyspepsia, a disease engendered by forced attendance at too many religious services when one is young. The disease is unfortunately apt to develop in mature years, into complete indifference to doctrine of all kinds.

After all, doctrine is largely useful as a mental exercise, and may easily become divorced from {150} practical honesty. Not once but fifty times have I been told that the village experts in theology were precisely the men who needed most watching in mundane matters. "So-and-so is a specialist on the millennium: *beware of him*." "Old Duncan is the strictest Sabbatarian in the island, but on Monday he's worth keeping an eye on." "Many a man that keeps the fourth commandment is not so particular about the others." Such are the phrases one is perpetually hearing, and they go far to prove how inoperative are ritual, profession, and form, in the life of some Christians.

To keep the ten commandments, or rather, I should say, the eleven, is no easy matter for either Celt or Saxon. It is far easier to be ostentatiously religious than scrupulously moral, to say prayers than to pay debts, to split hairs of doctrine than to love your enemies. I never read a more markedly scriptural book than *The Men of Skye*, nor one that displays such intolerance to the school of Laodiceans. I am not insensible to the intense enthusiasm of the author for the memory of the illiterate catechists who went round the island preaching to the people in a homely and graphic way. The unlovely feature of the book is the antagonism displayed towards those who wish to bring about a union of the Presbyterian bodies. "Not all the cement outside of heaven," one man says, "could bring about a union of the Free and U.P. Churches." The Declaratory Act, secular teaching in schools, instrumental music, and such like, all come in for severe treatment or ironical reference. {151}

THE MEN OF SKYE.

The book to which I have referred (*The Men of Skye*) gives a wonderful insight into the religious psychology of the Celtic zealot. It was in Portree that I first got a look at the little work, which consists of a series of biographies of outstanding lay preachers. I enjoyed the perusal of it immensely, and I am afraid the pious author will regard me as little better than one of the wicked when I say that I had many a hearty laugh at its contents. I am very unwilling to seek gaiety in pious books, very averse to laugh at honest, heart-felt beliefs, but the author of *The Men of Skye* was too many for me. His quaint metaphors, droll tenses and unlicensed syntax, were a perpetual feast of nectared sweets.

The language in which the book is written is not Gaelic, though it has not quite reached the stage

of English. The following extract is a typical one: "John Mackenzie lived at Galtrigil, was a God-fearing man, and professed religion, and his conduct was worthy of his profession, consistent in all its parts. He was employed as fishcurer to Dr. Martin. When he would be busy in the store, on the shore, his wife would go down with his food. He had a large heap of salt beside him, but he was so scrupulously conscientious that when she took down an egg, she would need also to bring from his own house the grain of salt he would put in it. He would not take so much as a grain of salt that was not his own. He was careful about what belonged to the cause of Christ, and would like to know that those who took up a profession of religion had undergone what he termed a {152} *clean conversion*."

Some of the stories told of Angus Macleod, are altogether unique: "He was one day entrusted with the herding of the minister's cattle, but while he prayed, the cattle made their way into the corn. The minister came out and began to advise and rebuke him, but Angus said, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head.'" (Psalm cxli. 5.) I consider that story and the two which follow quite equal, in their diverting pointlessness, to any of those told by Cicero in *De Oratore*, Book ii. At one time it was thought advisable to teach Angus how to read, but he never could be got to master the alphabet. He would utter aloud the following reflections: "*A b*, *ab*: Ah! that is but dry. There is no food there for my soul. There is no word about Christ or God there, no word about forgiveness of sin. I would rather be at the back of a dyke where I would get a moment of the presence of the Lord." As Angus usually replied to his associates by a text of Scripture, he must have had a good ear for Holy Writ. "His father was one day repairing a dyke. Angus tried to assist him and broke the spade. His father's temper was roused, and he ran after his son to punish him. Angus ran away calling out, 'Oh, Lord, avenge me of mine adversary.'" On one occasion, when asked why he had refused to pray in public, he replied that it was out of his power to do so at the time. "Why," said his interlocutor, "Jonah was able to pray even in the whale's belly." "Yes, yes," {153} said Angus, "but I was in a worse state than Jonah: for the whale was in my belly."

It may not be unnecessary to state that the word Men in the title of the book is to be understood as meaning "men of exceptional piety." The word is a technical one in that sense. All the *men* I have read about were fervid Frees, many of them being elders and catechists in that body. After the Disruption, there was a wonderful crop of these men produced in the Highlands, and through their means, *religion became a very real and forcible affair*. Their attitude to life and general outlook on the world are quite unlike anything to be found among the luke-warm believers of the Laodicean South. We read of one zealot devoting a whole winter to the task of combating shinty and tobacco. It is impossible to withhold some measure of admiration from Christians so staunch, logical, and uncompromising. *Logical?* Well, here at least is a gem of ratiocination. What, for example, was the cause that forced so many Skyemen to emigrate to the Canadian plains and the Australian bush? The fathers of Skye believed that the crofters, having insufficiently appreciated the unique opportunities of divine worship at home, were driven by a wrathful deity over the water to a land where there were *few or no Presbyterian Churches*.

THE AULDEST KIRK.

There are some parts of Scotland that the Reformation seems never to have reached. I have been told that up till this day no Protestant minister ever preached in Morar (the delightful spot, with {154} lake of same name, near Mallaig), and that in consequence Catholics call it "Blessed Morar" (*Morar Bheanaichte*). There is a Catholic strip of country, extending right through the heart of Scotland, along the Caledonian Canal; aristocrats, chiefs, and crofters there boast that their ecclesiastical history goes back, uncontaminated by schisms and private judgment, right to the time of Ninian and Columba.

It appears evident that the iconoclastic Parliament of 1560, which made it unlawful to obey the Pope or say mass, pretty effectually paralysed the Catholic Church in the land. Only in secluded districts, such as Uist, Barra, Morar, Arisaig, and Glengarry, were the faithful safe from prosecution. The organisation of the Church was maimed and broken, and hundreds of priests took to flight. To use the cruel words of Milton—

> "Then might ye see
> Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tossed
> And fluttered into rags; then relics, beads,
> Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls—
> The sport of winds."

Having visited a fair number of Catholic districts in the West of Scotland, I have given myself the pleasure of reading, as far as is available, the historical records of the Pope's faithful adherents there. *These are most interesting as showing the pertinacity of religious faith among the most hostile surroundings.* The Scots College at Rome, founded by Clement VIII., supplied a large number of priests, who spread themselves abroad in the glens, and kept the old faith from {155} completely perishing. The Roman Catholic College at Scanlan, on the Braes of Glenlivet, was a turf-built erection, dating from 1712. It was often compulsorily closed and the students dispersed. The most important school for priests in the West was at Buorblach, near Morar. Here the aspirants for priesthood studied for a year or two, after which they proceeded to some one of the Scots colleges abroad—such as Paris, Ratisbon, Valladolid, or Rome. Those students who received the whole of their instruction at home, and got ordained without going abroad, were styled *heather priests*.

The best-known Catholic township of the West Highlands at the present time is undoubtedly Arisaig, a charming spot, where the mild air allows the wild flowers to spring in profusion and where the fuchsia thrives better than anywhere else in Scotland. There is a strikingly elegant Catholic Church here, built on a commanding site that dominates the bay. In September, 1904, I addressed a meeting in the Astley Hall of Arisaig, under the genial chairmanship of the Clerk of the House of Commons. The audience was overwhelmingly Catholic, and it was quite evident that all were keenly appreciative of the library that had recently been sent to the district. It gave me no ordinary pleasure to note that the literary society of the place was made up of both Catholics and Protestants, and that all the inhabitants, forgetting their religious differences, could assemble together as friends on the common meeting-ground of literature. Such an amalgamation is bound to mitigate the sectarian rancour that too often works like a pestilence in {156}
small villages and rural communities. It is an excellent feature, too, in such places as Arisaig, that the local priest gives every encouragement to his people to read and study secular books of an elevating character. It would be strange indeed if the representative of a Church which in mediæval times gave such splendid encouragement to art and letters, should deem it a duty to prohibit his people from availing themselves of the means of culture.

It undoubtedly comes as a surprise to a Lowlander, who is prone to think that every born Scot is necessarily a born Protestant, to find in remote nooks of his native country, home-grown specimens of the faith that was once prevalent everywhere. He has to sit down and muse on the hillside over the matter, and, if he is imaginative, he will see by fancy's eye the skiff of St. Columba breasting the breakers on its way from Ireland to Iona.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Of all the Churches or sects in Scotland, probably the most remarkable is the Episcopalian. Many Englishmen settle in the Lowlands for purposes of trade, and, in most cases, bring their religion with them. Such immigration explains the numerous Episcopal chapels in the towns of southern Scotland. But no such cause can explain the presence of scores of small Episcopal congregations in the rural districts of Aberdeen and Banff. These have not been imported from over the Border, but in reality have a long history behind them. Many of them date from the sixteenth and {157}
seventeenth centuries. The Stuart kings never liked Presbyterianism, and James I. tried to make the Scotch Church as like the English one as possible: in 1610, indeed, he managed to bring about the consecration of a certain number of Scotch bishops. The Episcopalians in the North showed a warm affection for the Stuarts during the distresses of that royal house, and such Jacobitism did the scattered congregations a deal of harm. The number of Episcopal chapels throughout the land is fairly high, but the total of the communicants is relatively small. The clergy are a most estimable and cultured body of men, and perform their duties, which are often very laborious, in an eminently exemplary fashion. Their stipends are ridiculously poor, and the scene of their labours is frequently the reverse of lively. Very often, in the bleak moors and glens of north-east Scotland, I have spent pleasant and memorable evenings in the village rectory. The modes of speech and general atmosphere of a Scotch rectory differ piquantly from those of the manse. It is certain that a clergyman who is in constant touch with the Anglican ritual, develops a special turn of talk and a characteristic set of mannerisms.

I am convinced that, in learning and culture, the Episcopal clergy compare very favourably with those of the other Churches. Some of them have written, both in the departments of theology and general literature, works of outstanding and permanent value. In spite of all that, however, it does not seem probable that they will make many converts to their creed. Presbyterianism has a {158}
firm grip on the country: symbol and ritual do not thrive well in the cold air of the North. Once upon a time, in the Black Isle, as the records of the Arpafeelie Episcopal Church show, there was a strong feeling of antagonism to Presbyterianism; but that was in 1711, and was probably more political than religious.

It is a well-known fact that a large proportion of the aristocracy and landed-gentry of Scotland are Episcopalians. This is due, not so much to the leisure they have for studying theological problems, as to the fact that most of them have been educated in English public schools.

How pleasant it is to contemplate the broad-mindedness of the greatest of our Scotch Episcopalians, Sir Walter Scott, as seen in the thirty-seventh chapter of *Guy Mannering*! Speaking of religious differences, he makes Pleydell say: "*A plain man may go to heaven without thinking about them at all*." Even at the present day, there is a most regrettable lack of such urbanity in the disputes of educated theologians. I picked up a book not long since, which amused as well as shocked me greatly. It purported to be a history of *the* Church in Scotland. The author was a facetious Episcopalian, for his history made no mention of either the Free, the Established, or the United Presbyterian denominations. The Episcopal sect alone had the honour of being dubbed a Church. Now, if a writer ever took it on him to write a history of the Church in England, he ought to devote space to *all* the bodies, and be careful not to omit mention even of {159}
the Plymouth Brethren. I rather think that the Plymouth Brethren should have the lengthiest treatment of all, seeing that no shred of the Church resembles so closely the original type of Christianity.

AN INTERLUDE OF METRE.

I have often endeavoured to fix discourses from the Highland pulpits by embodying in metre (I do not say poetry) the leading thought or most striking illustration that I carried away. For the sake

of variety and to prevent this chapter from appearing too frivolous, I, at this point, give one or two "moderate" sermons in little.

I.

When heavy-laden Christian, panting sore,
Had gained the home of the Interpreter,
He saw a sorry fellow with great stir
Ply a vile muck-rake on a filthy floor;
And the more mire the churl raked, the more
He smiled, although a winged messenger
Floating aloft was eager to confer
On him the crown that in her hands she bore.
So is it with those fools that waste their days
In raking stores of dross and minted gear,
Oblivious of the crown of deathless rays
That God is offering freely to them here.
Miser! your stay on earth is short indeed,
Renounce the dross and choose the heavenly meed.

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II.

He that is wise will not in haste decide,
But look and think before believing aught;
Then, having long reflected, will confide
To no breast but his own his finished thought,
Until experience warrants every jot.
Man! Suffer not thy soul to yield to pride
Of intellect. Small is thy mortal lot
Of wisdom. Others seek the truth beside
Thyself. Behold aloft in air there fly
Fowls diverse all in nature, strength of wing
And keenness: even so the men who hie
On the soul's quests. In genius differing,
They all some twinkling sparks of truth may see,
But the whole flaming round is hid from them and thee.

III.

Thou who in folly thinkest Heaven's King
Has sent thee into this fair world to gain
As many guineas as, with toil and pain,
In threescore years thine avarice can wring
From poorer men, be warned! With tiger-spring
Fell death will leap upon your life amain
And rive you from your opulence, though fain
To tarry. Then the jovial heir will fling
To the four winds of heaven thy gathered hoard
In flaunting joys and unrestricted glee,
While costly dishes glitter on the board
And the wine flows in ruddy runnels free.
Thou, meanwhile, in the shady realms below
A bloodless ghost, wilt wander to and fro.

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IV.

I.

Though lilies on their graceful stalk
Droop, fade, and die,
Earth's still renewing forces mock
Death's cruelty.

II.

For roots and seeds within the mould
Will thrust again
Their sheathed beauties manifold

Up to the plain.

III.

Though flowery hopes of dazzling gleam
Wither and die,
New hopes in the soul's garden teem
Unceasingly.

V.

O Lord of light, disperse my baffling fears,
Give me a look but for a moment's space
Upon the tranquil glory of Thy face,
To serve as force to fight the chilling years.
Clouds hide Thee from me, and the bitter tears
Run down my cheek in floods. Out of Thy
grace
Let my heart's chamber be a dwelling-place
For Thee. Come for a little space. Mine ears
Strain for the hearing of a word divine
Straight from Thy holy lips. No single task
Can I at all accomplish or design
Without the full assurance that I ask
This, namely, that my soul is one with Thee,
And Thou dost work Thy purposes by me.

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THE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

It would be well-spent labour if some sympathetic historian could find time to write a short account of the Plymouth Brethren, giving details of the origin, tenets, divisions, and influence of the sect. I am surprised that Mr. Barrie in his notable excursions into Scotch life and religion, has never portrayed such a fine specimen of the working-man turned theologian.

It must not be supposed that only the rich and the leisurely have what is called religious experiences and shadowed souls. The finest developments, doubtless, of the religious sense require time and money. That leisurely groping after tendencies, that introspective analysis of the sins of omission and commission, that delightful perception of the falling away from righteousness of your brethren and sisters—all these choice sweets are, if they are to be adequately enjoyed, compatible only with a minimum of £300 a year. The religious sense and the musical are in many points alike. If you wish to develop an initially melodious soul, it means expense: you must go to professors, study counterpoint, practice many hours daily, and attend concerts of the most exclusive and expensive kind. Similarly with religion in its finest flower. You need slaves to cook and wash for you if you mean to ecstaticise and see beatific visions: you must get the most fashionable and picturesque specialists to come and feel your religious pulse, and you must on no account neglect the subscription lists. But only those rich enough to be hypochondriac can afford such luxuries. Now, in the toiling classes there are often good ears for {163}
music, and exquisite responsiveness to religious sensations. What satisfies such natures and such wants must be cheap. The Plymouth Brethren (I ought rather to say *Christian* Brethren), have no General Assembly, little or no pedantry of a costly kind, and yet, I believe, they supply all the exhilaration of schisms, splits, counter-splits, and heresy-hunts. Every man his own General Assembly! There may be a lack of the finer touches in such a system, but what is lacking in elegance is fully made up in clearness of view and rombustious vigour.

In many of the fishing villages on the east coast of Scotland, there are large congregations of these worthy men raising their Ebenezers, and making a joyful noise on the first day of the week. I have a good deal of sympathy with their democratic and direct style of worship. In Scotland, when a man gets converted, he feels constrained to *do something*, but very often there is little outlet for his energy in the calm routine of the fashionable churches—hence the necessity for bethels and mission-houses. At their revivals, let me add, one is in presence of that mysterious awakening to which every religion owes its birth.

In the autumn of 1906, I had an interesting talk with the minister of a seaside village on the shore of the Moray Firth, and was distressed to find that he was sorely harassed by the lively sect I have mentioned. Every now and again a wandering evangelist comes along the coast, pitches a tent, and begins a series of gospel services. Those who are converted, neglect the church and all {164}
its ordinances, and begin preaching on their own account; nay, they even buttonhole the minister and preach to *him*, accusing him of being an unjust steward, a hireling, and no shepherd, and so on. Such conduct creates a very painful situation. With a good deal of detail, the long-suffering clergyman gave me an account of a visit he had paid to an old woman recently converted. The narrative of her conversion as told by herself was quaint and touching: "They were a' gettin' it," she said, "and I wasna gettin' it. So I jist went to the door and steekit my e'en, and raised them to the lift, and *I got it*. Isn't that the way o't, auld man?" "Aye, aye, that's the way o't, auld wife," chimed in the husband. The latter then took up the wondrous tale: "When she came in and tell't me she had got it, I went doon on my knees to thank the Lord jist at the fireside, and lo and

behold, when I opened my e'en, I was at the street door. The Spirit had taken me there, unbeknown to me. So I lifted up my voice and called on God's people. And in five minutes the room and kitchen were filled wi' saved folk, a' singing hymns, because my auld wife had got it at last."

I also remember meeting an old thatcher of eminent talents who seemed to me to be on the straight road for Zion, for he fulfilled the Scriptural injunction to be fervent in spirit as well as not slothful in business. James had at one time been precentor in one of the regular churches, but owing to some cantankerous criticism of his melody, he seceded to the Brethren, who fearlessly accepted his services gratis. James was specially lyrical on the roof, and it was a treat to hear him {165} sing "*There is rest for the weary*," as he pushed the thatch into its long home:—

> "There is rest for the weary,
> There is rest for the weary,
> There is rest for *you*" (with a forceful thrust).

I must not omit to mention (and with reverence be it spoken) that James had a reputation far and wide in the country-side, for the vigour and extreme unction of his grace before meat. Though giving a humble tenor to the initial phrases and using the tar-brush on himself, and the hungry company as putrid sinners unworthy even of the least of the mercies, he always contrived to reassure everyone by sunnily rounding off the matter with some rich and racy allusions to the gracious and ample promises of Holy Writ. One could have felt quite comfortable even in a slight excess of gluttony after such introductory words of blessing. You felt that the occasion had been met, that something like perfection had been attained. James was willing to admit shortcomings in thatching, or in any department of human activity, so long as his superiority in pre-prandial supplication was admitted. But it so happened that Fate, whose delight it is to imperil even the stablest reputations, sent his way a South-country Brother with a gift in prayer truly appalling. At a gathering at which James was present, this stranger was honoured by being asked to say grace. In the process, he soared to such heights of oratory and supplicatory fervour, that the uniform opinion of the guests, as evinced by looks, demeanour, and even congratulation, was that James {166} had at last been beaten on his own ground. Supreme dejection settled on the thatcher, and neither bite nor sup could dislodge the settled melancholy of his soul. After long pondering with chin on chest in a corner of that pious throng, he had an idea. Sidling up to the matron of the house, he, with a terrible whisper of earnestness, addressed her in these words: "Mistress, before we gang hame, doon wi' a whang o' cheese and a farl o' cake—it'll no' cost ye much—and *I'll ha'e a tussle wi' him for't yet*." She gladly complied with his request. His excitement gave him inspiration, and over that cheese and oatcake, he delivered himself of such a grace as had never before proceeded from his lips. A murmur of involuntary admiration greeted the conclusion. James was comforted, and once more held his head erect.

To talk of the Evolution of Religion to men like James would be a complete waste of time. Such men regard themselves as the acme of the process: whatever modifications may supervene after their day will be deteriorations. It is quite impossible to persuade an enthusiast that he is a mere phenomenon of development, and not, actually and now, the roof and crown of things. Even if persuasion were possible, it would be a cruelty to disillusionise these happy wights,—men who, with such sublime confidence, can read their title clear to mansions in the sky. They have a complete key to the universe, and are as happy as if they had seen the whole vast circle of truth. {167}

DRIMNIN IN MORVEN.

How many of my readers know where Drimnin is? If I should say, "In the parish of Morven," it is possible the majority of them would not be greatly edified, unless they had acquaintance with the saintly Macleod's *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish*. Well, Drimnin is on the mainland, nearly opposite the entrance to the haven of Tobermory. The *Chevalier* nears into the coast when anyone wishes to land, and two boatmen, obeying a signal, pull out from shore into the open, and the passenger leaps, as gracefully as circumstances permit, into their arms—amid the cheers of those left on the steamer.

The clergyman of Morven ministers to a parish that has over a hundred miles of seaboard, and, strange to say, there have been only three incumbents in it during the last hundred and thirty years, himself being the third, with twenty-six years' ministry to his credit so far. These facts procured him an extraordinary reception in America, where he spent a holiday recently. The Americans, with whom change is the permanent element, looked with amazement on a minister who came from a parish with such a record. They thronged round his hotel to get shaking hands with him, while he blushed to think that homage was being paid to the longevity of his predecessors. It is no treat to be a lion in Maine.

The visitor to Drimnin should return to Oban by driving to Lochaline, where there is a pier. A mere glance up that inlet of Lochaline is sufficient to prove the unerring accuracy of Sir Walter's {168} description: "Fair Lochaline's woodland shore." Scott had a marvellous eye for scenery, and having once seen a locality, could describe it better than a native could do who had lived in the neighbourhood from youth upwards.[19]

CRAIGNISH.

At Craignish (two miles *or so* from Ardfern, next pier to Luing on the way from Crinan to Oban) I

was astonished to find what I think is unique in Scotland, an old clergyman, born in 1824, still, without any aid whatever, performing all the duties of a parish minister in one of the wildest parts of Argyllshire. I refer to the Rev. Mr. M'Michael, who was chairman at the lecture. The old gentleman, who is remarkably hale in body and never melancholy at meal-time (as he slyly puts it), is prone to speak by preference of the events of "auld lang syne." He gave me a most vivid account of Professor John Wilson (whom, as I do not now live in Paisley, I may safely venture to call Paisley's *greatest* son), who was one of his teachers, and who, as "Christopher North," wrote {169}
so many witty and solid articles that undeservedly perished in *Blackwood's Magazine* at the beginning of last reign. I have rarely had such a treat as my talk with this hale-hearted octogenarian. His charming daughters keep house for him, and employ their leisure time weaving at a loom of their own. The sheep that graze on the glebe supply the wool, and the intermediate stages between the back of the sheep and the woollen overcoat on the back of the needy are all supervised by these dexterous daughters of the manse.

The coach to Craignish passes through a bit of Scotland that, in the leafy month of June, must be glorious to behold. I passed along in a fierce and chilling blizzard of sleet and snow. If a poet could keep warm, thought I, this would be the spot for him to get impressive scenes for his word-pictures. At one part, the road ziz-zags up a hill for three miles, alongside a furious burn, to a height of six hundred feet; from which eminence one sees, on the right, great bare crags and steep heights, and, on the left, an inlet of the Atlantic foaming wildly below. Ye gentlemen of the cloth, whose lot is cast in towns and who sit at home in ease, think of the trials of your rural brethren in their attempts to drive in winter through drifting snow to a presbytery meeting fourteen miles away![20] {170}

A MODEL MINISTER.

Not far from the city of Aberdeen is a little village of seafaring folk, and the worthy minister, the Rev. Mr. Pollock, is guide, philosopher, and friend to the entire community. Up to his manse, which is a mile from the uneven and fishy streets, there is a constant *va-et-vient* of parishioners. One old widow wishes him to write to her son at the Yarmouth fishing, herself being ignorant of English spelling; this old man, painfully hobbling uphill on his stick, and muttering to himself as he goes, desires the faithful pastor to come and cheer a bed-ridden wife who is failing fast; that young fisher-lass will blush as she tells that her young man is on the way home to claim her as his own, with the Church's aid. Mr. Pollock is the confidential repository of all their secrets: nothing in their lives is hidden from him; he knows all of comic and tragic in their lowly careers. Along with his wife, he visits every house in the place, and from intimate knowledge can tell you, nodding his head to this or that house as he walks along, the worth or worthlessness of every native of the village. His time is so fully taken up with pure religion and undefiled, that he has no time to waste on the Higher Criticism.

A tout for some wandering minstrels recently came over from Aberdeen, meaning to leave one of his red-and-yellow bills (announcing a performance) in each of the local shops. The minister saw him as he distributed the bills, and closely followed up on his trail. Mr. Pollock entered each shop and said to the shopkeeper: "Please let me see the bill you have there in the window." On getting {171}
it, he would scan it, and request to get keeping it. In no shop was he refused, so that by the time he got to the end of the village, he was carrying two dozen large concert placards, while the tout, merrily whistling, and all unconscious of the nullity of his labours, was on his way back to Aberdeen. "Lead us not into temptation," said the minister, as he thrust the garish announcements into his study stove. None of Mr. Pollock's flock were at the concert that night. Perhaps, if any had gone, little harm would have been done. The minister, however, thought they were better at home, or at the local prayer-meeting.

Mr. Pollock's predecessor was a thin, unemotional man—a geologist—who spent an important percentage of his time chipping rocks and looking for fossils. Owing to this mania, his flock were forgotten, and came to forget *him*. No wonder if the church attendance dwindled! *Ab uno disce omnes*, as Virgil says. One day this ordained geologist had agreed to baptize a child in a hamlet some miles away, and set forth to walk to the place in good time. Unhappily, by the roadside, there was a quarry, into which, by instinct, the minister glided, keen and eager-eyed. He stayed therein for four hours, and forgot all about the infant (squalling, no doubt, in special robe, and impatient for the christening), the waiting relatives, the inevitable decanter, and the thick cuts of indigestible bun. The minister, I say, trudged home with his treasure-trove of petrified ferns and foot-marked shale—a greater fossil than any under his own cases of glass. His memory was {172}
stirred by his wife's catechising, but it was too late to undo the mischief.

MINISTERIAL TRIALS IN OLDEN TIMES.

In modern times, ministers are badly paid, considering the expenses of their training and long education, but they are better paid than they used to be. In 1756, the minister of Ferintosh, a big, active man, with the object of adding something to his stipend, leased the meal-mill of Alcaig from the laird of Culloden. The combination of miller and minister did not please his parishioners. It never occurred to these clowns that the occupation of miller is singularly adapted for reflection: spiritual and bodily nourishment (thought of together) might well form a field of thought fertile in instructive metaphors; "the dark round of the dripping wheel," the work of separating husks and flour, the topics of dearth and abundance, might all come to have a homiletic value to a serious-minded teacher of religion. But a cry of scandal, directed not against

themselves for underpaying their minister, but against that worthy man for being an *ordained miller*, arose in the parish. A member of the congregation was deputed to give a gentle hint to the minister that the two occupations were incompatible. The interview took place on the high road. "What news this morning, Thomas?" said the minister. "Have you not heard of the fearful news?" said Thomas. "No, what is it?" "Well, everybody's saying," said Thomas, with a whisper of affected horror, "that *the minister's wife has taken up with the big miller of Alcaig*." The delicacy of this {173} hint was such that the minister resigned his lease.

The trials of ministers long ago were truly great. Witches had to be reckoned with, as the aforementioned Ferintosh minister, who was their foe, knew to his cost. By their incantations they caused him to be afflicted with somnolency. As this sleepy fit usually came on in church between the first psalm and the prayer, it can be easily seen how awful were the reprisals of these Satanic hags.

AN ARTFUL DODGER.

The Rev. Mr. Rogers, minister of a parish in Fife, was, like many another worthy man, in sore financial straits at one period of his life. He was a widower, and probably this fact accounts for his displenished exchequer. With supreme audacity he touched the bell of a rich old maiden lady, and on entering her boudoir he bluntly admitted his lack of funds, and said, "Give me £200 and I'll marry you." She gave him the money, and for months after never saw his face. Finally she wrote asking an interview. He came, and she tartly said, "Did you not say, Mr. Rogers, that if I gave you £200, you would marry me?" "Certainly I did," said the cunning minister, "and *I'm ready to marry you whenever you produce your man: where is he*?" This anecdote shows the difficulty of being unambiguous when speaking English, and furnishes an argument for the adoption of French as the language of courtship as well as of diplomacy.

The same foxy ecclesiastic wished two things, both of which his heritors flatly refused: (*a*) a new manse, and (*b*) a site with a wide prospect. Finding them intractable, he professed humility, and {174} craved merely a species of scaffolding to buttress up one of the walls of the old manse. The heritors marvelled a little at the strange request, but, glad of being saved from the cost of a new building, authorised the buying of some sturdy joists to prop up a wall that the minister averred was off the plumb. No sooner was the buttressing timber in position than Mr. Rogers appeared with a violent complaint in the Sheriff Court, declaring that the manse was like to fall about his ears, and that the heritors had palpably admitted the danger by erecting a scaffold. The Sheriff expressed strong disapproval of the heritors' stinginess, and ordered them to get a new manse built for the minister. Now as to the site! To spite Mr. Rogers, the heritors determined to deprive him of a good view, and directed the St. Andrews builder to erect the new manse down in the valley on a broad bank by a burnside. The master-builder placed pegs and marks in the ground at the prescribed place and returned to St. Andrews, telling his workmen to proceed next day to begin the work, and mentioning that they would know the site by marks he had placed there. At cockcrow the minister was afoot, busy transferring the pegs to the summit of a lovely knoll. The tradesmen came out to the country, and looking for the site found it on the hill-top and began their work. After they had been a week or more on the walls, out from St. Andrews came the master to see how his men were progressing. He came near a complete collapse when he saw his men on the hill instead of in the valley. He spoke winged words to them, but it was too late. In {175} such fashion did Mr. Rogers outwit his heritors. I regret that no literary relics of this acute divine are to be had. He seems to have been in his way a kind of Higher Critic judging from a remark he made on the Ark: "How did you manage," he said, as if addressing Noah in person, "how did you manage to keep the first plank of your boat from getting rotten before the last was nailed on, if you actually took 120 years to put the whole thing together?"

SOME ANECDOTES FROM GIGHA.

The late minister of Gigha, a small island community of 360 souls off the coast of Kintyre was a cleric of great humour and full of stories. His church was the only one in the island, a fact of which he was proud. At a communion service, a minister from the mainland, struck off a monumental phrase in one of his prayers. He said "Thou hast shown, O Lord, Thy confidence in Thy servant, the devout minister of Gigha, for lo! out of the plentitude of Thy great mercy Thou has seen fit *to give him an island all to himself*." I have heard and do in part believe it, that the effect of such a supplication in Gaelic is overpoweringly strong.

This same minister "of the island," whose digestion I may say, was so perfect that he could triumphantly absorb strong tea and poached eggs as a regular midnight meal, told me one night over this collation, the story of a fisherman in one of the Western Islands, whose prayer before going to sea was of a singular character. He invariably addressed the Deity as *Sibshe* (You) {176} instead of the ordinary *Thusa* (Thou). On one occasion, when the weather was squally and danger was anticipated, he prayed thus: "O Lord God, my Beloved, if You would be so good as to take the care of Mary and Jessie, my daughters; but that She-Devil, my wife, the daughter of Peter Macpherson, I am indifferent about her: she will have another husband before I am eaten by the crabs!"

Here follows another well-known story from the same authority. A Lowlander, taking a week's sail on one of Macbrayne's cargo-boats stepped ashore, on Sunday morning, at a remote insular port, to attend church, as was fit and proper. The text was the well-known verse "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" The minister, strange to say, preached a long

and painfully vivid sermon on *leprosy*. The tourist waited, after sermon, in order to talk with the minister and quietly remonstrate with him. He said: "You gave us an excellent discourse to-day, but do you think it followed quite appropriately from the text: surely you are aware that a *leopard* and a *leper* are two different things." The minister, eying the tourist with a look of indignant scorn for a second, lifted up his voice and denounced him thus: "Out of my sight with you: I know what you are; you are one of these pestilent fellows called Higher Critics. Begone!"

In the Long Island, it is an article of fixed belief among the stricter Presbyterians that Catholics are outside any scheme of salvation. Episcopalians, too, are regarded as being in an extremely dubious position. Any stick, however, is good enough to beat the partisans of the Pope. {177} "Brethren," said a minister near Stornoway, "I have forgotten my sermon to-day: but *I'll just say a word or two against the Catholics*." Such a philippic, he seemed to think, could never be out of season.

Denunciation has always been a favourite method of the religious bigot. If the various sects of the Christian Church, could go on their way, ameliorating the world, and leaving each other in peace, the millennium would be within reasonable distance. I heard a U.F. say to a Wee Free: "Donald, you'll no' gang to Heaven, *because I'm bad*." The sentence is good enough for an epigram. Unfortunately, too many of our sectaries think it the prime virtue of their faith to run down their neighbours.

GROWING POPULARITY OF RUSKIN.

One of the most cheerful features in the present-day thought of Scotland, and one from which we may anticipate excellent results in every department of social and religious life, is the growing popularity of the great apostle of the nineteenth century, John Ruskin. Though dead, he continues to speak; and from close inspection of the registers that show in detail the nature of the books asked for, at the various village libraries, I have noted, with no small pleasure, that Ruskin's works are eagerly read all over the Highlands and islands of Scotland. This is something quite new, and will, I am certain, work immense good.

For Ruskin's work in the department of religion, no words can be too commendatory. His genius was in thorough accord with the spirit of the Biblical writers, and his modes of speech and {178} illustration perpetually reminiscent of Scripture. He loses no opportunity of dwelling on the culturing influence of the Bible. There is also a fine tolerance in his religious teaching, which is alike helpful and suggestive. His is that variety of teaching which we find most effectively outside of the ranks of professional commentators, and which comes through the keen flashes of genius that accompany the insight of the literary artist. He has pointed out to us with great eloquence that, while specific doctrines take at various epochs very different degrees of importance, and aspects of rite, ceremony, and all that, appeal with changing force to different generations, the essence of religious feeling, without which dogma becomes harsh and rite insipid, hardly varies at all; seeing that in the musings of the great minds of all ages, we have oftenest the pure gold of devotion, mingled, though it may sometimes be, with the adhesive dross of superstition. He also warns us of the danger of mistaking pugnacity for piety, and earnestly urges that, at every moment of our lives, we should be trying to find out, not in what we differ from other men, but in what we agree. Ruskin considers this to be the correct spirit in which to approach ancient as well as modern religion, believing that if a reader cannot understand a spiritual agency, or thinks that the best of ancient men were not dominated by any such, the understanding of the very alphabet of history will be endangered. It would tend greatly to salvation from arid formalism, if ministers would teach that Plato, Sophocles, Browning, Carlyle, are all apostles of religion. A living word from an intuitionist like the last-named not unfrequently vivifies with new force the dark sayings {179} of a Hebrew seer, in much more direct fashion than half-a-score of mutilated Pentateuchs made in the delirium of the Higher Criticism.

In spite of his unsystematic procedure, Ruskin deserves to be numbered among the men who have earned the gratitude of their fellows, by translating some of the ever-vital aspects of religion into the vocabulary of the hour. The language of religious discourse is liable to a subtle kind of pedantry, requiring a vigorous intellect adequately to dissolve. New illustrations, novel forms of definition, are often helpful in expelling the dreariness of outworn and meaningless phrases. Ruskin's task is facilitated by the nice balance of his intellectual and imaginative endowments, by the fact that his words are not mere symbols of definite connotation, but marvellous centres of emotional force. Happily he did not seek to elaborate any system of religion: but now here, now there, in his books, one comes upon the pure gold of religion, enshrined in exquisite jewelries of diction, which glimmer on (if I may say so) to the utmost verge of emotion, and more successfully than any formal harangue, work out their intended function. Such works as *Unto this Last* and *Munera Pulveris*, however keen the mental antagonism they may initially provoke, mark a period in the spiritual life of the reader: no matter what the prepossessions of a man may be, these books will modify them. He is reverent, but, like Plato, he is dynamic. You can't sit at ease as you read his pages, for they are charged as much with defiance as with guidance. {180}

CHAPTER IV.

EDUCATIONAL.

Some Insular Dominies—Education Act of 1872—Education in the Highlands—Feeding the hungry—Parish Council boarders—Dwindling attendances—Arnisdale—Golspie Technical School—On the Sidlaws—Some surprises—Arran schools—Science and literature—Study of Scott—The old classical dominie—Vogue of Latin in former times—Teachers and examinations—Howlers—Competing subjects.

SOME INSULAR DOMINIES.

It is by no means an easy matter for a teacher to get south again once he is installed in a remote Highland school. He accepts a distant rural or insular post, marries the girl of his heart, gets settled in the schoolhouse of the glen or township, and rarely moves thence all the succeeding years of his life. He becomes identified with local affairs; plays whist maybe with the doctor, the factor, and the banker; and is apt to magnify the cackle of his bourg into the great Voice that echoes round the world. The monotony of his life is varied by such happenings as a birth or a death in his own household, a visit from the emissary of My Lords, an epidemic of measles, a general election, and the like. I don't say these men are unhappy, but unless they develop a hobby, torpidity is bound to settle like a mist upon their brains. Such studies as geology, botany, and gardening, are sovereign for driving off the vapours of ennui. Nor are golf, angling, and the composition of verse, specifics that the rural dominie can afford to despise. {181}

I have in my mind at this moment the portraits of many notable gentlemen (for true gentlemen they are, though their purses are thin) who have given up their lives to educating the progeny of the inclement North. Lamont, for example, whom I remember as a first-class mathematician, is living in the marshy navel of an Outer Isle, amid wild-fowl and spirals of peat-reek. If you want to visit him you have (1) to cross the billowy western deep; (2) drive fifteen miles in a trap; (3) traverse a four-mile arm of the sea in a ferry that needs baling; (4) proceed seven miles to another ferry two miles in breadth; (5) hop, step, and jump three miles along a narrow and tortuous track, enough to give vertigo to a goat. Lamont is not unhappy: he keeps his mind active by solving stiff quadratic equations and fiddling with Cartesian co-ordinates. I hope he will get credit for all these studies, when the last trump sounds, for he gets little enough at present.

Ramsay, too, is a dweller among these treeless bogs, and is engaged, during his leisure, on a translation of Anacreon which will never be finished, or, if finished, will never be published. I called on him and immolated myself on the altar of his Anacreon in order to give him a little pleasure. He, later on, enlarged on his school, scholars, and daily life. The horizon of the boys and girls is extremely limited: most of them have never seen either a pig or a policeman. Cabbages have only been recently introduced into the district, but are already thriving wonderfully well considering the thin soil. There are of course no trees: for what trees could stand against the buffeting of the fierce wintry gales of the Atlantic? Ramsay's only chum is a missionary, who is of an antiquarian turn, and goes fumbling about for arrow-heads and prehistoric bracelets, especially after a storm, when the hill-sides are laid bare. {182}

Neither Lamont nor Ramsay know a word of Gaelic, and there they are in districts where English is a foreign language. Needless to say, the lack of Gaelic is a terrible drawback to these two men. They should never have been where they are, for they are aliens. The scholars, unbreeched little rogues, have an advantage over their teacher, and in the playground talk the tongue of the Celt invariably, and may be maligning him for all he knows. I am afraid, too, that teacher and minister do not always consider themselves as auxiliaries in these outer isles. The younger generation of teachers have, as might be expected, a more extensive knowledge of books than the old school of Presbyterian ministers. The latter, feeling their literary inferiority, are inclined to regard the teacher as an intruder whose work in the school-room will cause the rising generation to look slightingly on the "essentials." I have in my possession numerous letters from Highland teachers dealing with this fear on the part of the clergy, that novels and secular literature generally will pervert the minds of the people. The addition of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's books to a library was recently likened to the arrival of the Serpent in Eden. {183}

EDUCATION ACT OF 1872.

In one of the best-known chapters of *Rob Roy*, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, the utilitarian Glasgow merchant, says to his cattle-reiving kinsman: "Your boys, Rob, dinna ken the very multiplication table, which is the root o' a useful knowledge, and it's my belief they can neither read, write, nor cipher, if sic a thing could be believed o' ane's ain connections in a Christian land." Rob replies in a sentence that is worthy of being put alongside the remark of old Earl Douglas in the poem of *Marmion*: "Hamish can bring down a blackcock on the wing with a single bullet, and Rob can drive a dirk through a twa-inch board." These quotations adequately explain the almost complete absence of prose remains in the literature of the Gael. Bards there were in plenty, but they could neither read nor write.

In the year 1872, education was made the concern of the nation. It was rightly considered to be a standing menace to the security of the realm that ignorance, which is the parent of disorder and lawlessness, should be the doom of a large proportion of the nation. Rather than hazard the dangers of an illiterate population, education was undertaken by the State, and paid for out of the national purse. The analogy between disease and ignorance is, in truth, sufficiently close to

justify both sanitation and education coming into the wide domain of imperial duties.

Looking back on the changes that resulted in the Lowlands from the Education Act of 1872, we see grounds for criticism. The measure, like all earthly things, was imperfect. There was {184} something hard and inelastic about the system fostered by the old Code. The psychology of Child Nature was almost totally ignored. A system of examination was established that assumed an equal and mechanical progress on the part of every child every year. Yet, in spite of grave defects, the Act of 1872 brought inestimable blessings with it. For one thing, the health conditions of education were vastly improved. Many of the old schools were absolute hovels. After 1872, large, airy, and spacious buildings, were erected in every district of the land. It was no longer a case of one old dominie facing singly a whole regiment of unruly youngsters: every school was organised and disciplined into regular and seemly order. We had the advantage in Scotland of a complete system of School Boards, and that awakened an intense and universal interest in educational affairs. The old parochial schools of Scotland had many admirable features, but in 1872 they were quite unfit to cope with the nation's needs. On the whole, the School Board system was a decided boon to the land.

EDUCATION IN THE HIGHLANDS.

It is only since the Act of 1872 that any education of a serious or systematic kind has been attempted in the Celtic parts of Scotland. Nevertheless, a word of praise is due to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and other civilising agencies of the Churches (Established and {185} Free), for their work during the educational night that preceded the Act. These agencies were, of course, utterly inadequate to meet the needs of the Highlands, as may be easily seen from the fact that in 1862, over 47 per cent. of the men who married, could not sign their own names. But, indeed, what resources, save those of the Imperial Treasury, could ever be adequate to meet the expense of educating the children spread over such wide and sparsely-peopled tracts? Sheriff Nicolson, one of the most fervid Gaels that ever lived, made a report to Government in 1865, characterising the education given in the Highland schools as lamentably insufficient.

The effects of the Act of 1872 were slow but sure, and in the course of fifteen years a change, analogous to that effected by General Wade in the state of the roads, was brought about in the realm of education. Yet the expenses involved in the working of the measure were of an unduly burdensome kind, in spite of the generous bounty of the Education Department. In some of the large parishes of the Long Island, the heavy school rate was such a cause of complaint that My Lords were forced to take very drastic measures to relieve the financial strain. In summing up the results of the Education Act, Professor Magnus Maclean says: "Among the good things that education has brought the Highlanders, are a knowledge of English, wider social and political interests, a brighter intelligence and brighter outlook, freedom from mental vacuity and traditional superstitions." {186}

FEEDING THE HUNGRY.

Probably, as I have hinted, one of the chief benefits of the Education Act, was that teaching had to be carried on in conditions of space and air. Given such conditions and an enthusiastic master, some good progress will certainly be made.

Connected with the physical side of education we have had, of late, signs of a new departure. There is a talk of *feeding the hungry*.

Every parent worthy of the name is proud to provide food and clothing for his children. That's what he's there for. But it does not require much keenness of vision to see that there are many parents unworthy of the name, and that, by the dark and inscrutable degrees of Heaven, such worthless individuals are often allowed to be parents of a numerous progeny. We must (i) inject into these wastrels the feeling of responsibility and (ii) prevent the children from dying of starvation. The first problem requires lengthy treatment and is perhaps hopeless of accomplishment; the second can be done at once by philanthropy, either individual or national.

However much it may wound the pride of our gilded youth, it can hardly be asserted that birth and rank are matters that involve the slightest personal merit. It seems to be an affair of the purest accident into what class of society a child is born. We have overcome the difficulties and dangers of youth—most of us—but it might well have been otherwise. Soften your hearts, ye political economists, and cease to regard the poor, the weak, and the wretched as criminals. If {187} there is no wealth but life, our country must soon be poor indeed should the rising generation be sickly and underfed. Bairns must not be allowed to study on an empty stomach.

PARISH COUNCIL BOARDERS.

Let me here mention a point alluded to by more than one friend of the Highlands. It has reference to one aspect of the new science called Eugenics, which deals with the means for producing the maximum of vigour in our nation. It is not well enough known that for years the authorities have been pouring into a few of the islands and straths of the North and West a great number of maimed, consumptive, and mentally defective children. Some houses in the Hebrides have three or four of these children, who, but for the action of the authorities, would be living under the most deplorable conditions of life in the towns. The results, as regarding improvement in health and physique, are of the most encouraging kind.[21]

After a certain age the official subsidy ceases, and the children as a rule go to work on the farms and crofts. It is evident that such extensive planting out of city boys and girls is bound by and by {188} to work a great change in the composition of our rural districts. It is believed that some of the islands would soon be without children but for these incomers: it is a well-known fact that the indigenous youthful population of certain of them is very meagre indeed. We are thus in modern times witnessing some most instructive operations of Nature: for generations the country has been depleted to swell the bloated population of the towns; and now the wastage of the cities is being sent back to the country to get a renewal of vigour at the primeval fountain of health.

There is one further point of great moment. As a proportion, relatively large, of these children come of morally dubious parentage, it is of supreme interest to know their subsequent career and conduct. I have seen reports and statistics which seem to prove that questionable heredity can be overborne by healthy surroundings and good training; in other words, that the offspring of criminals may, if rescued early from a vicious environment, become respectable citizens. Such facts ought to rejoice the hearts of all moral reformers.

DWINDLING ATTENDANCES.

It is in the country school that the need for new blood is most apparent to the eye. In schools capable of holding 120 children, you will often find a shrunken roll of less than a dozen. A gentleman of mature years usually does all the teaching and keeps himself from getting insane by breeding hens and cultivating roses in his spare time. He has also, in all likelihood, the little {189} pickings of officialdom in the district, and is registrar, session-clerk, and precentor. One facetious teacher, who dwelt on a wide moor, headed his letter to me *Parish Council Chambers*, thereby suggesting marble staircases and sumptuous furniture. It was this same teacher who, on being asked to bring forward Standard V. for inspection, had to admit that Standard V. was laid up with a broken leg. For such small schools there is an increasing difficulty in finding male teachers.[22] Widows, who in their ante-nuptial days, had been engaged in teaching are often preferred to men, for reasons of salary. The lot of such women, who have usually families to support out of their meagre earnings, is hard indeed: if they keep their health, they manage tolerably well, but when illness comes into the house, there must be a deal of suffering and distress. The young pupils who attend the remote schools of the uplands, also deserve much sympathy. During the heavy snows and extreme cold of winter, these children—often ill-shod and scantily fed—have to trudge along miles of country cross-roads or hill-paths to their little school. Our country is a glory to the eye when mid-summer and autumn are there, but think of the harsh winter months with their torrents of driving rain, their whirlwinds of hail and sleet and the icy nip of the blasts that {190} blow down the snow-sheeted glens.

ARNISDALE, ETC.

It will be perhaps interesting to the general reader if I strive, by drawing on my reminiscences, to give him an idea of how education is carried on in certain remote corners of Scotland at the present time. He will, perhaps, be led to admire as much as I do the noble work that is being done by teachers and inspectors for the rising generation of the country.

Arnisdale, on the mainland facing Skye, is a very destitute district, and has suffered much from the failure of the once-flourishing herring-fishery of Loch Hourn. One can see by the attire of the children that the poverty must be exceptional, even for the Highlands. The teacher says that in winter she has to think as much how to feed the children as to teach them. By the charity of some benevolent visitors, she was, last winter, able to give the pupils a mid-day meal of cocoa and biscuits. It is a sad contrast to the extraordinary beauty of this picturesque spot that such dire misery should overtake a proportion of the natives during the winter season.

Arnisdale is not very accessible, even in the height of the summer traffic, and when one gets there, it is a problem how to get away. I asked the captain of the *Glencoe* to set me down near what is called the *dry island*, in Loch Hourn, and thence I was rowed ashore by two very wild-looking, unkempt boatmen. The school-house, where I lodged, is right on the beach, and just at {191} the base of the gigantic Ben Screel. Twelve miles along the coast, by a road of the most awe-inspiring kind, one comes to the interesting nook of Glenelg, with its Pictish towers and ruined barracks.

It was a mild and hazy morning when I traversed the road between Arnisdale and Glenelg. On coming to the summit, a great breeze arose and drove away the heavy white mists from the Sound of Sleat, and showed the white, sentinel-like lighthouse of Isle Ornsay and great fertile stretches of the near portion of Skye. Reluctantly the clouds finally curled and rolled away before the wind and the glitter of the sun, until the Cuchullins were visible beyond the water and the green peninsula of Sleat.

In a cosy recess near the highest part of the road, beside a bubbling spring, a *gipsy family* had pitched its tent. I admired the taste shown in the selection of a place commanding such a view. The family was still under canvas, but hanging on the branch of a tree was a worn and mud-stained skirt. Do not ladies in hotels, in similar fashion, hang out their dusty and travel-soiled attire at the doors of their chambers? And perhaps the dark-skinned owner had hung up her dank and dripping weeds in the hope that some silvan faun or Robin Goodfellow would, without a tip, perform the dusting process, in this case so palpably necessary. We do wrong in supposing that imagination is not the portion of these woodland rovers.

One of the most difficult problems of the Education Department is to see that gipsy children get a suitable amount of schooling. "Here awa', there awa', wandering Willie," is applicable to all their {192} tribe. How can progressive instruction be carried on where there is no fixity of habitation? One day the camp is pitched on an eminence overlooking Loch Hourn; but before twelve hours have passed, the nomads may have crossed the ferry at Kyleakin and be warming their hands round a blaze of stolen peats in the wild moorland between Portree and Dunvegan. Only in winter, when frost and snow drive the gipsies into the city slums, do the children get some smattering of the three R's.

GOLSPIE TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

There are now in the Highlands a number of excellent higher class public schools, in which the elements of secondary education are taught. The pupils in these schools are drawn from wide areas, and, by means of bursaries, can board away from their own homes. The Golspie Technical School is an altogether unique higher-grade institution. At a library lecture delivered in Golspie, the boys belonging to the school (forty-eight in number, divided into four clans, each with a chief) were present, accompanied by the Principal and his staff. My attention was at once drawn to them by their fine physique, their gentlemanly bearing, and their earnest attention. Next day, I had the pleasure of visiting the school and seeing the working of the scheme initiated by the Duchess of Sutherland.

The institution is really a boarding-school for poor lads of talent belonging to the northern counties. They are under the eye of some teacher at every hour of the day, and are kept incessantly busy, not at books alone. They are taught to do their own washing, dusting, {193} scrubbing, cooking, and darning. The training is excellent: one is impressed by its practical character and educational thoroughness. Latin and Greek are not attempted at all, the literary instruction being entirely based on English and the modern tongues. The science part of the curriculum is remarkably complete, and art is by no means neglected.

Before a pupil has the good fortune to be admitted, the Principal visits the parents. It is almost incredible (so he told me) the squalor of some of the cots he had seen. Too often, in the Highlands, the one bedroom of the family (frequently identical with the kitchen) has free communication with a malodorous byre or stye. What a contrast with the dormitory of the Technical School, where there is no lullaby of lowing kine, but a tranquil, high-roofed hall that would do for the siesta of the Duke of Sutherland himself!

ON THE SIDLAWS.

High up on a spur of the Sidlaw Hills in the county of Forfar, there is a wee school that supplies education for a wide and sparsely-peopled countryside. The teacher is Mr. Brown, who was once a dominie in the island of Whalsay. He is a jovial and courteous man, and leads you on very astutely to ask him how long he taught there. Such a question gives him the opportunity of replying with a laugh: "*I was there exactly the length of time Napoleon was in St. Helena, five years and seven months*." When in Whalsay, Mr. Brown took the service on Sunday, if the minister happened to be ill. In this capacity he achieved great popularity by the meritorious {194} device of shortening the sermon to fifteen minutes. He was so much in love with the first sermon he wrote, that he never wrote another, contenting himself with giving it again and again, and merely varying the text. If he could only hit upon a suitable title, and a suitable publisher for this sermon, Mr. Brown would get it printed, and scattered broadcast over the Shetland Islands. I believe it would furnish unique food for thought even to sinners on the mainland.

Mr. Brown received me with extreme kindness, and invited me inside to see his school. I heard his senior class read, and thought the pronunciation extremely good. About 12.55 the attention of the pupils became visibly impaired; glances were furtively cast towards the door; there was a feeling of expectancy all along the benches. Suddenly the door sprang open, as if by some violent external impact, and a middle-aged dame entered, carrying in each hand a large pail of steaming potato-soup. Accompanying her was a young woman with dozens of small pewter basins, and large spoons. I never saw such expeditious ladling, such quick distribution, such speed of consumption, and such manifest enjoyment all round. The steam of the soup obscured the wall-maps, and the parsing exercise on the blackboard. The children could get as many helpings as nature would permit, *for one farthing*. When the mist cleared away, teacher and taught once more proceeded to tackle simple proportion and analysis of sentences. I personally examined the soup, and found it to be "nae skinking ware that jaups in luggies." {195}

SOME SURPRISES.

Some surprises are in store for one who calls in casually at some of the remoter schools. I have more than once found the teacher *giving instruction in his shirt sleeves*. In one school, I saw the master with *a large melodeon* (the Board being too stingy to supply a piano), giving an inharmonious accompaniment to the musical drill. I got a dreadful surprise on meeting the schoolmaster of a district in Jura: the unfortunate gentleman was *stone-deaf*, his auditory nerves being completely destroyed. Yet he managed, unaided, a school of forty-seven pupils, and got excellent reports. The case is unparalleled in my experience, and I should not have believed it possible had I not personally seen the man at his work. He heard with his eyes, and could most nimbly interpret what his pupils said by watching their lips. The scholars liked him, and did not

attempt to take advantage of his defect. In another insular school, I was introduced to a lady-teacher who had *lost both her arms in youth*, and who, in consequence, has been forced to bring up her pupils entirely on the principles of moral suasion. By holding the pen with her teeth, she can write a fine running *hand* (if I may say so without violence to language). She is an extremely clever lady: it was a treat to see how well she could control the children with a word or a glance.

Some teachers in the Lowlands complain of children playing truant. That vice is not common in the Highlands, but it exists to a slight extent.

In my presence the teacher of a school in Skye made the absentees of the previous day, write out their reasons for non-attendance. I give some of the typical answers: {196}

(i.) Dear Sir,—I had to work all day at the peats.

(ii.) I was kept at home for harrowing with the horses.

(iii.) I was herding the lambs and keeping them from the sheep.

(iv.) *I was on the shore all day, but I will not do it again.*

ARRAN SCHOOLS.

The Arran schools that I had the pleasure of visiting struck me as being very well managed. It is wonderful how much excellent work some of these country children get through. The schools are almost all supplied with Paisley libraries, and thus the pupils, under the guidance of their masters, can overtake an extensive course of reading in British authors. At Loch Ranza the higher pupils study Shakespeare, Shelley, and Wordsworth.[23]

There is no desire whatever on the part of the young people to be taught the language of their forefathers. As a consequence, Gaelic is rapidly dying out in the island. Twenty years ago it was the language of the playground at Whiting Bay: now the pupils speak English only. At my request the teacher there addressed a few Gaelic phrases to the assembled children, but only two knew what he was saying. In the neighbourhood of Lagg, there is a more general knowledge of the venerable tongue. {197}

In spite of the decay of Gaelic, Arran has produced some Celtic scholars of great brilliancy, the most eminent being the late Dr. Cameron of Brodick. Mr. Kennedy of Caticol has made a great reputation for himself in philology: he is in touch with Celtic scholarship on the Continent and is also an adept in Irish Gaelic. In his manse, I saw a famous Celtic manuscript, the *Fernaig MS.*, a brown-leaved passbook, full of old poems written carefully in a very small neat hand. It is said to be worth £2,000, but not having that amount of loose cash about me, I could not gratify myself by offering to purchase it.

SCIENCE AND LITERATURE.

Those rural teachers cannot be too strongly commended who combine literary studies with work in the open air. I know some masters who encourage their pupils to collect, say, all the flowers mentioned in Wordsworth and Burns. That is idealising the study of botany in a most delicious way. Wordsworth's descriptions of flowers are nothing less than divine: to take a single example out of hundreds, his lines on the daffodils beginning—

"I wandered lonely as a cloud."

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Even the gayest of our lyrists, Herrick, has something to say about that flower that is as powerful as a sermon. Birds, trees, and flowers should, as far as possible, be known by all the young people, and some poetic word associated with each. It is astonishing how accurately our best poets describe the objects of nature, and how their imaginative touches show insight and give a pleasure above mere science. Spenser's catalogue of the trees is worth knowing by heart. All the vicissitudes of the changing months have their apt poetical descriptions if we only look for them. Cowper, Thomson, and Wordsworth might be especially recommended to pupils for their brilliant word-painting of landscape. I cannot think of a finer adjunct to the teaching of open-air science than the auxiliary descriptions of such great masters of verse.

As Mendelssohn composed *songs* without words, so may the schoolmaster give *lessons* of the most powerful import without a word being spoken. A beautiful interior in a schoolroom is a silent lesson in order and good taste. Beauty and order have a most valuable influence on the emotions and the character. It is a pleasure to see the attention that is now given to the cultivation of taste. Clean, bright class-rooms; pictures of artistic merit on the walls; busts; collections of fossils, sea-shells, and the like—these are to be found even in remote country schools. Such spontaneous education of the eye is something that cannot be overestimated for importance and fruitfulness.

Lord Avebury puts the case for artistic environment very well indeed. "Our great danger in education," he says, "is the worship of book-learning—the confusion of instruction and education. We strain the memory instead of cultivating the mind. The children are wearied by the mechanical act of writing and the interminable intricacies of spelling; they are oppressed by columns of dates, by lists of kings and places, which convey no definite idea to their minds, and have no near relation to their daily wants and occupations. We ought to follow exactly the {199}

opposite course, and endeavour to cultivate their taste rather than fill their minds with dry facts."

There is one precious faculty that runs the risk of being stifled by too much memory work. I mean the faculty of imagination. Youth is the time when fancy is busy; it is the period when the brain can furnish unlimited scaffolding for castles in the air. Wordsworth was so impressed, indeed, by the opulence of the youthful fancy, that he could only account for it by supposing recent contact with heaven.

STUDY OF SCOTT.

I sometimes think that in the training of the youthful intellect and imagination we have not made sufficient use of the novels and romances of Scott. Of late years a great improvement is noticeable in this respect, and Scott is coming to be regarded as (for school purposes) our greatest historian. In some schools, as Lord Avebury has hinted, it was formerly thought that pupils knew history adequately when they could rattle off a list of dates and tell something of the deeds and misdeeds of a set of unhappy persons who masqueraded as statesmen and courtiers. {200} Such unedifying farce has nothing to do with history, which is a serious, instructive, and all-embracing study. The social life of the great mass of a nation is far more important and interesting than the eccentric deeds of a few high-placed rogues or saints. The old school-history was, unfortunately, too often a glum compendium of insignificant detail, told without breadth of view or fire of restorative imagination.

In the history of Scotland, most of what is worth knowing may be most enjoyably learned from the pages of Sir Walter. Hardly any epoch of Caledonian annals, hardly any county in the land has escaped the treatment of his masterly hand. From the Borders to the rain-lashed Shetlands (the *Pirate* deals with gusty Thule), from Perth to Morven, the great wizard has made his country known to all lands. In his stories the past faithfully reproduces itself, and we are impressed, instructed, and amused.

THE OLD CLASSICAL DOMINIE.

It is a pleasure to think that a few of the old school of Scotch dominies, who date from before the 1872 Act, are still to the fore, and still engaged in teaching. They have all fixity of tenure, and so enjoy the privilege of criticising, as adversely as they like, the degeneracy of modern educational developments. These "*old parochials*," as they are called, are men of good scholarship, well versed in Horace and Virgil, and generally fond of snuff and Latin quotations. {201}

The Act of 1872 did a great deal for elementary education, but very little indeed to encourage that type of higher instruction, which was the glory of the old parish school. Ian Maclaren and other writers have given pleasant sketches of country schoolmasters who were strong in the ancient tongues, and who sent their pupils straight to the benches of the University. I believe such men as "Domsey" were quite common in this country. Porteous, whom I knew, was one of these. Porteous was a philologist second to none in these realms, and was on intimate terms of acquaintanceship with the famous Veitch, who gave such a *redding up* to the Greek verbs. It was very amusing to hear the complete way in which Porteous could silence some imperial young examining professor on the weighty subject of classical derivation. The latter would appeal to some such authority as Curtius, whereupon Porteous would unlock the desk in which lay the tawse, and taking therefrom a copy of the invoked Curtius, open it at the root in question, and display the page all marked with pencil corrections and emendations. In support of his views, would come such a torrent of erudition from half a score of Classical, Sanscrit, Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon rills, that the young professor would feel "like one of sense forlorn," and be fain to put palm to forehead in dazed amazement. A pupil learning the rudiments under such a teacher, was dazzled rather than instructed by the ruthless surgery of words that constantly went on. No word was too small for Porteous to operate upon: he settled *hoti's* business, and could so inflate Greek vocables by supplying digammas and dropped consonants, that Plato would have disowned them. {202} Give him chalk, a blackboard, and a class of six, and he would in ten minutes fill the board with hieroglyphics, curves, arrow-headed diagonals, etc., all meant to illustrate the relationships, divergencies, and contrarieties of the Aryan roots. His life was spent in the company of these radicals, and he could call them forth out of their trickiest hiding-places. In the midst of his chalky toil, he would turn round with radiant glee as if to say, "This is a merry and exciting trade: it is my fun and is as good as poaching or golf." But woe betide the youth who showed levity. Soon would there be weeping and wailing and tingling of palms. His reputation for strap-wielding made roots respected.

Another teacher of the school of Porteous was Thomas Taylor, whose death I saw announced a few weeks ago. Where has all *his* Greek lore gone to, so assiduously cultivated, so continuously added to? If Taylor's soul is ever re-incarnated in a mortal body, it is absurd to suppose that he must begin to learn the Greek alphabet just like a novice. His clay is indeed mixed with the clay of common men, but I love to think of him dwelling on the other side of the River in the meads of asphodel, discussing with kindred shades, the topics he delighted to handle when he was here. With tearful eye I pen these doleful decasyllabics to his memory:—

> What chums Tom Taylor and Charles Lamb had been
> O'er bottled porter and the *Fairy Queen*! {203}
> In youth, one day, seeking forbidden fruit
> Tom tumbled from the branches with his loot,

And broken bones compelled the lad to go
On straddling crutches, warily and slow,
Counting the pebbles on his path below.
The noisy pleasures of the open air,
The football kicked exuberant here and there.
Cricket, beloved of sinewy juvenals,
And golf with all its hazards, clubs and balls,
Were not in Taylor's province: so he turned
To calmer pastimes where the ingle burned,
And when the whole world turned to *goals* and *tees*
He took to *Iliads* and to *Odysseys*.
He'd croon like one possessed the magic strain
Of heroes tossed along the unvintaged main,
And, crutch aloft in air, would fondly beat
Time to the rushing of the poet's feet.
Poetry was all his solace: those bright dames
That old Dan Chaucer in his rapture names,
And those in Villon's pages that appear
As dazzling-white as snows of yester-year,
Trooped past his eye in long procession fair.
O, Sovereign Virgin, what a crowd was there!
Helen, alas! with Paris by her side,
On the high deck crossing the sunny tide,
Circé, bright-moving in her godlike bloom
Before the throbbing music of the loom.
The love-lorn heroines of Shakespeare's plays,
The red-cheeked country girls of Burns's lays,
Would to his raptured eye the tear-drop bring,
And set his crazy quill a-sonnetting.

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VOGUE OF LATIN IN FORMER TIMES.

The old-world schoolmaster believed Latin was a universal specific. He loved the language and knew all the flock of frisky little exceptions of gender and conjugation, even as a shepherd knows his sheep. He gave his pupils gentle doses of the *Delectus*, and watched with eager, almost menacing, eye, for the working of the charm. It is quite possible that no pupil ever went over that *Delectus*, with its world-weary fragments of trite morality, without a feeling of pleasure at the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Yet it was educative, and moreover a boy was equipped for life with quotations suiting every juncture. Fate was powerless against one who had mastered the *Delectus*. The faculty of Latin quotation was to some extent also a badge of respectability. Fancy, too, the glory of being the exclusive possessor in a mixed company of the knowledge that Castor and Pollux came out of the one egg! It was a sore drawback to a boy once upon a time if he were shaky on the compounds of *fero*.

"*The pest of the present day is the prevalence of examinations*:" these, it is alleged, have destroyed the grand old freedom of learning which gave full scope for the individuality alike of teacher and pupil. Oh! those were days of the gods, when five hours were spent daily burrowing in Virgil and Horace! Arcadia was realised—a sunny clime of Nymphs, Fauns, and Graces. The supreme luxury of abundant time—the leisurely chewing of sweet-phrased morsels—is gone: it is gone, that chastity of phrase and perfection of idiom, which felt a bad quantity like a wound. The {205}
examination craze has destroyed the classical dominie, and the intrusion of science, falsely so-called, has well-nigh asphyxiated the Napææ of the dells. It was formerly possible for the teacher to develop to the full his literary taste and declaim the sonorous tit-bits of Virgil till the tears started from his eyes. Now the instructors of youth seem to regard the works of the tuneful Mantuan as composed for the purpose of illustrating the use of the Latin subjunctive. Youths cannot get at the Aeneid, the spirit and majesty of it, I mean, owing to the pestilential numbers of grammatical reminiscences recalled by almost every line. When once you begin to set examination papers on a subject, the romance seems to evaporate. There is something withering about test-questions. This modern disease of grammatical annotation, engendered largely by prosaic examiners, who have published grammars, is spreading to the English Classics, and we may soon expect Burns to furnish a text for exceptional scansion, bob-wheel metrics and general philological catechising. Items which glide effortless into the brain in desultory reading are not so easily remembered if the examination is in store. Certain gentlemen have recently been reading Milton with a pair of compasses in order to discover the exact point of the cæsural pause in every line: they give figures, strike percentages, and set questions which even the leading character in "Paradise Lost" couldn't answer. Literary microscopy is likely to ruin Shakespeare's reputation in school and would have done so long ago but for Lamb's *Tales*—a darling compilation and by far the best introduction to the poet. "*Shakespeare is a horrid man*" is the {206}
deliberate verdict of the schoolgirl who has been teased to death by the notes within the tawny covers of the Clarendon Press Edition. And fancy what Chaucer's Prologue must seem like, taught by a man bent only on philological hunts, variant readings, and a complete explanation of all the final e's.

TEACHERS AND EXAMINATIONS.

It has always seemed to me a matter for surprise that those who had for years studied the elements of Latin and Greek at school (and that with no small difficulty), should entirely neglect these tongues afterwards and read nothing composed in them. Most elaborate preparations are made to reach the Promised Land, but the weary passenger never gets there. Can it be that the preparations are too elaborate?[24] They are certainly not very interesting, and are, indeed, well fitted to disgust pupils with the classical tongues. Sir William Ramsay of Aberdeen, in a letter to the *Herald* some time ago, spoke strongly on this subject. {207}

Sir William says, with justice, that a teacher should teach his subject without any thought of examination. Every teacher would like to do that if he could. As a matter of fact, the secondary schoolmaster is forced to become a crammer. He codifies the catch questions of previous university preliminaries, excogitates similar weird lists of anomalies and exceptions, and doses the pupils on such stuff instead of really teaching the important parts of his subject. Experience seems to prove that the most effective way of rendering a subject dry, uneducational, and generally useless is to set examination papers on it. What can be more outrageous and grotesque than the practice of setting out-of-the-way questions because of the ease thus afforded to the examiners in correcting the answers of the helpless and puzzled candidates! Even though the questions set were plain and straightforward, it would be absurd to suppose that an hour or two in an examination hall could furnish sufficient data to pass or fail a candidate.

It used to be the glory of our universities that an average college class contained representatives of every grade of society in the land. Professor Ramsay says it is not so now: the professors have become pedagogic coaches, and the students grind rather than study. Sir William assures us that many who would make good students are frightened away by the preliminary examination. It would be interesting to know where these latter go when they leave school. Do they rush off to business at once, or do they proceed with their education in some extra-mural way? If they can afford the time, the university is certainly the place for them. Let the university gates be opened as wide as possible to all serious-minded youths, and let it be remembered that it is not necessarily those who sweat most over their books or take the highest honours that get most good from attendance at the lectures. {208}

It does not appear that, at present, our universities are adequately in touch with the nation. The great commercial community of Glasgow does not benefit nearly enough from having a famous seat of learning in its midst. We might learn a lesson from the Sorbonne how best to nationalise our universities. In Paris, the lecture halls are open to all, and it is possible for either native or foreigner to listen for hours daily, if he be so minded, to some of the finest and most erudite orators and scholars of Europe. There are, it is true, special students' courses, from which the general public is excluded, but the most important lectures are open to all. Hence the Sorbonne is a national institution in every sense of the word. I do not say that Glasgow does not benefit a little from the corps of professors at Gilmorehill. But the benefit is spasmodic, discontinuous, and extremely limited. Some of the professors do at times come down into the open and speak words of wisdom. But more is wanted than that if the universities are to be saved from denationalisation. We hear of Dugald Stewart's class-room being, in the old days, crowded with the keenest intellects of the Capital. But a university was not then a kind of higher-grade secondary school. {209}

HOWLERS.

Almost every schoolmaster I have met, either in the Highlands or Lowlands, has his budget of anecdotes, usually dealing with children's answers or the droll eccentricities of the local School Board. The answers of children are invariably entertaining; and I wish the Educational Institute of Scotland would appoint a committee to codify the howlers that come under the notice of its members. A collection of genuine howlers would be no unimportant service to the science of juvenile psychology. Let it be remembered that the eminent Professor Sully considered it in no way derogatory to his philosophical status to write on the subject of *dolls*. In bi-lingual districts children's answers would have a special value. Children are everywhere, of course, more or less bird-witted and inattentive. Here is a story which illustrates what Latin scholars call *contaminatio*. A teacher had given a lesson on the geography of Kent, laying special stress on Canterbury, as giving a title to the Anglican primate, and on Greenwich as the place through which, on the map, the first meridian is made to pass. At the close of the lesson, he wished to test the scholars, and asked one of them what Canterbury was famous for. At once came the glib reply: "Canterbury is the seat of an *archbishop through whom the first meridian passes*." The difficulty young pupils have in concentrating their ideas, is largely accountable for many of the diverting essays we have all heard and seen. On a recent visit to the romantic shores of Skye, I was shown the following essay on Water: "Water is a liquid, but in winter you can slide on it. In all kinds of water, little beasts occur to a greater or to a less extent. Even a great amount of heat cannot kill these curious little animals. *Hence some people prefer spirits*." From the same quarter I procured this nugget on patriotism. "Patriotism is love of country such as we see in Burns or Sir Walter Scott. Burns and Sir Walter wrote beautiful lines about their native land, and thousands of tourists came and circulated their money there. *It would be telling us* if writers would imitate these great patriots in our day." Many of the young scribes on the mainland can also indulge in a deal of brilliant irrelevancy. One of them being asked to write an essay on "Rivers," began thus: "*In ancient times, the chief use of rivers was for the baptizing of converts*." Another, in the course of a short life of King Alfred, made a strong point of that monarch's humility, adding, "In order to discover the plans of the Danes, he demeaned himself so far as to go to their camp *disguised as a* {210}

poet." The annual blue book of the Scotch Education Department used to include a recreative series of howlers that had been sent up in the various reports of the Government Inspectors. These tit-bits were well calculated to keep up the gaiety of nations. Of late years these howlers have been excised, but if Scotland had Home Rule they might re-appear.

The finer attenuations of speech are unknown to the soaring human boy. I was shown an essay on {211}
Ireland the other day in which the young writer compendiously remarked, "*The Irish are a bloodthirsty, lazy, and resentful race*." On Wordsworth, another juvenile critic thus expressed himself: "*Wordsworth's compositions are utter bosh*." The following extract is from an "Essay on the '15": "*The Rising of '15 was a failure because the Old Pretender was an unmitigated ass. Fancy an ass trying to take charge of a Rebellion!*"

A genial gentleman, Mr. Sneyd-Kynnersley, who retired from the Inspectorate some years ago, published in 1908 a book of choice reminiscences, containing some good specimens of schoolboy answers. Some of his howlers have long been known in the North: but a howler (like history) is wont to repeat itself. I saw in a Paisley boy's essay on Lambert Simnel the following sentence: "Lambert Simnel was a claimant for the English crown, and went about the country boasting that he was one of the princes who had been murdered in the Tower." Mr. Kynnersley's examinee wrote thus: "Prince Charles Edward claimed to be one of the little princes murdered in the Tower. He was found to be a deceiver, and was put into the king's kitchen to work."

A boy once told Mr. Kynnersley that *a quorum is a question asked at a meeting which the chairman is unable to answer*. I saw a definition of paradox, equally absurd: "*A paradox is something which is apparently not what it seems to be*."

It is a favourite geographical test to require a pupil to describe a coast journey between two seaports, and mention capes, rivers, and towns seen on the way. "Describe a trip from Greenock {212}
to the Isle of Man," said a teacher to his class; "I give you an hour to write it out." Very few were past Lochryan at the hour's end. One daring youth took his boat, which he christened "*The Comet*," right round the Mull of Kintyre, with intent to reach Douglas by way of Cape Wrath, the North Sea, Dover, Land's End, and St. George's Channel. When time was up, the *Comet*, all torn and tattered by the strumpet wind, was beating round the north end of Skye. That boy will, in all probability, turn out a deep-sea captain.

"How many days are there in a year?" asked an inspector of a class of Highland youngsters. No answer was given. "Tut, tut," said the inspector testily, "this is ridiculous. Is there *no one* who knows how many days there are in the year?" "Oh, yes, sir," said a boy reproachfully, "*God knows*."

"What kind of king was William III.?" inquired another examiner. "He had an aquiline nose, sir," said a boy. "What does that mean?" said the examiner. "*It means*," answered the boy, "*that William III.'s nose was turned up at the point like the beak of an eagle!*" "What right had William to the English throne?" continued the examiner, changing his ground. "*No right under heaven*," was the forceful Jacobite rejoinder.

Here is a tale, from the eastern seaboard of Scotland.

Inspector, M.A., Ph.D., LL.D., etc. (examining a class of ten-year olds): "Now, boys, what is the shape of the earth?"

Boy: "Roon, like an orange." {213}

Inspector: "But how do I *know*, how can I be *sure* that the earth is round like an orange?"

Boy: "*Because I tell't ye.*"

Pupils show great affection for the phrases of their text-books. Not long ago, at a written examination, a lad wrote in reply to a historical question which was puzzling him: "*The answer to this question is known only to the Great Searcher of Hearts*." What could the boy mean? Was it "cheek," ignorance, or piety? It was none of these. *It was Collier!* About thirty years ago, Dr. Collier, a modern Euphuist, composed a *History of England*, which deserves to be reckoned among the glories of the reign. Carlyle may be great, but Collier is greater: Collier is a theologian, philosopher, and *a' that*. The style of his history is a wondrous blend of *Ossian* and Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*; and its special peculiarity is that the words, owing to some feature, never really analysed, linger in the mind long after the sentences of the Shorter Catechism have become blurred. Collier is strong in tropes—a highly-dangerous feature. It is no doubt true, as he says, that William the Conqueror ruled with a rod of iron, but when a boy, after reading this metaphor, asserts that that sovereign ruled his subjects *with a long iron pole*, you begin to question the utility of historical study. "Joy-bells pealed and bonfires blazed," is a phrase of the Doctor's which sets all the caverns of the mind ringing, even though its historical setting is long forgotten. But unction is the chief feature of the history: there is a rotund finality about the author's spacious utterances, and a dodging of investigation by means of pious generalisations. {214}
The book has all the effect of a benediction. When it is really too tiresome to inquire into all the authorities on some affair of magnitude, it is so respectable to sum up in the phrase imitated by the youth alluded to above.

It is in the Secondary Schools of the country that the confusion of thought is apt to be most painfully seen. Far too much is attempted, and the pupils are overworked. A teacher in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, a *laudator temporis acti*, has a manuscript collection of howlers,

drawn from elementary, secondary, and university sources, with the following fearful lines as a preface:—

"Ye statesmen all, of high or humble station,
Collective conscience of the British nation,
Whether the frothing vat has made your name
Or tropes in carpet-bags begot your fame,
Behold the *product* of the education
Wherewith is dosed the rising generation.
And see the modern devotee of cram
At midnight hour hard-grinding for the exam.,
A moistened towel garlanding his brow,
And coffee simmering on the hob below.
High on a three-legged stool uncushioned, he
Sits glowering through his goggles painfully,
Nagging his brain with all a grinder's might
Till *one* sounds on the drowsy ear of night.
Like Sibyl's leaves the papers strew his floor
Wrought-out examples, 'wrinkles' by the score,
Conundrums algebraic, 'tips' on Conics
And thorny 'props' remembered by mnemonics.
Betweenwhiles as the slow time lagging goes,
He takes the spectacles from off his nose,
Removes the damper from his aching head, {215}
Pours out the coffee, cuts a slice of bread,
Sips wistfully the liquid from his cup:
The zeal to pass the exam. has eaten *him* up.
Thrice happy ye! born 'neath the ancient reign
When *Tityre tu* alone possessed the brain
(Ere Tyndall's tubes made sweating students numb)
And the whole aim of life was *di, do, dum*."

COMPETING SUBJECTS.

So numerous indeed are the subjects of the school curriculum in our day that howlers and confusion are bound to result. Formerly there was but one scheme (containing classics, mathematics, and a little English), and everybody took it. Now there is a kind of competition among the departments of a school as to which is the most culturing. When a fond mother asks the opinion of the masters as to what course of study her boy (whom she is entitled to think a genius of the first order) ought to pursue, she is often puzzled by the variety of answers. Mr. Test-tube, the Science Master, invariably prescribes an extensive course of chemistry. If a boy is to be a lawyer, he ought to know the principles of atomic combination and the doctrine of gases; if he thinks of the ministry, why then, having a thorough acquaintance with science, he will be competent to close the mouths of heretics, infidels, and such vermin. Dr. Aorist, on the other hand, believes that a sound knowledge of "*qui* with the subjunctive" is a splendid sheet-anchor for every squall in life's rude sea. "I wish my boy to be a civil engineer; what advice would you give me as to his studies?" "I have no hesitation in affirming," the Doctor replies, "that the boy {216} will build bridges all the better if he has his mind expanded and (so to speak) broadened by the study of subjects outside his special trade, such, *e.g.*, as the interesting fact that in ancient times 'All Gaul was divided into three parts.'"

The average boy has an impartial mind. As a rule, he has no prejudice in favour of either science or letters, his maxim being never to do to-day what he can put off till to-morrow.

His favourite books for home
Are buccaneering combats on the foam,
Or grim detective tales of Scotland Yard,
Where gleams the bull's-eye lamp and drips the poniard.

Parents may be reminded that the wide spaces of the colonies remain to be peopled and that many a *stickit minister* might have made a first-class empire-builder. {217}

CHAPTER V.

A TRIP TO SHETLAND.

Aberdeen—En route—Lerwick—Past and present saints—Some notes on the islands—A Shetland poet—A visit to Bressay—From Lerwick to Sandwick—Quarff—"That holy man, Noah"—Fladibister—Cunningsburgh—"Keeping off"—The indignant elder—Torquil Halcrow—Philology—A Sandwick gentleman—Local tales—Foulah and Fair Isle—The fishing season.

ABERDEEN.

The most expeditious and comfortable way of getting to Shetland is by way of Aberdeen.

I have passed through the city of *Bon Accord* about six times during the last twelvemonth, and like it better the more I see of it. It is one of the stateliest towns in Britain, and its main street, spacious, airy, and symmetrical, is hard to match. The architectural taste of the new University Buildings is perfect, and will be more striking still to the casual visitor, when the unsightly buildings all round have been torn down. It would be worth while going to Aberdeen if for nothing but to see the superb stretch of sandy beach between the mouths of the Don and the Dee: one could sit and dream away a whole forenoon there and be entirely oblivious to the proximity of a large town. {218}

The finest tribute paid to Aberdeen was written nearly four hundred years ago by the great Scotch poet, William Dunbar. Three years before Flodden, Queen Margaret passed through the town, and Dunbar, who accompanied her, was so delighted with the hospitality, loyalty, and lavish expenditure of the magistrates, that he wrote a eulogistic poem to commemorate the occasion. Dunbar carried away the impression that Aberdeen was a *blythe* place:

> "*Blythe* Aberdeen thou beryl of all tounis,
> Thou lamp of beauty, bounty and *blitheness*."

I do not find that the town has produced many poets, but it has been the cause of poetry in others.[25] A few years ago Mr. William Watson, out of gratitude for the LL.D. bestowed on him by the University, wrote a pleasant sonnet in which Aberdeen is represented as

> "Beaming benignant o'er the northern main."

As I sat on the seashore, repeating to myself the lines of Mr. Watson's poem, and breathing the fresh air, which an official of the bath-house told me was *made in Germany* (meaning thereby that the wind was blowing from the east), the thought struck me that it would be a pardonable pastime to employ the spare time I had before the boat started for Lerwick, in writing a *Sonnet to Mr. William Watson*. In such exercitations it is necessary to employ the second person singular: {219}

> Watson! I would thy pen were fluenter,
> And yet, perchance, thou usest stores of ink,
> Ampler than any of thy readers think,
> In blotting that wherein the first quick stir
> Of thought and genius made the language err.
> If Heaven had lent thy polished Muse a blink
> Of saving humour for her crambo-clink,
> Then never-dying fame had fallen to her.
> Yet Heaven be thanked for what it has bestowed
> On thee of what is tunefullest and best:
> The trim epistle, the heart-stirring ode,
> The witching freshness of a *Prince's Quest*,
> The soft romance that dreams of years gone by,
> Bright noons and dewy glades of Arcady.

EN ROUTE.

The little steamer that plies between Aberdeen and Lerwick is timed to leave the former port at 11.30 a.m., *or as soon afterwards as the tide will permit*. Often the boat does not leave for some hours after 11.30 a.m., the tide not being always to blame. What a capacity the boat has for empty barrels! I counted six heaped lorry-loads of them that were rolled on board, destined, later on, to be filled with herring up north among the islands.

It is extremely interesting (see Virgil III., 690) to stand in calm weather on the deck of a moving vessel and talk about the notable places on the coast with one who knows them well. Much information of a varied and piquant kind may thus be acquired. The Aberdeenshire coast is rather {220} unpicturesque, but many historical legends linger airily on the stern old ruins that are passed from time to time. I omit mention of these, preferring to tell an anecdote of recent years that is associated with the immense rocky sea-caverns, of world-wide fame, not far from Cruden Bay. During the Boer War, some Scotch journalists, strong in the science of genealogy, undertook to prove that all the generals at the front had Scotch blood in their veins. It seems that these patriotic penmen succeeded quite easily in making their contention good with respect to all the generals *save one*. No Scotch lineage could be found for General Buller. The difficulty was at last surmounted by the felicitous conjecture that he was one of the famous *Bullers of Buchan*!

About eight miles past Cruden Bay is Peterhead, the most easterly town in Britain. Great efforts are being made at present to boom this place as a health resort. I have heard it said that "printers who die at 30 of consumption elsewhere, weigh 21 stone at over threescore in Peterhead," also that "centenarians there have been known to get up at 5.30 a.m., to chop wood, no chill or bacillus daring to make them afraid." The Home Office has long thought highly of Peterhead as a place of permanent retreat for those afflicted with ethical infirmities.

After Peterhead is left behind, the steamer soon gets entirely away from land. All night long she

battles through the surges, passes about 2 a.m. the lonely Fair Isle, encompassed by the rushing roost, and two hours later Sumburgh Head is visible. The approach to Bressay, especially if the {221} rocks and precipices are half seen through driving haze, is suggestive, to a student, of the landscape of "Beowulf," with its *windy walls*, *shadow-helms*, *broad nesses*, and *glimmering sea-cliffs*.

As seen from the sea, Lerwick looks trim and picturesque, but when the visitor lands, he is apt to lose his bearings among its tortuous lanes. I followed a porter who was tottering under the weight of trunks, and asked him, as we treaded a flag-paved vennel: "Is it far to the main street?" He grimly replied: "This *is* the main street, sir." The response unnerved me, shaky as I was with seventeen hours' tossing on the North Sea. Once in the hotel, my spirits rose. A most welcome and savoury breakfast—consumed near an open window commanding a view over a sun-lit sound—is well able to hearten the most downcast.

LERWICK.

The town of Lerwick is indeed one of the finest of our island capitals, and is constantly becoming finer. No visitor can fail to be impressed by its unique natural harbour, gloriously screened by the God-given shelter of the island of Bressay. Commercial Street, which runs along the water's edge, is at the foot of a hill, and is so narrow in parts that two vehicles can hardly get past each other. If I stayed in Lerwick, I should not like to have any resident enemies, for it would be difficult to keep from brushing clothes with them in the main street. Up from this main street to the newer {222} town, on a plateau at the top, run numerous quaint wynds, sinuous, and not always well-scavenged. This new and well-built part contains the far-seen and notable Town Hall, the architecture of which would have pleased Ruskin, especially as its fine windows are all appositely illustrative of Shetlandic annals. By climbing the dusty clock-tower, one has a splendid view of all surrounding slopes and seas.

Here is a hint to prospective tourists. Take to the left when you quit the hall, get down the lane leading to the sea-crags, and walk for two miles in the direction of the rifle-range. It is a glorious and solitary walk—not altogether solitary, for the sea is invariably good company. Don't be so foolish as to keep on your hat: off with it, and let the air-borne sea-spume wet your brow. It is also a good thing to recite Byron's vigorous "Address to the Ocean,"—the odd cows you may pass will not stop their grazing for that. There is no finer air in King Edward's dominions than that which blows in this region, for the hill air meets the sea air that has come all the way from Norway, and the two coalesce to give the rapt pedestrian a mouthful of exhilarating ether. One who is really a poet and not merely a casual sonneteer, should try to get a site for his tent on this particular shore, and retire to compose an epoch-making epic. The mediæval saints knew what they were doing when they retired to little nooks and isles along this coast to pray and meditate undisturbed: it is much easier to feel devout in a fresh atmosphere, than in the squalor of a town. {223}

PAST AND PRESENT SAINTS.

What indeed astonishes the visitor to these northern isles is the immense number of ecclesiastical ruins. The Christian missionaries seem speedily to have translated their enthusiasm into stone and lime. What hymns were chanted and what sermons preached up there in bygone times, passes the wit of man to reckon! It is a far cry from Palestine to the Shetland creeks and voes, but the voice of the lowly Nazarene effectually reached the Celts and Norsemen of these treeless storm-lashed isles.

Many of the smaller islands have the appellation *papa*, which indicates, as I hinted above, that some monk or hermit, withdrawing from the world to pray and meditate, has bequeathed a whiff of sanctity to headland and skerry.

"The hermit good lives in the wood," says Coleridge, but for the Shetland *papa* there was no *nemorum murmur*:—

> No sun-illumined leafage met his eye
> Raised from perusal of the Holy Word,
> No murmur of the woodland zephyr-stirred
> Blended with his devotions sped on high,
> Only the chiding of the billows nigh.
> The clangour of the wheeling ocean-bird,
> Or soul-astounding shriek of storm-fiend heard
> From the dun cloud-battalions hurrying by,
> Greeted his ear: yet piously through all
> His life the austere anchorite remained, {224}
> On his lone island, buffeted by squall
> And sea, and faithful unto death obtained
> The promised guerdon that the Lord bestows
> Upon the pure in heart, and only those.

It has been asserted by those who have means of knowing, that the days of theological rigidity are past and gone in the Shetlands. Thing unheard of in the Hebrides—the shops are open on Sunday mornings for the sale of Saturday's *Scotsman* and *Herald*. In some parts of Scotland you could not hire a trap for a Sunday drive; in others, you *might* manage, by salving the driver's

conscience with a double fare. In Shetland the tariff is the same for the first and the last days of the week. To explain the ecclesiastical differences between the islands of the North and the West would require a philosopher with all Buckle's shrewdness and ingenuity. Buckle accounted for the sombre nature of Scotch theology by dwelling on the awe-inspiring reverberations of thunder among the Highland peaks. The easy-going creed of the Shetlands might perhaps be accounted for by a reference to the happy-go-lucky way in which the sea wanders at will among the confusion of peninsulas, islets, and skerries. Any theory is better than none at all, and geopsychical explanations are fashionable at present.

The pulpit stars twinkle with great lustre in these boreal regions. A country minister, with no preparatory groans, but sharp and trippingly thus began his homily some Sundays ago: "It is now thirty-five years since the Lord sent me to labour in this part of his vineyard, if vineyard I may {225} call it, where no grape was ever seen. On a bright summer morning thirty-five years ago, I turned the corner of the road and came among you. Young women, your mothers were in the fields, busy with the work of the crofts. Your mothers were exceedingly fair to look upon, and I am happy to say, my dear young sisters, that, by the providence of God, the beauty of your mothers has lost nothing by being transmitted to your comely selves. And now for my text, which you will find in Ezekiel, chapter *x* and verse *y*."

SOME NOTES ON THE ISLANDS.

A century ago Shetland was almost an unknown land to the Lowlanders of Scotland. When a Shetland minister was deputed to attend the General Assembly, it might take him a year to get there and back. His journey was a very circuitous one: he had to go in a trading vessel to Hamburg, take boat from Hamburg to London, and from London proceed to Leith. To return from Edinburgh, the journey was performed the reverse way. Now that there is a regular service between Aberdeen and Lerwick, and between Leith and several of the Shetland ports, the journey can be performed with comfort and expedition. Tourists flock North in the summer season to admire the scenery, catch the trout, and inhale the health-giving breezes.

The natives, being mainly of Norse descent, look with a kindly eye over the water in the direction of Bergen. They do not love Scotland, and they have their reasons. When the Shetlands were handed over to the Scotch kings, numbers of needy adventurers, armed with cheaply-got {226} charters, swooped down on the islands and dispossessed the native proprietors. This has neither been forgotten nor forgiven. Mr. Russell, who lived for three years among them, says:—"They believe that the present lairds are interlopers, and that they themselves have been defrauded and despoiled. They speak of these things only among themselves, and not openly; but those who have been in the country, and have gained their confidence, know that there is a strong undercurrent of feeling against Scotland and Scotsmen.... They conceive that they have a claim even as things are, to dwell on the land, and that a proprietor has no right to remove them from his estate." I was dreadfully shocked to notice that in a volume of tales published by a Lerwick author only four years ago, the leading villain was from the mainland. "Scotland is nothing to us," said a Shetlander to an inspector of schools. "What has Scotland ever done for us except send us *greedy ministers and dear meal*?"

In the old days, when communication with the mainland was uncertain and fitful, the luxuries of civilised life were quite unknown. In one outlying district a box of oranges was washed ashore from a wreck: these the natives boiled, under the impression that the orange was a novel kind of potato. A cask of treacle, come by in a similar way, was used like tar to daub the bottom of a smack. By and by a cow was seen to lick the boat with evident relish, and this opened the eyes of the natives to the real nature of the substance. Nowadays the natives are well in line with {227} modern civilisation, one of the most convincing proofs being that they buy drugs and patent medicines of every kind. One has only to scan the advertisement pages of the Shetland newspapers to note the persistent way in which quacks of all shades bring their nostrums before the notice of the islanders. Dyspepsia and rheumatism are the commonest ailments; and to combat these, myriads of pills and numberless elixirs are annually swallowed. Faith does a lot even when the drugs of a legitimate practitioner are concerned: the fact that you have swallowed something with a bitter taste is often a distinct aid to recovery. Mr. Russell, whom I referred to above, says: "To my surprise, I learned that some who were in extreme poverty, and had hardly enough food to eat, were in the habit of sending South for pills and patent medicines."

A SHETLAND POET.

Long before I ever thought of visiting Shetland, I was acquainted with the dialect spoken there, through having studied a most interesting little book of poems called *Rasmie's Büdie*, published in Paisley. The author of this book is Mr. Haldane Burgess, a very prolific and able writer, but unfortunately afflicted with blindness. During my short stay in Lerwick, I gave myself the pleasure of calling upon him, and I was intensely delighted with my reception. When the sense of sight is lost, that of touch becomes inordinately keen: Mr. Burgess has accordingly excellent control over his type-writer, and can compose as nimbly as in the days when his eyesight was {228} unimpaired. He spoke of his most recent novel, *The Treasure of Don Andreas*, and expressed himself as highly pleased at the criticism passed upon it by a reviewer in the *Athenæum*. Mr. Burgess begins composition every morning at seven, and regulates his life with military precision. On all departments of Shetlandic history, folk-lore, and dialect, he discourses with great knowledge, fluency, and animation. But his interests in the general field of modern

literature are extremely wide. He speaks the Norse language almost as easily as English, has studied Icelandic, and knows a good deal about the writers of modern France. Some friend had been reading Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* to him shortly before my visit. He was loud in praise of that book, the ironical insolence and pawky humour of which he had greatly enjoyed.

On parting from Mr. Burgess, I received from him a copy of his pleasant Shetlandic story *Tang*, a careful and illuminating study of island life and manners. The English style struck me as full, robust, and strongly tinged with poetical figures, and the character sketches drawn with the precision of intimate knowledge. All his prose works display great wealth of material, and much psychological insight. His most characteristic production, however, is his little book of poems mentioned above, *Rasmie's Büdie*. Rasmie is a Shetland crofter who is typical of the race: shrewd, kindly, thoughtful, and gifted with a touch of quaint sarcasm. He has perfectly clear views of life, this old peasant, and is quite free from cant, or superstition, or mystery. Some of his metaphors are droll: after long pondering on the scheme of creation, he comes to the conclusion {229} that earth is the field, heaven the house, and hell the "midden." Pope, speaking of *Paradise Lost*, complains that—

> "In quibbles angels and archangels join,
> And God the Father turns a school-divine."

What would the great Augustan have thought of verse in which God the Father is likened to a cosmic Crofter?

> "Dis Universe is Güd's grit croft,
> It's His by richt, wis never koft
> Frae gritter laird
> And ne'er sall be, laek laand o Toft
> Wi' idder shared."

For those who have the patience to pierce through the husk of Rasmie's dialect, much amusement and delight is in store.

A VISIT TO BRESSAY.

If Charles Lamb and Herbert Spencer had been sent to Lerwick and Bressay to write a report on what they saw, I daresay the difference of their accounts would have astonished every reader. Lamb would probably have swilled porter in the *Ultima Thule* Refreshment Bar and written a most interesting account of Bressay without ever crossing the Sound. The ribs of a big uncouth Dutch boat, square, cumbrous, shell-fretted, and tilted up on the beach, would probably have bulked more in Lamb's narrative than the modern steam-trawlers that abound in these waters. His politico-economical reflections on the rise in price of peppermint lozenges, consequent on the {230} annual arrival of the Dutch fishing crews would, I am sure, have furnished excellent reading. Spencer's report would have dealt, I fancy, with the rotation of crops, the cause of the different currents, the varieties of pigmentation (with percentages) among the islanders, and the evolution of fishing gear from its rudimentary forms—in sum with the definite combination of heterogeneous changes both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences. No two out of a hundred visitors see the same things, a fact which may help to prove Bishop Berkeley's theory that the universe is subjective entirely.

I went over to Bressay with a genial and erudite clergyman to visit the schoolhouse and inspect the ruins of an eighth century church. Three Shetland women rowed us over the Sound and handled the oars splendidly. The minister, a plump, jolly be-spectacled gentleman, who has not "perpetrated matrimony," declared with a sigh that he was an unprotected male, and on our arrival at the Bressay beach, he called aloud to the oarswomen to lift him out of the boat. These muscular dames shrieked with laughter and proceeded to unship their oars as if to buffet him: he, thereupon, leaped lightly enough on the strand and, turning round, would have improved the occasion by a word in season had not the tittering Nereids begun to splash him as he stood on the shingle.

Innumerable sheep pasture on the Bressay slopes, and on the sky-line of some of the hills one can discern companies of rollicking Shetland ponies. My friend, the minister, who is writing a book on {231} Darwin, got into conversation with Mr. Manson, the Bressay pony-breeder. The latter spoke thus about his tiny steeds: "Pony-breeding is a more puzzling business than anything else in God's universe. The parents, grandparents, and great grandparents of a given pony have all been perfect in every point. Good! You naturally expect that a pony with such exceptionable ancestry will itself be without a flaw. But is it? No, often it is not. Too frequently you get bitter water from sweet, and thistles instead of grapes. Just look at that tricky, mischievous, ill-tempered, wall-eyed little rascal. Where did he get his evil cantrips and his wall-eye? I have known his ancestors for four generations back and they were all without a blemish." The minister made a note of this fact within the book and volume of his brain: it may be useful in the pulpit, and I expect to see it in print when he publishes his book on Darwin.

The eighth century church was at last reached. It is about three miles from the landing-place and quite near the water. Every point was most lucidly explained by my ecclesiastical guide. To the outer eye the place consisted of some low, ruined walls enclosing various species of rank, wet grass. Such remains of olden piety are provocative of gloomy reverie, which the rushing of the

inconstant tide close by only serves to deepen. Immediately after the Crucifixion and long before this church was reared by saintly hands, the little Christian communities thought the kingdom of God would shortly be established and all sin and suffering be banished from the world. But the {232} apostles died, and so successively have

"Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child"—

the bishop, the church-builder, and the patriot in all those generations, and the kingdom of God is not with us yet, seems, indeed, to be as far off as ever. When the world has been at peace for a while and the millennium seems imminent, all of a sudden a perverse, stiff-necked, *wall-eyed* generation supervenes, and evolution gives way to deterioration!

Lightly bounding down the ages, my companion turned my thoughts from unrealised dreams of religion to those of politics. Along these waters that cast their spray on the ancient ruin, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, third husband of Queen Mary, fled in hot haste, with a pursuing squadron at his heels, in the year 1567. Kirkaldy of Grange entered the Sound of Bressay as Bothwell was leaving by the northern exit.

Our walk lasted about four hours, and ended up in the school-house, where the teacher's hospitable dame regaled us to a welcome and excellent cup of tea. It did us good after the strain of so many reminiscences. The teacher is a hearty and sociable gentleman, who loves his books and his fireside. On the fine Saturdays, friends ferry across from Lerwick for a round of golf with him over the Bressay links. The fine library, recently sent from Paisley, furnishes a pleasant variety of reading both for himself and his pupils. On my remarking that, as chairman at the {233} lecture next evening, he need not speak more than thirty minutes, he replied, with visible emotion, that he would concentrate his remarks into a space of thirty seconds.

We got back to Lerwick in a lugsail that was full of passengers, potatoes, and milk-cans. There was a good deal of loud, elementary chaff during the twenty minutes' crossing. An old, wrinked, peat-smoked dame gave us much good advice and (better still) a sprig of white heather apiece. I found by subsequent experience that the trip is not always so amusing. Next evening a boatman pulled us over, and it was stiff work for him, as the Sound was lumpy and the wind contrary. Coming back, he hoisted his sail, and we careered over in rollicking style. I was a little scared at the swift-rushing currents and the switchback motion of the boat. Overhead were moon, stars, and flying clouds; the hulls of big steamers loomed like phantoms on the surface of the Sound; on the hill opposite twinkled the ever-nearing light of Lerwick.

Bressay, I may add, has a nice little hall, with all items of modern convenience, including ventilation. The building is used for every legitimate purpose, from worship to *weel-timed daffin'*.

FROM LERWICK TO SANDWICK.

I have a vivid recollection of a day's drive from Lerwick to Sandwick, down the long, narrow peninsula that terminates in Sumburgh head. I was accompanied by the reverend gentleman already alluded to in connection with Bressay. {234}

It is a common saying in the isles that Shakespeare had his eye on the soil of Shetland when he pronounced the famous line:

"'Tis true, 'tis *peaty*, 'tis *peaty* 'tis, 'tis true."

On all sides in the country you see acre after acre of bog, dripping with moisture and exuding black runnels whenever the spade of the peat-cutter begins to slice its fibrous bulk. Should a wayfarer leave the road by mishap after nightfall, he would soon be plunging in the treacherous morasses. It is well for him to have a lantern swinging at his girdle when the sun has gone down.

Such are the reflections suggested by a view of the country between Lerwick and the little clachan of Quarff.

QUARFF.

Quarff is the headquarters of a minister who is said to be the only extempore preacher in Shetland, if the word can be appropriately applied to one who, being blind, has to prepare his sermons in "the quick forge and working-house of thought" without the succour of books. This gentleman spent long years in the little islets called *Skerries*, and, like a miniature Augustine or Columba, claims to have been the first to preach the sublime truths of Christianity on these limestone formations.

Though blind, he enjoys his pipe, and I had a smoke with him at the fireside. Between the puffs, he indulged in a furious onslaught on the Lord Chancellor and the Wee Frees. Lord Halsbury he considered a poor, benighted creature, who didn't know the difference between a Trades Union {235} and a body of Christians. "*If he ever comes to Shetland*," said the minister, "*he had better bring his woolsack with him, for I won't let him down soft!*" After Lord Halsbury had been adequately trounced, the talk turned on notable things that had happened in the district within the last

decade or two. One of the tales (which was very divertingly told) had to do with the trite subject of intemperance, but as it contains one or two novel touches, I here briefly rehearse it.

An elder of the place, who, with his trap, had come to grief one market night on the way back from Lerwick, told his session a strange tale to account for the catastrophe. "When I got to Lerwick in the forenoon, I said to the driver: 'Young man, if I mistake not, you have had no tip from me for a long time.' 'That's very true, sir,' said he. 'Well,' said I, 'there's half-a-crown; go and spend it judiciously.' During the day I transacted business with various friends, omitting none of the usual rites. About five o'clock my driver returned, and harnessed the horse for the return journey. At first I thought he had brought his brother with him, but, on rubbing my eyes, I found it was an optical delusion. As I watched him narrowly, I saw the outlines of a bottle bulging out from his buttoned coat, and distinctly heard, as he moved to and fro, the gurgling sound of liquid in agitation. He was smiling in self-approval, and when I reproved him for his slowness, he quoted Habakkuk v. 5, 'Hurry no man's cattle,' adding that his authority was the Revised Version. As we went rattling along the road, his tricks were fantastic in the extreme. At a point about two {236}
miles from Lerwick, I saw, a little in front of us, a tall individual enveloped in a long waterproof, of which the collar was turned up to cover his ears. The eyes of this person glowed like live coal as he peremptorily demanded a lift. Not waiting for permission, he, with a sudden spring, vaulted on the trap and squeezed himself between the driver and myself. The air grew hot and close. The driver became ten times friskier than before. I determined to unmask the unceremonious stranger, and, putting down my hand, grasped him by the foot. He had no boots on, and what I seized was a cloven hoof. I asked him there and then if he was Beelzebub. 'I am,' said he, 'and clever and all as you are, it will take all your talents to slip out of my clutches this night.' At this point there is a blank in my souvenirs. I only remember sparks flying and the sensation of falling down from my seat on to a steep embankment. On recovering consciousness, I found myself lying on a crofter's bed, with aching limbs. I told him the story of my escape, and he said, after hearing it: 'We live in troublous times, John, and the Arch-deceiver seems to be off the chain. Watch and pray, or you may fall further next time.'"

"THAT HOLY MAN, NOAH."

Particular stories are suggested by the place where one first heard them. This profound remark is worked out in detail by Sir William Hamilton and Professor Sully. As I look at the map of the road I traversed that day, I am reminded of certain anecdotes retailed by my genial and reverend {237}
guide.

"After leaving college," said he, "I was appointed assistant to a worthy D.D. who regarded the higher critics as a species of vermin. Hell with him was not a mere unpleasant state passed in *this* world, but an actual raging bonfire specially prepared for everyone who could not repeat the Shorter Catechism. The parishioners of this worthy man were, in consequence, devoutly orthodox, and had, one and all, a keen nose for bad doctrine. They did not like to be fobbed off with a sermon of the spineless order; they liked bones, blood, and fire—not a mosaic of cheery quotations from Tennyson about the larger hope and about worms not being cloven in vain. They had also a great liking for the patriarchs, especially Noah. By ill luck, I spoke one Sunday on the patriarchs, and handled them pretty roughly. I felt that sacred enthusiasm which every man feels in denouncing the sins of others. I gave the Captain of the Ark a special lick of tar. This sermon caused a mighty commotion in the district. I might as well have asserted that the paraphrases were inspired, or that Sankey's hymns were canonical. I could see that the elders began to look coldly upon me. In barn and byre little groups discussed my preaching, and there was much wagging of the head and shooting out of the lip. A deputation came out of a potato-field to me one day as I was walking along the road, and the leader, an old theological crofter, said bluntly: 'Your sermons are not pleasing us, if you please, sir.' 'Is the doctrine bad?' I asked. 'Not exactly that, {238}
but the folk say it's very unseemly.' 'What special sermon do they object to?' 'They think you're not sound on that holy man, Noah.' 'Do they go the length of saying Noah was perfect?' 'They don't just go that length; but, while admitting Noah was human, they desire' (here the old man raised his head, shut his eyes, and shouted) 'to hear no more from a young inexperienced lad like you, a single word about the patriarch's shortcomings. The man was a patriarch, and therefore a saint. Talk about his virtues as much as you like, but don't fash about his trespasses, there's a good boy, I speak as your friend.'"

FLADIBISTER.

When my friend had delivered himself of this story, he pointed with his pipe to a little confused collection of low, thatched cottages which we were rapidly approaching on the left, and, oblivious of Noah, went thus musing on: "You are now in the charmed domain of Fladibisteria, of which the core or citadel, as it were, is this village of Fladibister. This is no settlement of Norsemen: no, this is a Celtic nook where second sight and such witchcraft flourished not so many years ago. Did not the minister once rebuke them for their spells and mystic whims by aptly applying to them the words of St. Paul to the Galatians: '*Oh, foolish Fladibisterians, who hath bewitched you?*' There is an atmosphere of tranquillity and Arcadian peace swimming over Fladibister such as is nowhere else to be found in Shetland. The young men of the place roam far over the sea, as mariners and fishers; but like the exiled Jacobite— {239}

'Who sighed at Arno for his lovelier Tees,'

they never feel happy till they are back home here under the roofs of thatch. And what a work their women folks make with them when they return! What feasting and merrymaking! What screwing of fiddle-pegs, nimble motion of elbows and long-sustained dancing and skipping. I don't deny that there is clink of glasses, too, at times, to aid the passage of the hours far past the noon of night."

CUNNINGSBURGH.

Cunningsburgh, the journey to which was shortened by these tales, is one of those places you might pass through without being aware of it; that is to say, there is no feature about it so startling or abrupt as to impress itself at once on the attention. The district all round is well tilled, and the houses bien and comfortable.

The minister of the place arrests the attention instantly. His genial face and hearty handshake have a more Christianising effect on the soul than a ton of sermons. I have never heard a more kindly voice or seen a face in which tenderness, merriment, and intellectual keenness, were all so harmoniously blended. He does not smoke himself, but has that wise and wide perception of things which leads him to press those who are anxious to smoke, but say they are not, to take out their pipes in his drawing-room. It was easy to see the man he was, by a hasty look at his book-shelves. All the philosophers were represented there, from Plato to the present-day mystical {240} Germans. Lang's *Odyssey* was side by side with the Icelandic sagas and the Song of the Niebelungs. I did not see many books of Systematic Theology; but the Greek tragedians, the Sacred Books of the East, German and French novels, had all a place in the bookcase of this cosmopolitan clergyman of a remote Shetlandic parish.

"KEEPING OFF."

In secluded townships like Cunningsburgh where life's round has much of the monotony of fashionable society, and involves a still recurring succession of similar duties, the minister is indeed a power. If he is a man of broad and enlightened mind, his influence for good is incalculable. The Kirk-Session is a permanent Court of Justice, taking cognisance of minor matters of morality, and enforcing its decisions by religious sanctions. To be barred from participating in the communion rites might not seem a very alarming punishment to the easy-going Lowlander; but to a Shetland peasant, being *keepit off*, as it is technically called, is a terrible and humiliating penalty. A crofter came to the manse to complain about his wife's unruly and satirical tongue. "But what can I do to her?" said the minister, "she's your wife, and you must assert your authority." "I've tried everything," said the man, "but she still continues to be a troubler in Israel." The minister professed his inability to interfere. "I can do nothing at all," he said. "Yes you can," said the crofter, with a wink and a fearful whisper, "*You can keep her off!*" {241}

THE INDIGNANT ELDER.

Since the Reformation the people have lived and thriven under the jurisdiction of the Session. In the records of the Session one finds a chronicle of the sins, eccentricities, and merriments of the people for the last two or three centuries. Several incidents based on these minutes will make what I say abundantly clear. The Quarrel of the Elder and the Minister's Housekeeper, for example, convulsed a still remoter parish in much the same overmastering way as the Dreyfus Trial agitated Paris. Herodotus is the only author I can think of who could have done justice to this northern *affaire*. Let me briefly summarise it. Between the minister's garden and that of one of his elders ran what was termed a hedge. The shrubs which formed the base of this hedge were so ill-grown that the minister's fowls could easily go, clucking and scraping, from one garden into the other. Evidence was given to prove that the cabbages and pot-herbs in the elder's plot were torn and spoiled in parts. Every morning he stood at a gap in the hedge and sang aloud like a skipper in a storm or Achilles at the trench of the Greeks: "I am being ruined and brought to poverty by the minister's hens." This cry grated upon the ears of the manse housekeeper, who by and by thought it her duty to go out and reason with the elder. "It's no' the minister's hens ava that's to blame, it's the craws o' the firmament." "It's the hens." "No, the craws." "Hens I declare!" "You're a *deceitful impostor*!" said the housekeeper. Now, no self-respecting elder could stand that. Boiling with wrath as he was, he remembered his ecclesiastical status, merely {242} remarking that there was work for the Session at last. By nightfall he had been in every croft within the Session's jurisdiction, laying off his tale in each, and as he got practice and more vehemence with constant repetition, he attained extreme fluency and impressiveness before the day was done. An unspeakable joy came over the community at the prospect of a delicious scandal. To avoid the breach being healed by an apology, many of the crofters sought to envenom the quarrel by refusing to believe that the elder was altogether right. "Crows," they said, "had been known to play havoc with cabbage. Elders were but human, and so, hasty in laying charges on insufficient evidence. The case was certainly one for the Church courts. The housekeeper must have a good defence to make, and would no doubt make it at the proper time and in the proper place. We must hear both sides." One may see by this that the spirit which animates a great nation (the desire, namely, to divert itself with the contentions of those who come before the public eye), animates also the smallest communities in the realm. The great passion-stirring process, *Hens versus Crows*, lasted for some seven months. Over and over again the hedge was examined. Now the elder thought he had the best of it, only to be damped by a revulsion of feeling in favour of the housekeeper. The finding of the Session was adverse to the lady. The fact

that she had practically called the elder a son of Belial could not be got over. The minister, holding the scales of justice, was forced, in spite of himself, to declare against her. Considering {243} her position, some mildness was shown in pronouncing her condemnation and the penalty. Having regard to the dignity of the offended man, nothing less than the sentence of *keeping off* could meet the ends of ecclesiastical law. But one "keeping off" was deemed adequate. The elder was avenged. At the ensuing communion, he was seen to smile and rub his hands diabolically, as he glanced towards the back of the church, where sat, outside the pale of the privileged elect, the unhappy and vanquished housekeeper, who had called him an impostor.

TORQUIL HALCROW.

Torquil Halcrow's case presents features of a different order. For some reason a *fama* spread abroad respecting him to the effect that his language and demeanour left much to be desired, and that not even the presence, or at least proximity, of women operated to mellow the strength of his vocabulary. Nothing definite was openly formulated against him, but Torquil became aware that in certain quarters his reputation was being slowly undermined. It is precisely this vague kind of aggression on a man's character that is the most difficult to combat. He took the bull by the horns in a most heroic way. *He got up a public testimonial to himself, and went round canvassing for signatures.* The testimonial ran thus:—"We, the undersigned women of the parish, have pleasure in bearing witness that we have known Torquil Halcrow for twenty years, and never have we known him do an unseemly act or utter an unworthy expression." Thereafter followed a list of forty names. Furnished with this document, he strode up to the manse, fluttered {244} it in the minister's face with a gesture of triumph, laid it down on the study table, then turned on his heel and walked away. The minister, when he examined the paper minutely, found that Torquil, in the belief that the heading of the testimonial was not sufficiently strong, had added this further clause in his own handwriting: "*but many a precious word of truth and gracious spiritual comfort have we heard proceeding from his lips*."

I have already referred to the beautiful and pathetic saying of Mr. Barrie that every window-blind is the curtain of a tragedy. I thought of that dictum as the minister of Cunningsburgh pointed to one cot after another in the neighbourhood, and narrated the calamities that had fallen upon them within recent years. Here, an old widow was mourning the loss of a son who had gone to the deep-sea fishing and would never return: his bright young life had been swallowed up in the insatiable ocean, and she was left lamenting in her indigence. There, it was a father who had been engulfed in the roost; or again, the illness of a mother had cast a blight for years upon this other household. Sometimes I have seen two old people, all their sons dead, living a kind of stupefied half-life, automatically moving about, poor and wretchedly clad, unable to understand anything except the welcome heat of the sun and the animal comfort of a little food. There are many sad things in this world: none is more sad than the sight of two old people outliving their progeny and wandering about in decrepit second childhood with no more substance than a {245} dream. The sea is mainly answerable for the great and deep tragedies of the Shetlands: it is like a pitiless monster, howling in anger at their doors and claiming its yearly prey. No native writer has as yet attempted to make vocal for us the immense dumb sorrows of these fisher folks in the way Loti has done for the seafarers of Brittany.

PHILOLOGY.

Jakobsen, the Danish philologist, spent some years recently in collecting the remains of the old Norwegian speech that still linger in the conversation and the place-names of the islanders. Perhaps the most interesting point brought out by Jakobsen is the prevalence in comparatively recent times of lucky words, which the fishermen used when at the deep-sea fishing, and only then. This practice is undoubtedly a relic of pagan ages when the sea-depths were regarded as the dominion of dread water spirits, who keenly watched those who intruded in their realms. The strange feature about this deep-sea speech is that its expressions were purely Norse, whereas the home idiom of the fishers was overwhelmingly English. The pagan beliefs respecting the hostile powers of the sea found expression in old words handed down from a pre-Christian epoch. These old words may have been originally liturgical or worship words, for the sea was an object of veneration and awe to the Norsemen who, in the conquering days, made their home on its angry waters. It was believed that the jealous powers of the ocean were vehemently hostile to Christianity, and hence the Shetland fishers, up till quite recently, carefully avoided any direct {246} mention of *church* or *minister* when on the water: the *haaf* or lucky words being respectively *benihoose* (prayer-house) and *upstander*. Even the domestic animals had special *haaf* appellations. This conception of the sea as filled with weird mysterious beings of unspeakable malignity, ever ready to whelm the boat of an unwary intruder, carries the mind back to the old alliterative lay of *Beowulf*, the contest of that hero with the wallowing ocean-monsters, and the grim subterranean glow in the sea-home of Grendel's mother. The Shetlanders have only too much reason to brood over the cruelty of the sea. On July 20, 1881, during a terrific squall, sixty-three breadwinners were engulfed in the thwarting currents of the Sound of Yell.

A SANDWICK GENTLEMAN.

During all the foregoing discussion in the Cunningsburgh manse and garden, our driver had been wondering what subjects of talk could possibly be keeping us from continuing our journey to Sandwick. The two ministers—the original one and the Cunningsburgh man also—at length

mounted the trap with me, and we all went joyfully on the final lap. The object of the journey was to visit Mr. Sinclair of Sandwick, a gentleman well worth going fifty miles to see. Mr. Sinclair has many qualities that make a man notorious. He went to Australia in an emigrant ship many years ago, and wrote a book upon it, in which he playfully remarks that he got the full value of his passage money, inasmuch as there was a birth, a death, and a suicide, between Plymouth and {247}
Melbourne. Another of his distinctions is great dexterity in playing the violin, his favourite pieces being "The Scalloway Lasses" and "The Auld Wife ayont the Fire." The title of the last-named piece rather staggered me, until I was informed by one of the ministers, who is a scholar and an antiquarian, that it relates to a time when the fire was in the middle of the room and when the smoke escaped by a hole in the roof, or in default of that, by the door. Mr. Sinclair rendered these pieces with infinite gusto, and, like all true artists, got as much pleasure as he gave. He had also the most diverting way of ejaculating the word *hooch* I have ever heard in my journey through life. It gives me pleasure to add that he wrote a poem on fifty whales that were driven from the sea by the local fishermen into Sandwick Bay. These whales were all beautifully cooped in the narrow inlet and stranded on the beach, when lo! the local landowners, citing some old statute, claimed from the fishermen a share of the spoil. Mr. Sinclair, indignant and astute at once, took upon himself the championship of the fishermen, and managed matters so admirably that the lords of the soil were completely worsted in the Edinburgh law-courts. Flushed with such signal success, he put the whole story into metre. A printed and framed copy of the poem hangs in a conspicuous place in his sitting-room. At our special request, he favoured us by singing the impassioned stanzas. It was a unique treat to hear him do so. There he was in the centre of the room holding the framed verses in his hand, gazing fondly thereat even as a mother regards her child. When the chorus came on, he laid down the poem, and lifted up his voice with glorious {248}
enthusiastic force. Inspiration was in his eye, his grey locks became dishevelled, his arms swung rhythmically to the beat of the melody. The entire interview was intense: it was one crowded hour, of which time is unable to cancel the memory.

LOCAL TALES.

The evening was a glorious one, and we *walked* back some miles of the way. The Cunningsburgh minister was full of stories. He alluded laughingly to one of his flock who, when under the influence of drink, was powerful in prayer. "*When he gets a dram he goes to his knees at once.*" The anecdote seemed to me to run counter to the views of the hymnologist who says "Satan trembles when he sees, the weakest saint upon his knees." Another of his stories had reference to two old crofters, both over eighty, who began one evening to talk of the follies of the young fisher-lads when they took to dram-drinking. One of the two remarked: "I wonder now what folly we two old men would commit if we chanced to get intoxicated, say at a funeral." "Well," said the other hoary-headed and infirm octogenarian, "I have no idea what you would do, but I am certain of this, that if I ever got the least bit touched, I would go and make love to the lasses at once." Thereupon the two feeble old fellows skirled a wicked laugh, and nearly gasped out their slim residue of life in unseemly merriment.

Both ministers assured me that the belief in fairies still lingers on among the Shetland peasantry. Up on the hill-side the trow is supposed to wander about, and the little fellow can be seen {249}
skipping on the moon-light sward, by all who have eyes and the necessary faith. It is believed that he haunts the road-side even when the moon is not shining: consequently, when the crofters have to go out of doors at night, they protect themselves from his spells by carrying with them a blazing peat gripped with tongs. This smokes and sparkles in the darkness and the trow does not like it. It is easy for the electric-lighted citizens of Glasgow and Edinburgh to laugh at the simple folk-lore of fisher and crofter; but no one, however learned and sceptical, can quite escape from the mystic influence of fairy-lore if he lives through a winter among believing dalesmen. Let him look on the long silvery glimmer of a sea-voe, and hear the natives tell of trows chasing the ebbing Neptune down there on the dim sea-strand in a night of haze, before he says (with Theseus, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*):

> "I never may believe
> These antick fables, nor those fairy toys."

To the ear and eye of the philological Jakobsen, the Shetlanders both in speech and looks are remarkably like the Norwegians of the Saettersdal. In that part of Norway the trow is also a very popular terror. Children of a disobedient and obstreperous turn are afraid to venture near a wood at nightfall for fear of a little bogie with a red cap, who may suddenly slide down a pine-tree and snatch them off. {250}

FOULAH AND FAIR ISLE.

I do not altogether envy the candidate for parliamentary honours who has to *nurse* a remote insular constituency like Orkney and Shetland. I met Mr. Cathcart Wason in Lerwick, and learned that he had been going the round of the islands and had even paid a visit to the isolated and mountainous rock of Foulah. Now this was a very daring feat indeed, for I have heard of a young man who went once to visit his friends there and was kept a prisoner for five months owing to the squalls. The papers complimented Mr. Wason on his intrepidity: he went over from Walls in a smack, and did not make his address too lengthy, for fear the weather might change and Westminster be deprived of his eloquence for a space. Mr. Wason is a very tall gentleman, but in Foulah he met his peers in point of stature. The islanders are a fine set of men, hardy and godly.

They are adroit fowlers and nimble cragsmen. It gives one a queer sensation to hear that the face of their sheer precipices used to be (like level land elsewhere) apportioned equitably among the various families. If A did not wish to catch birds on his aerial lot, he could let it to B and claim a certain percentage of the spoil. The population of the island is about 250: owing probably to intermarriage, there are many childless homes.

I do not know if Mr. Wason has ever been to the Fair Isle, but I understand an Ex-Moderator of the Church of Scotland visited the little community there in 1903. There are two ways of getting {251} to this islet: (1) by means of a sailing boat which leaves Grutness for Fair Isle once a fortnight with the mails; if the weather is bad, this mode of communication is suspended, as in winter no sane man would venture through the roost in such a boat; (2) by taking a passage on board the s.s. *Pole Star*, which calls on the first of every month with stores for the lighthouse. She is a strong, swift boat, and makes the journey from Stromness, seventy miles away. I may remark that a lecturer wishing to speak in the Fair Isle need not trouble himself about placards or handbills: the whole population will be on the shore to welcome him when he lands, and he could conveniently intimate his subject then, if he has any breath left in his body. The Fair Isle possesses a church organ and a non-surpliced choir. The islanders have a great appetite for sermons, as the following story, told by Mr. Russell, amply proves. "The minister of Dunrossness went one summer to dispense the communion in the Fair Isle, and a storm came on which detained him there for about eight days. The weather also prevented the boats from going to the fishing. As the people had no pressing work to do at the time, and as it was only on rare occasions that they enjoyed the presence of the parish minister, they were anxious to avail themselves of his services while he was among them. *Accordingly, at their desire, he preached every day during his stay. In all, he preached thirteen times.* He had taken the precaution of bringing a good stock of sermons with him. Before this was exhausted, the weather providentially {252} improved, so that he was able to get home."[26]

The cherished legends of one's youth get sorely demolished in the course of travel and investigation. The school-books used to say that the Shetlanders were taught to knit by Spanish women saved from the wreck of the Armada. The islanders stoutly deny any indebtedness, and declare that there never was the slightest friendship between their ancestors and the crews of King Philip's galleons.

THE FISHING SEASON.

To Lerwick, during the fishing season, thousands of women come from the island of Lewis to gut the myriad herring that are daily brought into the bay. There is an extemporised town for the strangers on the outskirts, over which float many odours, weird, pungent, and unsavoury. All the processes of gutting, curing, and kippering go on in grand style. The women, clad in a kind of {253} oilskin, handle their dangerous implements in most dexterous fashion. It is a horrid business, but well paid. Prolific Nature is never tired supplying these women with work, for as many as 68,000 eggs have been found in the roe of one female herring. My friend, Mr. M'Kenzie of Ullapool, who is in the service of the Fishery Board, took me to see the official examination of several hundred barrels of fish, preparatory to the branding thereon of the official stamp. The owners pay for this examination, but the additional value given to each barrel by the Government mark far surpasses the fee exacted by the Board. The branding-officer selects at random a barrel here and there, extracts some dozen fish from each, and satisfies himself as to the size and quality. If the herring are puny or of inferior sort, the officer refuses to brand, and the examination fee is refunded. Mr. M'Kenzie remarked that this was the only case in which he had ever seen men reluctant to receive money. I followed that gentleman as he walked over the long lines of slippery herring barrels, lying in horizontal juxtaposition, and I cannot recommend the exercise to those who have had no training in gymnastics.

The great success of the Shetland fisheries during the last year or two has brought to Lerwick a palpable increase of business and droves of business men. In the Grand Hotel there were, in August last, thirty gentlemen resident who were in some way brought thither by the traffic in herring—among the number a young Russian, who, with his wife, sat at a little table apart, and kept jabbering their language with glib expressiveness. His name was Walk-off, and his object {254} was the annexation of fish for Muscovite consumption. He had a flabby face and long, dark hair, which he publicly combed. *She* was small and pretty—doll-like, indeed—with jewels in her ears, which glittered and flashed in the gas-light. She was a very loquacious wee creature, and her intonation reminded me of the caressing way the Swedes articulate English. I heard him read the Russian newspapers to her with evident emotion, but the only word I could make out was *Kouropatkin*. The herring-agents at the hotel table were full of drollery. One of them, hailing from Wick, addressed a neighbour abruptly to this effect: "I am a rather expensive man to sit beside, and to one like you especially so, for you seem to be a water-drinker. When I tell you who I am, however, you will insist on standing me a bottle of champagne." He was frigidly asked to state his grounds for such a preposterous expectation. "Prepare to gasp," he replied; "you see before you one who is a model and a beacon to all the men of Caithness. I am the sire of nine sturdy sons, and *they have only three birth-days among them*, seeing that they came into this vale of tears three at a time." {255}

CHAPTER VI.

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS AND THEIR ANECDOTES.

Trials of commercials—The two-est-faced knave—Mary, the maid of the inn—Anecdotes of the smoking-room: Sonnet to Raleigh—Peelin's below the tree—"She's away!"—A mean house—One of the director's wives—Temperance hotels—A memorial window—The blasted heath—The day for it—The converted drummer—A circular ticket—A compound possessive—Sixteen medals—"She's auld, and she's thin, and she'll keep"—The will o' the dead—Sorry for London—"Raither unceevil"—An unwelcome recitation—A word in season—A Nairn critic—A grand day for it—A pro-Boer—"Falls of Bruar, only, please!"—A bad case of nerves.

TRIALS OF COMMERCIALS.

The commercial traveller (that bustling and indispensable middleman) leads a life of mingled joy and pain. He is constantly on the move, and from meeting innumerable types of men, becomes very shrewd in judging character. Resource, readiness, abundance of glib phrases must in time become his. He must not, for fear of offence, show any marked bias in politics or religion. His temper must be well under control; he must have the patience of an angel; he must smile with those that are merry, be lugubrious with those that are in the dumps, and listen, with apparent interest, to the stock stories of hoary-headed prosers. It is not enough that he should book orders. {256}
Some shaky customers are only too ready to give these. It is his business to book orders only from those that are likely to pay. A big order delivered to a scoundrel who means to fail next week, is a horrible calamity, which, if it does not result in pains and penalties, means a sharp reprimand and a loss of prestige at headquarters, that may take years to redeem.

He has to sleep in many a different bed. It is lucky for him if a damp couch has not rheumatised his limbs. No one knows better than he that what seems a bell-pull has often, owing to former violence and broken wires, no connection with the bell. Here a chimney smokes, there the flue is blocked with birds' nests. In certain country inns, the flimsy gossamer of spiders makes an undesirable fretwork over the greenish knobs of the ill-puttied panes. Mice, rats, and "such small deer" scamper uncannily the live-long night along the worn waxcloths and unspeakable carpets. As he undresses by the light of a three-inch candle, he has his soul horrified by early Victorian prints, of Paul tumbling from his horse on the way to Damascus, of the gory relief of Lucknow, or of some towsy-headed clansman smiling out of perspective. He is by no means a tourist on pleasure bent. He must face gust and surge, for he cannot choose his time and weather. His duty is to cover as much ground as he can in a given week, fill his order-book with irreproachable orders, and get home to report, preparatory to another sally in another direction. Competition stings him into feverish activity. If he sells tea, he well knows that an army of rivals is scouring {257}
the whole country with samples as good, or perhaps a great deal better, than his own.

THE TWO-EST-FACED KNAVE.

Nevertheless, the jovial facetiousness of these commercial gentlemen knows no limits, and hotel-waiters are, at all times, fair game for their stings and arrows. In one of the northern hotels, there used to be a portly and rubicund waiter who might have passed for the High Priest of the Goddess of Health. His face shone, if I may say so, with the radiance of perfect digestion. A pert commercial, one day, approached him with an affected look of deep concern and said, "*Well, I hope you're keeping better*," accompanying the remark with a dig in the waiter's stomach. The waiter, who had never known a minute's ill-health in his life, swore vividly for fifteen minutes without repeating himself, and among many references to the commercial's ancestry, called him the *two-est-faced* knave that had ever set foot on the Shetland Islands. Such a superlative was felt by all to be a masterpiece of language, and turned the laugh against the bagman.[27] {258}

MARY, THE MAID OF THE INN.

I have a great deal of sympathy with hotel-porters and waiters, and think them unduly longsuffering at times. As to Mary, the exemplary maid of the hotel alluded to, she can hold her own in repartee with any of the visitors. She is a distinct character, and Molière could have made a "type" of her. She has no sinecure of a situation, and, after eleven at night, when the last supper is over, she has to polish the knives for the morrow's breakfast. She is young, slim, and active, and wears a string of red corals round her neck. The place is not frequented by plutocratic tourists, and so her tips are meagre. In spite of her long days and her slim perquisites, the girl is affable, smiling, and gay. She trips out and in, sylph-like, can carve fowls most dexterously by the light of nature, never spills the soup, and has a laughing and appropriate word for all. Mary, I hope, will get some decent fellow for husband, and be a stay and comfort to him all the days of his life. Meanwhile, however (to use the historic present), a nice old gentleman in the soft goods line, who hails from the flourishing village of Dundee, is paying her marked attentions. She will have none of him, for all his apostolic looks. He repeats to her, with a comically sentimental air, the lines of Omar:

"Here with a book of verse beneath the bough,

A loaf of bread, a cup of wine, and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness,
The wilderness were Paradise enow."

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Mary looks in amazement at the old gentleman with the insinuating voice, anon bursts into a merry peal, and trips off with the remark, "*There's nae fules like auld anes*," which a listening Londoner takes to mean, "There's nothing fills like onions!"

ANECDOTES OF THE SMOKING-ROOM.

SONNET TO RALEIGH.

The conversation of an intelligent commercial traveller is, as I said, of a facetious and entertaining turn. He speaks to so many people in the course of a day and hears so many anecdotes as he rushes about, that his sense of humour becomes very keen. Old Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, used to dissipate his sombre thoughts by listening to the coarse badinage of bargemen: a modern, afflicted with Burton's complaint, might well find a cure in the smoking-room of a hotel among a company of commercial travellers. One Saturday night, in a Shetland hotel, I listened to a crowd of these merry gentlemen communicating to each other their several collections of stories. Before doing so, they all sang with great fervour the well-known hymn *The Sands of Time are Sinking*, a whisky-traveller officiating at the harmonium. One of the number ostentatiously beat time with his pipe. It was a very affecting scene, and certain of the singers were moved to tears at their own melody.

The company then settled down, in a pleased frame of mind, to tell stories. I noted some of these, and as they were new to me, I cherish the hope that they may not be stale to others. The {260} following preliminary sonnet to Sir Walter Raleigh seems to be apposite and new; it is needed to give atmosphere to the tales:

Raleigh! the benefactor of thy kind,
May azure undulations ever roll
As incense to thee from the glowing bowl,
Thy rapt disciples fume with placid mind
In easy chair, by ingle-nook reclined!
Next to the mage, Prometheus, who stole
From Heaven's court with philanthropic soul,
The wonder-working fire, thou art enshrined
In mortal bosoms as a friend, for thou
Did'st bring from sunset isles the magic leaf
That weaves enchantment's halo round the brow,
Alleviates the pang of every grief
And stirs the bard, exempt from fretting cares,
To wail the weird of pipeless millionaires.

And now for the stories.

"PEELIN'S BELOW THE TREE."

A Sunday School teacher in the island of Luing was giving a lesson on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into this world, and other ills. At the close of his harangue, which was rather above the heads of the children, he said, "Can any of you tell me *how the Creator knew* that Adam had eaten the apple?" There was silence for a time. At last one boy, with a glimmer of light in his eyes, shouted: "Please, sir, because He *saw the peelin's below the tree*." {261}

"SHE'S AWAY."

An Englishman staying in Oban, wished to visit the island of Coll, and discovered, on enquiry at Macbrayne's office, that the S.S. *Fingal* left for that outer isle at five in the morning. He accordingly gave serious instructions to the "boots" of his hotel to rap him up at 4.30 A.M., and to show him no mercy. At *six* o'clock, the tourist was awakened by a noise like that of a battering-ram at his door, and a stentorian voice sternly enquiring: "Are you the gentleman that's going with the early boat?" "Yes, yes, I am," said the tourist, leaping to his feet. "*Well, she's away*," said the boots. (This is a story that grows on one.)

A MEAN HOUSE.

Another hotel story: Feeling somewhat thirsty in the middle of his dinner and not judging that water was sufficiently slockening, a visitor rang the bell and asked the waiter to bring him a bottle of lager. This was done. "How much do you charge for this?" enquired the traveller. "Ninepence," replied the waiter. Anger, consternation, and incredulity were all depicted, by turns, on the visitor's cheek. "What!" he shouted, "*ninepence*. Why, I could buy a dozen bottles for half-a-crown. It's downright robbery to ask ninepence for one bottle. You've made a mistake." "I've made no mistake," said the waiter; "I was told to ask ninepence. *But*," (at this point he sidled

up to the traveller and whispered, with terrible accents, in his ear) "*it's a damp mean house this you're in, and I'm leaving mysel' the morn!*" {262}

ONE OF THE DIRECTOR'S WIVES.

A gentleman who loved tobacco exceedingly well, went into a first-class smoking compartment, filled his pipe, and settled down, with a newspaper in front of him, to enjoy the luxury of a long and undisturbed worship of the weed. He had a journey of fifty miles before him. Just as the train was moving off, a lady, who was panting and flustered, was pushed up into the compartment by a porter. It was soon evident that pipes and tobacco were not congenial to this dame. She began to sniff in a very haughty fashion, but the smoker, utterly indifferent to her presence, continued to roll out with deliberate relish his dense tobacco fumes. Soon she lost all patience, and said with extreme bitterness: "You there, behind that paper, you have no manners. You have no right to smoke before a lady. Do you know who I am? *I am one of the directors' wives, sir.*" Down went the journal, and "Oh, indeed," said he, "you are one of the director's wives, are you? Well, let me tell you this, that even if you were the director's *only* wife, I do not intend to encourage you, by any compliance of mine, in the bad habit of rushing for trains and getting into the wrong compartment!"

TEMPERANCE HOTELS.

An English clergyman—a pronounced teetotaler and temperance worker—was being driven through the streets of a Scotch town in an open machine. Looking round, with expansive benevolence, on the streets and people, he was overjoyed to see such a large number of temperance hotels. "Driver," he exclaimed, "I am delighted to see, by the hotels, that total {263} abstinence has got such a firm hold in this place." "Indeed, sir," said the driver, "don't be too sure of that. We have two kinds of temperance hotels here: the first kind would like the licence, but can't get it; the second kind have had the licence, and lost it through bad behaviour and disorderly conduct."

A MEMORIAL WINDOW.

An inn-keeper in Ross-shire, with great enthusiasm, said to a visitor: "There's nobody I work for with more satisfaction than an English gentleman. Now, there's Sir Samuel Oatts, the wealthy Liverpool merchant that has the shootings near here. He is a fine gentleman, and so considerate. He is not very good at shooting, I must admit: he often misses the birds, and he goes through a good number of dogs. One day he shot the keeper in the right eye, and blinded it. But he gave the keeper a handsome present and a fine new glass eye. We call that eye '*Oatts' Memorial Window*,' and the keeper can sleep during the sermon now without anybody knowing, provided he does not snore."

THE BLASTED HEATH.

Two English tourists—big, hearty fellows—were travelling in the same compartment with a communicative Scot, when the train stopped at Forres. "Gentlemen," said the Scot, "this is Forres, and I'm sure you've read about it; quite near Forres is the *blasted heath* where Macbeth was accosted by the witches." "How shocking," said one of the Englishmen; "how really shocking! {264} Well, you see, we haven't read about that yet: we've been up North for some time, and *we have'nt seen the pypers for ten dyes!*"

THE DAY FOR IT.

The driver of the bus which goes through the delightful part of Argyllshire known as Hell's Glen, is often chaffed by the summer tourists rather unmercifully. One day, a nervous southern was criticising him on his furious and careless driving: "You shouldn't be on the box at all; I never saw such a wild driver." "Drive!" said Jehu, in a voice of thunder. "Why, man, once every year, I drive the mail-coach *down that steep hill-side* among the bracken. *And this is the day for it!*" So saying, the humorous fellow made as if to whip the horses down the cliff, and the terrified tourist shrieked aloud. "Seeing I've such a nervous passenger," said the driver, with a guffaw, "I had better break my own rules, and keep to the main road."

THE CONVERTED DRUMMER.

A dilapidated Scot, with a strong odour of the accursed, staggered into a Salvation Army meeting one night, and was deeply impressed by the service. He became a changed man, professed conversion, and got a thorough moral overhaul. Like many others, he had great difficulty in keeping his good resolutions, but persevered, nobly and successfully. Latterly, he was admitted into the orchestra, and got command of the big drum. He was so anxious to show his zeal, that he beat far too vehemently, and drowned all the other instruments in his ecstatic rataplan. The {265} captain mildly remonstrated with him, and requested him to beat a little more gently. "*Gently!*" shouted the reformed drummer, "that's impossible. Since I've got salvation, I feel so happy, that I could ding the whole slammed thing to bits!" (or rather "slim the whole danged thing to bits").

A CIRCULAR TICKET.

Three commercials, travelling from Cork to Dublin, had a discussion on the illiteracy of the Irish railway employés. "Look here," said one of them, "the majority of the ticket collectors can't even *read* the tickets they are supposed to check." The other two refused to believe him, but he stoutly maintained his assertion. Taking out of his pocket the round ticket given him at the office of the Cork hotel, and containing the number of his bedroom, he said, "I intend to offer this, instead of my railway ticket, at the first station where tickets are punched." Shortly thereafter, the train stopped, and a porter came round the carriages to look at the tickets. There was silence deep as death when the commercial handed his bedroom ticket to the official. The latter looked long and carefully at the thing and muttered, "Bejabbers, I never saw one like that before!" "Don't keep the train waiting," said the commercial, in a pretended fury, "don't you see it's a *circular ticket*." "Oh, and in faith it's you that's right: it *is* a circular ticket," said the porter. So saying, he punched the hotel check and withdrew, leaving the three travellers to weep for joy all the way to Dublin. {266}

A COMPOUND POSSESSIVE.

The following grammatical story will doubtless be new to most readers. A Sunday School jaunt had been arranged in an Ayrshire town, and the children were all ready to go in carts to a field, some miles away, for games and open-air junketing. Everyone was impatient to set out, but the piper was late, and the procession of carts could not start without music. The minister became impatient, and sent a youth to tell the piper to hurry up. The boy, on coming to the piper's house, saw a woman standing at the door, and addressed her in these words: "*Are you the man-that-plays-the-pipes's wife?*"

SIXTEEN MEDALS.

Those who doubt the efficacy of self-lauding advertisement are refuted by this story. A commercial traveller, representing a whisky firm, craved an order from a small Highland innkeeper. "Come, Donald," he said, "you must give me an order this time." "You will be getting no order from me, for your whisky is no good whatever. Dewar of Perth has got sixteen medals for his whisky; it is so good to drink, and makes people drunk so nice and quiet. But *your firm never got a single medal for filling folk fou*." The granting of medals for quiet and comely intoxication is a brilliant, although droll, idea.

"SHE'S AULD, AND SHE'S THIN, AND SHE'LL KEEP."

In a lone isle of the West, funerals are functions that cannot be celebrated (at least in the way consecrated tradition prescribes) without ample dispensing of whisky among the mourners. As {267} there is no pier on the island, the steamer very frequently may not be able to call for days, during the terrific gales of winter. The legitimate stores of insular whisky thus occasionally become exhausted, and should a death occur during the period of dearth, a very regrettable situation arises. In the epigrammatic style of King James I., who used to say "*No bishop, no king*," we might express the difficulty by saying *No whisky, no funeral*. While a gale of exceptional ferocity was raging some winters ago, an old woman passed away, and there was not enough whisky on the island to bury her with credit. Her son scanned the angry sky and sea daily, in the hope that the weather would show signs of clearing up. After a week's blighted hopes, he still refused to sanction interment, remarking, "*She's auld, and she's thin, and she'll keep*." Next day the sea was calm, the *Dunara* called, and the old lady got her *munera pulveris*.

THE WILL O' THE DEAD.

The foregoing story suggested to one of the auditors the tale told in connection with the death of Lord Forglen, one of the Judges of the Court of Session, in 1727. After a long illness, in which he had endured the expert advice of several eminent physicians, Forglen, one morning, departed into the land of shadows. Not knowing of the fatal termination, one of the medical men, Dr. Clark, called as usual and asked David Reid, clerk to Forglen, how his master was. David's answer was: "I houp he's well,"—a gentle euphuism, indicating that all was over, and also a timid hope that Heaven had received a new inhabitant. The doctor was shown into a room where he saw two {268} dozen of wine under the table. Other doctors arriving, David made them all take seats, while he detailed, with much pathos, the affecting incidents of his master's dying hours. As an antidote to their grief, the company took a glass or two, and thereafter the doctors rose to depart, but David detained them. "No, no, gentlemen; not so. It was the express will o' the dead that I should fill ye a' fou, and I maun fulfil the will o' the dead." All the time the tears were streaming down his cheeks. "And indeed," said Dr. Clark afterwards, when telling the story, "he did fulfil the will o' the dead, for before the end o't there was na ane of us able to bite his ain thoom."

SORRY FOR LONDON.

The following story is a good example of insular patriotism. Certain shooting tourists in the island of Mull, who hailed from London, and who were expecting important news from the capital, were greatly exasperated to find, on calling at the local post-office, that telegraphic communication with the mainland had broken down. Some very uncanonical language was indulged in, which the

local postmaster deeply resented. One tourist after another, exclaimed with blank despair: "Alas, poor Mull will get no news from London to-day." "What will Mull do without the London news?" "No news from London, what a misfortune for Mull!" This harping on the forlornness of the island caused the blood of the postmaster to boil with indignation, and he shouted in ire: "It is not Mull I {269} will be sorry for, at all, at all. Mull can do without the London news. But what will poor London do, when she finds she will not be able to get any news from Tobermory, or from Salen, or from Dervaig, or from Craignure, or from Lochdon, or from Lochbuie, or from Bunessan, the whole of this blessed day!"

"RAITHER UNCEEVIL."

A well-known boat, *The Stormy Petrel*, had been to Ardrossan for coal, and was conveying the precious cargo to the romantic terminus of Cairndow at the head of Loch Fyne. At St. Catherine's a great thirst took possession of the crew, and they put in there for refreshments. The conversation was most animated, and extended itself over a wide tract of political and theological topics. On setting out for Cairndow early next morning, all the crew had wistful, lustreless eyes, confused thoughts, and bad consciences. He to whom the coal was being conveyed, was awaiting them. He rowed out to *The Stormy Petrel* in a small boat, and on coming near assailed them, in English and Gaelic, with all the most vituperative expressions he could remember. But the crew, each and all of them, knew they had been guilty of culpable delay, and uttered not a word, good or bad, as their assailant rowed round their boat and withered them with his invective. They had no fight left in them, and sat, with bowed heads, till the storm would subside. After enduring the agony for half an hour, one of the crew looked up and said, "Do you no' think, Mr. Sanderson, that you're *raither unceevil so early in the morning*?" This remark, uttered in a quiet, sad, {270} reproachful way, staggered Mr. Sanderson far more than the most thunderous abuse would have done, and brought home to him the undoubted fact that he had been defective on the score of good taste.

AN UNWELCOME RECITATION.

One of the travellers, on being asked to contribute his item to the fund of anecdotes, said that instead of telling a tale, he would give a recitation. Before doing so, he sneezed artificially six times, and then recited a poem on

Influenza.

Influenza has come like the wolf on the fold,
And the duke and the ditcher are down with
the cold.
The doctor is smiling, for business is here,
And the chink of the guinea resounds in his
ear.
No household is spared: both the villa and cot
Their quota of swollen-nosed patients have
got.
The clerk of the weather is gloating on high
At the lords of creation that bed-ridden lie.
Each chamber resounds with the echo of
sneezing,
With deep-laboured coughing and bronchial
wheezing.
While, loading the table, the victim can spy
Lotions, tonics, and ointments confusedly lie.
The druggist (douce man) is thanking his stars
For this nice epidemic of paying catarrhs,
He's making his hay, though no sunshine is
seen,
And his till gleams with silver where copper
has been.

A WORD IN SEASON.

This dismal piece of verse effectually cleared the smoking-room, and filled me with a great sorrow, since I had just recollected three or four stories of my own. I now take the liberty of {271} laying these before the ingenuous reader. If he says they are dull, let me tell him (i.) that he has no perception of humour, and (ii.) that occasional dulness is the inalienable privilege of every free-born Briton. Many a spry wight thinks it his duty to be *continuously funny and monotonously merry*. Let a quiet and demure dulness be the foil of your side-splitting sallies. Learn to keep the peace, yea for hours at a time. If you are in a mixed company, cultivate the dictum of "give and take." Be not for ever doling out your scraps of mirth to the dyspeptic stomachs of your associates. A wise reciprocity and interplay of merriment is the best rule—a fair share among the entire party. Burns himself, sparkling talker as he was, is recorded to have been at times sunk in gloom and shadow. But anon emerging from his moodiness, he would utter such words as set the

table in a roar. And now for these masterpieces of humour.

A NAIRN CRITIC.

Why is it that publishers, aye, and even booksellers, are so often out of sympathy with the poets? I spoke once to a bookseller in Nairn about a local poet's volume that was lying on the counter. "Do you personally know this bard?" I asked. "Ay, that I do," was the reply; "he's an eccentric wee chap. I've many a laugh at him as he goes along the street, muttering to himself and picking his teeth with a fountain-pen. Eccentric! bless my soul, how could a poet be anything but eccentric? Besides, he's bound to be a liar: for if he can't get the end of a line to come right with truth for a {272} rhyme, he has got to make it *clink with a whopper*. Why, man, it's a great worry for an honest man like me to speak the truth in plain prose. If I were to send out my bills in metre to my customers, there would be a rise of temperature soon in the town of Nairn. No, no: the only thing that can be done with a poet's manuscript is to take it to the head of the garden, sprinkle it with paraffin, and apply a vesta."

"A GRAND DAY FOR IT."

While one of the great six-day battles of the Eastern war was going on, a country doctor, by some mistake in delivery, did not get his *Herald* to breakfast one morning. Anxious to get the news, he bolted his meal and sallied forth to hear the latest from the seat of war. He saw a wrinkled old churl trimming the roadside hedge with a bill-hook, and humming a tune like the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, Act v. "Any news of the war?" gasped the doctor. "Eh?" said the old man, without discontinuing his work. "Are you not aware," said the doctor, "that there is a great battle raging in Manchuria?" "No," said the man, "I know nothing about it, and care less." "What!" shouted the doctor. "You care nothing about it? Why, man, the Russians and Japanese are at this moment *fighting for the hegemony of all Eastern Asia*." "Lord, do you say so?" replied the old cock, lopping unconcernedly at his hedge; "well, all I can say is, that *they're gettin' a grand day for it*." {273}

A PRO-BOER.

On one occasion, in the West Highlands, I availed myself of a lugsail ferry to cross an arm of the sea and so avoid a long détour by land. The boat was old, the sail was thick with big-stitched patches, and the ferryman was an elder. I had much edifying talk with him, and at last gliding from the Declaratory Act, of which he did not approve, I asked him if he had any family. "Yes," he replied, "I have two sons. One of them is a polissman in Glasgow, a nice lad, a very nice lad: he sends me ten shillings every month; oh! an excellent lad is he indeed. But my other son is a disgrace to me; he is bad, very bad. He is a drunkard and a card-player and a Sabbath-breaker, and what's a thousand times worse than all that, he's a *Pro-Boer*." This instance of patriotism in a remote Highland nook was very refreshing for me to hear, and I gave the anti-Krugerite elder a substantial fare for his trouble in ferrying me over the loch. He invoked the blessing of Heaven on me, and I hope his prayer will be answered.

"FALLS OF BRUAR, ONLY, PLEASE!"

Some years ago, I had occasion to spend a day at Blair Athol, where I was dosed with nothing but kindness by a genial son of the famous Clan Macdonald. He put his trap and driver at my disposal, in order that I might, with comfort and expedition, go and view the Falls of Bruar, immortalised in one of Burns's cleverest poems. No sooner had we set off than the driver began to calumniate Burns in unmeasured language, and to throw withering scorn on the Falls, which, he declared, were utterly unworthy of being visited by any sane man. "If you want to see real {274} falls," said he, "I'll take you to the Falls of Tummel, which could knock those of Bruar into a cocked hat!" (such was the curious metaphor he employed). I told him he could take me to both if there was time, but Bruar I must see. He landed me at the Tummel, and drove on recklessly himself a mile further to see his sweetheart. The desire to pay a visit to his Bonnie Jean was the sole cause of his gibes at the poet. Back he came in an hour, chanting merrily, and we drove to Bruar. I found the varlet had lied most expansively: the Falls are gloriously fine, and worth walking a good many miles to see. On the homeward road, I could see he was ill at ease: he was dreadfully afraid that his amorous flight would be discovered by his master. He said to me once every minute, "*Falls of Bruar, only, please: keep your thumb on Tummel!*" Latterly he set these words to a kind of rough music, and sang them continuously in my ear, winking the while and smiling roguishly. I obeyed him.

A BAD CASE OF NERVES.

While I was sitting alone in the smoking-room of the hotel, a tall, thin, restless-eyed, aristocratic young fellow came quietly in. He went up to the sideboard, poured out half a tumbler of water, and carefully measured out about ten drops of phospherine therein. He swallowed the mixture, smacked his lips, and sighed. He then remarked that it was a nice evening and that he was very {275} ill with a nervous complaint. "I suppose, now," he said, "you would actually tell me not to worry, to take everything easy, and, above all, to firmly believe there is nothing whatever the matter with me?" "Most certainly," I said, "you ought to consider yourself in perfectly good health; by and by you would come to be so in reality. The Christian Scientists say you might even learn to hold fire in your hand by thinking of the frosty Caucasus." "I suppose, too, you would recommend

me to have a hobby, such as golf, or gardening, or amateur photography." "Yes, I believe a harmless hobby such as you mention would relieve the mental strain and take you out of yourself." "Well, I essayed golf, but, alas! I massacred a ram; I tried gardening, and tired of it before the flowers began to show; and as to photography, it only increased the number of my enemies." "What about cycling or horse-riding?" "These won't do—I can *think* at both of them. Now, I *don't want to think: in fact, I mustn't*." "Fishing? wouldn't that be a reposeful diversion?" "No, no," he said, "I could not stand the sight of an animal enduring pain." "Well, you surely might try a little light reading." "The strange thing about my reading is this," said he, "I look at a sentence and understand it, but I am aware of something, either at the back of my head or behind me, which says, 'All this is futile stuff and nonsense: give it up, it's not for you; you are condemned to everlasting emptiness, and your life will never know any more fulness or joy.' {276}

"Immense vacuity of intellect!
I lift a volume, but a sentence tires;
Even a flimsy magazine requires
From me more concentration and direct
Volition than my vagrant wits elect
To give the pages. All my soul desires
Is to gaze without purpose on the fire's
Crackle of glowing cinders, and detect
Weird shapes of beasts and palaces and men
In the red mass of photographic coal;
Perchance my lazy mind may, now and then,
Without exertion, read as on a scroll
(While the glede sinks to ashes in the grate)
The dust and nothingness of mortal state."

"Well," I said, "your case is a queer one, and I am at a loss to suggest anything further." At this, the young man burst into a loud peal of laughter. He was supremely delighted at finding himself so unique, so singular. He took me by the hand, shook it most heartily, saying, "I haven't enjoyed myself so much for a long time. If I were oftener in the company of men like you, I might regain hope."

The improvement was, unfortunately, of very short duration. He continued his observations thus:

"And yet, and yet: *Sunt lacrimae rerum*. What is this world but a succession of fleeting images chasing each other across a background of joy or pain! Now we quaff the sour cup of misery, by and by we drink the intoxicating vintage of hope. Heaven alone stands firm, gemmed with the pitiless stars. The day breaks, rises to its glory in the shimmering height of noon, and dies away {277} in the west: so does the utmost pride of man's career fade away to nothing, a harvest for Time's scythe. On all this growth and decay the stars gaze with their unpitying and eternal eyes. I think I'll have a little more phospherine." {278}

CHAPTER VII.

LEGENDS AND LITERARY NOTABILIA.

Gairloch folk-lore: Prince Olaf and his bride—A laird who had seen a fairy—Tales from Loch Broom: The dance of death—The Kildonan midwife—The magic herring—Taisch—Antiquities of Dunvegan—Miscellaneous terrors—St. Kilda—Lady Grange—Pierless Tiree—Lochbuie in Mull—Inveraray Castle—The sacred isle—Appin—Macdonald's gratitude—Notes on the Trossachs—Lochfyneside: Macivors, Macvicars, and Macallisters—Red Hector—Macphail of Colonsay—Tales from Speyside: Tom Eunan!—Shaws and Grants—The wishing well—Ossian and Macpherson—At the foot o' Bennachie—Harlaw—Lochaber reivers—Reay and Twickenham—Rob Donn—Rev. Mr. Mill of Dunrossness.

GAIRLOCH FOLK-LORE.

I do not think anyone interested in local history and antiquities could find a greater treat than that furnished by Mr. Dixon's *Account of the Parish of Gairloch*. That romantic and lovely district is fortunate in having found a historian of unlimited enthusiasm and untiring industry. There is not a single dry page in his long and detailed narrative. Many of the legends he tells are known to me from other sources, but I am certain that no Scotch compiler (Mr. Dixon, let me say, is English) has written of them with such enjoyable sympathy and poetical ardour. I have been assured by local authorities that the facts adduced by Mr. Dixon are invariably reliable. That I {279} can well believe; but what is still more rare, Mr. Dixon's facts are everywhere made to gleam and glitter in the radiance of romance. Let me narrate, in concentrated form, one of the legends which this clever writer has alluded to in more than one of his chapters.

PRINCE OLAF AND HIS BRIDE.

In the ninth century of the Christian era, one of the islands that in such picturesque fashion dot the surface of Loch Maree, was honoured by being the abode of a pious hermit, despatched thither from the sacred isle of Iona. His presence there, implying as it did austerity, perpetual worship of Heaven, and the reading of devout treatises, inspired veneration in the minds of the obstreperous tribes around. They felt themselves better from having such a good man near them. Wherever in these old times of war and gore, a saintly pioneer established himself, the kingdom of chaos and night was pushed back for miles around his cell.

The Picts of the ninth century revered this man, and his fame was known also to the predatory seamen who came buccaneering among the islands of the West. A Viking of royal blood, Prince Olaf, in the intervals of his sea-roving, hied sometimes to the hermit's retreat, for instruction and spiritual blessing. The young man, as tradition alleges, was not beyond the need of guidance, for his temper was of the most fiery violence, and, at the slightest provocation, his hand was on the hilt of his sword. No doubt the saint of Isle Maree managed to moderate the Prince's vehemence, and draw him somewhat away from wrath which (as Homer puts it), waxeth like smoke in the {280}
breasts of warriors, and is far sweeter to them than trickling honey.

By and by, this youth fell in love, and in characteristic fashion he loved with a whole-souled and overwhelming passion. The hot-tempered Viking became a new man, and he thus communed with himself: "How can I ask this maid to share my life on the stormy sea? She is too tender and gentle to go under the dark clouds in a war-galley with me and my rude mates, when we sail to meet the enemy. Nor, were she my wife, could I leave her behind and unprotected. Marry her I must, but I can neither take her with me thereafter, nor defend her in my absence. Go to, I'll e'en visit the monk of Isle Maree and get counsel from *him*."

It is pleasant to note that the holy father found a way out of the difficulty. "Marry her, my son," said he, "and build a tower of strength as her abode on this isle of mine. When you are away, she will be near me. Old man as I am, the natives respect me for my devotion and my hoary hairs." The prince's scruples, so honourable to his love, were overcome. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing. The green pathways of the isle were thronged with feasters; tents were erected beside the thickets of oak and holly, and the Loch had little rest from the plashing of oars. The hermit blessed the couple and blessed the castle too in which the twain were for a time to reside.

Prince Olaf and his lady were perfectly happy, and the golden hours of their wedlock sped merrily by. But the hours that were short to them, were long and dreary to the Norse rovers, lying {281}
inactive in the ships anchored hard by in the waters of Loch Ewe. Murmurs, growing at length in volume, were muttered by the men as they reflected, day by day, on the soft uxoriousness of their leader. They wished to be at sea on an expedition that had been planned aforetime ere the marriage had taken place. These murmurs reached the prince's ears, and, with many tears, he tore himself away from the bridal tower to take his place at the head of the squadron. It was a bitter severance, but tempered by the expectation of a speedy reunion. The prince took with him two pennons, a black and a white. "If I am successful in my expedition," he said, "I will display the white pennon on my galley; if misfortune befalls me (which God avert) the black will be flying on the prow. Do you come to meet my returning fleet and let a similar indication be visible on your barge to tell of your safety or your misfortune. A lover feels his excitement growing, the nearer he comes to his home: let us abridge, by such a device, the length of our anxiety."

Love did not make Olaf a worse fighter: rather, indeed, it improved his prowess. The thought of the fair young wife in the lonely tower, protected mainly by the sanctity of an old hermit, nerved his arm, and he speedily got through the expedition with great applause. He swept everything before him, and turned homeward in the expectation of a cordial and meet welcome. During his absence, the lady had been fretting. Finally, as the days passed, she became downright angry. {282}
"He is neglecting me," she cried; "he goes away from my arms to the society of rough seamen. I am a mere bauble, a plaything for his leisure. He is tired of me, and perhaps on some distant coast he is dallying with a newer sweetheart. But I will try his heart. When I hear of his homecoming, I will go forth on my barge and have the black flag of desolation flying from the prow. In this way I may obtain some hint of his real feelings."

Olaf came homeward in great glee, and on entering Loch Ewe from the outer sea, the white pennon of success flapped gaily in the wind. The princess, on the other hand, let prepare her boat, and, clothed in the weeds of death, lay down on the deck, while simulated sobs of woe and lamentation were raised by all her attendants. Slowly the boat, with its ill-omened signal, moved to meet the conquering hero. Olaf, the impetuous, was chilled to the heart, when he saw what he thought the sure indication of his lady's misfortune. What a sight met his eyes when he leapt on board! The princess stretched out in apparent death, and robed in the garments of the grave! He could not endure the torment and disillusion. He drove a dirk into his bosom with such passionate might that he fell down, bereft of life, mighty and mightily fallen, on the deck beside her.

She had not expected such a tragic conclusion to her blamable artifice. Remorse, of course, got hold of her, and drawing the gory weapon from her dead lord's breast, she plunged it into her own. Too late was she convinced of his true love for her: she had only one duty, and that was to {283}
die with him. It is said in the legend that her life was not extinct when the barge, with its weird freight, returned to the hermit's isle. The old man, holding in his quaking hand the cross before her dying eyes, strove to comfort her somewhat as her blood ebbed quickly away.

"The bodies of the unhappy pair," says Mr. Dixon, "were buried within the inclosure on the island, beneath the shade of the sacred hollies; they were laid with their feet towards each other, and

smooth stones with outlines of mediæval crosses were placed over the graves, and there they remain to this day. A few stones still indicate the site of the hermit's cell, and a considerable mound marks where the tower stood."

The last time I stood beside the little pier on Loch Maree, I noticed many indications of the advent of southern tourists. Empty bottles were floating on the waves, and the tiny steamer that plies on the loch was getting ready for the summer traffic. Visitors from the Lowlands do not suspect that such tales as I have narrated still live on the lips of the Gairloch natives, and help to pass the hours at many an evening reunion. How the centuries meet in such nooks of Ross! Steamers on Loch Maree, and Olaf's cross still standing on the hermit's isle! The driver of the mail-coach from Achnasheen to Gairloch will discuss creeds and schisms with you, and tell you he does not believe in modern religious developments at all; anon, as the coach passes the Gairloch Church, he will point with extended whip to a grassy hollow on the left, and say: "That is where the Free Church used to have its open-air Communion Service: the place is called *Leabaidh na Ba Bhàine*, because Fingal scooped it out as a bed where his white cow might calve." "But did Fingal lodge in this neighbourhood?" you ask. "Oh yes, he did whatever," the driver will reply, "and the best proof of it is, that if you go to the north end of Loch Maree, you will see the *sweetheart's stepping-stones*, placed there by Fingal to keep his feet dry when he went that way to court Malvina." {284}

A LAIRD WHO HAD SEEN A FAIRY.

Bailie Nicol Jarvie, whom we all know so well, confessed that when he heard the wild stories of the North, he felt his blood tingle and his pulses leap. This fact, which as a sober man of business he felt bound to apologize for, was probably due to heredity, his mother having been a Macgregor. The Bailie lived at a time when rumours of witchcraft and fairydom were more common than now, and when there was less dissemination of Scripture truth. It is a saying in some parts of the North that the profuse spread of the Shorter Catechism has been the means of driving witches and fairies out of their old haunts. For my own part, I know of nothing more likely to make them decamp.[28]

I was lucky enough to meet a gentleman who declared, not with an oath, but with a *pretty strong* asseveration, that he had once seen a fairy. It was in a railway train that I knit conversation with him. He was a kilted country squire, tall, thin, and soulful: on his head was a glengarry with a pair of flying ribbons. He spoke in rapt sentences, as if he were looking on a vision. This is the substance of his remarks:— {285}

> One autumn morning, when the world lay fair
> Under the radiant blue, I musing lay
> By a green knoll, beside a rippling bay,
> When, suddenly, gliding through the silent air,
> A green-clad apparition, wrinkled, spare,
> Angry, and grieving, passed along the way
> Before me for a moment's space. The fay
> Was old and did not see me lying there.
> I grieved to see her sob in fretful mood,
> And often since I marvel in my mind
> What grievous heart-pang drove her from the wood
> To ease her heart away from her own kind.
> Strange, that these tiny, soulless beings should,
> Like us, be grieved and be with passion blind!

These are the words of a man who speaks with conviction. I ought to mention that, ecclesiastically (and I hope in other ways, too,) he was a Moderate. Two things annoyed him greatly: (1) that the fairy did not deign to look at him; (2) that nobody but his little grand-daughter of eight would believe he had seen a fairy at all. "Why," he said, "I could draw that fairy now, if I had pencil and paper. I see her as plain as I see you. *Her little bosom was heaving, and she wore a necklace of twisted corn-stalks. I am sorry I did not offer her some refreshment.*" {286}

TALES FROM LOCH BROOM.

The enquirer will find a specially abundant crop of old stories if he stays long on Loch Broom side. The bard of Ullapool, Mr. Roderick Mackenzie, has made an excellent collection of romantic incidents associated with the neighbourhood, and has told them in a very quaint and effective fashion. From his collection I now cite a specimen or two. I by no means recommend them as reading for the small hours of the morning.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

Three young fellows belonging to Strathmore, in the parish of Loch Broom, were returning from the Low Country, where they had been living for some time. It was long before the days of Watt and Macadam; roads were not good, progress was slow, and rain was frequent. When they, in the final lap of their journey, arrived at the green hillside of Lochdrom, the weather was extremely inclement. Seeing a commodious shieling on the braeface, the young men entered, and one of them, with the object of driving dull care away, struck up a lightsome tune on his pipes. His two

comrades at once began to fling their legs about and caper merrily. Soon, having succeeded in dancing themselves dry, they all agreed that female partners would be a great acquisition. The wish was at once gratified. Three women mysteriously glided into the shieling, and the dancing began in earnest. One of the women stood close by the piper, while the other two skipped about, with their partners, all round the building. Outside it thundered and lightened in terrific fashion. Tired and sweating, the two couples were at length fain to stop, and they sat down to rest on {287} seats of turf and heather. The piper stopped too: he felt some malign influence coming over him; he was certain some devilish deed was a-doing. Stealing a glance at his two friends, he perceived that they were both stark dead, and that the two infernal huzzies were smiling a hideous smile of triumph. Action, he felt, was immediately necessary: he flung the still groaning bagpipes full in the face of the witch near him, stunned her thus for an instant, and with one wild leap cleared the threshold. And now began a hot race and hot pursuit. Like another Tam o' Shanter, but without the mare, the piper sped over the moor and through the rain, plying a foot as good as wings. Not till they came in sight of the clachan of Fasagrianach, did the witches relinquish the chase. The exhausted piper had a sad tale to tell to the mothers of his two hapless friends. Next day a company of mourners went to the scene of the infernal dance, and, amid much mourning, they sang a weird wail with the sad refrain, *Airidh mo Dhubhaich*, which, being interpreted, means "Shieling of my Sorrow."

Let me give another tale, but of less sombre issue, culled from the folk-lore of the same locality.

THE KILDONAN MIDWIFE.

A woman living at Kildonan, on the north shore of Little Loch Broom, and exercising the useful profession of howdie, or midwife, had been summoned to attend a case at Keppoch. She did not arrive at her destination, although she left home after telling her neighbours where she was {288} going. It was on Christmas eve that Fair Sarah, as she was called, left Kildonan, and for the space of an entire year, not a word, good or bad, was heard of her. Search parties were organized, but all to no purpose. Exactly twelve months after her disappearance—the next Christmas eve, namely—back came the errant midwife to her home, not a hair the worse for her long absence. She was immensely astonished to find she had been so long away, her own impression being that only an hour or two had elapsed. It was evident to all the natives of Kildonan that Fair Sarah had been among the fairies, in whose company, as every one knows, months and years slip past as quickly as hours and days. Sarah was asked to speak out and tell her experiences. "It seems to me," said the flustered howdie, "that it was but last night that I left for Keppoch. Just as I passed the White Knoll, between Strathmore and Strathbeg, I came upon a company of little folk, who would have me with them, right reason or none. I accepted their hospitality, and what drinking, skipping, revelry, and glee my eyes beheld! At last I grew sick of their cantrips and capers. Remembering I was a Christian and a communicant, *I blessed myself in the name of the Glorious Trinity*, with the result that I was unceremoniously bundled out of the place."

The White Knoll had long had the repute of harbouring fairies; Sarah's experiences put the matter beyond all doubt. That worthy female continued to ply her vocation for many years after, with unvarying dexterity and signal success. She was certainly a more prosperous woman after {289} her year's excursion into Fairy-land.

THE MAGIC HERRING.

There is an interesting legend told of the device by which shoals of herring were first induced to come into Loch Broom.

It seems that long ago (the precise date is unessential) the lochs round the island of Lewis were invariably, at the herring season, visited by magnificent shoals of fish, while not a tail was ever seen to twinkle in the spacious waters of Loch Broom. Abundance on one side of the Minch, destitution (for no earthly or apparent reason) on the other! After mature consideration, the dwellers by Loch Broom came to the conclusion that the anomaly could only be explained by the malignant operation of the Lews witches. Query: How best neutralise the spells of these partial harridans? A remedy, both unique and effective, was at length devised. A silver herring was made and given into the hands of a sturdy crew, who set sail with it over the water to Lewis. On arriving there, the men partook of an adequate amount of refreshment, let down the silver fish (attached to a cord) among the jostling shoals in one of the lochs, and then, with the metallic animal trailing in the sea behind them, they turned the prow of the boat in the direction of home. The ruse was successful beyond all belief: glimmering clouds of phosphorence followed through the seas below in the wake of the boat and its silver lure. Under the stars of night, in all the rapture of excitement and success, the Loch Broom fishers led the droves of herring right up to {290} the farthest reach of their loch. The metallic herring was then allowed to sink to the bottom: there it remains, and so long as it is there, an abundant harvest of the deep will be the portion of the resourceful toilers of these shores. Perhaps I ought to mention that the famous boat which did the feat was painted black on one side and red on the other. I am not sufficiently versed in the niceties of *grammarye* to be able to render a reason for this piebald device.

Of late years, as I have been told, the prosperity of Ullapool is not as high as it was. Can it be that the Lews witches are at their old tricks again? Or has the silver herring been borne, by the wash of retreating surges, out into the Hebridean deep. Every visitor who walks through the sea-facing, white-washed little town, must be struck by the silence of the streets and the utter lack of

business animation.

TAISCH.

The most interesting place in the island of Skye is, beyond question, the neighbourhood of Dunvegan. It was of surly, superstitious, loyal-hearted Samuel Johnson that I chiefly thought when I leapt out of the trap that landed me at the Hotel of Dunvegan, for I had just been reading his famous *Journey*, with its diverting remarks on second-sight. It would not, I confess, have surprised me over much, in my tired and wind-beaten condition, to see the Doctor and the Auchinleck laird, walking arm in arm along the road. I should have put it down to a kind of inverted *taisch*, certainly to nothing stronger. {291}

It may surprise many southerners to know that the belief in *taisch* is not by any means extinct. I have met educated Skyemen who firmly believed in the mysterious visual gifts of the seventh son of a seventh son. In old days, the Highlanders were wont to attribute the gift to none but those of an austere and devout cast, who, living a solitary life in the eye of nature, were thought to be specially prepared for receiving supernatural impressions. I am afraid the vast majority of *taisch* tales are dreadful nonsense. Mr. MacCulloch, in his recent work on Skye, has usefully summarized the various types of second-sight as expounded by the very credulous Macleod of Hamera: (1) The seer is aware of a phantom winding-sheet enwrapping the doomed person; (2) he may see the corpse of some one still in life; (3) he may behold a drowning or accidental death; (4) he may hear noises as of a coffin being hammered; (5) he may see a living person dwindle to the size of a child, and anon expand to normal bulk. As Johnson remarks, many of the seers declared themselves poignantly afflicted by what they saw. Aubrey tells of a clairvoyant who asked the presbytery to pray that the gift (or curse) might be taken away. Instant prayer removed the obsession.

The extraordinary futility and droll language of the sentences uttered by some of the seers are very mirth-provoking. Here are one or two prophecies of the Brahan Seer:—

"The heir of the Mackenzies will take
A white rook out of the wood,
And will take a wife from a music-house
With his people against him. {292}
And the heir will be great
In deeds, and as an orator,
When the Pope in Rome
Will be cast off his throne,
Over opposite Creagh-a'-chon
Will dwell a little lean tailor," etc.

The following is excellent: "*When the big-thumbed sheriff-officer and the blind man of the twenty-four fingers shall be together in Barra, Macneill may be making ready for the flitting.*" It is said that the same seer prophesied thus of the Strathpeffer wells: "The day will come when this disagreeable spring, with thick-crusted surface and unpleasant smell, shall be put under lock and key, so great will be the crowd of people pressing to drink the waters."

Belief in clairvoyance and prophecy was quite common among the Lowland Covenanters; and I believe *Peden's Prophecies* may still be found among the lumber of the book-shops. An old lady, in Irvine, once repeated to me the following couplet, as having been uttered by Peden:—

"Between Segton and the sea
A bloody battle there shall be."

Now, as Segton is the old name for Kilwinning, it would seem that the locale of the battle (probably, as the lady, indeed, thought, the battle of Armageddon) will be *in the immediate neighbourhood of the site at present occupied by Nobell's Dynamite Factory*.

ANTIQUITIES OF DUNVEGAN.

Taisch has taken me a long way from Dunvegan, of which I meant to say something. No souvenir is to me more delicious than that of some days spent there, on one of which I visited the fine old {293} castle of the Macleods, stablished on its rocks, and filled with romance from base to topmost turret. On the landward side are lawns, flowers, and abundance of eye-gladdening leafage, while, seaward, there is the unspeakable glory of isle-dotted loch and distant sea. By the kindness of Macleod of Macleod (you must not call that grand and most genial gentleman by any more garish title: he is *the* Macleod; he typifies the clan—that is his highest glory), I visited the delightful old castle and saw every room, relic, and dirk of importance. What gave me the most pleasure was the illuminating commentary of Macleod himself and of his charming daughters. One cannot hear the history of some of the rooms without a feeling of terror. In the drawing-room of the castle (the room now used for prayers, and well it may be,) a horrible outrage was planned to take place by Black Ian, a usurping chief. The atrocious deed happened in the middle of the sixteenth century, and was due to Ian's fear that the Campbells, who had landed with a large force in Skye, would expel him from Dunvegan castle. Ian, pretending that he wished to discuss terms, invited eleven of the leading Campbells to a banquet. At table, Macleods and Campbells were seated side by side; and, at a given signal, which consisted in placing a cup of blood in front of each guest, all

the Campbells were simultaneously stabbed to death, each Macleod exterminating his man. I was glad to get out of that drawing-room.

The main relics in the castle are: (1) The Fairy Flag; (2) Rory Mor's Drinking-horn; and (3) the Dunvegan Cup. {294}

It is not as well known as it should be that one of the mediæval chiefs of the Macleods married a fairy. This dainty little woman presented her lord with a yellow silk flag, dotted here and there with red spots. The virtue of the flag, she told him, resided in its efficacy to save the chief of the Macleods on three different occasions. After the third employment of the flag, it would flutter away to fairy-land. The flag has twice saved a chief out of a particularly awkward predicament, and it is still in Dunvegan, though sadly grimed and rent. The present chief, who has served his country nobly, is quite fit, in soldierly fashion, to grapple single-handed with any difficulty he may encounter; but he is in hopes that the flag may yield its residual virtue to the contentment of some one or other of his successors.

Rory Mor's drinking-horn, which could contain, I should think, between two and three bottles of wine, is an interesting indication of pre-Reformation thirst. Of old, each chief as he came of age, was expected to drink off its contents at one draught as a proof that he had arrived at years of discretion.

The cup is made of dark wood, and is finely adorned with silver work. It is dated 1493, and contains a Latin inscription.

The Fairy Tower in Dunvegan Castle contains the room in which Dr. Johnson and Sir Walter Scott slept during their respective visits to the castle. The burly lexicographer would have little wind left for argument after he had toiled up the steep and narrow spiral stairway leading to the room. {295} Formerly, so the smiling chief told me, the young lady chosen by the Macleod to be his wife, had to pass a night alone in this haunted chamber, in order that the fairies might have an opportunity of seeing her, and formally approving the choice.

MISCELLANEOUS TERRORS.

He who investigates Celtic demonology will hear a good deal about a gruesome and insidious animal called the *Water Horse*. This fell beast, though able at need to transform itself into the shape of a human being, is normally like a horse, though much bulkier and fiercer. Its usual abode is in the deep lochs, but it may occasionally be seen, with wreck or sea-weed clinging to its hoof or mane, feeding on the hill-side among earthly horses. The detestable feature about the brute is its fondness for human beings. There is no hope for any man, woman, or child, who gets upon its back: at a furious gallop, the animal bounds off by the nearest road to the loch, and leaps under the waves to devour its prey. Foals of a specially vicious turn are believed to have this brute for their sire: in some such way the furious nature of the horse called "Kelpy" in George Macdonald's story might be explained.

Certain lochs in Skye are believed to harbour a variant terror, the water-bull. Loch Morar, on the mainland, contains a huge mystic bogie, undefined in shape, but of terrible malignity. I have heard too, in Uist, of a phantom dog, with eyes of glede and unearthly bark, that frequents the entrance to the old wayside burying-ground. No driver, unless fortified by several glasses, will {296} drive you that way after dark.

"Duncan," said a commercial traveller to a driver, "I'll have to go to Gruiginish farm to-night. Have everything ready at 8.30."

"I can't do that, Mr. Smith; it'll be dark."

"But you have lamps, Duncan."

"Yes, yes, but I can't go. You have to pass the old cemetery."

"I know that, but I must attend to my business. What ails you at the cemetery?"

"There's the dog at the gate, the dog with the eyes of burning coal. What is he doing there? And the wee man inside, *What is he doing there?*"

"I don't know what he's doing, but to Gruiginish this night I must go. Do you think a glass of *forked lightning* would do you any good?"

"Well, it might help."

In spite of more than one glass of forked lightning, poor Duncan was in a terrible state of excitement when the cemetery was approached. He kept his head averted, and clutched the reins so nervously that the vehicle was in imminent danger of being upset.

It is a beautiful saying of Goldsmith that innocently to amuse the imagination in this dream of life is wisdom. Judged by this standard, the imaginative operations taking place in Duncan's brain, considering their effect on his happiness, cannot be pronounced either innocent or wise. To add ideal terrors to the prosaic hardships of a place like Uist is the very height of folly. And yet it is precisely in such bare and rough regions where man has to fight with nature as with a constant {297} foe, that the unseen powers are believed to be most terrible. The *lutin* of the smiling land of France is a mere capering trickster, and the "lubber fiend" of Milton's poem is pictured as an

unpaid adjunct of the dairy. Duncan's "wee man up on the hill-side" is a permanent and unspeakable horror of the night. "*What is he doing there?*"[29]

ST. KILDA.

St. Kilda, the lonely and precipitous island, forty miles west of Lewis, which Boswell at one time thought of buying, has now, like so many other islands of the West, a well-furnished library from Paisley. I hope the minister of the place encourages the reading of the books, and does everything in his power to broaden the religious views of the people by healthy secular literature. A luckless inspector of schools crossed over once to examine the school of this island. His boat arrived late on Saturday, and was to leave again early on Monday. To suit his own convenience, the greatly-daring official proposed to examine the scholars on Sunday. Never was their such {298} indignation among the islanders. What! examine the school on the first day of the week! Did the unhappy man wish the wrath of Heaven to fall in fire and brimstone on the island? The inspector was angrily hooted and denounced. Still, as he must needs return by his steamer, the islanders agreed to send their children immediately after Sunday was over, *i.e.*, *the bairns were assembled at midnight*, and parts of speech were bandied about then in the visible darkness of the tiny school.

St. Kilda belongs to the Macleod, and every spring the factor goes over to collect the rents. All winter the island is isolated, and has no outer news save, perhaps, from some stray Aberdeen trawler. For twenty years the factor went over in a sailing-boat belonging to the chief, but by some mishap, in which no lives were lost, this boat was ill-manœuvred and, with sails full-set, was engulfed in a whirlpool. He now goes over in the steamer.

The first question propounded to the factor is this: "*Has there been war anywhere, my dear?*" If the answer is "Yes," a great joy is visible on every face. "*That's good, that's good: tell us all about it.*" Having heard all about the war, the natives show an eagerness for sweets, of which they are inordinately fond.

The natives are expert cragsmen, and much of their time is occupied in collecting birds' feathers. The oil of the solan goose is also a source of wealth. Rough tweeds are now woven in many of the houses. The factor informed me that, for some unknown reason, everything that comes from the island is impregnated with a heavy odour that is most disagreeable. Means have been tried to {299} neutralise this smell, but success is only for a time: by and by the odour returns, as bad as ever, to fabric and feather. Merchants, both at home and abroad, are loath to purchase such unfragrant wares.

In Dunvegan Castle are to be seen several of the little letter-boats employed by the St. Kildeans to convey news to Scotland in the winter months. The tide is watched, and the letter-boat cast into the sea. Usually the message is washed ashore on some part of the Long Island. Natural superstition supplements, in a small degree, the lack of mails: when the islanders, for example, hear *the notes of the cuckoo*, they are convinced that the Macleod is dead. Happily the cuckoo is rarely heard breaking the silence of the seas so far west.

LADY GRANGE.

To this day there are in the possession of the Macleod family certain old accounts of the years 1744 and 1745, that recall one of the most diabolical and continuous pieces of cruelty recorded in history. I refer to the accounts paid in these years to the Laird of Macleod for the board and burial of Lady Grange. No one who knows the history of that ill-fated lady can look at these time-stained documents without a knocking of the seated heart at the ribs.

Everyone who has enjoyed the light and graceful poetry of Ovid, has sighed over the relegation of that city man to the barbarous horrors of the Black Sea. As Gibbon exquisitely phrases it: "The tender Ovid, after a youth spent in the enjoyment of wealth and luxury, was condemned to a {300} hopeless exile on the frozen banks of the Danube, where he was exposed without remorse to those fierce denizens of the desert with whose stern spirits he feared that his gentle shade might hereafter be confounded." The banishment of Lady Grange to St. Kilda, in 1734, by her rascally husband, is to me fully as pathetic as Ovid's expatriation to Tomi. She, a refined and beautiful woman, the light of Edinburgh drawing-rooms, was hustled off to a lonely rock and left remorselessly to pine there amid the squalls. Let me briefly summarise this affecting history.

Lord Grange, a Scottish judge of strong Jacobite leanings, was known by his Lady to be concerned in a plot, along with Lovat, Mar, and others, to bring back the Pretender. This was in the year 1730. Stung in her wifely pride by her husband's ill-treatment and licentiousness, she openly threatened to expose his treason. To prevent such exposure, Grange caused his wife to be kidnapped and clandestinely conveyed first to a small island off North Uist, and subsequently to St. Kilda. In the latter island, no one could speak any English except the catechist, and here for seven years this polished society dame lived amid the blasts and the screaming ocean-fowl, lacking even the privilege, which Ovid enjoyed, of sending letters to child or friend. In 1741, when the catechist left the island, she made him bearer of letters to her law-agent, Hope of Rankeillor. Hope fitted out a sloop, with twenty-five armed men on board, and set out for St. Kilda to rescue the lady. Macleod, who was, of course, privy to her detention, at once removed {301} her to Skye, and Hope's expedition came to nothing. The poor woman, worn out with sorrow and suffering, died in 1745, a helpless imbecile!

The story, which throws a lurid light on the savagery of the eighteenth century, and which, to my thinking, surpasses in pathos anything occurring in fiction, was long disbelieved. But it was only too true. It is said that ill-luck pursued the lady even after death, and that her funeral was a miserable parody. A coffin filled with stones and turf was interred, before a large crowd, in the churchyard of Duirinish, the real remains being, with maimed rites or none at all, secretly buried elsewhere.

It is noteworthy that Lady Grange died in 1745, the year when Prince Charlie's hopes were shattered on Culloden Moor. Like her, he too had the ill-luck to be a hopeless wanderer in the Misty Isle.

PIERLESS TIREE.

I regret to say that I did not stay long enough in the island of Tiree to add to my store of legends, and yet, I went there with a capacious note-book and excellent intentions. What is more, I read from beginning to end, Dr. Erskine Beveridge's detailed book on the island, and could have passed an examination on semi-brochs, rock-forts, marsh duns, islet-forts, sandhill dwellings, and prehistoric burial-sites. I steeped myself so thoroughly in the *minutiae* of pre-Reformation churches, that I almost forgot to go to the modern ones. Tiree took hold of me completely, and so {302}
did the Norse invaders of the Hebrides—men like Ketil Flatnose, Magnus Barelegs, Hako, and Somerled. I got a pocket map arranged for my own use (copied from Dr. Beveridge's large one) with a red cross at all the sites of ancient forts. It was my fond hope, for pride attends us still, that I might find some inaccuracy in Dr. Beveridge's book, and, from measurements on the spot, be able to contradict some of his statements. But what are the hopes of man! I did not know that predestination, in the form of dirty weather, was working against me, and was about to quench all my interest in *duns*. On September 5th, 1907, I determined to take Dr. Beveridge's measurements for granted.

On that day, in fact, I was for some time under the impression that my last lecture had been delivered. It was on the way between Coll and Tiree. The gale was a furious one and, combined with the greasy odours of the *Fingal*, was enough to sicken a practised seafarer. I did notice that some of the crew were prostrated, so that there was some excuse for a landsman not being proof against Neptune's dandling. So low, exposed, and precarious is the shore at Scarinish, that, often for weeks, the ferrymen dare not venture out to the steamer for passengers. I asked one of the *Fingal* men if there was any chance of being landed. He was a cruel cynic, and said: "No, not to-day. The sea is too wild for the ferry to come out. We'll go right across to Bunessan in Mull, so prepare for three more hours' shaking. You won't forget the *Dutchman's Cap* for the rest of your {303}
life." Then with a remark addressed to the Creator, he added: "*There's the ferryboat after all; she's racing over the water like a stag.*"

He was right: the lugsail was careering out to us and came alongside at length, and, after fearful trouble, got fastened to the *Fingal*. Sometimes the ferryboat was even with our deck, sometimes far above it, sometimes fifteen feet below. It looked like certain death to leap into that lugsail.

I hesitated, and shouted to the captain: "Is it safe to jump?"

He replied, "I wish to Tophet I had the chance."

I watched for the next opportunity of the ferryboat and the *Fingal* being approximately on the same plane, and leaped into the arms of a boatman.

Other passengers followed,—men, women, even babies. Then came the mails; and finally, live stock. I remember being struck on the mouth by a sheep heaved into the boat by the above-mentioned cynic. "Come, come, that's enough, keep the rest; let us be off," shouted a boatman. Everybody was wet to the skin: the wind was howling; the women weeping; and the babies were mixed up with the sheep.

Once clear of the *Fingal*, the adroit ferrymen did their duty well, and in less than ten minutes we were all landed. A crowd of islanders were waiting to lift us out. All agreed that it had been a *close shave*.

Such was my introduction to *Pierless Tiree*.

I did not stay long enough in the island to measure brochs, but quite long enough to experience the good-will and kindliness of the natives. The houses are solid and substantial, the inhabitants {304}
strong and muscular. Great gales from the Atlantic blow almost continually, sweep up the sand in clouds, and prevent any trees from taking root. I did not see much poverty with my own eyes, but the ministers all assured me there was a great deal. Maize, more than oatmeal, is the cereal used for porridge. For supplementary information, Dr. Beveridge's admirable and accurate work may be consulted.

LOCHBUIE IN MULL.

The great straggling island of Mull, so full of scenery, romance, and song, still awaits its historian. Few, who have ever visited the noble isle, will refuse to say with Macphail, the bard of Torosay:

"O the island of Mull is an isle of delight

With the wave on the shore and the sun on the height,
And the breeze on the hills and the blast on the Bens,
And the old green woods and the old grassy glens."

The gem of the island is undoubtedly the haven of Lochbuie, one of the choicest nooks in insular Scotland. The modern mansion, which is but a step or two from the well-preserved castle of olden times, is quite near the shore, and looks straight south over the Atlantic to the island of Colonsay. The entire surroundings are a delight to the eye: great towering mountains behind, the sea in front, and in the space between, green lawns, rocks, gorse, and many-tinted garden-plots.

The MacLaines of Lochbuie trace their descent from the great Gillean of the Battle-axe, a redoubtable warrior who flourished his weapon to some purpose in the reign of Alexander III. But {305}
the most notorious of all the MacLaines is *Ewen of the Little Head*, who died in battle, and thereafter assumed the rôle of family ghost. Before the death of any of his race, this phantom-warrior gallops along the sea-beach near the castle, announcing the event by cries and loud lamentations. The doctor, who attended the present chief's mother, declares that, while sitting beside her bed during the silent watches of the night, he heard the noise of the spectral horse just before the old lady's decease. The natives of Mull can describe the ghost and horse with accurate detail. The horse is a small, hardy, sure-footed animal of brown colour, and Ewen is known by the smallness of his head, and by a long floating mantle of green. He performed a weird and long-continued gallop round the bay in 1815, before the news of the valiant Sir Archibald MacLaine's death became known by official despatch from the seat of war.

Lochbuie, like so many other places in Scotland, has its Piper's Cave. There is a remarkable similarity in all such tales—diversified, however, by quaint local additions. MacLaine's piper, a foolhardy man, determined once to test the allegation that a certain cave on Lochbuie was connected with another cave at Pennygown on the Sound of Mull. Attired in his official costume and having his dog at his heels, he entered the cave, blowing his pipes triumphantly. Those above, on the hills, were able to make out his line of passage by the sound of the music. At a certain point the pipes ceased, and nevermore did the piper come up to the shores of light. The {306}
dog got to the cave of Pennygown—a limp and hairless parody of its former self.

Browning, in his "Pied Piper of Hamelin," has but poetised one version of a world-wide tale. Often, in the Highland tales, it is money the piper is after. There is a deep cave near Melvaig, in Wester Ross, into which a piper is said to have led a band of men in search of gold, and never returned. In this case the pipe-music is said to have continued for years—some natives even asserting that it may be heard still by those who have ears to hear.

In spite of all the legendary lore connected with the family of the MacLaines, the chief interest of Lochbuie for a lover of literature, centres round the visit of Boswell and Johnson. In one of the rooms of the castle there is a fine portrait of Johnson. On looking at it, my mind reverted to the amusing question addressed to the sage by the "bluff, comely, noisy old gentleman" who was the laird of Lochbuie in 1773: "Are you of the Johnstons of Glencro or of Ardnamurchan?" "Dr. Johnson," says Boswell, "gave him a significant look, but made no answer; and I told Lochbuie that he was not Johnston, but Johnson, and that he was an Englishman."

I regret to say that the great war saddle, which was in Lochbuie's possession in 1773, and which Boswell did not see because the young laird had taken it to Falkirk with a drove of black cattle, is no longer in the island: somebody took it to America, and forgot to bring it back. {307}

The present laird is greatly beloved by his tenantry. At the lecture I gave at Lochbuie, he was unable, owing to illness, to take the chair. His absence was a terrible grief to the people, and the piper of the family, in a brief speech, alluded in a most touching way to the sorrow felt by all present.[30]

INVERARAY CASTLE.

Three days after Johnson and his friend left Lochbuie, they were entertained by the Duke of Argyll in Inveraray Castle. Boswell's description of the incidents of this visit is one of his finest efforts. He tells us that Johnson admired the "utter defiance of expense" shown by the Duke in the building and appointments of the place. Records exist which show that the masons were paid at the rate of 4½d. a day, *plus* a weekly bonus of meal!

It is interesting to note that the Rev. John Macaulay (grandfather of Lord Macaulay) was one of the ministers of Inveraray in 1773. Boswell gives him a very high character, but this had no emollient effect on the great historian, when he came to review *Croker's Edition of Boswell's* {308}
Johnson.

Inveraray Castle is a superb object-lesson in Scotch history. All the Campbells of note for centuries past are hanging on the walls, from the old Duke who passed away last, to the squinting Marquis (*Gleed Argyll* mentioned in the "Bonnie House o' Airlie"), who was beheaded on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh in 1661. The Duke, who commanded at Sheriffmuir ("when we ran and they ran, and they ran and we ran," etc.) is standing in his accoutrements of pride, painted by the son of Allan Ramsay:

"Argyll the State's whole thunder, born to wield
And shake alike the Senate and the Field."

Mediæval armour, firelocks from Culloden, flags from a score of battlefields, mutely suggest the glory and gore of the olden times. It is impossible to walk through the rooms of such a place without feeling intimately in touch with the events of the past.

The present hotel is the one in which Johnson and his biographer lodged. Burns came sixteen years later, and wrote on the pane of his bedroom window the scandalous epigram on Inveraray so often quoted. The present Duke (who has perpetrated a fair amount of poetry himself) would give much of his odd cash to recover that pane, which was cut out some years ago by a pilfering visitor.[31] {309}

THE SACRED ISLE.

Wordsworth came to Iona (which also belongs to the Argyll family) in 1833, and wrote four poor sonnets on the sacred isle. This is what he saw:

> "To each voyager
> Some ragged child holds up for sale a store
> Of wave-worn pebbles, pleading on the shore
> Where once came monk and nun with gentle stir."

Owing to its ecclesiastical renown as the cradle of Christianity in Britain, no island is so much visited as Iona. The audience I addressed was the most miscellaneous I have ever seen: there were boatmen and barristers, anglers and artists, curates and crofters, French and Germans.

The present-day natives seem desirous of keeping up the old reputation for theology. The boatman who ferries visitors ashore, remarked to me with pride that his favourite book was one entitled *The Great Controversy between God and the Devil*, a book with which I was, and am still, unacquainted.

Dr. Johnson's remarks on Iona remain the most eloquent tribute to the island. He never wrote anything finer. All the children in the Iona school should be made to learn the piece by heart.[32] {310}

It is most gratifying to think that Christianity has been the great purifying force in Europe. The introduction of Christianity into the world must be reckoned as the most revolutionary event of history. Nothing was ever more needed. To one who knows the morality of the most brilliant society of the Greeks and Romans, there is no need to extol the pure and lofty moral tone of Jesus of Nazareth. But those who have not read the masterpieces of ancient art, with their mingled beauty and foulness, may be assured that literature owes more to Christianity than has ever yet been told. With Christianity a great healthy breeze swept over the world. Men became ashamed of wallowing in the mire. An ideal was raised up before them for their worship and imitation. The old Adam and his deeds needed stern repression after the wild iniquities of the effete society of imperial Rome. The spirit needed to curb the flesh, literature needed to be cleansed. We, living to-day and nursed on the accumulated tradition of so many anterior Christian centuries, are sometimes disposed to minimise the debt we owe, in pure and simple morality, to the teachings {311} of the New Testament. I find it impossible to imagine what the world would be without these teachings. They renewed the world, they made it do penance for its sins, they made advance practicable. An entirely retrograde movement is impossible when once man is indoctrinated with a grand ideal.

APPIN.

In this chapter (as, indeed, in all the others) I am rummaging among my souvenirs for materials that are in some way noteworthy. It is utterly impossible to exhaust the romance and glamour of the Highlands. Those who go regularly North are certain to bring back, on each occasion, a host of interesting memories. "Swift as a weaver's shuttle fly our years": the chief difficulty is to jot down all that one sees and hears.

On the occasion of my second visit to Appin, I stayed in the fine new hotel built on the eminence called Druim-an-t-Sealbhain. The landlord is a man of great wit and reading, and with him I had some enjoyable hours of miscellaneous conversation. Mr. Macdonald (for that is his name) has an excellent knowledge of the Celtic dialects, has translated into Gaelic verse some of the best-known poems of Burns, Tannahill, and Byron, and is extremely clever at retailing the legendary tales that still go rumouring along the Strath of Appin. He has also a good knowledge of English literature, and told me certain details regarding Scott and Wordsworth which I was pleased to know.

It seems that Sir Walter was at one time tutor in Appin House, and was in the habit of visiting the {312} cot of an old shepherd, a notorious *seanachie*, full of romantic lore, for the purpose of hearing, and writing down, the old man's tales. An oak tree is still pointed out, under which, it is said, Scott composed part of *The Lord of the Isles*. Appin is not very far from the castles of Dunollie and Dunstaffnage, which Sir Walter wrought skilfully into the texture of his tales.

The most interesting item mentioned by Mr. Macdonald had reference to the visit of William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, in the year 1803. Everyone who has read the life of the great poet of Nature knows the charming description of the district contained in one of his sister's letters. "We arrived," she says, "at Port-na-croish. It is a small village—a few huts and an indifferent inn, by the side of the loch; ordered a fowl for dinner, had a fire lighted, and went a

few steps from the door up the road, and turning aside into a field, stood at the top of a low eminence, from which, looking down the loch to the sea through a long vista of hills and mountains, *we beheld one of the most delightful prospects that, even when we dream of fairer worlds than this, it is possible to conceive in our hearts*." Here follows a description so exquisite of the sea-scenery and the Morven Hills, that it deserves to be classed with the finest examples of word-painting in the English language.

The new hotel at Appin is built on the low eminence referred to in the above-cited letter. The name Druim-an-t-Sealbhain is giving way to the complimentary title of "Dorothy Wordsworth's View." From the front windows of the hotel, the same calm inland seas, grassy hills, Morven {313} mists, grim old forts, and intricate communion of land and water, can be seen precisely as they were seen by the Wordsworths more than a century ago. The Port-na-croish inn has become a village store: it is well worthy of note, not merely for the reference in the letter, but for a fine legend, which I shall now narrate.

MACDONALD'S GRATITUDE.

The first tenant of the inn was a Macdonald of Glencoe, a man between sixty and seventy at the time of the story, the year 1755 namely. He had around him a family of stalwart sons, all imbued with intense hatred of the clan Campbell. The peculiar and fiendish malignity of the terrible massacre of Glencoe precluded all possibility of forgiveness on the part of the clan. Highland hospitality has always been a lavish and magnificent thing, and Colonel Campbell and his assassins had been treated with exceptional kindness in Glencoe. The bloody outrage, in a midnight of winter snows, was too terrible a meed of hospitality to be readily forgotten or forgiven by the Macdonalds. This old innkeeper of Port-na-croish, then, hated the Campbells with the unquenchable hate that deep wrongs, done not alone to an individual but to a tribe, engender in the Celtic soul.

One day a white-bearded wayfarer begged food and shelter in the little hostel, and in the course of conversation over the meal that was soon spread on the board for his wants, he let slip an avowal that, in his youth, as one of Campbell's men, he had taken part in the gruesome massacre of the "valley of weeping." Without more ado, the landlord slipped out and posted his sons at the {314} door, with whispered orders to them that the stranger should be dirked to death on crossing the threshold of the inn. Returning indoors, old Macdonald, dissimulating his fell intentions, proceeded to ply the visitor with question upon question, so as to gain a detailed knowledge of all the incidents of the weird carnage. Finally he said, "Tell me, Campbell, what part of that devilish business made the strongest impression on your mind?" "I will tell you," said the old soldier, "what to me was the outstanding incident of that night. Towards the close of the massacre, a child's voice was heard piercingly on the night air—a scream it was, and seemed to come from no great distance. The captain sent me in the direction of the sound, bidding me, if the child should be a male Macdonald, to kill it forthwith; if a girl, to spare. I soon came up to the place whence the sound proceeded, and saw through the whirling snow, under the protection of a jutting cliff, a nurse with a boy of four years old, both of them wailing and shivering with cold. The child was gnawing a bone and, near by, a dog was crouching. Pity wrung my heart. I drove my bayonet through the trembling cur, and, going back to the captain, showed him the bloody steel as a proof that I had obeyed his commands."

The innkeeper, who had been all ears, said: "You, then, were that soldier?" "I was, indeed," replied the old wanderer. "*And I was that child!*" said the landlord, "and *your* life is saved. My sons stand at the threshold of the inn, ready to fall upon you when you leave. I countermand the {315} order for your destruction. Here you shall stay, an honoured guest, till the end of your days, as a recompense for saving my life on that awful night."

The story goes on to state that the foot-weary Campbell lived for some years a pensioner in Port-na-croish inn, and was buried at the expense of the grateful innkeeper. I do not know any story that comes nearer perfection.

NOTES ON THE TROSSACHS.

The Rev. Mr. Wilson, the cultured and genial minister of the Trossachs, has recently published a most readable little book on the district he knows so well. Perhaps no district indeed on the world's surface is so well known (even to those who have never seen it), as the Trossachs. Little did Sir Walter suspect, when he penned the stirring iambics of *The Lady of the Lake*, that he was furnishing materials to the pedagogue which would be parsed, analysed, and dissected by myriads of pupils in all the schools of the British Empire. We shall all carry with us to the grave the leading passages of that romantic lay: the stag-hunt, the duel at Coilantogle Ford, the whistle that garrisoned the glen, and the episode of the Fiery Cross. Such lines, we may say, have gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Happening to pass Strathyre station in July, 1907, I was requested by a bright-eyed little Japanese gentleman in the compartment to tell him where we were. On being informed, he (after casting an eye of pity on the deplorable stork that is supposed to decorate the drinking-fountain of the station), began to {316} declaim, in capital English, the passage that begins—

> "Benledi saw the Cross of Fire,
> It glanced like lightning up Strathyre,
> O'er dale and hill the summons flew,

Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew;
The tear that gathered in his eye
He left the mountain breeze to dry."

Mr. Wilson's book to which I have alluded is a collection of the impressions written down by eminent visitors to the locality, from Dorothy Wordsworth to Queen Victoria. Carlyle, who was in Perthshire in 1818, wrote the following note, which, though short, is finely characteristic of him: "The Trossachs I found really grand and impressive, Loch Katrine exquisitely so, my first taste of the beautiful in scenery. Not so, any of us, the dirty, smoky farm-hut at the entrance, with no provision in it but bad oatcakes and unacceptable whisky, or the Mrs. Stewart who somewhat royally presided over it, and dispensed these dainties, expecting to be flattered like an independency, as well as paid like an innkeeper." The foregoing note, by itself, is good value for the cost of Mr. Wilson's book (two shillings, namely), and raises regrets that the author of *Sartor* did not travel oftener through the Land of Cakes. (The only other place in the Highlands where I have heard Carlyle spoken of, is Kyleakin in Skye, where he was the guest of Lady Ashburton, and where (as the natives say), the cocks and hens had to be removed out of ear-shot for his convenience.) {317}

One of Mr. Wilson's stories (contributed by a lady) is apposite at the present time, when so much is being heard of women's rights. Glengyle, a district of the Trossachs, was once *entirely ruled* by a number of women, who constituted a sort of High Court with women as Judge and Jury. "The most notorious case which they dealt with, and which probably led to their downfall through drawing the ridicule of the country upon them, was a case of horse-stealing. The accused man had been seen riding furiously away on someone else's horse, and all evidence pointed to his guilt. To the astonishment of the outsiders, the jury returned a verdict of 'not guilty,' and the Judge on summing up declared the horse was the culprit, as it had run away with the man. *She condemned the unfortunate animal to be hanged, and hanged it was, while the man got off scot free.*"

LOCHFYNE-SIDE.

None of the mainland counties of Scotland can boast of such wonderful ramifications of sea and loch as the county of Argyll. The present amiable and cultured head of the Clan Campbell declaimed, with great applause, at a social gathering not long ago, a fine poem, in which the beauties of his ancestral shire were floridly—but not unjustly—elaborated. It would be difficult to over-praise the county of Argyll, with its splendid sea-board, its rugged and impressive peaks, and its unrivalled fiords and lakes. Thanks to its proximity to large centres of population, few counties are so much visited. Its fame, in our day, is likely to be more widespread than ever, owing to the graceful and entertaining writings of Mr. Neil Munro, who probably knows the {318} details of its local history better than any man living, and who possesses the inimitable art of interesting others in his delineations of the past. I confess that I feel, personally, as much interest in the Wars of Lorn as I do in the Siege of Sphacteria, and that "Glee'd Argyll" seems fully as attractive as Cleon or Brasidas.

Of course, long before Mr. Munro, Loch Fyne had a European reputation, which it owed to its herring. The Popes of Rome used to eat these herring in mediæval times, and sent for them *viâ* Amsterdam or Antwerp. Orthodox Catholics have always had good judgment in the matter of fish, and especially the French, who belong to a country which proudly boasts of being *the eldest daughter of the Church*. For many a generation the French came annually to Lochgilphead, and bartered their kegs of claret for barrels of salt herring. The French Revolution, among its many other effects, put a stop to this trade. War lasted for so many years between Britain and France, that, at the end of it all, the continental sailors had forgotten the way to Loch Fyne.

Argyllshire is rich in legends, for many of which no date can be given except the elastic one *long ago* or *in byegone times*. Let me cite one or two of these:—

MACIVORS, MACVICARS, AND MACALLISTERS.

On the road to Kilmartin is a place called the Robber's Den, the locality of which may be firmly fixed in the tourist's memory by noting that it is just behind a large distillery. Here, long ago, {319} lived one Macvicar, whose wife was a Macivor. These names are important, and so also is that of the Macallisters of Tarbert, who one day stole cattle belonging to the Macivors. Mrs. Macvicar noticed these Tarbert scoundrels driving her father's cattle through the glen, and mentioned the fact to her boy. Young Macvicar followed the robbers, and found them in a forest feeding joyously on a slain bullock belonging to his grandfather. As each Macallister finished picking a bone, he would throw it violently against a big stone, remarking at the same time, with a chuckle: "*If a Macivor were here, that's how I would treat him*." The boy, from his hiding-place in the foliage, threw a stone and struck one of the feasters. The injured man blamed one of his own clansmen, and, after much recrimination, a free fight of Macallisters was the result. During the mêlée, the boy slunk off and told his mother's family what was happening. The Macivors, in a furious and determined band, soon fell upon their disordered foes, and completely routed them and regained their cattle, *minus* the consumed bullock. The chief of the Macallisters was slain by a woman, who took off her stocking, placed a *large stone therein*, and heaved it at his head. That same night, Mrs. Macallister, wife of the chieftain thus ignominiously laid low, gave birth, perhaps prematurely, to a son, whom the care of a discriminate midwife secreted from the vengeance of

the Macivors, who were howling all round the house. This child grew up to manhood with the picture of the stone-laden stocking ever before his mind's eye. He prepared a most effective {320}
retaliation: he sent to Ireland and got over a large band of Antrim men, who were quite pleased to help him in his bloody projects. The Macivors were completely overpowered, and even the Macvicars had a taste of Irish steel. Macvicar, father of the boy who distinguished himself in the wood, was attacked in his own house. He was an athlete of great powers, and was *able to jump thirty feet either in a backward or a forward direction*. The Irishmen set fire to his house, and Macvicar—hoping, no doubt, to make a final leap for life—tried to escape by the chimney. His foes struck him on the knee with a spear: he fell into their hands, and was at once despatched.

RED HECTOR.

We hear a good deal of the Irish in the traditions of Argyllshire. The ruthless Colkitto, notorious for his own deeds and also for Milton's mention of him, brought over a contingent of men from Ireland to help Montrose in the Royalist wars. These auxiliaries swooped down on Kintyre, murdered hundreds of Campbells, and devastated with fire and sword the whole of Argyll's country. To this period belongs the story of Red Hector and the Irish colossus, Phadrig Mor.

Hector was a little, red-haired kern of the Campbell clan, who was caught by Colkitto's men skulking in the wood, and dragged with pinioned arms before the son of that bandit. Hector was about to be hanged without more ado, but as preparations were being made he cried out: "*Give me a sword and I'll fight any one of you. If I am beaten, kill me then.*" The Irishmen, to whom an {321}
"illigant foight" has always been welcome, agreed to the proposal of Red Hector. They chose Phadrig Mor, a fierce giant of a man, to fight with the little fellow. The latter, to neutralise the advantages of Phadrig's stature, leapt nimbly on the sawn stump of a tree, and, in an attitude of defence, awaited the oncoming of his foe. The wee man parried most dexteriously every blow that Phadrig wished to deal, and there was much mirth and excitement among the spectators. At length, seeing a terrific blow coming his way, Hector speedily leapt off the trunk of the tree, and the Irishman's sword came fiercely down and was embedded in the timber. Now was Hector's chance: he laid about the defenceless giant to such purpose that Phadrig was soon a corpse.

MACPHAIL OF COLONSAY.

Leyden, the polyglott poet, has written a poem on an Argyllshire tradition attaching to the whirlpool of Corryvreckan. Near that dreaded tumult of waters, Macphail, a Colonsay man, was pulled out of his boat by a mermaid, and taken down to her shell-strewn chamber at the bottom of the sea. They stayed for years together, and five little, unbaptized Macphails claimed him at length as their sire. By and by he grew tired of the eternal swirling of the currents, the saltwater garden growths, and the irritating deflection of the sunlight. His mind continued to revert to Colonsay and the girl he had left behind him there. One day he got the mermaid to take him near the strand of his native island, whereupon he suddenly leapt ashore and escaped. In future years {322}
he avoided the sea as much as possible, preferring to devote his time and talents to cultivating the soil of Colonsay.

TALES FROM SPEYSIDE.

Part of my purpose in this chapter is to show to any of my readers who may have poetical talents, that abundance of material for verse, and that of the most pathetic, thrilling, and gruesome kind, is still to be found in the North country. No one since Scott has thought fit to draw much on traditions of the Highlands: and though Scott poetised a great many of these, plenty of them still remain unsung. Many fine tales are associated with the delightful district of Speyside.

TOM EUNAN!

Near the little village of Kincraig is a queer old church built on a hill called Tom Eunan, just beside the Spey. This church is declared to be the only one in Scotland in which services have been continuously held since the seventh century. The outside is antique in the extreme; inside, there have been renovations: there is a deal of varnished wainscoating that would have scared the Culdees, and instead of the uneven cobble stones of old, there is a modern floor of wood. On one of the windows of the church, there is a fine old bronze bell that exists as a relic of Culdee times. Some profane person once laid hands on this bell and carried it off to Perth; but it *would not* ring away from Speyside. To speak figuratively, the bell was broken-hearted: from its metallic tongue, night and day, came the mournful wail, "Tom Eunan, Tom Eunan." I am happy to say that {323}
it was brought back to its beloved hillock.

Rural churches with earthen floors were not uncommon in Scotland even in the nineteenth century: in such there would be no great trouble in interring the dead. Two Speyside stories, dealing with kirks and kirkyards, are told of the Grants of Rothiemurchus.

SHAWS AND GRANTS.

For several generations the possession of Rothiemurchus was a constant subject of dispute between the Shaws and the Grants. The Shaws were the original owners, but having waxed fat and kicked against the Government on more than one occasion, word was sent from Edinburgh to

one of the Grants, who was Laird of Muckerach, that he should dispossess the Shaws of the lands of Rothiemurchus, *gin he could*. Grant was by no means "blate" in availing himself of the hint, but the Shaws were tough fighters. In a final and decisive contest between the two clans, the Grants were victorious and the chief of the Shaws slain. The victorious Muckerach, now unequivocal Laird of Rothiemurchus, caused his dead rival to be buried deep down within the kirk beneath his own seat. Every Sunday *when he went to pray* he stamped his feet triumphantly upon the place under which lay the corpse of his enemy.

Patrick Grant, surnamed Macalpine, cuts a rather picturesque figure in clan history. With a body of gaily-dressed retainers he paraded round the countryside, dispensing justice and letting the minimum of time elapse between the sentence and the execution. He was twice married, and his {324}
second wife survived him. That forlorn lady had much to endure from the first family, and notably from the wife of Macalpine's eldest son and heir. The widow took a very dramatic way of publicly showing her grievances. Once after the service in the kirk was over, she stepped up, with her fan in her hand, to the corner of the kirkyard, and, taking off her high-heeled slipper, she tapped with it on the stone laid over her husband's grave, crying out through her tears, "*Macalpine! Macalpine! rise up for ae half-hour and see me richted!*"

A diverting legend explains the *low-lying situation of Ballindalloch Castle*, a beautiful specimen of baronial architecture, standing near the junction of the Spey and the Avon. In planning the place, somewhere about 1545, the laird fully intended to secure a wide prospect, and to that end, chose a commanding site. But his views did not commend themselves to the Powers of the Air, and the masons could make no progress. Every night, when the workers had retired from building the walls, a prodigious gale came roaring from the summit of Ben Rinnes and swept stones and mortar into the bed of the Avon. The laird, sorely puzzled at this strange phenomenon, lay in watch one night, with the result that he was blown off his feet, and landed right up among the branches of a holly-tree. Having taken the conceit out of the laird in this abrupt way, the Mysterious Power, chuckling in fiendish fashion, called out "*Build on the cow-haugh*." Frightened out of his wits, the laird was only too glad to comply. {325}

THE WISHING WELL.

Round the old Castle of Rothes clings a legend of a more pathetic kind. "Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralise my song," says Spenser, and it is with these well-worn but ever-fresh subjects that the story deals. The heiress of one of the old lairds of Rothes, being allowed to roam at will with her foster-mother, cast an eye of love on the son of the laird of Arndilly. As in ballad lore, the love seems to have been immediate, reciprocal, and unquenchable. The girl's father, hearing of the attachment, summarily forbade it, and commanded his daughter to turn her back on young Arndilly, and take a different road in future. But as journeys end in lovers meeting, the two young people, by whatever way they set out, invariably met at the *Wishing Well*. A sad severance came, however, for young Arndilly, like so many mediæval knights of song who had faithful mistresses, must needs go crusading to the Holy Land. During his absence, the lady hied daily to the Wishing Well, and many a tear she let fall therein as she thought of the lad that was so far away. But after many a month, back from Palestine came young Arndilly, and went, of course, straight to the old trysting-place, where he found his lady-love praying for his safe return. The meeting was rapturous but tragically short. A dark shape glided upon the scene, and drove a fatal dirk in the young soldier's back. The lady shrieked aloud and swooned away. For the rest of her life she was an imbecile: she never left the castle, and spent her time crooning a plaintive song and rocking a cradle. Her ghost still haunts the place, and those who have ears to hear can, at nightfall, make {326}
out, above the sough of the wind, the mournful notes of a weird lullaby, and mysterious cradle-rockings within the ruined walls. Close by the Well, at the spot of the murder, a bush sprang up, whereof the leaves resembled crosses; in autumn they turned to a bright scarlet colour, as if typical of the blood that had flowed there from its victim's wounds. Others will have it that the lady's ghost may be seen flitting about, distractedly, in the woods, on a particular night of the year—the anniversary, it is supposed, of Arndilly's murder.

OSSIAN AND MACPHERSON.

The beautiful little town of Kingussie is famous for its association with "Ossian" Macpherson, who was born near by. No man, born on Scottish earth, except perhaps, Sir Walter Scott, had ever such an influence on European literature as this Highland dominie. "His Ossian," as Professor Macmillan Brown says, "was translated into almost every European language; and its influence is apparent in Goethe's Werther, in Schiller's Robbers, and in all the Storm-and-Stress literature of Germany, in the productions and speeches of the French Revolutionists, in the romantic literary movement that preceded and followed the Revolution, and in much of the Italian, Spanish, and Danish poetry of the time. It generally affected the prose style of eighteenth century romance, and was a direct antidote to Johnsonianism in the imaginative literature. In our own century it bent the genius of Scott to the Highlands, and moulded the dramas of Byron, and the often vague {327}
imagery of Shelley; it appears in the style of Kingsley's Hereward, and directly or indirectly it is responsible for the pioneering efforts of Walt Whitman in prose poetry and for the rapid growth of poetic prose through De Quincey, Bulwer Lytton, and Ruskin. During last century it stirred Blake to misty prophecies, led writers of romance back into the less known periods of the past, and gave the new audience a delight in mysterious and almost formless legend and tale and idea."

The extraordinary vogue of Macpherson's Ossianic poems was due to literary merit of a high order, and also to the parched and dry state into which the poetry of Europe had sunk in the middle of the eighteenth century. Boileau and his rules had crushed all sap and life out of European verse, and the poet had become either a teacher of rimed ethics or a framer of dexterous satire. How refreshing Ossian must have been to the men of such a time:

> "The hills were round them, and the breeze
> Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
> Their foreheads felt the wind and rain."

Let the modern reader go through the *Rape of the Lock*, and then take up the song of the hunter Shilric from Macpherson's "Carric-thura."

Shilric, not knowing that his love Vinvela is dead, thus communes with himself:

> "I sit by the mossy mountain; on the top of the hill of winds. One tree is rustling above me. Dark waves roll over the heath. The lake is troubled below. The deer descend from the hill. No hunter at a distance is seen. It is mid-day; but all is {328}
> silent. Sad are my thoughts alone. Didst thou but appear, O my love! a wanderer on the heath! thy hair floating on the wind behind thee; thy bosom heaving on the sight; thine eyes full of tears for thy friends, whom the mist of the hill had concealed! Thee I would comfort, my love, and bring thee to thy father's house!"

To him mourning thus, the spirit of his dead love appears:

> "But is it she that there appears, like a beam of light on the heath? bright as the moon in autumn, as the sun in a summer-storm, comest thou, O maid, over rocks, over mountains to me? She speaks: but how weak her voice! like the breeze in the reeds of the lake.
>
> "'Alone I am, O Shilric! alone in the winter-house. With grief for thee I fell. Shilric, I am pale in the tomb.'
>
> "She fleets, she sails away; as mist before the wind! and wilt thou not stay, Vinvela? Stay and behold my tears! fair thou appearest, Vinvela! fair thou wast, when alive!
>
> "By the mossy mountain I will sit; on the top of the hill of winds. When mid-day is silent around, O talk with me, Vinvela! come on the light-winged gale! on the breeze of the desert, come! Let me hear thy voice, as thou passest, when mid-day is silent around.'"

The readers of the eighteenth century did not stay to consider whether the foregoing was, or was not, a genuine antique: it suited their taste admirably. Rousseau had brought sentimentalism into favour; the "return to nature" was a kind of creed with the French philosophers: these facts aided {329}
greatly in causing the epidemic of Ossianism that overran Europe.

I should not like to be condemned to read nothing but Ossian for a year. The short staccato sentences, the difficulty of getting hold of anything definite amid so many moonbeams, gliding ghosts, whistling reeds, and feasts of shells, has a very debilitating effect on the mind. There is too much weeping: one is constantly saying with Tennyson, "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean." Yet, no one can dip into Macpherson without being rewarded by some phrase of an impressive or refreshing kind, *e.g.*:—

> "Thou art with the years that are gone; thou fadest on my soul."
>
> "Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days?"
>
> "Her steps were like the music of songs; she saw the youth and loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul."
>
> "Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame."
>
> "When shall it be morn in the grave to bid the slumberer wake?"
>
> "Mixed with the murmur of waters rose the voice of aged men, who called the forms of night to aid them in the war."
>
> "Autumn is dark on the mountains; grey mist rests on the hills."

AT THE FOOT O' BENNACHIE.

I have on several occasions, during the last year or two, visited that part of Aberdeenshire which is immediately under the glorious ridge of Bennachie. Like all lovers of ballad lore, I know by {330}
heart the poem of the little wee man who had such prowess, and who invited the poet to go with him to his green bower. After seeing magnificent examples of dancing, the poet found himself lying in the mist at the foot of Bennachie:—

> "Out went the lichts, on cam' the mist,
> Leddies nor mannie mair could I see;

I turned aboot, and gave a look,
    I was just at the foot o' Bennachie."

The exquisite little ballad from which I quote is calculated to raise expectations of beauty which the picturesque surroundings of Bennachie are well able to satisfy. Great tracts of Aberdeenshire are flat, treeless, and painful in their monotony; in winter, great gusts sweep the cold plains, and make driving or walking a trying ordeal; the country is thinly peopled, and the impression of the visitor is that, in some districts, railway stations are more numerous than villages. Round Bennachie, however, the scenery is most pleasant and picturesque. The villages of Oyne and Insch, in which hospitality to strangers is a religion, are beautifully placed and well-foliaged all around. The region is, indeed, one of romance, and the little brook of Gadie ripples on in the radiance and glamour of pathetic song.

HARLAW.

Those who consider, like Ruskin, that the stories of the past add no inconsiderable item to the beauty of a landscape, as it appears to the eye and intelligence of modern observers, will not fail to remember the momentous issues decided at no great distance from the foot of Bennachie, in {331}
1411. Teutonic and Celtic Scotland came to grips at Harlaw, near by:—

"The Hielandmen, wi' their lang swords,
    They laid on us fu' sair;
And they drave back our merry men
    Three acres' breadth and mair.
    . . . . . .
Gin anybody speer at ye
    For them we took awa',
Ye may tell them plain and very plain,
    They're sleeping at Harlaw."

Burton, in his *History of Scotland*, declares that the check given to Donald of the Isles at Harlaw, was a greater relief to Scotland than even Bannockburn was. If the Stuart kings, hard pressed as they were by England on the south, had been threatened by a formidable Celtic sovereignty on the north, Holyrood might have been in ruins a good many centuries earlier. I am not going to shock my Highland friends by saying it was a good thing for the country that Donald, with the remnant of his plaids and claymores, had to retreat to the misty straths and islands of the west. The coalition of Celt and Teuton has taken place in an unostentatious way, to the advantage of both races: Macfadyen does not now, as in the days of Dunbar, bide "*far norrart in a neuk*;" he has come to the Lowlands long ago, and rarely goes North, except on holiday. And the language, which to the finical ears of James Fourth's poet-laureate, seemed too terrible even for the devil to tolerate, has come south, too, and has a chair all to itself in the University of Edinburgh. *Time*, says Sophocles, *is a god who performs difficult things with ease*. {332}

Mention of Harlaw suggests a comic tale told to the credit of the Provost of Inverness. That gentleman, on being threatened with a predatory visit from Donald in 1400, took the remarkable plan of sending an ample supply of Inverness whisky into the Celtic camp. The men of Lewis and Skye tackled the liquid bounty with great glee, and soon were in a state of maudlin intoxication. The wily Provost meanwhile collected a force and attacked Donald's men, who (as they magnified the attacking host to *double its real numbers*) were easily scared and routed. At Harlaw, eleven years later, the Provost of Aberdeen, evidently a man who lacked the resource of the chief magistrate of Inverness, was killed, and 500 men with him.

LOCHABER REIVERS.

The predatory habits of the Highlanders gave great trouble to the Aberdeenshire farmers *for fully three hundred years after Harlaw*. In 1689 a dozen wild Lochaber men came right down into the heart of Aberdeenshire and lifted six score of black cattle. The fate of the marauders is thus described by the author of *Johnny Gibb*:—

"They were pursued by a body of nearly 50 horsemen, well mounted and armed, and each carrying bags of meal and other provisions, both for their own support, and to offer in ransom for the cattle, if peaceful negotiations could be carried through. On through the hills, over marshes, rocks, and heather, the spirited horsemen followed, under their leader; and guided by a herd-boy {333}
whom they encountered, they traced the robbers by Loch Ericht side into the heart of their own country. At nightfall, they came upon them at Dalunchart, encamped and busily engaged roasting a portion of the flesh of one of the cattle they had stolen. They offered, after some parley, to give each of the freebooters a bag of meal and a pair of shoes in ransom for the cattle. The Highlanders treated such an offer for cattle driven so far and with so much trouble with contempt; the herd was gathered in, and the fight began in deep earnest, the result being that the Lochaber men were all shot down, killed or wounded, except three, who escaped unhurt to tell the tale; and the cattle were, of course, recovered."

REAY AND TWICKENHAM.

Perhaps the least attractive of the Scotch counties, in respect of scenery, is Caithness. The North-

going train enters it a little after Helmsdale, and from thence to Thurso the journey is of a most dreary and depressing character. He who wishes to see the romantic part of the county should quit the train at Helmsdale, and go right to John o' Groats by the shore road: thereafter he should proceed along the line of the Pentland Firth to the dainty town of Thurso and to the village of Reay, the citadel of the Mackays. The district round Reay is a delightful one, and has great historical interest.

Some good examples of the power assumed of old by the country ministers are furnished by a perusal of the life of an eighteenth century minister, the Rev. Alexander Pope, who was stationed {334} for many years in Reay. He was a huge giant of a man, and invariably carried about with him a nail-studded cudgel that was a terror to sinners. A lout of a fellow in his parish refused to come to church and get rebuked for an infringement of the usual commandment. Mr. Pope sent three elders with ropes to pinion the adulterer, hale him to church, and fasten him to a conspicuous pew right under the pulpit. The minister cannonaded the culprit to his heart's content, beginning thus: "*Shame, shame, son of a beggar, where art thou now?*"

Another parishioner who neglected family worship on the ground that he could not make up a prayer, was severely taken to task by Mr. Pope, who gave the man a year within which to manufacture one. At the end of the twelvemonth, Mr. Pope called and requested to hear the prayer. The man glibly rattled off a long succession of phrases that did not please the minister at all. "That won't do," he said, "you must prepare over again." "And is all my long labour to go for nothing," said the man, "all my year's toil? No, no: rather than lose my labour, I'll *break the prayer up and make two graces of it*." For the rest of his life, as the story runs, he did actually employ the two parts of his mutilated prayer as Grace before and Grace after meat respectively. Could there be a finer example of natural thrift in the spiritual world?

An Inverness journalist, Mr. Carruthers, wrote a life of the great poet, Alexander Pope, in which occurs the following curious note respecting the minister of Reay, just mentioned: "The northern {335} Alexander Pope entertained a profound admiration for his illustrious namesake of England; and it is a curious and well-ascertained fact that the simple enthusiastic clergyman, in the summer of 1732, rode on his pony all the way from Caithness to Twickenham, in order to pay the poet a visit. The latter felt his dignity a little touched by the want of the necessary pomp and circumstance with which the minister presumed to approach his domicile; but after the ice of ceremony had in some degree been broken, and their intellects had come in contact, the poet became interested, and a friendly feeling was established between them. Several interviews took place, and the poet presented his good friend and namesake, the minister of Reay, with a copy of the subscription edition of the 'Odyssey' in five volumes quarto."

A grandson of the Reay minister, a Mr. James Campbell of Edinburgh, gave a description to Mr. Carruthers of a snuff-box which the poet had presented to the Rev. Mr. Pope. A series of letters to the *Northern Ensign*, in April, 1883, brought out the information that a Wick gentleman, Mr. Duncan, had in his possession two volumes of de Vertot's *History of the Roman Republic*, bearing an inscription to the effect that they had been presented by the poet of Twickenham to his northern namesake.

It has been suggested that the poet and the minister were distant blood-relations. Mr. Campbell, alluded to above, said that "the two Popes claimed kin." In any case, the friendship of the two men, one living on the shores of the wild Pentland Firth, in sight of the Orkneys, and the other {336} not far "from streaming London's central roar," is pleasant to think of. In 1737, Pope wrote the lines—

> "Loud as the wolves on Orca's stormy steep
> Howl to the roarings of the northern deep,"

adding, in a note, that he refers to "the farthest northern promontory of Scotland, opposite to the Orcades." Perhaps his mind reverted to the burly incumbent of Reay as he penned the note.

ROB DONN.

The little township of Reay is less famous for the Rev. Mr. Pope's incumbency than for the fact of Rob Donn, the satirical Gaelic bard, being a native of the district. The author of the *Dunciad* is the greatest satirist in British Literature; Rob Donn is supreme among Gaelic bards for the sharpness of his tongue and his clever way of showing up his contemporaries to ridicule. He was in the habit of giving praise to people in order to make his satire more biting. Praise on his tongue was compared to oil on the edge of a razor: the cut was all the deeper. Rob, although a master of language, was unable to read or write, so that though he "lisped in numbers"—he began to compose at the age of three—he could not say, like Pope:

> "Why did I *write*? What sin to me unknown
> *Dipt me in ink*, my parents' or my own?"

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Blackie speaks thus of him: "Rob Donn, according to all accounts, though outwardly of such fair respectability that he attained an honour, unknown to Robert Burns, of acting as an elder of the kirk, was not always so chaste in his words as he might seem to be in his deeds; he took his plash as a poet, and not always in the clearest waters; besides, he had a terrible lash at his command, which he could wield with an effect at times that paid little respect to the bounds set in such matters by Christian charity, or even by social politeness. The consequence has been that much

of the wit and humour of his pieces, however telling for its immediate purpose, has lost half of its interest by the disappearance of the persons to whom it referred. These personal allusions also import an additional difficulty into the language which he uses, and cause his productions, however belauded, to be less known amongst Highlanders generally than those of Duncan Ban and Dugald Buchanan. Severe moralists also very properly object to the undue license and occasional coarseness of his verses."[33] {338}

REV. MR. MILL OF DUNROSSNESS.

Before concluding the present chapter, I should like to refer briefly to a valuable and amusing book (brought under my notice in Shetland) that furnishes details of the life of Mr. Mill, minister of Dunrossness from 1742 till 1805. Mr. Mill's special talent was his unrivalled power of exorcism: he was a strenuous foe to the devil in every shape and form, and his life was one long battle with the Prince of Darkness. The latter was constantly bringing into play all manner of gins, traps, and wiles to confound the uncompromising clergyman; but, on a calm review of the evidence, one cannot but admit that the devil was far inferior in intelligence to his opponent.

On one occasion, Satan had the effrontery to come into Dunrossness Church and take his seat at the Communion Table. Mr. Mill at once recognised his life-long adversary, and began to speak in all the deep languages, and, last of all, in Gaelic, and that beat him altogether. Satan went off like a flock of "doos" over the heads of the people, many of whom swooned. "As a permanent reminder of the hostility cherished against him by the Arch-Enemy, it was said that Mr. Mill always had the wind in his face. One day he came up to officiate at Sandwick, in the teeth, as usual, of a pretty stiff breeze. An ordinary person would naturally have expected the wind to be on his back on the return journey. But during the service the wind veered round. Mr. Mill's only comment, as he started for home, was, 'It's all he can do.' In one respect, Mr. Mill benefited by the penalty of always having the wind in his face, for on his very numerous sea-journeys he could {339} always secure a favourable breeze *by sitting with his back to the head of the boat*."

The following additional tale from Mr. Mill's biography only brings into more striking relief the resource of the minister in all emergencies. "One day a very respectable gentleman entered the house of a tailor in Channerwick, and ordered a suit of clothes to be made out of cloth which he brought with him. The tailor's delight at having such a fine gentleman for a customer was, however, turned into perplexity and fear as he opened up the cloth and found that the colour kept constantly changing. He at once sent for the minister and laid the matter before him. He was advised to spread a sheet on the floor and cut the cloth upon it, so that none of the clippings should be scattered about the room, and the minister said that he would be present to meet the stranger when the latter called to get the clothes. The day came, and when the stranger entered the house, Mr. Mill stepped forward to meet him. A terrible controversy ensued, and the respectable-looking gentleman was swept out of the house in a cloud of blue, sulphurous flame. It is not recorded if he took the new suit with him. A clue to his identification was furnished by his accidentally striking his foot against the door-step as he departed. The result of the collision was that a mark as of a cloven hoof was imprinted on the stone." {340}

CHAPTER VIII.

METRICAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY.

I.

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ARRIVAL OF THE MAIL-TRAIN AT A HIGHLAND STATION.

"*Hark! 'tis the twanging horn.*" So Cowper sang
Of the slow post-boy by the flooded Ouse;
In different fashion now the great world's news
Goes to each nook of Britain. The harangue
Of politician; great events that hang
In Fortune's hand, with magic speed diffuse
From London's centre to the furthest Lews,
Their tingling rumour and resounding clang.
Daily along yon track of curving steels
Comes to this Highland clachan, Watt's machine,
Rolling in triumph on its iron wheels,
And bringing letter, journal, magazine,
To kilted Celts with collies at their heels
And frivolous tourists from the putting-green.

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II.

DEFOE[34]

(FATHER OF JOURNALISM).

Father of journalists! illustrious liar!
Untiring wielder of the nimblest quill
That ever shed the stanchless inky rill
Upon the virgin whiteness of the quire.
What full and varied stores of gold and mire,
Magnificence and squalor, good and ill,
Prayers, curses, loyalty and treason fill
Thy books! But that which children most admire
Of all thy hundred volumes, is the one
Fated for ever more to charm mankind
From the far Orient to the Setting Sun.
Prompt-witted Daniel! thou has left behind
Upon the Sands of Time, distinctly traced,
One footmark that can never be effaced.

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III.

A VILLAGE TOPER.

John loved strong waters and ne'er stirred his feet
Abroad in leafy spring or summer's heat,
Autumnal breeze or winter's rimy chill,
Unsolaced by the nectar of the still.
Spirits came always kindly to his lips,
And time he measured not by hours but "nips."
Teetotalers to him were curse and gall,
Grim Banquos at the world's wide festival,
Men, whom a weird and fate-ordainéd bale,
Had smitten with the hate of cakes and ale,
A soda-water, syphon-squirting crew,
Guilty of treason to the revenue:
Their lurid language and their unctuous

warnings,
Their moral-pointings and their tale-adornings,
And, worst of all, their shameful *waste of ink*
In signing pledges to abstain from drink,
Proved them a witless and a churlish band,
Unfit to dwell in any Christian land.

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IV.

A REVEREND HELLENIST.

In that old ivied manse exists
A scholar, wrinkled, bent, and gray,
His student lamp gleams through the mists
And twinkles on till break of day.

This sage is wedded to his books,
And Sultan-like his harem's full,
He dotes upon them in their nooks
With love and joy that never cool.

No wonder that his back is bent,
Or that his eye has mystic glows,
He pores on pages redolent
Of love and love's undying rose.

No earthly maiden, fresh and sweet,
Could please his fancy half so well
As a Greek nymph with twinkling feet
Skipping in some Arcadian dell.

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V.

ANTIGONE

(READ IN A HIGHLAND MANSE).

A form of beauty blent with hardihood,
Majestic as Olympus wreathed in snows,
What modern pages of romance disclose
A radiant maiden of such dauntless mood!
Yet, when the tyrant strives with outrage rude
The unyielding maid in darkness to enclose,
Then, only then, her burning heart outflows
In anguished cries of love, but unsubdued
By baser throbbings. Ah! that nuptial hymn
Unsung! that bond in death! All men agree
To crown thee in that chamber dark and dim
With love's immortal wreath, Antigoné.
Since love and duty in thy death combine,
An immortality of praise is thine.

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VI.

SHADOWS OF THE MANSE.

I.

Lo! we have him of shaven face
And curls of long and lustrous hair,
Who breathes an atmosphere of grace
And has a wondrous gift in prayer.
You'd ne'er suspect to see him there,
Shaking his head in solemn guise,
The college life of deil-may-care
Diversion that behind him lies.

II.

And then the little starveling pope
Who strives to make his sermons new
By stringing florid scraps of hope
And faith and love to dazzle you:
From Stopford Brooke a phrase or two,
A gleaming line from Arnold's page,
Whole screeds of Browning and a few
Stolen thunders from the Chelsea sage.

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III.

Perhaps the most diverting wight
Is he who sees in Holy Writ
Old Jewish fables gross and trite
To semblance of a system knit—
Fables for modern taste unfit,
Until *he* cleans the dross away
And shows the tiny little bit
Of gold that gleams amid the clay.

IV.

But worst of all is he who jests,
Or tries to jest, in pulpit gown,
Lord, save us from such holy pests
Who so unseemly act the clown
And pull the tabernacle down
To something worse than pantomime:
On all such zanies let us frown
And scourge them both in prose and rhyme.

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VII.

"MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS."

Puzzling over musty tomes,
What a life to lead,
While each gay companion roams
Where his fancies lead!

One beside a shady pool
Sweeps the wave for hours,
Comes home with his basket full,
When the evening lowers.

Some more energetic wights
Leave the level land,
Mountaineer on dizzy heights,
Alpenstock in hand.

Others boat in sunny bays
Where bright sands are seen
Glimmering amid a maze
Of tangled flowers marine.

Luck to all is what I wish
With a meed of fun,
I'll row, mountaineer, and fish,
When *your* sports are done.

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VIII.

SADDELL
(KINTYRE).

Fresh gusts of wind ripple the ocean's face,

And the green slopes, after the night's soft rain,
Glitter beneath the blue.

Most glorious are the sea-descending glens,
Vivid with countless ferns, and with the blaze
Of sun-enamoured broom.

The dark, tip-tilted rocks of cruel mood,
Show a stern beauty through the creamy foam
That flecks their rugged flanks.

See, from this hill-top, how the blazing Sound
Is marked by moving shadows of the clouds
That skim aloft in air.

Through the clear radiance of the freshened morn,
The eye can see the far farm-windows gleam
Up on the Arran hills.

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IX.

SPRINGTIME IN PERTHSHIRE.

Returning Springtime fills the woods with song —
The ring-dove, sick for love, is cooing sweet;
The lark, scorning the daisies, soars to greet
The sun, while the brown swarms of bees among
The flowery meadows skim in haste along.
Once more the young year glories in the feat
Of driving winter off with vernal heat
And tepid sap luxuriantly strong.
Winter has drawn aloof his snowy powers
To the high peaks that domineer the plain,
And, like a vanquished leader, grimly lowers,
From a safe distance, on the victor's reign.
E'er many months have passed, his arrowy showers
And gusty cohorts will descend again.

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X.

DR. GEORGE MACDONALD'S CREED.[35]

(WRITTEN AT CULLEN).

God will not suffer that a single one
Of His own creatures, in His image made,
Should die, and in irrevocable shade
Lie evermore—neglected and undone.
It is not thus a father treats his son,
And those whose folly credits it, degrade
God's love and fatherhood, that never fade,
By lies as base as devils ever spun.
Man's love is but a pale reflex of God's,
And God *is* love, and never will condemn
Beyond remission—though He school with rods—
His children, but will one day comfort them.
Dives will have his drink at last, and stand
Among the faithful ones at God's right hand.

XI.

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ABBOTSFORD.

"Dryden and Scott, men of a giant seed!"
So said I to myself, gazing upon
The pictured countenance of Glorious John,
In Abbotsford, hard by the storied Tweed.
These twain were brothers, kin in mind and deed:
Old England never had a brawnier son
Than Dryden; and in fervid Scotland none
Better than Scott exemplified the breed.
After five centuries of blood and hate,
Britain is one leal land from north to south,
From gusty Thurso to St. Michael's Mount,
I therefore, Scot and Briton, am elate
To think that from Sir Walter's golden mouth
Dryden's career received the fit account.

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XII.

CARLYLE
(AT ECCLEFECHAN).

The ploughman in the loamy furrow sings,
The sailor whistles as he reefs the sail,
Blithe is the smith as the blows fall like hail
From his huge hammer, and the stithy rings.
Work is the sole and sovereign balm that brings
Peace to the torpid soul when doubts assail,
And sickening pleasures are of no avail
To lull the torture of affliction's stings.
Give me the work I love, the work I feel
God in His Heaven has willed that I should do,
And you may offer the whole commonweal,
Lands, mansions, jewels, gold, and temples too,
Vainly to me. By strenuous work alone
Man mounts on Jacob's ladder to God's throne.

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XIII.

SHELLEY.[36]

'Twas but a passing visit that he paid
To the gross air of earth, this mystic seer,
The tyrannies of sense were too severe
For one of clay more fine than Adam's made.
The inhumanity of man, the trade
Of coining gold from the serf's groan and tear,
The galling fetters of religious fear,
And vain ecclesiastic masquerade
Tortured his gentle soul, and made his life
One bitter struggle with the powers that be:
Yet not in vain he lived; his manful strife
With all the deadening despotisms we see
Will ring along the centuries, until
Good has her final triumph over ill.

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XIV.

PICTURE IN AN INN.

A wood of pines through which the setting sun
Pours from the western sky a parting flame,

Beside the shore, a church called by the name
Of some old saint whose pious race was run
Long ere schismatic Luther had begun
To work the Pope and his disciples shame.
In earnest-seeming talk, a knight and dame
Sit in a painted galley, rowed by one
Whose back is to the setting orb of day.
The soldier and his mate, their faces lit
With all love's animation and the ray
Of the down-lapsing globe of crimson, sit
Together in the gilded vessel's prow,
And there will sit for evermore, as now.

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XV.

RAIN-STORM AT LOCH AWE.

The topmost mountain-snows are melting fast,
See, how the swollen waters hurry down
In perpendicular runnels from the crown
Of every wreathéd hill. The train has past
Beside a dark stream into which are cast
A hundred huddling rills whose foam is brown
With pilfered soil. No dweller in a town
Ever beheld such manifold and vast
Torrents of roaring water. Each small isle
Spaced on the loch, glooms through the
hanging haze
Like a dream-picture, and for many a mile
Beneath those clouds that lean upon the braes
Encompassing Loch Awe, the watery plain
Is pricked with million lances of the rain.

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XVI.

KINLOCHEWE.

The mist, retreating, gems the leaves with
dew,
Soft blows the breeze along the fragrant
meads,
A little brawling burn runs through the reeds
And ripples away under the cloudless blue.
I never saw the world so fair to view,
For Spring has riven old Winter's funeral
weeds
And given new sap and vigour to the seeds
That lay inanimate the cold months through.
Old man! with jaded limbs and wrinkled brow,
That walkest feebly in this lenient sun
Like a day-dream, thy life is winter now.
But life and death in ceaseless cycles run,
And tireless Time and Heaven have in store
For thee a myriad resurrections more.

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XVII.

GENERAL WADE.

Houses are fewer here than milestones are:
We stand a thousand feet aloft in air
Upon a bouldered hillside stern and bare,
Down which the roadway serpentines afar.
There are no clouds in the wide blue to mar
The passage of the sun's imperial glare

Over a dreary-stretching landscape, where
Rough winds hold riot all the calendar.
Who that has footed o'er these firm-knit paths
But lauds the men whose strenuous axe and
spade
Drove roads through the wild glens and hilly
straths
Under the generalship of tireless Wade!
On the safe tracks behind them, commerce
came
The unruly spirit of the Celt to tame.

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XVIII.

THE SOUND OF RAASAY IN DECEMBER.

A snowy gust is whirling down the strait,
Raasay is gleaming ghostly to the sight,
And, robed in lawn, from sea to topmost height
Skye and her lordly mountains stand in state.
Ever from heaven falls the silent weight
Of wavering flakes that dim the stars of night.
Our gallant little boat with all the might
Of the wild-hissing surges holds debate,
Plunging and struggling, till at last we see
A spacious haven, sudden and serene
And, high aloft, the twinkle of Portree.
At once the winds are hushed, the moon is
seen
To free her face from cloudy drift, and fill
With silver light the clefts of Essie Hill.

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XIX.

LES NEIGES D'ANTAN.

I.

Where is Macfee, that valiant preacher,
Gifted with voice, so harsh and loud,
Aye, louder and harsher than any screecher
Of birds that sail on the black storm-cloud?
And his beadle John, with back so bowed,
Where is *he* that had never a peer?
Is he too rolled in his mortal shroud?
But where are the snows of yester-year?

II.

Donald the Gay, that steered his steamer
Many a year through the Sound of Mull,
He that was never a Celtic dreamer,
But a captain of captains masterful:
O Death, thou madest the world more dull
When you nailed *him* down in his narrow bier,
And sent his ghost into Charon's hull;
But where are the snows of yester-year?

III.

Duncan, the bard of rocky Staffin,
Away in the north of rainy Skye:
Has *he* given over his rimes and daffin',
In the mould of the bleak kirkyard to lie? {361}
His cot was built where the sea-gulls fly,
And his misty isle to his soul was dear;
Ere his song is finished, the bard must die;

But where are the snows of yester-year?

IV.

And Dougal, who carried King Edward's mails
Every day o'er the moor and heather,
Scorning the chill of the winter gales,
And the ten-mile walk in the sultry weather:
Has *he* too come to the end of his tether
And gone to the ghosts with all his gear,
His whistle, his satchel and strap of leather?
But where are the snows of yester-year?

V.

Prince, they have gone from the regions that knew them,
Gone at the summons that none can resist,
Praise and every honour be to them,
They did their best and they will be missed.
We, too, shall soon be erased from the list
Of workers below in this mortal sphere,
And be no more to those that exist
Than the vanished snows of yester-year.

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XX.

THE ISLANDS OF THE NESS.

A fairyland of trees and leafy bowers
Where one may sit and dream the hours away,
Or 'mid the devious walks and alleys stray,
While perfume rises from a world of flowers,
The girdling river, swollen with upland showers,
Sends rippling round to every creek and bay
The vagrant branches of his water-way;
Then gathering up his current's parted powers,
Swiftly-majestic in a broadening bed,
He glistens on by many a chiming spire,
And past the castle's pennoned turrets red,
Till he attain the goal of his desire,
And into the salt sea exulting throws
His subsidy of rains and melted snows.

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XXI.

AMERICAN TOURIST LOQUITUR

(AT BERRIEDALE, CAITHNESS).

If I had wealth like Vanderbilt
Or some such millionaire,
I'd live in Scotland, don a kilt,
And *pay to prove* my forbears spilt
Their blood in forays there.

I'd buy a picturesque estate
Beside the ocean's flow,
With knolls of heather at my gate,
And pine-clad hills to dominate,
The ferny dells below.

I'd be a father to the folk
That laboured on the soil,

With old and young I'd crack my joke,
Drink with them in their thirst, and smoke
The pipe that lightens toil.

For hens I'd have a special run,
For ducks a special pool,
My calves should frolic in the sun,
My sheep should be surpassed by none
Whose backs are clothed with wool. {364}

Although I'm not a Walton quite,
Betweenwhiles I should try
To lure the finny tribe to bite
(At the right time, in the right light,)
My simulated fly.

When winter heaped his rattling hail
High on the window sill,
With pipe and wassail, rime and tale,
I'd never miss the nightingale
Or cuckoo on the hill.

Nay, musing by the ingle-lowe
With summer in my brain,
I'd cloth with leaves the frozen bough
And all the ice-bound brooks endow
With tinkling life again.[37]

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XXII.

THE MINERS.

The afternoon is cool and calm,
Near by flashes the mighty sea,
Inland rise green, dewy hills,
Crowned with eye-bewitching trees.

Suddenly the eye is amazed and terrified,
A hideous procession sordid and grimy
Of men and boys, slaves of the coal-pit,
Is seen on the road, shaming the daylight.

All the day long they work in the darkness,
Far from the songs of the birds and the
sunshine,
Now they return to their sordid villages,
Ill-smelling rows of comfortless cottages.

The rich and dainty ladies of fashion
Stand aloof from these swart coal-hewers,
Are ready to swoon as the air is poisoned
With odours of subterranean foulness.

Coarse of look, and of speech far coarser!
Laughter loud with no merriment in it!
No more soul than the beasts that perish!
These are the men despised for their toiling.

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XXIII.

IN A COUNTRY GRAVEYARD.[38]

Man dreads the tomb, but dreads oblivion
more;
He fears, when death has loosed the load of
years,
His name shall cease to sound in mortal ears,
And, in the dusty darkness, all be o'er.
Some o'er the scrolls of ample science pore,
Tome after tome the nimble authors write,

And gain a meed of glory: soon the night
Comes: the author with his laurel disappears,
The painting fades, the marble busts decay,
The kingly structures fall in ruin down,
Devouring Time consumes the artist's prize,
The centuries like lightning pass away,
Or hurrying billows: emperor and clown
Sink with the myriads in impartial clay.

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XXIV.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

Where'er these wandering footsteps lead me to,
Peak-dominated glen, hill where the sheep
Graze in the sun, mountains that ever keep
A solemn guard o'er lakes profound and blue,
Or undulating tracts of treeless view;
No matter if the rain and whirlwind sweep
The landscape, or the gladdening sunshine peep
Through muffled vapours that the winds undo;
Let it be night speckled with myriad fires,
Clear dawn, hot noon, or cool of dying day;
Be it in cities with their chiming spires,
Or country fields with fragrant ricks of hay;
Ever the voices of my hearth I hear,
And muse on those to me for ever dear.

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(CHIEFLY OF PROPER NAMES).

FOOTNOTES.

[1] Let the southern reader remember that a boy born in a city like Glasgow has, as respects opportunities of getting on, infinitely better chances than a lad of equal ability born in a Highland village. The crofter's son has no reading-room with costly works of reference, scientific manuals, English translations of Latin authors, etc., to go to when he is in need of help. He begins the battle of life at a very serious disadvantage, and often gives up the fight altogether. Anything that tends to equalise the chances of town and country, from the point of view of mental equipment, would do more general good to Scotland, by bettering the available brain power, than any half-dozen Acts of Parliament taken at random.

[2] In an editorial of June 6, 1908, the *Glasgow Herald* excellently says:—"The first requisite

for a Highlander is such a knowledge of English as will open up to him the lucrative employment from which ignorance of English must shut him out, and it is no kindness to him to interfere with his acquisition of this indispensable accomplishment.... So good a Gael as Professor Magnus Maclean has observed that 'even more remarkable than the dearth of philosophical and dramatic poems, and, we might add, of narrative and pastoral poetry proper, is the scarcity of Gaelic prose.' By all means, however, let a literary knowledge of the Gaelic language be encouraged among Gaelic-speaking children. It is a very different matter to enforce such steps as would lead to the teaching of Gaelic to children that live indeed in Gaelic-speaking districts but yet speak only English."

[3] Coll is also a very interesting island for the antiquarian. It contains distinct traces of twenty-nine Hill-forts or Duns, so that there must have been lively times out there long ago. Some fine shells, beads, pins and pottery have been found in the prehistoric *kitchen-middens*. Before the Reformation the island was thickly peopled, and sites of old churches and deserted crofts are numerous. Coll has gone back in population; in 1901 it had 432 inhabitants; in 1755 the number of natives was 1,193.

[4] At Spean Bridge there is a worthy old farmer, Mr. Chalmers, who has a widespread fame for dexterous bone-setting, a talent which is said to have descended to him from a long line of forbears. A young gentleman from Glasgow was in the hotel there during my stay, and from personal experience spoke of Mr. Chalmers's remarkable powers. He told me that patients come from far and near (after eminent surgeons have failed to give benefit), in order to be treated at Spean Bridge.

[5] The student of eugenics will note that among the tea-bibbing islanders of the west the teeth of the natives are poor. My experience tends to show that the best teeth in Scotland are to be found in Aberdeenshire. When a Buchan audience laughs, there is a gleam of polished ivory that is very impressive; but rural Aberdeen has deviated less into slops than any other part of Britain.

[6] "There are probably now more persons of Highland descent in the Lowlands than in the Highlands themselves."—*Scotland of To-Day*, by Henderson and Watt, p. 300. See also note at end of chapter on Inverness surnames, etc.

[7] I have heard it maintained by some zealots, whom I greatly esteem, that Gaelic is a highly *moral* language, that the use of it conduces to purity of life and thought, and that everyone would be improved in tone by contact with its roots. Those ministers who have charge of Session Records, chronicling events that happened before English was known in the West, cannot unreservedly corroborate these views.

[8] In his book, *Edinburgh and its Neighbourhood*, Hugh Miller tells the following story, on the authority of Robert Chambers:—"Though legally only transferable with the works and the minerals to which they were attached, cases occasionally occurred in which miners were actually transferred *by sale* from one part of the country to another. During the early part of the XIXth century, the son of an extensive coal-proprietor was examining with a friend the pits of another proprietor, and finding a collier whose speech resembled that of the colliers of his own district, he inquired where he came from. 'Oh!' exclaimed the man with surprise, 'd'ye no' ken me? *Do ye no' ken that your faither sell't me for a powny?*'"

[9] Such emigration has, of course, nothing to do with the systematic work instituted by Mr. William Quarrier of Bridge of Weir. That devout philanthropist occupied himself with the waifs and strays of Glasgow, taught them trades, and sent large numbers of them to the colonies to learn farming. One Saturday, in 1907, I saw a hundred and twenty of these lads, who were on Bridge of Weir platform waiting for the train. The scene was pathetic in the extreme—enough to melt a heart of nether millstone. Many of the lads were in tears as they answered the roll-call for the last time. In the afternoon they (and over two thousand emigrants) left the Clyde, amid sobs, cheers, and the waving of multitudinous handkerchiefs. These boys go, in the first instance, to Brockville, in the province of Ontario, whence they are distributed out among the Canadian farmers.

[10] It is not often possible, in the *islands*, to get anything but a trap or open coach. In Lochranza, on a day of dreary, disheartening rain, I found on enquiry that there was no covered vehicle to be had except the *hearse*.

[11] Islay is yearly becoming better known. It is an undulating island, covered with rich meadow-land, the home of horses, sheep, and cattle. There should not be a hungry man within its circumference. Under the old lairds—the Campbells—there were 14,000 inhabitants, now there are 6000.

[12] Judging from the number of clans that make a similar claim, we might fancy that all King Arthur's knights

> "Gartened low their leg,
> And rowed their hurdies in a philabeg."

[13] A favourite and appropriate book in this part of Scotland is Wilson's *Tales of the Borders*. There are not many farm-houses in the Lowlands of Scotland in which one does not find old copies, bound and unbound, of Wilson's *Tales*. Usually they show unmistakable evidence of having been frequently perused. One is bound to admit that the modern reader, if he spends an evening turning over these old pages, will find little reason to pride himself on the superiority of the popular reading of to-day. The short story, now in vogue, may be finely illustrated, and highly sensational, but its matter is certainly inferior, as a rule, to the general run of Wilson's stories. Wilson, in his humble way, was a gleaner in the field so richly harvested by Sir Walter Scott. *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* had called attention to the great stores of poetry and romance lingering

among the peasantry of the Debateable Land. Wilson's *Tales* showed how much of the old spirit remained more than two centuries after the Union, and, in spite of all Christianity and an orderly Government had done for the softening of manners. Hogg, in speaking of his own countryside, said: "The poor people of these glens know no other entertainment in the long winter nights than repeating and listening to the feats of their ancestors recorded in songs which I believe to have been handed down from father to son for many generations." Wilson and his successors gathered up as much of the romantic material as they found available, and printed it for the delight of their generation.

[14] Mr. Lee has collected an amount of evidence which seems to prove that T. T., *i.e.*, Thomas Thorpe, who wrote the dedication, was not only a piratical publisher, but also a humourist. The dedication, read in the light of these observations, acquires a character of jocularity, and *begetter* means *procurer* or *getter*. Thorpe thus becomes what we know Curll to have been a century later, a printer of stolen copy, with a turn for cynical waggery. Mr. W. H., the begetter, accordingly, is not a glittering aristocrat, but an unscrupulous go-between, who has made free with somebody's escritoire, and handed the sonnets over to the gay T. T.!

[15] Penalties of a really deterrent kind might at least be laid upon those gentlemen who write *more than three* pages of notes to one of the author's text:

> O that the Kaiser showing sense for once
> Would loose his fury on each learned dunce,
> And visit with his summary proceedings
> The rogues who tease us with their *variant readings*.

[16] Mr. Tocher, a Peterhead gentleman, has adopted a special line of investigation. He has sent out schedules to every school in Scotland asking for detailed information as to the colour of the eyes and hair of the boys and girls. His desire is to connect *pigmentation* and race-origin. He believes it is still possible to get definite information, by such means, of the settlement and blending of Picts, Celts, Norsemen, and Anglo-Saxons.

[17] How differently the items in the Sacred Canon are regarded in scholastic circles in the South! A Glasgow teacher, discussing the Origin of Evil with a Government official, expressed great resentment at the loss of paradise through Adam's sin, and added: "It comes specially hard on me, seeing that I don't care a *docken* for apples."

[18] Ministers, being public men, are, of course, as Mr. Macdonald means to point out, exposed to the criticism, frequently so absurd, that eminence entails. I recently examined the bye-laws of a literary association in Ross-shire, of which the president is a sheep-farmer, and the secretary, a postman. It is a rule of this association that no minister is ever to be president, the reason assigned being that ministers would try to elevate the natives *too hurriedly*. The people do not object to be elevated, but they wish the process to be performed without unnecessary haste.

[19] I may here refer to a pleasant three hours spent in rowing on Lochaline in the company of Mr. Hugh Macintyre, an old gentleman full of Scott and well versed in the lore of the locality. He was a policeman in Glasgow for thirty-five years (latterly as guardian of the Kelvingrove Picture Gallery), and now, in the enjoyment of good health and a pension, spends his time reading and doing good in his native district. Mr. Macintyre's earliest recollection is of his father being evicted from a small holding, at the head of the loch, in the "forties."

Tennyson and Palgrave were visitors at Ardtornish, as Mr. Lang tells us, but made no special impression on the natives, who styled them respectively *Tinman* and *Pancake*.

[20] I could mention another rural parish, considerably further north, where, two winters ago, the roads were so badly blocked with snow that for five consecutive weeks no church services could be held! Both minister and congregation were overcome with grief.

[21] In that part of South Arran which lies between Dippen and Shannochie, there is high up on the hillside, a row of cottages and crofts collectively nicknamed "Mount Misery." The reason for this sinister name is that in most of the houses there is some maimed, consumptive, or imbecile child boarded out by the Parish Council. The children are better there than selling matches at St. Enoch's Station: they are well looked after and almost invariably improve in health.

[22] A country teacher in Kintyre, with a roll of eight, said to me: "We have had only one marriage in the district during the last year, and the bridegroom was aged *three score and fifteen*. I wonder what education is coming to: there is little or no patriotism about Kintyre or my roll would be higher. I wish I could get the people to think more imperially than they do at present."

[23] A striking object-lesson on the instability of mortal life is permanently given to the Loch Ranza pupils by the proximity of the churchyard, which is just over the wall from the school. The thoughtful visitor should not fail to read the tombstones. If a lover of books, he will be interested in learning that the founder of the famous publishing firm of Messrs. Macmillan belonged to the North Cock farm near Loch Ranza. The pensive moralist will perhaps be most affected by an old stone, A.D. 1813, declaring that Elspa Macmillan left this *inhospitable world*, aged 86. *That* was no rash inference.

[24] It is a notorious fact that very few graduates, when they leave college, are able to read Latin from an author they have not specially studied, with ease or pleasure. For this melancholy fact there are several reasons. The range of reading is miserably meagre. Only a few authors are read, and almost every sentence of these is cumbered with such an amount of annotation as to render progress and literary appreciation alike painful. Composition in Latin absorbs far too much time: the first duty of the teacher ought to be to turn out pupils who can read Latin with fluency. No amount of grammatical detail or

laborious composition, as at present practised, will ever make up for the lack of wide reading. Professor Phillimore's recent suggestion that the less-known authors should be read more than they are, is wise and opportune. The authors he mentions would furnish a welcome relief from the unspeakable dreariness of over-annotated texts.

[25] A recent publication shows that Greek verse is well written at the University. Paisley folk should know that an Aberdonian Hellenist has put some of Tannahill's verses into Greek.

[26] The prayers of as many righteous men as possible are requested for the inspectors of schools who have to examine and report on the state of education in the Orkneys and Shetlands. I had the pleasure of conversing with one of these hard-worked officials in November, 1906. He spoke very warmly of the improved educational benefit of the libraries that have been sent from Paisley to the isles and skerries. This gentleman inspects the Fair Isle school once every two years. On the occasion of his last visit, he was rowed from Lerwick in a "sixern," and had a most tempestuous time going through the *roost*. Two of his oarsmen sickened, and were helpless. On getting ashore at last, he forgot all his sorrows and soaking, when he heard heartsome strains of welcome being played on the *insular pianola*.

[27] As to language, one hears, especially in the Hebrides, phrases of amusing quaintness, due no doubt to the speaker handling a foreign tongue. The school in one of the Mull villages is very small, and I made a remark to that effect in the hearing of the hotel-porter. "Oh, no," said he, "*it is a good deal bigger than you would wonder*." The same waiter, who had a talent for confusing his language, said in reply to an irate visitor who had questioned his intelligence: "You need not talk like that; I am as good as you; *I am as good as any other man put together*."

[28] A very similar account is given, of the dearth of the little folk in England, by the poet Chaucer; only, that eminent writer declares that the phenomenon is due to the zeal and prayers of the monks and begging-friars, who paced about the country muttering blessings and exorcistic paragraphs.

[29] Collins's long *Ode on Popular Superstitions in the Highlands of Scotland*, addressed to Home, author of *Douglas*, contains some excellent rhetorical passages. Speaking of the second-sighted seer, Collins represents him as one who

> "In the *depth of Uist's dark forest* dwells."

We may say of Uist what Lord Rosebery said of Caithness, that it is *entirely delivered from the contaminating influence of foliage*. The air one breathes there does not suffer deterioration by coming through any such *dark forest* as Collins mentions: it blows from the Atlantic in an absolutely pure and strong condition.

[30] I am inclined to think that the relationship formerly existing between the Highland chief and the member of his clan was perfect in its way—a *model* of class relationship. There was nothing menial about the clansman's attitude, though he gave unbounded homage to his lord. At the battle of Inverkeithing, a clansman and his seven sons gave up their lives to shield from death their chieftain, Sir Hector Maclean. As the old man saw his boys fall one after the other, he shouted with glee and pride, "*Another for Sir Hector!*" until he himself lay, like a true thane, beside his progeny. Nothing could be finer or more touching than such a scene.

[31] Burns tells us that when in Inveraray Hotel, he was entirely neglected by the servants, who gave all their attention to some gentlemen from the Castle. In our day, the Campbells have shown contrition by their willingness to admit that Burns was one of their own clan. Burns's ancestors were, it is said, Campbells of Taynuilt. Taynuilt means in English, Burnhouse. When the poet's ancestors emigrated to Forfarshire, they were known as *Campbells from Burnhouse*. In course of time the appellation was shortened into Burnhouse simply, and latterly into Burness or Burns.—Q.E.D.

[32] Boswell's religious instincts come well out in his account of the visit to Iona. Two of his descendants, Messrs. Albert and James Boswell, devoted themselves entirely to religion, and were well known in Ayrshire, thirty years ago, as zealous evangelists. These two gentlemen went on a preaching campaign through the northern islands, and did much highly appreciated philanthropic and religious work there. They were members of the sect called Plymouth Brethren.

[33] Rob was at one time in the army, for every Mackay has the fighting instinct in him. (Reay is one of the few townships in the North that possess a drill-hall and a military instructor. It is impossible adequately to describe the consternation in the Mackay country at the time of our South African reverses. Everyone was in a fury and it was felt there was urgent need for the Mackays to straighten out matters at the seat of war. It was at this time that the drill-hall was built in Reay. Many of the young men went to the front as volunteers, and if the war had lasted much longer, there would have been few Mackays left in Sutherlandshire.)

[34] Let me here pay a tribute to the marked excellence and literary skill of the newspapers of provincial Scotland. These are very numerous—even Ailsa Craig has a sheet of its own, *The Ailsa Craig Banner*.

[35] Reprinted (by kind permission) from the *Scotsman*.

[36] Suggested by a copy of his poems in a West Highland bookcase.

[37] Berriedale, which moved the American to commemorative song, is on the Caithness shore, and there the Duke of Portland has one of his numerous residences. The Duke's seat is high up on the hills and behind it is a mountain of grim aspect which serves for a deer-forest. At Berriedale, the road traversed by the coach is simply appalling: boards

marked *Dangerous* forewarn all wheel-men that risks cannot be taken with impunity. An honest descent can be easily coped with, but here the road to the glen is not merely steep, it is as lacking in straightforwardness as the links of Forth. Once down at the level of the village, the breeze no longer blows fresh and chilly, but subsides into a quiet air, grateful with the odour of flowers. Passengers are requested to walk up the corresponding hill to a level equal to the height of the road before the interruption of the terrible Berriedale chasm. When the ascent is reached, one has a view of unsurpassed splendour. The wooded Wye, which Wordsworth sang so rapturously and which he saw with his mind's eye in the dinsome town, has no landscape to compare in grandeur and beauty with the country round Berriedale, viewed from this eminence. Hills of richest green, diversified with purple heather; a back-ground of wild bog and mountain; blue sea; and great banks of cloud shepherded over the heights by the mighty winds.

[38] Suggested by a French poem of Monsieur Desessarts, entitled *Se Survivre*.

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