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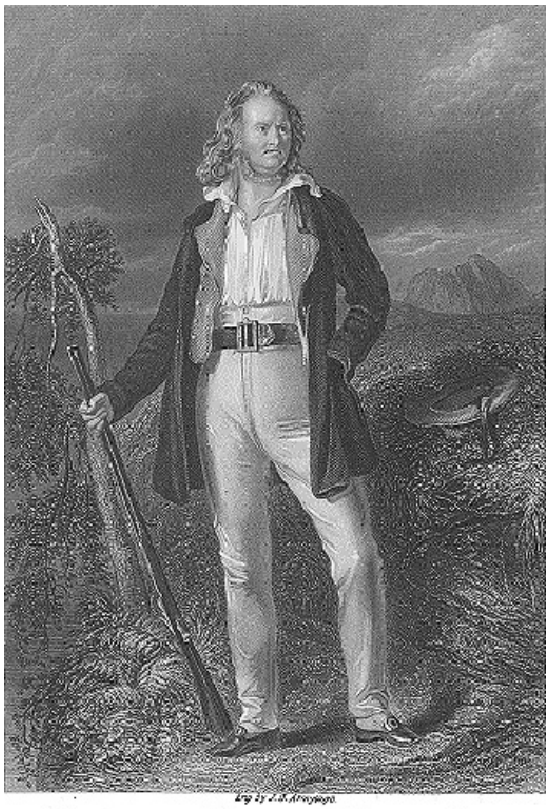

Christopher North in his Sporting Jacket
from a Painting by Thomas Duncan A.R.A.
in the possession of John Blackwood Esq.
W. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh & London

RECREATIONS

OF

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

A NEW EDITION IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXVIII

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

PREFATORY NOTE.

Like most of Professor Wilson's miscellaneous writings, the articles contained in the two following volumes appeared originally in "Blackwood's Magazine." Having been revised and considerably remodelled by their Author, they were published in three volumes, 8vo, in 1842, under the general title, "The Recreations of Christopher North." In the reprint, the special titles of some of the articles are different from those which the same papers bear in the Magazine.

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RECREATIONS

OF

CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET.

FYTTE FIRST.

There is a fine and beautiful alliance between all pastimes pursued on flood, field, and fell. The principles in human nature on which they depend, are in all the same; but those principles are subject to infinite modifications and varieties, according to the difference of individual and national character. All such pastimes, whether followed merely as pastimes, or as professions, or as the immediate means of sustaining life, require sense, sagacity, and knowledge of nature and nature's laws; nor less, patience, perseverance, courage even, and bodily strength or activity, while the spirit which animates and supports them is a spirit of anxiety, doubt, fear, hope, joy, exultation, and triumph—in the heart of the young a fierce passion—in the heart of the old a passion still, but subdued and tamed down, without, however, being much dulled or deadened, by various experience of all the mysteries of the calling, and by the gradual subsiding of all impetuous impulses in the frames of all mortal men beyond perhaps three-score, when the blackest head will be becoming grey, the most nervous knee less firmly knit, the most steely-
[Pg 2] springed instep less elastic, the keenest eye less of a far-keeker, and, above all, the most boiling heart less like a caldron or a crater—yea, the whole man subject to some dimness or decay, and, consequently, the whole duty of man like the new edition of a book, from which many passages that formed the chief glory of the *editio princeps* have been expunged—the whole character of the style corrected without being thereby improved—just like the later editions of the Pleasures of Imagination, which were written by Akenside when he was about twenty-one, and altered by him at forty—to the exclusion or destruction of many most *splendida vitia*, by which process the poem, in our humble opinion, was shorn of its brightest beams, and suffered disastrous twilight and eclipse—perplexing critics.

Now, seeing that such pastimes are in number almost infinite, and infinite the varieties of human character, pray what is there at all surprising in your being madly fond of shooting—and your brother Tom just as foolish about fishing—and cousin Jack perfectly insane on fox-hunting—while the old gentleman your father, in spite of wind and weather, perennial gout, and annual apoplexy, goes a-coursing of the white-hipped hare on the bleak Yorkshire wolds—and uncle Ben, as if just escaped from Bedlam or St Luke's with Dr Haslam at his heels, or with a few hundred yards' start of Dr Warburton, is seen galloping, in a Welsh wig and strange apparel, in the rear of a pack of Lilliputian beagles, all barking as if they were as mad as their master, supposed to be in chase of an invisible animal that keeps eternally doubling in field and forest—"still hoped for, never seen," and well christened by the name of Escape?

Phrenology sets the question for ever at rest. All people have thirty-three faculties. Now there are but twenty-four letters in the alphabet; yet how many languages—some six thousand we believe, each of which is susceptible of many dialects! No wonder, then, that you might as well try to count all the sands on the sea-shore as all the species of sportsmen.

There is, therefore, nothing to prevent any man with a large and sound development from excelling, at once, in rat-catching and deer-stalking—from being, in short, a universal genius in sports and pastimes. Heaven has made us such a man.

[Pg 3] Yet there seems to be a natural course or progress in pastimes. We do not now speak of marbles—or knuckling down at taw—or trundling a hoop—or pall-lall—or pitch and toss—or any other of the games of the school playground. We restrict ourselves to what, somewhat inaccurately perhaps, are called field-sports. Thus Angling seems the earliest of them all in the order of nature. There the new-breeched urchin stands on the low bridge of the little bit burnie! and with crooked pin, baited with one unwrithing ring of a dead worm, and attached to a yarn-thread—for he has not yet got into hair, and is years off gut—his rod of the mere willow or hazel wand, there will he stand during all his play-hours, as forgetful of his primer as if the weary art of printing had never been invented, day after day, week after week, month after month, in mute, deep, earnest, passionate, heart-mind-and-soul-engrossing hope of some time or other catching a minnow or a beardie! A tug—a tug! With face ten times flushed and pale by turns ere you could count ten, he at last has strength, in the agitation of his fear and joy, to pull away at the monster—and there he lies in his beauty among the gowans and the greensward, for he has whapped him right over his head and far away, a fish a quarter of an ounce in weight, and, at the very least, two inches long! Off he flies, on wings of wind, to his father, mother, and sisters, and brothers, and cousins, and all the neighbourhood, holding the fish aloft in both hands, still fearful of its escape, and, like a genuine child of corruption, his eyes brighten at the first blush of cold blood on his small fumy fingers. He carries about with him, up-stairs and down-stairs, his prey upon a plate; he will not wash his hands before dinner, for he exults in the silver scales adhering to the thumb-nail that scooped the pin out of the baggy's maw—and at night, "cabined, cribbed, confined," he is overheard murmuring in his sleep—a thief, a robber, and a murderer, in his yet infant dreams!

From that hour Angling is no more a mere delightful daydream, haunted by the dim hopes of imaginary minnows, but a reality—an art—a science—of which the flaxen-headed schoolboy feels himself to be master—a mystery in which he has been initiated; and off he goes now, all alone, in the power of successful passion, to the distant brook—brook a mile off—with fields, and hedges,
[Pg 4] and single trees, and little groves, and a huge forest of six acres, between and the house in which

he is boarded or was born! There flows on the slender music of the shadowy shallows—there pours the deeper din of the birch-tree'd waterfall. The scared water-pyet flits away from stone to stone, and dipping, disappears among the airy bubbles, to him a new sight of joy and wonder. And oh! how sweet the scent of the broom or furze, yellowing along the braes, where leap the lambs, less happy than he, on the knolls of sunshine! His grandfather has given him a half-crown rod in two pieces—yes, his line is of hair twisted—plaited by his own soon-instructed little fingers. By Heavens, he is fishing with the fly! And the Fates, grim and grisly as they are painted to be by full-grown, ungrateful, lying poets, smile like angels upon the paidler in the brook, winnowing the air with their wings into western breezes, while at the very first throw the yellow trout forsakes his fastness beneath the bog-wood, and with a lazy wallop, and then a sudden plunge, and then a race like lightning, changes at once the child into the boy, and shoots through his thrilling and aching heart the ecstasy of a new life expanding in that glorious pastime, even as a rainbow on a sudden brightens up the sky. *Fortuna favet fortibus*—and with one long pull, and strong pull, and pull altogether, Johnny lands a twelve-incher on the soft, smooth, silvery sand of the only bay in all the burn where such an exploit was possible, and dashing upon him like an osprey, soars up with him in his talons to the bank, breaking his line as he hurries off to a spot of safety twenty yards from the pool, and then flinging him down on a heath-surrounded plat of sheep-nibbled verdure, lets him bounce about till he is tired, and lies gasping with unfrequent and feeble motions, bright and beautiful, and glorious with all his yellow light and crimson lustre, spotted, speckled, and starred in his scaly splendour, beneath a sun that never shone before so dazzlingly; but now the radiance of the captive creature is dimmer and obscured, for the eye of day winks and seems almost shut behind that slow-sailing mass of clouds, composed in equal parts of air, rain, and sunshine.

Springs, summers, autumns, winters—each within itself longer, by many times longer than the whole year of grown-up life, that slips at last through one's fingers like a knotless thread—pass over the curled darling's brow; and look at him now, a straight and strengthy stripling, in the
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savage spirit of sport, springing over rock-ledge after rock-ledge, nor needing aught as he plashes knee-deep, or waistband-high, through river-feeding torrents, to the glorious music of his running and ringing reel, after a tongue-hooked salmon, insanely seeking with the ebb of tide, but all in vain, the white breakers of the sea. No hazel or willow wand, no half-crown, rod of ash framed by village wright, is now in his practised hands, of which the very left is dexterous; but a twenty-feet rod of Phin's, all ring-rustling, and a-glitter with the preserving varnish, limber as the attenuating line itself, and lithe to its topmost tenuity as the elephant's proboscis—the hiccory and the horn without twist, knot, or flaw—from butt to fly a faultless taper, "fine by degrees and beautifully less," the beau-ideal of a rod by the skill of cunning craftsman to the senses materialised! A fish—fat, fair, and forty! "She is a salmon, therefore to be woo'd—she is a salmon, therefore to be won"—but shy, timid, capricious, headstrong, now wrathful and now full of fear, like any other female whom the cruel artist has hooked by lip or heart, and, in spite of all her struggling, will bring to the gasp at last; and then with calm eyes behold her lying in the shade dead, or worse than dead, fast-fading, and to be re-illumined no more the lustre of her beauty, insensible to sun or shower, even the most perishable of all perishable things in a world of perishing!—But the salmon has grown sulky, and must be made to spring to the plunging stone. There, suddenly, instinct with new passion, she shoots out of the foam like a bar of silver bullion; and, relapsing into the flood, is in another moment at the very head of the waterfall! Give her the butt—give her the butt—or she is gone for ever with the thunder into ten fathom deep!—Now comes the trial of your tackle—and when was Phin ever known to fail at the edge of cliff or cataract? Her snout is southwards—right up the middle of the main current of the hill-born river, as if she would seek its very course where she was spawned! She still swims swift, and strong, and deep—and the line goes steady, boys, steady—stiff and steady as a Tory in the roar of Opposition. There is yet an hour's play in her dorsal fin—danger in the flap of her tail—and yet may her silver shoulder shatter the gut against a rock. Why, the river was yesterday in spate, and she is fresh run from the sea. All the lesser waterfalls are now level with the flood, and she meets with no impediment or obstruction—the coast is clear—no tree-roots here—no floating branches
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—for during the night they have all been swept down to the salt loch. *In medio tutissimas ibis*—ay, now you feel she begins to fail—the butt tells now every time you deliver your right. What! another mad leap! yet another sullen plunge! She seems absolutely to have discovered, or rather to be an impersonation of, the Perpetual Motion. Stand back out of the way, you son of a sea-cook!—you in the tattered blue breeches, with the tail of your shirt hanging out. Who the devil sent you all here, ye vagabonds?—Ha! Watty Ritchie, my man, is that you? God bless your honest laughing phiz! What, Watty, would you think of a Fish like that about Peebles? Tarn Grieve never gruppit sae heavy a ane since first he belanged to the Council.—Curse that collie! Ay! well done, Watty! Stone him to Stobbo. Confound these stirks—if that white one, with caving horns, kicking heels, and straight-up tail, come bellowing by between us and the river, then, "Madam! all is lost, except honour!" If we lose this Fish at six o'clock, then suicide at seven. Our will is made—ten thousand to the Foundling—ditto to the Thames Tunnel—ha—ha—my Beauty! Methinks we could fain and fond kiss thy silver side, languidly lying afloat on the foam as if all further resistance now were vain, and gracefully thou wert surrendering thyself to death! No faith in female—she trusts to the last trial of her tail—sweetly workest thou, O Reel of Reels! and on thy smooth axle spinning sleep'st, even, as Milton describes her, like our own worthy planet. Scrope—Bainbridge—Maule—princes among Anglers—oh! that you were here! Where the devil is Sir Humphrey? At his retort? By mysterious sympathy—far off at his own Trows, the Kerss feels that we are killing the noblest Fish whose back ever rippled the surface of deep or shallow in the Tweed. Tom Purdy stands like a seer, entranced in glorious vision, beside turreted Abbotsford. Shade of Sandy Govan! Alas! alas! Poor Sandy—why on thy pale face that melancholy smile!—Peter! The Gaff!

The Gaff! Into the eddy she sails, sick and slow, and almost with a swirl—whitening as she nears the sand—there she has it—struck right into the shoulder, fairer than that of Juno, Diana, Minerva, or Venus—and lies at last in all her glorious length and breadth of beaming beauty, fit
[Pg 7] prey for giant or demigod angling before the Flood!

> "The child is father of the man,
> And I would wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety!"

So much for the Angler. The Shooter, again, he begins with his pipe-gun, formed of the last year's growth of a branch of the plane-tree—the beautiful dark-green-leaved and fragrant-flowered plane-tree—that stands straight in stem and round in head, visible and audible too from afar the bee-resounding umbrage, alike on stormy sea-coast and in sheltered inland vale, still loving the roof of the fisherman's or peasant's cottage.

Then comes, perhaps, the city pop-gun, in shape like a very musket, such as soldiers bear—a Christmas present from parent, once a colonel of volunteers—nor feeble to discharge the pea-bullet or barley-shot, formidable to face and eyes; nor yet unfelt, at six paces, by hinder-end of playmate, scornfully yet fearfully exposed. But the shooter soon tires of such ineffectual trigger—and his soul, as well as his hair, is set on fire by that extraordinary compound—Gunpowder. He begins with burning off his eyebrows on the King's birthday; squibs and crackers follow, and all the pleasures of the pluff. But he soon longs to let off a gun—"and follows to the field some warlike lord"—in hopes of being allowed to discharge one of the double-barrels, after Ponto has made his last point, and the half-hidden chimneys of home are again seen smoking among the trees. This is his first practice in firearms, and from that hour he is—a Shooter.

Then there is in most rural parishes—and of rural parishes alone do we condescend to speak—a pistol, a horse one, with a bit of silver on the butt—perhaps one that originally served in the Scots Greys. It is bought, or borrowed, by the young shooter, who begins firing first at barn-doors, then at trees, and then at living things—a strange cur, who, from his lolling tongue, may be supposed to have the hydrophobia—a cat that has purred herself asleep on the sunny churchyard wall, or is watching mice at their hole-mouths among the graves—a water-rat in the mill-lead—or weasel that, running to his retreat in the wall, always turns round to look at you—a goose wandered from his common in disappointed love—or brown duck, easily mistaken by the unscrupulous for a wild
[Pg 8] one, in pond remote from human dwelling, or on meadow by the river-side, away from the clack of the muter-mill. The corby-crow, too, shouted out of his nest on some tree lower than usual, is a good flying mark to the more advanced class; or morning magpie, a-chatter at skreigh of day close to the cottage door among the chickens; or a flock of pigeons wheeling overhead on the stubble-field, or sitting so thick together that every stock is blue with tempting plumage.

But the pistol is discharged for a fowling-piece—brown and rusty, with a slight crack probably in the muzzle, and a lock out of all proportion to the barrel. Then the young shooter aspires at halfpennies thrown up into the air—and generally hit, for there is never wanting an apparent dent in copper metal; and thence he mounts to the glancing and skimming swallow, a household bird, and therefore to be held sacred, but shot at on the excuse of its being next to impossible to hit him—an opinion strengthened into belief by several summers' practice. But the small brown and white marten wheeling through below the bridge, or along the many-holed red sand-bank, is admitted by all boys to be fair game—and still more, the long-winged legless black devilet, that, if it falls to the ground, cannot rise again, and therefore screams wheeling round the corners and battlements of towers and castles, or far out even of cannon-shot, gambols in companies of hundreds, and regiments of a thousand, aloft in the evening ether, within the orbit of the eagle's flight. It seems to boyish eyes that the creatures near the earth, when but little blue sky is seen between the specks and the wallflowers growing on the coign of vantage: the signal is given to fire; but the devilets are too high in heaven to smell the sulphur. The starling whips with a shrill cry into his nest, and nothing falls to the ground but a tiny bit of mossy mortar, inhabited by a spider!

But the Day of Days arrives at last, when the schoolboy, or rather the college boy, returning to his rural vacation (for in Scotland college winters tread close, too close, on the heels of academies), has a gun—a gun in a case—a double-barrel too—of his own—and is provided with a licence, probably without any other qualification than that of hit or miss. On some portentous morning he effulges with the sun in velveteen jacket and breeches of the same—many-buttoned
[Pg 9] gaiters, and an unkerchiefed throat. 'Tis the fourteenth of September, and lo! a pointer at his heels—Ponto, of course—a game-bag like a beggar's wallet at his side—destined to be at eve as full of charity—and all the paraphernalia of an accomplished sportsman. Proud, were she to see the sight, would be the "mother that bore him;" the heart of that old sportsman, his daddy, would sing for joy! The chained mastiff in the yard yowls his admiration; the servant lasses uplift the pane of their garret, and, with suddenly withdrawn blushes, titter their delight in their rich paper curls and pure night-clothes. Rab Roger, who has been cleaning out the barn, comes forth to partake of the caulker; and away go the footsteps of the old poacher and his pupil through the autumnal rime, off to the uplands, where—for it is one of the earliest of harvests—there is scarcely a single acre of standing corn. The turnip-fields are bright green with hope and expectation—and coveys are couching on lazy beds beneath the potato-shaw. Every high hedge, ditch-guarded on either side, shelters its own brood—imagination hears the whirr shaking the dewdrops from the broom on the brae—and first one bird and then another, and then the remaining number, in itself no contemptible covey, seems to fancy's ear to spring single, or in

clouds, from the coppice brushwood with here and there an intercepting standard tree.

Poor Ponto is much to be pitied. Either having a cold in his nose, or having ante-breakfasted by stealth on a red herring, he can scent nothing short of a badger, and, every other field, he starts in horror, shame, and amazement, to hear himself, without having attended to his points, enclosed in a whirring covey. He is still duly taken between those inexorable knees; out comes the speck-and-span new dog-whip, heavy enough for a horse; and the yowl of the patient is heard over the whole parish. Mothers press their yet unchastised infants to their breasts; and the schoolmaster, fastening a knowing eye on dunce and neerdoweel, holds up, in silent warning, the terror of the tawes. Frequent flogging will cow the spirit of the best man and dog in Britain. Ponto travels now in fear and trembling but a few yards from his tyrant's feet, till, rousing himself to the sudden scent of something smelling strongly, he draws slowly and beautifully, and

"There fix'd, a perfect semicircle stands."

[Pg 10] Up runs the Tyro ready-cocked, and, in his eagerness, stumbling among the stubble, when, hark and lo! the gabble of grey goslings, and the bill-protruded hiss of goose and gander! Bang goes the right-hand barrel at Ponto, who now thinks it high time to be off to the tune of "ower the hills and far awa'," while the young gentleman, half-ashamed and half-incensed, half-glad and half-sorry, discharges the left-hand barrel, with a highly improper curse, at the father of the feathered family before him, who receives the shot like a ball in his breast, throws a somerset quite surprising for a bird of his usual habits, and, after biting the dust with his bill, and thumping it with his bottom, breathes an eternal farewell to this sublunary scene—and leaves himself to be paid for at the rate of eighteenpence a pound to his justly irritated owner, on whose farm he had led a long, and not only harmless, but honourable and useful life.

It is nearly as impossible a thing as we know, to borrow a dog about the time the sun has reached his meridian, on the First Day of the Partridges. Ponto by this time has sneaked, unseen by human eye, into his kennel, and coiled himself up into the arms of "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." A farmer makes offer of a collie, who, from numbering among his paternal ancestors a Spanish pointer, is quite a Don in his way among the cheepers, and has been known in a turnip-field to stand in an attitude very similar to that of setting. Luath has no objection to a frolic over the fields, and plays the part of Ponto to perfection. At last he catches sight of a covey basking, and, leaping in upon them open-mouthed, despatches them right and left, even like the famous dog Billy killing rats in the pit at Westminster. The birds are bagged with a gentle remonstrance, and Luath's exploit rewarded with a whang of cheese. Elated by the pressure on his shoulder, the young gentleman laughs at the idea of pointing; and fires away, like winking, at every uprise of birds, near or remote; works a miracle by bringing down three at a time, that chanced, unknown to him, to be crossing, and, wearied with such slaughter, lends his gun to the attendant farmer, who can mark down to an inch, and walks up to the dropped pout as if he could kick her up with his foot; and thus the bag in a few hours is half full of feathers; while, to close with eclat the sport of the day, the cunning elder takes him to a bramble bush, in a wall nook, at
[Pg 11] the edge of a wood, and returning the gun into his hands, shows him poor pussy sitting with open eyes, fast asleep! The pellets are in her brain, and turning herself over, she crunkles out to her full length, like a piece of untwisting Indian rubber, and is dead. The posterior pouch of the jacket, yet unstained by blood, yawns to receive her—and in she goes plump; paws, ears, body, feet, fud, and all—while Luath, all the way home to the Mains, keeps snoking at the red drops oozing through; for well he knows, in summer's heat and winter's cold, the smell of pussy, whether sitting beneath a tuft of withered grass on the brae, or burrowed beneath a snow-wreath. A hare, we certainly must say, in spite of haughtier sportsman's scorn, is, when sitting, a most satisfactory shot.

But let us trace no further thus, step by step, the Pilgrim's Progress. Look at him now—a finished sportsman—on the moors—the bright black boundless Dalwhinnie moors, stretching away, by long Loch Ericht side, into the dim and distant day that hangs, with all its clouds, over the bosom of far Loch Rannoch. Is that the pluffer at partridge-pouts who had nearly been the death of poor Ponto? Lord Kennedy himself might take a lesson now from the straight and steady style in which, on the mountain brow, and up to the middle in heather, he brings his Manton to the deadly level! More unerring eye never glanced along brown barrel! Finer forefinger never touched a trigger! Follow him a whole day, and not one wounded bird. All most beautifully arrested on their flight by instantaneous death! Down dropped right and left, like lead on the heather—old cock and hen, singled out among the orphaned brood, as calmly as a cook would do it in the larder from among a pile of plumage. No random shot within—no needless shot out of distance—covered every feather before stir of finger—and body, back, and brain, pierced, broken, shattered! And what perfect pointers! There they stand, still as death—yet instinct with life—the whole half-dozen! Mungo, the black-tanned—Don, the red-spotted—Clara, the snow-white—Primrose, the pale yellow—Basto, the bright brown, and Nimrod, in his coat of many colours, often seen afar through the mists like a meteor.

So much for the Angler's and the Shooter's Progress—now briefly for the Hunter's. Hunting, in
[Pg 12] this country, unquestionably commences with cats. Few cottages without a cat. If you do not find her on the mouse watch at the gable end of the house just at the corner, take a solar observation, and by it look for her on bank or brae—somewhere about the premises—if unsuccessful, peep into the byre, and up through a hole among the dusty divots of the roof, and chance is you see her eyes glittering far-ben in the gloom; but if she be not there either, into the barn and up on the mow, and surely she is on the straw or on the baulks below the kipples. No. Well, then, let your

eye travel along the edge of that little wood behind the cottage—ay, yonder she is!—but she sees both you and your two terriers—one rough and the other smooth—and, slinking away through a gap in the old hawthorn hedge in among the hazels, she either lies *perdu*, or is up a fir-tree almost as high as the magpie's or corby's nest.

Now, observe, shooting cats is one thing, and hunting them is another—and shooting and hunting, though they may be united, are here treated separately; so, in the present case, the cat makes her escape. But get her watching birds—young larks, perhaps, walking on the lea—or young linnets hanging on the broom—down-by yonder in the holm lands, where there are no trees, except indeed that one glorious single tree, the Golden Oak, and he is guarded by Glowrer, and then what a most capital chase! Stretching herself up with crooked back, as if taking a yawn —off she jumps, with tremendous spangs, and tail, thickened with fear and anger, perpendicular. Youf—youf—youf—go the terriers—head-over-heels perhaps in their fury—and are not long in turning her—and bringing her to bay at the hedge-root, all ablaze and abristle. A she-devil incarnate! Hark—all at once now strikes up a trio—Catalani caterwauling the treble—Glowrer taking the bass, and Tearer the tenor—a cruel concert cut short by a squalling throttler. Away—away along the holm—and over the knowe—and into the wood—for lo! the gudewife, brandishing a besom, comes flying demented without her mutch, down to the murder of her Tabby—her son, a stout stripling, is seen skirting the potato-field to intercept our flight—and, most formidable of all foes, the Man of the House himself, in his shirt sleeves and flail in his hand, bolts from the barn, down the croft, across the burn, and up the brae, to cut us off from the Manse. The hunt's up—and 'tis a capital steeple-chase. Disperse—disperse! Down the hill, Jack—up the hill, Gill—dive the
[Pg 13] dell, Kit—thread the wood, Pat—a hundred yards' start is a great matter—a stern chase is always a long chase—schoolboys are generally in prime wind—the old man begins to puff, and blow, and snort, and put his paws to his paunch—the son is thrown out by a double of dainty Davy's—and the "sair begrutten mither" is gathering up the torn and tattered remains of Tortoise-shell Tabby, and invoking the vengeance of heaven and earth on her pitiless murderers. Some slight relief to her bursting and breaking heart to vow that she will make the minister hear of it on the deafest side of his head—ay, even if she have to break in upon him sitting on Saturday night, getting aff by rote his fushionless sermon, in his ain study.

Now, gentle reader, again observe, that though we have now described, *con amore*, a most cruel case of cat-killing, in which we certainly did play a most aggravated part some Sixty Years since, far indeed are we from recommending such wanton barbarity to the rising generation. We are not inditing a homily on humanity to animals, nor have we been appointed to succeed the Rev. Dr Somerville of Currie, the great Patentee of the Safety Double Bloody Barrel, to preach the annual Gibsonian sermon on that subject—we are simply stating certain matters of fact, illustrative of the rise and progress of the love of pastime in the soul, and leave our readers to draw the moral. But may we be permitted to say, that the naughtiest schoolboys often make the most pious men; that it does not follow, according to the wise saws and modern instances of prophetic old women of both sexes, that he who in boyhood has worried a cat with terriers, will, in manhood, commit murder on one of his own species; or that peccadilloes are the progenitors of capital crimes. Nature allows to growing lads a certain range of wickedness, *sans peur et sans reproche*. She seems, indeed, to whistle into their ear, to mock ancient females—to laugh at Quakers—to make mouths at a decent man and his wife riding double to church—the matron's thick legs ludicrously bobbing from the pillion, kept firm on Dobbin's rump by her bottom, "*ponderibus librata suis*,"—to tip the wink to young women during sermon on Sunday—and on Saturday, most impertinently to kiss them, whether they will or no, on high-road or by-path—and to perpetrate many other little nameless enormities.

[Pg 14] No doubt, at the time, such things will wear rather a suspicious character; and the boy who is detected in the fact, must be punished by pawmy, or privation, or imprisonment from play. But when punished, he is of course left free to resume his atrocious career; nor is it found that he sleeps a whit the less soundly, or shrieks for Heaven's mercy in his dreams. Conscience is not a craven. Groans belong to guilt. But fun and frolic, even when trespasses, are not guilt; and though a cat have nine lives, she has but one ghost—and that will haunt no house where there are terriers. What! surely if you have the happiness of being a parent, you would not wish your only boy—your son and heir—the blended image of his mother's loveliness and his father's manly beauty—to be a smug, smooth, prim, and proper prig, with his hair always combed down on his forehead, hands always unglaured, and without spot or blemish on his white-thread stockings? You would not wish him, surely, to be always moping and musing in a corner with a good book held close to his nose—botanising with his maiden aunts—doing the pretty at tea-tables with tabbies, in handing round the short-bread, taking cups, and attending to the kettle—telling tales on all naughty boys and girls—laying up his penny a-week pocket-money in a penny-pig—keeping all his clothes neatly folded up in an untumbled drawer—having his own peg for his uncrushed hat—saying his prayers precisely as the clock strikes nine, while his companions are yet at blind-man's-buff—and puffed up every Sabbath eve by the parson's praises of his uncommon memory for a sermon—while all the other boys are scolded for having fallen asleep before Tenthly? You would not wish him, surely, to write sermons himself at his tender years, nay—even to be able to give you chapter and verse for every quotation from the Bible? No. Better far that he should begin early to break your heart, by taking no care even of his Sunday clothes—blotting his copy—impiously pinning pieces of paper to the Dominie's tail, who to him was a second father—going to the fishing not only without leave, but against orders—bathing in the forbidden pool, where the tailor was drowned—drying powder before the schoolroom fire, and blowing himself and two crack-skulled cronies to the ceiling—tying kettles to the tails of dogs—shooting an old woman's laying hen—galloping bare-backed shelties down stony steeps—climbing trees to the slenderest

[Pg 15] twig on which bird could build, and up the tooth-of-time-indented sides of old castles after wallflowers and starlings—being run away with in carts by colts against turnpike gates—buying bad ballads from young gypsy-girls, who, on receiving a sixpence, give ever so many kisses in return, saying, "Take your change out of that;"—on a borrowed broken-knee'd pony, with a switch-tail—a devil for galloping—not only attending country races for a saddle and collar, but entering for and winning the prize—dancing like a devil in barns at kirns—seeing his blooming partner home over the blooming heather, most perilous adventure of all in which virgin-puberty can be involved—fighting with a rival in corduroy breeches, and poll shorn beneath a caup, till his eyes just twinkle through the swollen blue—and, to conclude "this strange eventful history," once brought home at one o'clock in the morning, God knows whence or by whom, and found by the shrieking servant, sent out to listen for him in the moonlight, dead-drunk on the gravel at the gate!

Nay, start not, parental reader—nor, in the terror of anticipation, send, without loss of a single day, for your son at a distant academy, mayhap pursuing even such another career. Trust thou to the genial, gracious, and benign *vis medicatrix naturæ*. What though a few clouds bedim and deform "the innocent brightness of the new-born day?" Lo! how splendid the meridian ether! What though the frost seem to blight the beauty of the budding and blowing rose? Look how she revives beneath dew, rain, and sunshine, till your eyes can even scarce endure the lustre! What though the waters of the sullen fen seem to pollute the snow of the swan? They fall off from her expanded wings, and, pure as a spirit, she soars away, and descends into her own silver lake, stainless as the water-lilies floating round her breast. And shall the immortal soul suffer lasting contamination from the transient chances of its nascent state—in this, less favoured than material and immaterial things that perish? No—it is undergoing endless transmigrations,—every hour a being different, yet the same—dark stains blotted out—rueful inscriptions effaced—many an erasure of impressions once thought permanent, but soon altogether forgotten—and vindicating, in the midst of the earthly corruption in which it is immersed, its own celestial origin, character, and end, often flickering, or seemingly blown out, like a taper in the wind, but all at
[Pg 16] once self-reillumined, and shining in inextinguishable and self-fed radiance—like a star in heaven.

Therefore, bad as boys too often are—and a disgrace to the mother who bore them—the cradle in which they were rocked—the nurse by whom they were suckled—the schoolmaster by whom they were flogged—and the hangman by whom it was prophesied they were to be executed—wait patiently for a few years, and you will see them all transfigured—one into a preacher of such winning eloquence, that he almost persuades all men to be Christians—another into a parliamentary orator, who commands the applause of listening senates, and

> "Reads his history in a nation's eyes"

—one into a painter, before whose thunderous heavens the storms of Poussin "pale their ineffectual fires"—another into a poet composing and playing, side by side, on his own peculiar harp, in a concert of vocal and instrumental music, with Byron, Scott, and Wordsworth—one into a great soldier, who, when Wellington is no more, shall, for the freedom of the world, conquer a future Waterloo—another who, hoisting his flag on the "mast of some tall ammiral," shall, like Eliab Harvey in the Temeraire, lay two three-deckers on board at once, and clothe some now nameless peak or promontory in immortal glory, like that shining on Trafalgar.

Well, then, after cat-killing comes Coursing. Cats have a look of hares—kittens of leverets—and they are all called Pussy. The terriers are useful still, preceding the line like skirmishers, and with finest noses startling the maukin from bracken-bush or rush bower, her skylight garret in the old quarry, or her brown study in the brake. Away with your coursing on Marlborough downs, where huge hares are seen squatted from a distance, and the sleek dogs, disrobed of their gaudy trappings, are let slip by a Tryer, running for cups and collars before lords and ladies, and squires of high and low degree—a pretty pastime enough, no doubt, in its way, and a splendid cavalcade. But will it for a moment compare with the sudden and all-unlooked-for start of the "auld witch" from the bunweed-covered lea, when the throat of every pedestrian is privileged to cry "halloo—halloo—halloo"—and whipcord-tailed greyhound and hairy lurcher, without any
[Pg 17] invidious distinction of birth or bearing, lay their deep breasts to the sward at the same moment, to the same instinct, and brattle over the brae after the disappearing Ears, laid flat at the first sight of her pursuers, as with retroverted eyes she turns her face to the mountain, and seeks the cairn only a little lower than the falcon's nest.

What signifies any sport in the open air, except in congenial scenery of earth and heaven? Go, thou gentle Cockney! and angle in the New River;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and try a salmon-cast in the old Tay. Go, thou gentle Cockney! and course a suburban hare in the purlieus of Blackheath;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and course an animal that never heard a city-bell, by day a hare, by night an old woman, that loves the dogs she dreads, and, hunt her as you will with a leash and a half of lightfoots, still returns at dark to the same form in the turf-dyke of the garden of the mountain cottage. The children, who love her as their own eyes—for she has been as a pet about the family, summer and winter, since that chubby-cheeked urchin, of some five years old, first began to swing in his self-rocking cradle—will scarcely care to see her started—nay, one or two of the wickedest among them will join in the halloo; for often, ere this, "has she cheated the very jowlers, and lauched ower her shouther at the lang dowgs walloping ahint her, sair forfeuchen, up the benty brae—and it's no the day that she's gaun to be killed by Rough Robin, or smooth Spring, or the red Bick, or the hairy Lurcher—though a' fowre be let lowse on her at ance, and ye surround her or she rise." What are your great big fat lazy English hares, ten

or twelve pounds and upwards, who have the food brought to their very mouth in preserves, and are out of breath with five minutes' scamper among themselves—to the middle-sized, hard-hipped, wiry-backed, steel-legged, long-winded maukins of Scotland, that scorn to taste a leaf of a single cabbage in the wee moorland yardie that shelters them, but prey in distant fields, take a breathing every gloaming along the mountain-breast, untired as young eagles ringing the sky for pastime, and before the dogs seem not so much scouring for life as for pleasure—with such an air of freedom, liberty, and independence, do they fling up the moss and cock their fuds in the faces of their pursuers. Yet stanch are they to the spine—strong in bone, and sound in bottom;—see,
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see how Tickler clears that twenty-feet moss-hag at a single spang like a bird—tops that hedge that would turn any hunter that ever stabled in Melton Mowbray—and then, at full speed northward, moves as upon a pivot within his own length, and close upon his haunches, without losing a foot, off within a point of due south. A kennel! He never was and never will be in a kennel all his free joyful days. He has walked and run—and leaped and swam about—at his own will, ever since he was nine days old—and he would have done so sooner had he had any eyes. None of your stinking cracklets for him—he takes his meals with the family, sitting at the right hand of the master's eldest son. He sleeps in any bed of the house he chooses; and, though no Methodist, he goes every third Sunday to church. That is the education of a Scottish greyhound—and the consequence is, that you may pardonably mistake him for a deer dog from Badenoch or Lochaber, and no doubt in the world that he would rejoice in a glimpse of the antlers on the weather-gleam,

> "Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trod
> To his hills that encircle the sea."

This may be called roughing it—slovenly—coarse—rude—artless—unscientific. But we say no—it is your only coursing. Gods! with what a bounding bosom the schoolboy salutes the dawning of the cool—clear—crisp, yes, crisp October morn (for there has been a slight frost, and the almost leafless hedgerows are all glittering with rime); and, little time lost at dress or breakfast, crams the luncheon into his pouch, and away to the Trysting-hill Farmhouse, which he fears the gamekeeper and his grews will have left ere he can run across the two long Scotch miles of moor between him and his joy! With step elastic, he feels flying along the sward as from a spring-board; like a roe, he clears the burns and bursts his way through the brakes; panting, not from breathlessness but anxiety, he lightly leaps the garden fence without a pole, and lo, the green jacket of one huntsman, the red jacket of another, on the plat before the door, and two or three tall raw-boned poachers—and there is mirth and music, fun and frolic, and the very soul of enterprise, adventure, and desperation, in that word; while tall and graceful stand the black, the
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brindled, and the yellow breed, with keen yet quiet eyes, prophetic of their destined prey, and though motionless now as stone statues of hounds at the feet of Meleager, soon to launch like lightning at the loved halloo!

Out comes the gudewife with her own bottle from the press in the spence, with as big a belly and broad a bottom as her own, and they are no trifle—for the worthy woman has been making much beef for many years, is moreover in the family way, and surely this time there will be twins at least—and pours out a canty caulker for each crowing crony, beginning with the gentle, and ending with the semple, that is our and her self; and better speerit never steamed in sma' still. She offers another with "hinny," by way of Athole brose; but it is put off till evening, for coursing requires a clear head, and the same sobriety then adorned our youth that now dignifies our old age. The gudeman, although an elder of the kirk, and with as grave an aspect as suits that solemn office, needs not much persuasion to let the flail rest for one day, anxious though he be to show the first aits in the market; and donning his broad blue bonnet, and the shortest-tailed auld coat he can find, and taking his kent in his hand, he gruffly gives Wully his orders for a' things about the place, and sets off with the younkers for a holiday. Not a man on earth who has not his own pastime, depend on't, austere as he may look; and 'twould be well for this wicked world if no elder in it had a "sin that maist easily beset him," worse than what Gibby Watson's wife used to call his "awfu' fondness for the Grews!"

And who that loves to walk or wander over the green earth, except indeed it merely be some sonnetteer or ballad-monger, if he had time and could afford it, and lived in a tolerably open country, would not keep, at the very least, three greyhounds? No better eating than a hare, though old blockhead Burton—and he was a blockhead, if blockhead ever there was one in this world—in his Anatomy, chooses to call it melancholy meat. Did he ever, by way of giving dinner a fair commencement, swallow a tureen of hare-soup with half-a-peck of mealy potatoes? If ever he did—and notwithstanding called hare melancholy meat, there can be no occasion whatever for now wishing him any further punishment. If he never did—then he was on earth the most
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unfortunate of men. England—as you love us and yourself—cultivate hare-soup, without for a moment dreaming of giving up roasted hare well stuffed with stuffing, jelly sauce being handed round on a large trencher. But there is no such thing as melancholy meat—neither fish, flesh, nor fowl—provided only there be enough of it. Otherwise, the daintiest dish drives you to despair. But independently of spit, pot, and pan, what delight in even daunering about the home-farm seeking for a hare! It is quite an art or science. You must consult not only the wind and weather of to-day, but of the night before—and of every day and night back to last Sunday, when probably you were prevented by the rain from going to church. Then hares shift the sites of their country seats every season. This month they love the fallow field—that, the stubble; this, you will see them, almost without looking for them, big and brown on the bare stony upland lea—that, you must have a hawk's eye in your head to discern, discover, detect them, like birds in their nests, embowered below the bunweed or the bracken; they choose to spend this week in a wood impervious to wet

or wind—that, in a marsh too plashy for the plover; now you may depend on finding madam at home in the sulks within the very heart of a bramble-bush or dwarf black-thorn thicket, while the squire cocks his fud at you from the top of a knowe open to blasts from all the airts;—in short, he who knows at all times where to find a hare, even if he knew not one single thing else but the way to his mouth, cannot be called an ignorant man—is probably a better-informed man in the long run than the friend on his right, discoursing about the Turks, the Greeks, the Portugals, and all that sort of thing, giving himself the lie on every arrival of his daily paper. We never yet knew an old courser (him of the Sporting Annals included), who was not a man both of abilities and virtues. But where were we?—at the Trysting-hill Farmhouse, jocularly called Hunger-them-Out.

Line is formed, and with measured steps we march towards the hills—for we ourselves are the schoolboy, bold, bright, and blooming as the rose—fleet of foot almost as the very antelope—Oh! now, alas! dim and withered as a stalk from which winter has swept all the blossoms—slow as the
[Pg 21] sloth along the ground—spindle-shanked as a lean and slippered pantaloon!

> "O heaven! that from our bright and shining years
> Age would but take the things youth heeded not!"

An old shepherd meets us on the long sloping rushy ascent to the hills—and putting his brown withered finger to his gnostic nose, intimates that she is in her old form behind the dyke—and the noble dumb animals, with pricked-up ears and brandished tail, are aware that her hour is come. Plash, plash, through the marsh, and then on the dry furze beyond, you see her large dark-brown eyes—Soho, soho, soho—Halloo, halloo, halloo—for a moment the seemingly horned creature appears to dally with the danger, and to linger ere she lays her lugs on her shoulder, and away, like thoughts pursuing thoughts—away fly hare and hounds towards the mountain.

Stand all still for a minute—for not a bush the height of our knee to break our view—and is not that brattling burst up the brae "beautiful exceedingly," and sufficient to chain in admiration the beatings of the rudest gazer's heart? Yes; of all beautiful sights—none more, none so much so, as the miraculous motion of a four-footed wild animal, changed at once, from a seeming inert sod or stone, into flight fleet as that of the falcon's wing! Instinct against instinct! fear and ferocity in one flight! Pursuers and pursued bound together, in every turning and twisting of their career, by the operation of two headlong passions! Now they are all three upon her—and she dies! No! glancing aside, like a bullet from a wall, she bounds almost at a right angle from her straight course—and, for a moment, seems to have made good her escape. Shooting headlong one over the other, all three, with erected tails, suddenly bring themselves up—like racing barks when down goes the helm, and one after another, bowsprit and boom almost entangled, rounds the buoy, and again bears up on the starboard tack upon a wind—and in a close line, head to heel, so that you might cover them all with a sheet—again, all opened-mouthed on her haunches, seem to drive, and go with her over the cliff.

We are all on foot—and pray what horse could gallop through among all these quagmires, over all the hags in these peat-mosses, over all the water-cressy and puddocky ditches, sinking soft on
[Pg 22] hither and thither side, even to the two-legged leaper's ankle or knee—up that hill on the perpendicular strewn with flint-shivers—down these loose-hanging cliffs—through that brake of old stunted birches with stools hard as iron—over that mile of quaking muir where the plover breeds—and— finally—up—up—up to where the dwarfed heather dies away among the cinders, and in winter you might mistake a flock of ptarmigan for a patch of snow?

The thing is impossible—so we are all on foot—and the fleetest keeper that ever footed it in Scotland shall not in a run of three miles give us sixty yards. "Ha! Peter the wild boy, how are you off for wind?"—we exultingly exclaim, in giving Red-jacket the go-by on the bent. But see—see—they are bringing her back again down the Red Mount—glancing aside, she throws them all three out—yes, all three, and few enow too, though fair play be a jewel—and ere they can recover, she is ahead a hundred yards up the hill. There is a beautiful trial of bone and bottom! Now one, and then another, takes almost imperceptibly the lead; but she steals away from them inch by inch—beating them all blind—and, suddenly disappearing—Heaven knows how—leaves them all in the lurch. With out-lolling tongues, hanging heads, panting sides, and drooping tails, they come one by one down the steep, looking somewhat sheepish, and then lie down together on their sides, as if indeed about to die in defeat. She has carried away her cocked fud unscathed for the third time, from Three of the Best in all broad Scotland—nor can there any longer be the smallest doubt in the world, in the minds of the most sceptical, that she is—what all the country-side have long known her to be—a Witch.

From cat-killing to Coursing, we have seen that the transition is easy in the order of nature—and so is it from coursing to Fox-Hunting—by means, however, of a small intermediate step—the Harriers. Musical is a pack of harriers as a peal of bells. How melodiously they ring changes in the woods, and in the hollow of the mountains! A level country we have already consigned to merited contempt, (though there is no rule without an exception; and, as we shall see by-and-by, there is one too here), and commend us even with harriers, to the ups and downs of the pastoral or sylvan heights. If old or indolent, take your station on a heaven-kissing hill, and hug the echoes
[Pg 23] to your heart. Or, if you will ride, then let it be on a nimble galloway of some fourteen hands, that can gallop a good pace on the road, and keep sure footing on bridle-paths, or upon the pathless braes—and by judicious horsemanship, you may meet the pack at many a loud-mouthed burst, and haply be not far out at the death. But the schoolboy—and the shepherd—and the whipper-in—as each hopes for favour from his own Diana—let them all be on foot—and have studied the country for every imaginable variety that can occur in the winter's campaign. One often hears of

a cunning old fox—but the cunningest old fox is a simpleton to the most guileless young hare. What deceit in every double! What calculation in every squat! Of what far more complicated than Cretan Labyrinth is the creature, now hunted for the first time, sitting in the centre! a-listening the baffled roar! Now into the pool she plunges, to free herself from the fatal scent that lures on death. Now down the torrent course she runs and leaps, to cleanse it from her poor paws, fur-protected from the sharp flints that lame the fiends that so sorely beset her, till many limp along in their own blood. Now along the coping of stone walls she crawls and scrambles—and now ventures from the wood along the frequented high-road, heedless of danger from the front, so that she may escape the horrid growling in the rear. Now into the pretty little garden of the wayside, or even the village cot, she creeps, as if to implore protection from the innocent children, or the nursing mother. Yes, she will even seek refuge in the sanctuary of the cradle. The terrier drags her out from below a tombstone, and she dies in the churchyard. The hunters come reeking and reeling on, we ourselves among the number—and to the winding horn that echoes reply from the walls of the house of worship—and now, in momentary contrition,

"Drops a sad, serious tear upon our playful pen!"

and we bethink ourselves—alas! all in vain, for

"*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret*"—

of these solemn lines of the poet of peace and humanity:—

"One lesson, reader, let us two divide,
Taught by what nature shows and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure and our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

[Pg 24] It is next to impossible to reduce fine poetry to practice—so let us conclude with a panegyric on Fox-Hunting. The passion for this pastime is the very strongest that can possess the heart—nor, of all the heroes of antiquity, is there one to our imagination more poetical than Nimrod. His whole character is given, and his whole history, in two words—Mighty Hunter. That he hunted the fox is not probable; for the sole aim and end of his existence was not to exterminate—that would have been cutting his own throat—but to thin man-devouring wild beasts—the Pards—with Leo at their head. But in a land like this, where not even a wolf has existed for centuries—nor a wild boar—the same spirit that would have driven the British youth on the tusk and paw of the Lion and the Tiger, mounts them in scarlet on such steeds as never neighed before the flood, nor "summered high in bliss" on the sloping pastures of undeluged Ararat—and gathers them together in gallant array on the edge of the cover,

"When first the hunter's startling horn is heard
Upon the golden hills."

What a squadron of cavalry! What fiery eyes and flaming nostrils—betokening with what ardent passion the noble animals will revel in the chase! Bay, brown, black, dun, chestnut, sorrel, grey—of all shades and hues—and every courser distinguished by his own peculiar character of shape and form—yet all blending harmoniously as they crown the mount; so that a painter would only have to group and colour them as they stand, nor lose, if able to catch them, one of the dazzling lights or deepening shadows streamed on them from that sunny, yet not unstormy sky.

You read in books of travels and romances, of Barbs and Arabs galloping in the desert—and well doth Sir Walter speak of Saladin at the head of the Saracenic chivalry; but take our word for it, great part of all such descriptions are mere falsehood or fudge. Why in the devil's name should dwellers in the desert always be going at full speed? And how can that full speed be anything more than a slow heavy hand-gallop at the best, the Barbs being up to the belly at every stroke? They are always, it is said, in high condition—but we, who know something about horse-flesh,
[Pg 25] give that assertion the lie. They have seldom anything either to eat or drink; are lean as church-mice; and covered with, clammy sweat before they have ambled a league from the tent. And then such a set of absurd riders, with knees up to their noses, like so many tailors riding to Brentford, *viâ* the deserts of Arabia! Such bits, such bridles, and such saddles! But the whole set-out, rider and ridden, accoutrements and all, is too much for one's gravity, and must occasion a frequent laugh to the wild ass as he goes braying unharnessed by. But look there! Arabian blood, and British bone! Not bred in and in to the death of all the fine strong animal spirits—but blood intermingled and interfused by twenty crosses, nature exulting in each successive produce, till her power can no further go, and in yonder glorious grey,

"Gives the world assurance of a horse!"

Form the Three Hundred into squadron, or squadrons, and in the hand of each rider a sabre alone, none of your lances, all bare his breast but for the silver-laced blue, the gorgeous uniform of the Hussars of England—confound all cuirasses and cuirassiers!—let the trumpet sound a charge, and ten thousand of the proudest of the Barbaric chivalry be opposed with spear and scimitar—and through their snow-ranks will the Three Hundred go like thaw—splitting them into dissolution with the noise of thunder.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it; and where, we ask, were the British cavalry ever overthrown? And how could the great north-country horse-coupers perform their contracts, but

for the triumphs of the Turf? Blood—blood there must be, either for strength, or speed, or endurance. The very heaviest cavalry—the Life Guards and the Scots Greys, and all other dragoons, must have blood. But without racing and fox-hunting, where could it be found? Such pastimes nerve one of the arms of the nation when in battle; but for them 'twould be palsied. What better education, too, not only for a horse, but his rider, before playing a bloodier game in his first war campaign? Thus he becomes demi-corpsed with the noble animal; and what easy, equable motion to him is afterwards a charge over a wide level plain, with nothing in the way but a few regiments of flying Frenchmen! The hills and dales of merry England have been the best
[Pg 26]
riding-school to her gentlemen—her gentlemen who have not lived at home at ease—but, with Paget, and Stewart, and Seymour, and Cotton, and Somerset, and Vivian, have left their hereditary halls, and all the peaceful pastimes pursued among the sylvan scenery, to try the mettle of their steeds, and cross swords with the vaunted Gallic chivalry; and still have they been in the shock victorious; witness the skirmish that astonished Napoleon at Saldanha—the overthrow that uncrowned him at Waterloo!

"Well, do you know, that, after all you have said, Mr North, I cannot understand the passion and the pleasure of fox-hunting. It seems to me both cruel and dangerous."

Cruelty! Is there cruelty in laying the rein on their necks, and delivering them up to the transport of their high condition—for every throbbing vein is visible—at the first full burst of that maddening cry, and letting loose to their delight the living thunderbolts? Danger! What danger but of breaking their own legs, necks, or backs, and those of their riders? And what right have you to complain of that, lying all your length, a huge hulking fellow, snoring and snorting half-asleep on a sofa, sufficient to sicken a whole street? What though it be but a smallish, reddish-brown, sharp-nosed animal, with pricked-up ears, and passionately fond of poultry, that they pursue? After the first Tally-ho, Reynard is rarely seen, till he is run in upon—once, perhaps, in the whole run, skirting a wood, or crossing a common. It is an Idea that is pursued, on a whirlwind of horses, to a storm of canine music—worthy, both, of the largest lion that ever leaped among a band of Moors, sleeping at midnight by an extinguished fire on the African sands. There is, we verily believe it, nothing Foxy in the Fancy of one man in all that glorious field of Three Hundred. Once off and away—while wood and welkin rings—and nothing is felt—nothing is imaged in that hurricane flight, but scorn of all obstructions, dykes, ditches, drains, brooks, palings, canals, rivers, and all the impediments reared in the way of so many rejoicing madmen, by nature, art, and science, in an enclosed, cultivated, civilised, and Christian country. There they go—prince and peer, baronet and squire—the nobility and gentry of England, the flower of the men of the earth, each on such a steed as Pollux never reined, nor Philip's warlike son—for could
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we imagine Bucephalus here, ridden by his own tamer, Alexander would be thrown out during the very first burst, and glad to find his way dismounted to a village alehouse for a pail of meal and water. Hedges, trees, groves, gardens, orchards, woods, farmhouses, huts, halls, mansions, palaces, spires, steeples, towers, and temples, all go wavering by, each demigod seeing, or seeing them not, as his winged steed skims or labours along, to the swelling or sinking music, now loud as a near regimental band, now faint as an echo. Far and wide over the country are dispersed the scarlet runners—and a hundred villages pour forth their admiring swarms, as the main current of the chase roars by, or disparted runlets float wearied and all astray, lost at last in the perplexing woods. Crash goes the top-timber of the five-barred gate—away over the ears flies the ex-roughrider in a surprising somerset—after a succession of stumbles, down is the gallant Grey on knees and nose, making sad work among the fallow—Friendship is a fine thing, and the story of Damon and Pythias most affecting indeed—but Pylades eyes Orestes on his back sorely drowned in sludge, and tenderly leaping over him as he lies, claps his hands to his ear, and with a "hark forward, tantivy!" leaves him to remount, lame and at leisure—and ere the fallen has risen and shaken himself, is round the corner of the white village-church, down the dell, over the brook, and close on the heels of the straining pack, all a-yell up the hill crowned by the Squire's Folly. "Every man for himself, and God for us all," is the devout and ruling apothegm of the day. If death befall, what wonder? since man and horse are mortal; but death loves better a wide soft bed with quiet curtains and darkened windows in a still room, the clergyman in the one corner with his prayers, and the physician in another with his pills, making assurance doubly sure, and preventing all possibility of the dying Christian's escape. Let oak branch smite the too slowly stooping skull, or rider's back not timely levelled with his steed's; let faithless bank give way, and bury in the brook; let hidden drain yield to fore-feet and work a sudden wreck; let old coal-pit, with briery mouth, betray; and roaring river bear down man and horse, to cliffs unscalable by the very Welsh goat; let duke's or earl's son go sheer over a quarry twenty feet deep, and as many
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high; yet "without stop or stay, down the rocky way," the hunter train flows on; for the music grows fiercer and more savage—lo! all that remains together of the pack, in far more dreadful madness than hydrophobia, leaping out of their skins, under insanity from the scent, for Vulpes can hardly now make a crawl of it; and ere he, they, whipper-in, or any one of the other three demoniacs, have time to look in one another's splashed faces, he is torn into a thousand pieces, gobbled up in the general growl; and smug, and smooth, and dry, and warm, and cosy, as he was an hour and twenty-five minutes ago exactly, in his furze bush in the cover—he is now piecemeal in about thirty distinct stomachs; and is he not, pray, well off for sepulture?

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CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET.

FYTTE SECOND.

We are always unwilling to speak of ourselves, lest we should appear egotistical—for egotism we detest. Yet the sporting world must naturally be anxious to know something of our early history—and their anxiety shall therefore be now assuaged. The truth is, that we enjoyed some rare advantages and opportunities in our boyhood regarding field-sports, and grew up, even from that first great era in every Lowlander's life, Breeching-day, not only a fisher but a fowler; and it is necessary that we enter into some interesting details.

There had been from time immemorial, it was understood, in the Manse, a duck-gun of very great length, and a musket that, according to an old tradition, had been out both in the Fifteen and Forty-five. There were ten boys of us, and we succeeded by rotation to gun or musket, each boy retaining possession for a single day only; but then the shooting season continued all the year. They must have been of admirable materials and workmanship; for neither of them so much as once burst during the Seven Years' War. The musket, who, we have often since thought, must surely rather have been a blunderbuss in disguise, was a perfect devil for kicking when she received her discharge; so much so, indeed, that it was reckoned creditable for the smaller boys not to be knocked down by the recoil. She had a very wide mouth—and was thought by us "an awfu' scatterer;" a qualification which we considered of the very highest merit. She carried anything we chose to put into her—there still being of all her performances a loud and favourable report—balls, buttons, chucky-stanes, slugs, or hail. She had but two faults—she had got addicted, probably in early life, to one habit of burning priming, and to another of hanging fire;
[Pg 30] habits of which it was impossible, for us at least, to break her by the most assiduous hammering of many a new series of flints; but such was the high place she justly occupied in the affection and admiration of us all, that faults like these did not in the least detract from her general character. Our delight, when she did absolutely and positively and *bonâ fide* "go off," was in proportion to the comparative rarity of that occurrence; and as to hanging fire—why, we used to let her take her own time, contriving to keep her at the level as long as our strength sufficed, eyes shut perhaps, teeth clenched, face girning, and head slightly averted over the right shoulder, till Muckle-mou'd Meg, who, like most other Scottish females, took things leisurely, went off at last with an explosion like the blowing up of a rock.

The "Lang Gun," again, was of a much gentler disposition, and, instead of kicking, ran into the opposite extreme on being let off, inclining forwards as if she would follow the shot. We believe, however, this apparent peculiarity arose from her extreme length, which rendered it difficult for us to hold her horizontally—and hence the muzzle being attracted earthward, the entire gun appeared to leave the shoulder of the Shooter. That such is the true theory of the phenomenon seems to be proved by this—that when the "Lang Gun" was, in the act of firing, laid across the shoulders of two boys standing about a yard the one before the other, she kicked every bit as well as the blunderbuss. Her lock was of a very peculiar construction. It was so contrived that, when on full cock, the dog-head, as we used to call it, stood back at least seven inches, and unless the flint was put in to a nicety, by pulling the trigger you by no means caused any uncovering of the pan, but things in general remained *in statu quo*—and there was perfect silence. She had a worm-eaten stock, into which the barrel seldom was able to get itself fairly inserted; and even with the aid of circumvoluting twine, 'twas always coggly. Thus too, the vizy (*Anglice* sight) generally inclined unduly to one side or the other, and was the cause of all of us everyday hitting and hurting objects of whose existence even we were not aware, till alarmed by the lowing or the galloping of cattle on the hills; and we hear now the yell of an old woman in black bonnet and red
[Pg 31] cloak, who shook her staff at us like a witch, with the blood running down the furrows of her face, and, with many oaths, maintained that she was murdered. The "Lang Gun" had certainly a strong vomit—and, with slugs or swan-shot, was dangerous at two hundred yards to any living thing. Bob Howie at that distance arrested the career of a mad dog—a single slug having been sent through the eye into the brain. We wonder if one or both of those companions of our boyhood be yet alive—or, like many other great guns that have since made more noise in the world, fallen a silent prey to the rust of oblivion.

Not a boy in the school had a game certificate—or, as it was called in the parish—"a leeshance." Nor, for a year or two, was such a permit necessary; as we confined ourselves almost exclusively to sparrows. Not that we had any personal animosity to the sparrow individually—on the contrary, we loved him, and had a tame one—a fellow of infinite fancy—with comb and wattles of crimson cloth like a gamecock. But their numbers, without number numberless, seemed to justify the humanest of boys in killing any quantity of sprauchs. Why, they would sometimes settle on the clipped half-thorn and half-beech hedge of the Manse garden in myriads, midge-like; and then out any two of us, whose day it happened to be, used to sally with Muckle-mou'd Meg and the Lang Gun, charged two hands and a finger; and, with a loud shout, startling them from their roost like the sudden casting of a swarm of bees, we let drive into the whirr—a shower of feathers was instantly seen swimming in the air, and flower-bed and onion-bed covered with scores of the mortally wounded old cocks with black heads, old hens with brown, and the pride of the eaves laid low before their first crop of pease! Never was there such a parish for sparrows. You had but to fling a stone into any stack-yard, and up rose a sprauch-shower. The thatch of every cottage was drilled by them like honey-combs. House-spouts were of no use in rainy weather—for they were all choked up by sprauch-nests. At each particular barn-door, when the farmers were at work, you might have thought you saw the entire sparrow population of the parish. Seldom a Sabbath, during pairing, building, breeding, nursing, and training season, could you hear a single syllable of the sermon for their sakes, all a-huddle and a-chirp in the belfry and
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among the old loose slates. On every stercoraceous deposit on coach, cart, or bridle road, they were busy on grain and pulse; and, in spite of cur and cat, legions embrowned every cottage garden. Emigration itself in many million families would have left no perceptible void; and the inexterminable multitude would have laughed at the Plague.

The other small birds of the parish began to feel their security from our shot, and sung their best, unscared on hedge, bush, and tree. Perhaps, too, for sake of their own sweet strains, we spared the lyrists of Scotland, the linnet and the lark, the one in the yellow broom, the other beneath the rosy cloud—while there was ever a sevenfold red shield before Robin's breast, whether flitting silent as a falling leaf, or trilling his autumnal lay on the rigging or pointed gable-end of barn or byre. Now and then the large bunting, conspicuous on a top-twig, and proud of his rustic psalmody, tempted his own doom—or the cunning stone-chat, glancing about the old dykes, usually shot at in vain—or yellow-hammer, under the ban of the national superstition, with a drop of the devil's blood beneath his pretty crest, pretty in spite of that cruel creed—or green-finch, too rich in plumage for his poorer song—or shilfa, the beautiful nest-builder, shivering his white-plumed wings in shade and sunshine, in joy the most rapturous, in grief the most despairing of all the creatures of the air—or redpole, balanced on the down of the thistle or flower of the bunweed on the old clovery lea—or, haply twice seen in a season, the very goldfinch himself, a radiant and gorgeous spirit brought on the breeze from afar, and worthy, if only slightly wounded, of being enclosed within a silver cage from Fairy Land.

But we waxed more ambitious as we grew old—and then woe to the rookery on the elm-tree grove! Down dropt the dark denizens in dozens, rebounding with a thud and a skraigh from the velvet moss, which under that umbrage formed firm floor for Titania's feet—while others kept dangling dead or dying by the claws, cheating the crusted pie, and all the blue skies above were intercepted by cawing clouds of distracted parents, now dipping down in despair almost within shot, and now, as if sick of this world, soaring away up into the very heavens, and disappearing to return no more—till sunset should bring silence, and the night air roll off the horrid smell of
[Pg 33] sulphur from the desolated bowers; and then indeed would they come all flying back upon their strong instinct, like black-sailed barks before the wind, some from the depth of far-off fir-woods, where they had lain quaking at the ceaseless cannonade, some from the furrows of the new-brairded fields aloof on the uplands, some from deep dell close at hand, and some from the middle of the moorish wilderness.

Happiest of all human homes, beautiful Craig-Hall! For so even now dost thou appear to be—in the rich, deep, mellow, green light of imagination trembling on tower and tree—art thou yet undilapidated and undecayed, in thy old manorial solemnity almost majestical, though even then thou hadst long been tenanted but by a humble farmer's family—people of low degree. The evening-festival of the First Day of the Books—nay, scoff not at such an anniversary—was still held in thy ample kitchen—of old the bower of brave lords and ladies bright—while the harper, as he sung his song of love or war, kept his eyes fixed on her who sat beneath the dais. The days of chivalry were gone—and the days had come of curds and cream, and, preferred by some people though not by us, of cream-cheese. Old men and old women, widowers and widows, yet all alike cheerful and chatty at a great age, for often as they near the dead, how more lifelike seem the living! Middle-aged men and middle-aged women, husbands and wives, those sedate, with hair combed straight on their foreheads, sunburnt faces, and horny hands established on their knees —these serene, with countenances many of them not unlovely—comely all—and with arms decently folded beneath their matronly bosoms—as they sat in their holiday dresses, feeling as if the season of youth had hardly yet flown by, or were, on such a merry meeting, for a blink restored! Boys and virgins—those bold even in their bashfulness—these blushing whenever eyes met eyes,—nor would they—nor could they—have spoken in the hush to save their souls; yet ere the evening star arose, many a pretty maiden had, down-looking and playing with the hem of her garment, sung linnet-like her ain favourite auld Scottish sang! and many a sweet sang even then delighted Scotia's spirit, though Robin Burns was but a youth—walking mute among the wildflowers on the moor—nor aware of the immortal melodies soon to breathe from his impassioned heart!

[Pg 34] Of all the year's holidays, not even excepting the First of May, this was the most delightful. The First of May, longed for so passionately from the first peep of the primrose, sometimes came deformed with mist and cloud, or cheerless with whistling winds, or winter-like with a sudden fall of snow. And thus all our hopes were dashed—the roomy hay-waggon remained in its shed—the preparations made for us in the distant moorland farmhouse were vain—the fishing-rods hung useless on the nails—and disconsolate schoolboys sat moping in corners, sorry, ashamed, and angry with Scotland's springs. But though the "leafy month of June" be frequently showery, it is almost always sunny too. Every half-hour there is such a radiant blink that the young heart sings aloud for joy; summer rain makes the hair grow, and hats are of little or no use towards the Longest Day; there is something cheerful even in thunder, if it be not rather too near; the lark has not yet ceased altogether to sing, for he soars over his second nest, unappalled beneath the sablest cloud; the green earth repels from her refulgent bosom the blackest shadows, nor will suffer herself to be saddened in the fulness and brightness of her contentment; through the heaviest flood the blue skies will still be making their appearance with an impatient smile, and all the rivers and burns, with the multitude of their various voices, sing praises unto Heaven.

Therefore, bathing our feet in beauty, we went bounding over the flowery fields and broomy braes to the grove-girdled Craig-Hall. During the long noisy day, we thought not of the coming evening, happy as we knew it was to be; and during the long and almost as noisy evening, we

forgot all the pastime of the day. Weeks before, had each of us engaged his partner for the first country dance, by right his own when supper came, and to sit close to him with her tender side, with waist at first stealthily arm-encircled, and at last boldly and almost with proud display. In the churchyard, before or after Sabbath-service, a word whispered into the ear of blooming and blushing rustic sufficed; or if that opportunity failed, the angler had but to step into her father's burnside cottage, and with the contents of his basket leave a tender request, and from behind the gable-end carry away a word, a smile, a kiss, and a waving farewell.

[Pg 35] Many a high-roofed hall have we, since those days, seen made beautiful with festoons and garlands, beneath the hand of taste and genius decorating, for some splendid festival, the abode of the noble expecting a still nobler guest. But oh! what pure bliss, and what profound, was then breathed into the bosom of boyhood from that glorious branch of hawthorn, in the chimney—itself almost a tree, so thick—so deep—so rich its load of blossoms—so like its fragrance to something breathed from heaven—and so transitory in its sweetness too, that as she approached to inhale it, down fell many a snow-flake to the virgin's breath—in an hour all melted quite away! No broom that nowadays grows on the brae, so yellow as the broom—the golden broom—the broom that seemed still to keep the hills in sunlight long after the sun himself had sunk—the broom in which we first found the lintwhite's nest—and of its petals, more precious than pearls, saw framed a wreath for the dark hair of that dark-eyed girl, an orphan, and melancholy even in her merriment—dark-haired and dark-eyed indeed, but whose forehead, whose bosom, were yet whiter than the driven snow. Greenhouses—conservatories— orangeries—are exquisitely balmy still—and, in presence of these strange plants, one could believe that he had been transported to some rich foreign clime. But now we carry the burden of our years along with us—and that consciousness bedims the blossoms, and makes mournful the balm, as from flowers in some fair burial-place, breathing of the tomb. But oh! that Craig-Hall hawthorn! and oh! that Craig-Hall broom! they send their sweet rich scent so far into the hushed air of memory, that all the weary worn-out weaknesses of age drop from us like a garment, and even now—the flight of that swallow seems more aerial—more alive with bliss his clay-built nest—the ancient long-ago blue of the sky returns to heaven—not for many a many a long year have we seen so fair—so frail—so transparent and angel-mantle-looking a cloud! The very viol speaks—the very dance responds in Craig-Hall: this—this is the very Festival of the First Day of the Rooks—Mary Mather, the pride of the parish—the county—the land—the earth—is our partner—and long mayest thou, O moon! remain behind thy cloud—when the parting kiss is given—and the love-letter, at that tenderest moment, dropped into her bosom!

[Pg 36] But we have lost the thread of our discourse, and must pause to search for it, even like a spinster of old, in the dis arranged spindle of one of those pretty little wheels now heard no more in the humble ingle, hushed by machinery clink-clanking with power-looms in every town and city of the land. Another year, and we often found ourselves—alone—or with one chosen comrade; for even then we began to have our sympathies and antipathies, not only with roses and lilies, or to cats and cheese, but with or to the eyes, and looks, and foreheads, and hair, and voices, and motions, and silence, and rest of human beings, loving them with a perfect love—we must not say hating them with a perfect hatred—alone or with a friend, among the mists and marshes of moors, in silent and stealthy search of the solitary curlew, that is, the Whaup! At first sight of his long bill aloft above the rushes, we could hear our heart beating quick time in the desert; at the turning of his neck, the body being yet still, our heart ceased to beat altogether—and we grew sick with hope when near enough to see the wild beauty of his eye. Unfolded, like a thought, was then the brown silence of the shy creature's ample wings—and with a warning cry he wheeled away upon the wind, unharmed by our ineffectual hail, seen falling far short of the deceptive distance, while his mate that had lain couched—perhaps in her nest of eggs or young, exposed yet hidden—within killing range, half-running, half-flying, flapped herself into flight, simulating lame leg and wounded wing; and the two disappearing together behind the hills, left us in our vain reason thwarted by instinct, to resume with live hopes rising out of the ashes of the dead, our daily disappointed quest over the houseless mosses. Yet now and then to our steady aim the bill of the whaup disgorged blood—and as we felt the feathers in our hand, and from tip to tip eyed the outstretched wings, Fortune, we felt, had no better boon to bestow, earth no greater triumph.

Hush—stoop—kneel—crawl—for by all our hopes of mercy—a heron—a heron! An eel dangling across his bill! And now the water-serpent has disappeared! From morning dawn hath the fowl been fishing here—perhaps on that very stone—for it is one of those days when eels are a-roaming in the shallows, and the heron knows that they are as likely to pass by that stone as any other—from morning dawn—and 'tis now past meridian, half-past two! Be propitious, oh ye Fates!
[Pg 37] and never—never—shall he again fold his wings on the edge of his gaping nest, on the trees that overtop the only tower left of the old castle. Another eel! and we too can crawl silent as the sinuous serpent. Flash! Bang! over he goes dead—no, not dead—but how unlike that unavailing flapping, as head-over-heels he goes spinning over the tarn, to the serene unsettling of himself from sod or stone, when, his hunger sated, and his craw filled with fish for his far-off brood, he used to lift his blue bulk into the air, and with long depending legs, at first floated away like a wearied thing, but soon, as his plumes felt the current of air homewards flowing, urged swifter and swifter his easy course—laggard and lazy no more—leaving leagues behind him, ere you had shifted your motion in watching his cloudlike career, soon invisible among the woods!

The disgorged eels are returned—some of them alive—to their native element—the mud. And the dead heron floats away before small winds and waves into the middle of the tarn. Where is he—the matchless Newfoundlander—*nomine gaudens* Fro, because white as the froth of the sea? Off with a collie. So—stript with the first intention, we plunge from a rock, and,

"Though in the scowl of heaven, the tarn
Grows dark as we are swimming,"

Draco-like, breast-high, we stem the surge, and with the heron floating before us, return to the heather-fringed shore, and give three cheers that startle the echoes, asleep from year's end to year's end, in the Grey-Linn Cairn.

Into the silent twilight of many a wild rock-and-river scene, beautiful and bewildering as the fairy work of sleep, will he find himself brought who knows where to seek the heron in all its solitary haunts. For often when the moors are storm-swept, and his bill would be baffled by the waves of tarn and loch, he sails away from his swinging-tree, and through some open glade dipping down to the secluded stream, alights within the calm chasm, and folds his wings in the breezeless air. The clouds are driving fast aloft in a carry from the sea—but they are all reflected in that pellucid pool—so perfect the cliff-guarded repose. A better day—a better hour—a better minute for fishing
[Pg 38] could not have been chosen by Mr Heron, who is already swallowing a par. Another—and another —but something falls from the rock into the water; and suspicious, though unalarmed, he leisurely addresses himself to a short flight up the channel—round that tower-like cliff standing strangely by itself, with a crest of self-sown flowering shrubs; and lo! another vista, if possible, just a degree more silent—more secluded—more solitary—beneath the mid-day night of woods! To shoot thee there—would be as impious as to have killed a sacred Ibis stalking in the shade of an Egyptian temple. Yet it is fortunate for thee—folded up there, as thou art, as motionless as thy sitting-stone—that at this moment we have no firearms—for we had heard of a fish-like trout in that very pool, and this—O Heron—is no gun but a rod. Thou believest thyself to be in utter solitude—no sportsman but thyself in the chasm—for the otter, thou knowest, loves not such very rocky rivers; and fish with bitten shoulder seldom lies here—that epicure's tasted prey. Yet within ten yards of thee lies couched thy enemy, who once had a design upon thee, even in the very egg. Our mental soliloquy disturbs not thy watchful sense—for the air stirs not when the soul thinks, or feels, or fancies about man, bird, or beast. We feel, O Heron! that there is not only humanity—but poetry, in our being. Imagination haunts and possesses us in our pastimes, colouring them even with serious, solemn, and sacred light—and thou assuredly hast something priest-like and ancient in thy look—and about thy light-blue plume robes, which the very elements admire and reverence—the waters wetting them not—nor the winds ruffling—and moreover we love thee—Heron—for the sake of that old castle, beside whose gloom thou utteredst thy first feeble cry! A Ruin nameless, traditionless—sole, undisputed property of Oblivion!

Hurra!—Heron—hurra! why, that was an awkward tumble—and very nearly had we hold of thee by the tail! Didst thou take us for a water-kelpie? A fright like that is enough to leave thee an idiot all the rest of thy life. 'Tis a wonder thou didst not go into fits—but thy nerves must be sorely shaken—and what an account of this adventure will certainly be shrieked unto thy mate, to the music of the creaking boughs! Not, even wert thou a secular bird of ages, wouldst thou ever once again revisit this dreadful place. For fear has a wondrous memory in all dumb creatures—
[Pg 39] and rather wouldst thou see thy nest die of famine, than seek for fish in this man-monster-haunted pool. Farewell! farewell!

Many are the hundreds of hill and mountain lochs to us as familiarly known, round all their rushy or rocky margins, as that pond there in the garden of Buchanan Lodge. That pond has but one goose and one gander, and nine goslings—about half-a-dozen trouts, if indeed they have not sickened and died of Nostalgia, missing in the stillness the gurgle of their native Tweed—and a brace of perch, now nothing but prickle. But the lochs—the hill, the mountain lochs now in our mind's eye and our mind's ear,—heaven and earth! the bogs are black with duck, teal, and widgeon—up there "comes for food or play" to the holla of the winds, a wedge of wild geese, piercing the marbled heavens with clamour—and lo! in the very centre of the mediterranean, the Royal Family of the Swans! Up springs the silver sea-trout in the sunshine—see Sir Humphrey!—a salmon—a salmon fresh run in love and glory from the sea!

For how many admirable articles are there themes in the above short paragraph! Duck, teal, and widgeon, wild-geese, swans! And first, duck, teal, and widgeon. There they are, all collected together, without regard to party politics, in their very best attire, as thick as the citizens of Edinburgh, their wives, sweethearts, and children, on the Calton Hill, on the first day of the King's visit to Scotland. As thick, but not so steady—for what swimming about in circles—what ducking and diving is there!—all the while accompanied with a sort of low, thick, gurgling, not unsweet, nor unmusical quackery, the expression of the intense joy of feeding, freedom, and play. Oh! Muckle-mou'd Meg! neither thou nor the "Lang Gun" are of any avail here—for that old drake, who, together with his shadow, on which he seems to be sitting, is almost as big as a boat in the water, the outermost landward sentinel, near as he seems to be in the deception of the clear frosty air, is yet better than three hundred yards from the shore—and, at safe distance, cocks his eye at the fowler. There is no boat on the loch, and knowing that, how tempting in its unapproachable reeds and rushes, and hut-crested knoll—a hut built perhaps by some fowler, in the olden time—yon central Isle! But be still as a shadow—for lo! a batch of Whig-seceders,
[Pg 40] paddling all by themselves towards that creek—and as surely as our name is Christopher, in another quarter of an hour they will consist of killed, wounded, and missing. On our belly—with unhatted head just peering over the knowe—and Muckle mou'd Meg slowly and softly stretched out on the rest, so as not to rustle a windle-strae, we lie motionless as a maukin, till the coterie collects together for simultaneous dive down to the aquatic plants and insects of the fast-shallowing bay; and, just as they are upon the turn with their tails, a single report, loud as a volley, scatters the unsparing slugs about their doups, and the still clear water, in sudden

disturbance, is afloat with scattered feathers, and stained with blood.

Now is the time for the snow-white, here and there ebon-spotted Fro—who with burning eyes has lain couched like a spaniel, his quick breath ever and anon trembling on a passionate whine, to bounce up, as if discharged by a catapulta, and first with immense and enormous high-and-far leaps, and then, fleet as any greyhound, with a breast-brushing brattle down the brae, to dash, all-fours, like a flying squirrel fearlessly from his tree, many yards into the bay with one splashing and momentarily disappearing spang, and then, head and shoulders and broad line of back and rudder tail, all elevated above or level with the wavy water-line, to mouth first that murdered mawsey of a mallard, lying as still as if she had been dead for years, with her round, fat, brown bosom towards heaven—then that old Drake, in a somewhat similar posture, but in more gorgeous apparel, his belly being of a pale grey, and his back delicately pencilled and crossed with numberless waved dusky lines—precious prize to one skilled like us in the angling art—next —nobly done, glorious Fro—that cream-colour-crowned widgeon, with bright rufus chestnut breast, separated from the neck by loveliest waved ash-brown and white lines, while our mind's eye feasteth on the indescribable and changeable green beauty-spot of his wings—and now, if we mistake not, a Golden Eye, best described by his name—finally, that exquisite little duck the Teal; yes, poetical in its delicately pencilled spots as an Indian shell, and when kept to an hour, roasted to a minute, gravied in its own wild richness, with some few other means and appliances to boot, carved finely—most finely—by razor-like knife, in a hand skilful to dissect and cunning to divide—tasted by a tongue and palate both healthily pure as the dewy petal of a morning rose—
[Pg 41] swallowed by a gullet felt gradually to be extending itself in its intense delight—and received into a stomach yawning with greed and gratitude,—Oh! surely the thrice-blessed of all web-footed birds; the apex of Apician luxury; and able, were anything on the face of this feeble earth able, to detain a soul, on the very brink of fate, a short quarter of an hour from an inferior Elysium!

How nobly, like a craken or sea-serpent, Fro reareth his massy head above the foam, his gathered prey seized—all four—by their limber necks, and brightening, like a bunch of flowers, as they glitter towards the shore! With one bold body-shake, felt to the point, of each particular hair, he scatters the water from his coat like mist, reminding one of that glorious line in Shakespeare,

> "Like dewdrops from the Lion's mane,"

advancing with sinewy legs seemingly lengthened by the drenching flood, and dripping tail stretched out in all its broad longitude, with hair almost like white hanging plumes—magnificent as tail of the Desert-Born at the head of his seraglio in the Arabian Sands. Half-way his master meets his beloved Fro on the slope; and first proudly and haughtily pausing to mark our eye, and then humbly, as beseemeth one whom nature, in his boldest and brightest bearing, hath yet made a slave—he lays the offering at our feet, and having felt on his capacious forehead the approving pressure of our hand,

> "While, like the murmur of a dream,
> He hears us breathe his name,"

he suddenly flings himself round with a wheel of transport, and in many a widening circle pursues his own uncontrollable ecstasies with whirlwind speed; till, as if utterly joy-exhausted, he brings his snow-white bulk into dignified repose on a knoll, that very moment illuminated by a burst of sunshine!

Not now—as fades upon our pen the solemn light of the dying day—shall we dare to decide, whether or not Nature—O most matchless creature of thy kind!—gave thee, or gave thee not, the gift of an immortal soul!—Better such creed—fond and foolish though it may be—yet scarcely
[Pg 42] unscriptural, for in each word of Scripture there are many meanings, even when each sacred syllable is darkest to be read,—better such creed than that of the atheist or sceptic, distracted ever in his seemingly sullen apathy, by the dim, dark doom of dust. Better that Fro should live, than that Newton should die—for ever. What though the benevolent Howard devoted his days to visit the dungeon's gloom, and by intercession with princes, to set the prisoners free from the low damp-dripping stone roof of the deep-dug cell beneath the foundation rocks of the citadel, to the high dewdropping vault of heaven, too, too dazzlingly illumined by the lamp of the insufferable sun! There reason triumphed—those were the works of glorified humanity. But thou—a creature of mere instinct—according to Descartes, a machine, an automaton—hadst yet a constant light of thought and of affection in thine eyes; nor wert thou without some glimmering and mysterious notions—and what more have we ourselves?—of life and of death! Why fear to say that thou wert divinely commissioned and inspired—on that most dismal and shrieking hour, when little Harry Seymour, that bright English boy, "whom all that looked on loved," entangled among the cruel chains of those fair water-lilies, all so innocently yet so murderously floating round him, was, by all standing or running about there with clenched hands, or kneeling on the sod—given up to inextricable death? We were not present to save the dear boy, who had been delivered to our care as to that of an elder brother, by the noble lady who, in her deep widow's weeds, kissed her sole darling's sunny head, and disappeared. We were not present—or by all that is holiest in heaven or on earth—our arms had been soon around thy neck, when thou wert seemingly about to perish!

But a poor dumb despised dog—nothing, as some say, but animated dust—was there,—and without shout or signal—for all the Christian creatures were alike helpless in their despair—shot swift as a sunbeam over the deep, and by those golden tresses, sinking and brightening through the wave, brought the noble child ashore, and stood over him, as if in joy and sorrow, lying too

like death on the sand! And when little Harry opened his glazed eyes, and looked bewildered on all the faces around—and then fainted—and revived and fainted again—till at last he came to dim
[Pg 43] recollection of this world on the bosom of the physician brought thither with incomprehensible speed from his dwelling afar off—thou didst lick his cold white hands and blue face, with a whine that struck awful pity into all hearts, and thou didst follow him—one of the group—as he was borne along—and frisking and gambolling no more all that day, gently didst thou lay thyself down at the feet of his little bed, and watch there unsleeping all night long! For the boy knew that God had employed one of his lowly creatures to save him—and beseeched that he might lie there to be looked at by the light of the taper, till he himself, as the pains went away, might fall asleep! And we, the watchers by his bedside, heard him in his dreams mentioning the creature's name in his prayers.

Yet at times—O Fro—thou wert a sad dog indeed—neither to bind nor to hold—for thy blood was soon set aboil, and thou—like Julius Cæsar—and Demetrius Poliorcetes—and Alexander the Great—and many other ancient and modern kings and heroes—thou wert the slave of thy passions. No Scipio wert thou with a Spanish captive. Often—in spite of threatening eye and uplifted thong—uplifted only, for thou went'st unflogged to thy grave—didst thou disappear for days at a time—as if lost or dead. Rumours of thee were brought to the kirk by shepherds from the remotest hills in the parish—most confused and contradictory—but, when collected and compared, all agreeing in this—that thou wert living, and lifelike, and life-imparting, and after a season from thy travels to return; and return thou still didst—wearied often and woe-begone—purpled thy snow-white curling—and thy broad breast torn, not disfigured, by honourable wounds. For never yet saw we a fighter like thee. Up on thy hind-legs in a moment, like a growling Polar monster, with thy fore-paws round thy foeman's neck, bull-dog, collie, mastiff, or greyhound, and down with him in a moment, with as much ease as Cass, in the wrestling ring at Carlisle, would throw a Bagman, and then woe to the throat of the downfallen, for thy jaws were shark-like as they opened and shut with their terrific tusks, grinding through skin and sinew to the spine.

Once, and once only—bullied out of all endurance by a half-drunken carrier—did we consent to let thee engage in a pitched battle with a mastiff victorious in fifty fights—a famous shanker—and
[Pg 44] a throttler beyond all compare. It was indeed a bloody business—now growling along the glaur of the road—a hairy hurricane—now snorting in the suffocating ditch—now fair play on the clean and clear crown of the causey—now rolling over and over through a chance-open white little gate, into a cottage-garden—now separated by choking them both with a cord—now brought out again with savage and fiery eyes to the scratch on a green plat round the signboard-swinging tree in the middle of the village—auld women in their mutches crying out, "Shame! whare's the minister?"—young women, with combs in their pretty heads, blinking with pale and almost weeping faces from low-lintelled doors—children crowding for sight and safety on the louping-on-stane—and loud cries ever and anon at each turn and eddy of the fight, of "Well done, Fro! well done, Fro!—see how he worries his windpipe—well done, Fro!" for Fro was the delight and glory of the whole parish, and the honour of all its inhabitants, male and female, was felt to be staked on the issue—while at intervals was heard the harsh hoarse voice of the carrier and his compeers, cursing and swearing in triumph in a many-oathed language peculiar to the race that drive the broad-wheeled waggons with the high canvass roofs, as the might of Teeger prevailed, and the indomitable Fro seemed to be on his last legs beneath a grip of the jugular, and then stretched motionless and passive—in defeat or death. A mere *ruse* to recover wind. Like unshorn Sampson starting from his sleep, and snapping like fired flax the vain bands of the Philistines, Fro whammled Teeger off, and twisting round his head in spite of the grip on the jugular, the skin stretching and giving way in a ghastly but unfelt wound, he suddenly seized with all his tusks his antagonist's eye, and bit it clean out of the socket. A yowl of unendurable pain—spouting of blood—sickness—swooning—tumbling over—and death. His last fight is over! His remaining eye glazed—his protruded tongue bitten in anguish by his own grinding teeth—his massy hind-legs stretched out with a kick like a horse—his short tail stiffens—he is laid out a grim corpse—flung into a cart tied behind the waggon—and off to the tanyard.

No shouts of victory—but stern, sullen, half-ashamed silence—as of guilty things after the perpetration of a misdeed. Still glaring savagely, ere yet the wrath of fight has subsided in his
[Pg 45] heart, and going and returning to the bloody place, uncertain whether or not his enemy were about to return, Fro finally lies down at some distance, and with bloody flews keeps licking his bloody legs, and with long darting tongue cleansing the mire from his neck, breast, side, and back—a sanguinary spectacle! He seems almost insensible to our caresses, and there is something almost like upbraiding in his victorious eyes. Now that his veins are cooling, he begins to feel the pain of his wounds—many on, and close to vital parts. Most agonising of all—all his four shanks are tusk-pierced, and, in less than ten minutes, he limps away to his kennel, lame as if riddled by shot—

> "Heu quantum mutatus ab illo
> Hectore!"

gore-besmeared and dirt-draggled—an hour ago serenely bright as the lily in June, or the April snow. The huge waggon moves away out of the clachan without its master, who, ferocious from the death of the other brute he loved, dares the whole school to combat. Off fly a dozen jackets—and a devil's dozen of striplings from twelve past to going sixteen—firmly wedged together like the Macedonian Phalanx—are yelling for the fray. There is such another shrieking of women as at the taking of Troy. But

"The Prince of Mearns stept forth before the crowd,
And, Carter, challenged you to single fight!"

Bob Howie, who never yet feared the face of clay, and had too great a heart to suffer mere children to combat the strongest and most unhappy man in the whole country—stripped to the buff; and there he stands, with

"An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;"

shoulders like Atlas—breast like Hercules—and arms like Vulcan. The heart of Benjamin the waggoner dies within him—he accepts the challenge for a future day—and retreating backwards to his clothes, receives a right-hander as from a sledge-hammer on the temple, that fells him like an ox. The other carters all close in, but are sent spinning in all directions as from the sails of a windmill. Ever as each successive lout seeks the earth, we savage schoolboys rush in upon him in twos, and threes, and fours, basting and battering him as he bawls; at this very crisis—so fate
[Pg 46] ordained—are seen hurrying down the hill from the south, leaving their wives, sweethearts, and asses in the rear, with coal-black hair and sparkling eyes, brown brany legs, and clenched iron fists at the end of long arms, swinging flail-like at all times, and never more than now, ready for the fray, a gang of Gypsies! while—beautiful coincidence!—up the hill from the north came on, at double-quick time, an awkward squad of as grim Milesians as ever buried a pike in a Protestant. Nor question nor reply; but in a moment a general mêlée. Men at work in the hay-fields, who would not leave their work for a dog-fight, fling down scythe and rake, and over the hedges into the high-road, a stalwart reinforcement. Weavers leap from their treddles—doff their blue aprons, and out into the air. The red-cowled tailor pops his head through a skylight, and next moment is in the street. The butcher strips his long light-blue linen coat, to engage a Paddy; and the smith, ready for action—for the huge arms of Burniwind are always bare—with a hand-ower-hip delivery, makes the head of the king of the gypsies ring like an anvil. There has been no marshalling of forces—yet lo! as if formed in two regular lines by the Adjutant himself after the first tuilzie, stand the carters, the gypsies, and the Irishmen, opposed to Bob Howie, the butcher, the smith, the tailor, the weaver, the haymakers, and the boys from the manse—the latter drawn up cautiously, but not cowardly, in the rear. What a twinkling of fists and shillelas! what bashed and bloody noses! cut blubber lips—cheekbones out of all proportion to the rest of the face, and, through sudden black and blue tumefactions, men's changed into pigs' eyes! And now there is also rugging of caps and mutches and hair, "femineo ululatu," for the Egyptian Amazons bear down like furies on the glee'd widow that keeps the change-house, half-witted Shoosy that sells yellow sand, and Davie Donald's dun daughter, commonly called Spunkie. What shrieking and tossing of arms, round the whole length and breadth of the village! Where is Simon Andrew the constable? Where is auld Robert Maxwell the ruling elder? What can have become of Laird Warnock, whose word is law? And what can the Minister be about, can anybody tell, that he does not come flying from the manse to save the lives of his parishioners from cannibals, and gypsies,
[Pg 47] and Eerish, murdering their way to the gallows?

How—why—or when—that bloody battle ceased to be, was never distinctly known either then or since; but, like everything else, it had an end—and even now we have a confused dream of the spot at its termination—naked men lying on their backs in the mire, all drenched in blood—with women, some old and ugly, with shrivelled witch-like hag breasts, others young, and darkly, swarthily, blackly beautiful, with budding or new-blown bosoms unkerchiefed in the collyshangie—perilous to see—leaning over them: and these were the Egyptians! Men in brown shirts, gore-spotted, with green bandages round their broken heads, laughing, and joking, and jeering, and singing, and shouting, though desperately mauled and mangled—while Scottish wives, and widows, and maids, could not help crying out in sympathy, "Oh! but they're bonny men—what a pity they should aye be sae fond o' fechting, and a' manner o' mischief!"—and these were the Irishmen! Retired and apart, hangs the weaver, with his head over a wall, dog-sick, and bocking in strong convulsions; some haymakers are washing their cut faces in the well; the butcher, bloody as a bit of his own beef, walks silent into the shambles; the smith, whose grimy face hides its pummelling, goes off grinning a ghastly smile in the hands of his scolding, yet not unloving wife; the tailor, gay as a flea, and hot as his own goose, to show how much more he has given than received, offers to leap any man on the ground, hop-step-and-jump, for a mutchkin—while Bob Howie walks about, without a visible wound, except the mark of bloody knuckles on his brawny breast, with arms a-kimbo, seaman-fashion—for Bob had been at sea—and as soon as the whisky comes, hands it about at his own expense, caulker after caulker, to the vanquished—for Bob was as generous as brave; had no spite at the gypsies; and as for Irishmen, why they were ranting, roving, red-hot, dare-devil boys, just like himself; and after the fight, he would have gone with them to Purgatory, or a few steps further down the hill. All the battle through, we manse-boys had fought, it may be said, behind the shadow of him our hero; and in warding off mischief from us, he received not a few heavy body-blows from King Carew, a descendant of Bamfylde Moore, and some crown-cracks from the shillelas of the Connaught Rangers.

[Pg 48] Down comes a sudden thunder-plump, making the road a river—and to the whiff o' lightning, all in the shape of man, woman, and child, are under roof-cover. The afternoon soon clears up, and the haymakers leave the clanking empty gill or half-mutchkin stoup for the field, to see what the rain has done—the forge begins again to roar—the sound of the flying shuttle tells that the weaver is again on his treddles; the tailor hoists up his little window in the thatch, in that close confinement, to enjoy the cauler air—the tinklers go to encamp on the common—"the air is balm"—insects, drooping from eave and tree, "show to the sun their waved coats dropt with gold"—though the season of bird-singing be over and gone, there is a pleasant chirping

hereabouts, thereabouts, everywhere; the old blind beggar, dog-led, goes from door to door, unconscious that such a stramash has ever been—and dancing round our champion, away we schoolboys all fly with him to swim in the Brother Loch, taking our fishing-rods with us, for one clap of thunder will not frighten the trouts; and about the middle or end of July, we have known great labbers, twenty inches long, play wallop between our very feet, in the warm shallow water, within a yard of the edge, to the yellow-bodied, tinsey-tailed, black half-heckle, with brown mallard wing, a mere midge, but once fixed in lip or tongue, "inextricable as the gored lion's bite."

But ever after that Passage in the life of Fro, his were, on the whole, years of peace. Every season seemed to strengthen his sagacity, and to unfold his wonderful instincts. Most assuredly he knew all the simpler parts of speech—all the household words in the Scottish language. He was, in all our pastimes, as much one of ourselves, as if, instead of being a Pagan with four feet, he had been a Christian with two. As for temper, we trace the sweetness of our own to his; an angry word from one he loved, he forgot in half a minute, offering his lion-like paw; yet there were particular people he could not abide, nor from their hands would he have accepted a roast potato out of the dripping-pan, and in this he resembled his master. He knew the Sabbath-day as well as the sexton—and never was known to bark till the Monday morning when the cock crew; and then he would give a long musical yowl, as if his breast were relieved from silence. If ever, in this cold, changeful, inconstant world, there was a friendship that might be called sincere, it was that
[Pg 49] which, half a century ago and upwards, subsisted between Christopher North and John Fro. We never had a quarrel in all our lives—and within these two months we made a pilgrimage to his grave. He was buried—not by our hands, but by the hands of one whose tender and manly heart loved the old, blind, deaf, staggering creature to the very last—for such in his fourteenth year he truly was—a sad and sorry sight to see, to them who remembered 'the glory of his stately and majestic years. One day he crawled with a moan-like whine to our brother's feet, and expired. Reader, young, bright, and beautiful though thou be—remember all flesh is dust!

This is an episode—a tale, in itself complete, yet growing out of, and appertaining to, the main plot of Epic or Article. You will recollect we were speaking of ducks, teals, and widgeons; and we come now to the next clause of the verse—wild geese and swans.

Some people's geese are all swans; but so far from that being the case with ours—sad and sorry are we to say it—now all our swans are geese. But in our buoyant boyhood, all God's creatures were to our eyes just as God made them; and there was ever—especially birds—a tinge of beauty over them all. What an inconceivable difference—distance—to the imagination, between the nature of a tame and a wild goose! Aloft in heaven, themselves in night invisible, the gabble of a cloud of wild geese is sublime. Whence comes it—whither goes it—for what end, and by what power impelled? Reason sees not into the darkness of instinct—and therefore the awestruck heart of the night-wandering boy beats to hear the league-long gabble that probably has winged its wedge-like way from the lakes, and marshes, and dreary morasses of Siberia, from Lapland, or Iceland, or the unfrequented and unknown northern regions of America—regions set apart, quoth Bewick we believe, for summer residences and breeding-places, and where they are amply provided with a variety of food, a large portion of which must consist of the larvæ of gnats, and myriads of insects, there fostered by the unsetting sun! Now they are gabbling good Gaelic over a Highland night-moor. Perhaps in another hour the descending cloud will be covering the wide waters at the head of the wild Loch Maree—or, silent and asleep, the whole host be riding at
[Pg 50] anchor around Lomond's Isles!

But 'tis now mid-day—and lo! in that mediterranean—a flock of wild Swans! Have they dropt down from the ether into the water almost as pure as ether, without having once folded their wings, since they rose aloft to shun the insupportable northern snows hundreds of leagues beyond the storm-swept Orcades? To look at the quiet creatures, you might think that they had never left the circle of that little loch. There they hang on their shadows, even as if asleep in the sunshine; and now stretching out their long wings—how apt for flight from clime to clime!—joyously they beat the liquid radiance, till to the loud flapping high rises the mist, and wide spreads the foam, almost sufficient for a rainbow. Safe are they from all birds of prey. The Osprey dashes down on the teal, or sea-trout, swimming within or below their shadow. The great Erne, or Sea-eagle, pounces on the mallard, as he mounts from the bulrushes before the wild swans sailing, with all wings hoisted, like a fleet—but osprey nor eagle dares to try his talons on that stately bird—for he is bold in his beauty, and formidable as he is fair; the pinions that swim and soar can also smite; and though the one be a lover of war, the other of peace, yet of them it may be said,

> "The eagle he is lord above,
> The swan is lord below!"

To have shot such a creature—so large—so white—so high-soaring—and on the winds of midnight wafted from so far—a creature that seemed not merely a stranger in that loch, but belonging to some mysterious land in another hemisphere, whose coast ships with frozen rigging have been known to visit, driving under bare poles through a month's snow-storms—to have shot such a creature was an era in our imagination, from which, had nature been more prodigal, we might have sprung up a poet. Once, and but once, we were involved in the glory of that event. The creature had been in a dream of some river or lake in Kamtschatka—or ideally listening,

> "Across the waves' tumultuous roar,
> The wolf's long howl from Oonalashka's shore,"

when, guided by our good genius and our brightest star, we suddenly saw him sitting asleep in all
[Pg 51] his state, within gunshot, in a bay of the moonlight Loch! We had nearly fainted—died on the very spot—and why were we not entitled to have died as well as any other passionate spirit, whom joy ever divorced from life? We blew his black bill into pieces—not a feather on his head but was touched; and like a little white-sailed pleasure-boat caught in a whirlwind, the wild swan spun round, and then lay motionless on the water, as if all her masts had gone by the board. We were all alone that night—not even Fro was with us; we had reasons for being alone, for we wished not that there should be any footfall but our own round that mountain-hut. Could we swim? Ay, like the wild swan himself, through surge or breaker. But now the loch was still as the sky, and twenty strokes carried us close to the glorious creature, which, grasped by both hands, and supporting us as it was trailed beneath our breast, while we floated rather than swam ashore, we felt to be in verity our—Prey! We trembled with a sort of fear, to behold him lying indeed dead on the sward. The moon—the many stars, here and there one wondrously large and lustrous—the hushed glittering loch—the hills, though somewhat dimmed, green all winter through, with here and there a patch of snow on their summits in the blue sky, on which lay a few fleecy clouds—the mighty foreign bird, whose plumage we had never hoped to touch but in a dream, lying like the ghost of something that ought not to have been destroyed—the scene was altogether such as made our wild young heart quake, and almost repent of having killed a creature so surpassingly beautiful. But that was a fleeting fancy—and over the wide moors we went, like an American Indian laden with game, journeying to his wigwam over the wilderness. As we whitened towards the village in the light of morning, the earlier labourers held up their hands in wonder what and who we might be; and Fro, who had missed his master, and was lying awake for him on the mount, came bounding along, nor could refrain the bark of delighted passion as his nose nuzzled in the soft down of the bosom of the creature whom he remembered to have sometimes seen floating too far off in the lake, or far above our reach cleaving the firmament.

[Pg 52]

CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET

FYTTE THIRD.

O Muckle-mou'd Meg! and can it be that thou art numbered among forgotten things—unexistences!

> "Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees!"

What would we not now give for a sight—a kiss—of thy dear lips! Lips which we remember once to have put to our own, even when thy beloved barrel was double-loaded! Now we sigh to think on what then made us shudder! Oh! that thy butt were but now resting on our shoulder! Alas! for ever discharged! Burst and rent asunder, art thou now lying buried in a peat-moss? Did some vulgar villain of a village Vulcan convert thee, name and nature, into nails? Some dark-visaged Douglas of a henroost-robbing Egyptian, solder thee into a pan? Oh! that our passion could dig down unto thee in the bowels of the earth—and with loud lamenting elegies, and louder hymns of gratulation, restore thee, buttless, lockless, vizyless, burst, rent, torn, and twisted though thou be'st, to the light of day, and of the world-rejoicing Sun! Then would we adorn thee with evergreen wreaths of the laurel and the ivy—and hang thee up, in memory and in monument of all the bright, dim, still, stormy days of our boyhood—when gloom itself was glory—and when—But

> "Be hush'd my dark spirit! for wisdom condemns,
> When the faint and the feeble deplore."

Cassandra—Corinna—Sappho—Lucretia—Cleopatra—Tighe—De Staël—in their beauty or in their genius, are, with millions on millions of the fair-faced or bright-souled, nothing but dust and ashes; and as they are, so shall Baillie, and Grant, and Hemans, and Landon be—and why vainly
[Pg 53] yearn "with love and longings infinite," to save from doom of perishable nature—of all created things, but one alone—Muckle-mou'd Meg!

After a storm comes a calm; and we hasten to give the sporting world the concluding account of our education. In the moorland parish—God bless it—in which we had the inestimable advantage of passing our boyhood—there' were a good many falcons—of course the kite or glead—the buzzard—the sparrowhawk—the marsh harrier—that imp the merlin—and, rare bird and beautiful! there, on a cliff which, alas! a crutched man must climb no more, did the Peregrine build her nest. You must not wonder at this, for the parish was an extensive one even for Scotland—half Highland half Lowland—and had not only "muirs and mosses many o," but numerous hills, not a few mountains, some most extraordinary cliffs, considerable store of woods, and one, indeed, that might well be called the Forest.

Lift up thy rock-crowned forehead through thy own sweet stormy skies, Auld Scotland! and as sternly and grimly thou look'st far over the hushed or howling seas, remember thee—till all thy moors and mosses quake at thy heart, as if swallowing up an invading army—a fate that oft befell thy foes of yore—remember thee, in mist-shrouded dream, and cloud-born vision, of the long line

of kings, and heroes, and sages, and bards, whose hallowed bones sleep in pine-darkened tombs among the mountain heather, by the side of rivers, and lochs, and arms of ocean—their spirits yet seen in lofty superstition, sailing or sitting on the swift or settled tempest. Lift up thy rock-crowned forehead, Auld Scotland! and sing aloud to all the nations of the earth, with thy voice of cliffs, and caves, and caverns,

"Wha daur meddle wi' me?"

What! some small, puny, piteous windpipes are heard cheeping against thee from the Cockneys—like ragged chickens agape in the pip. How the feeble and fearful creatures would crawl on their hands and knees, faint and giddy, and shrieking out for help to the heather stalks, if forced to face one of thy cliffs, and foot its flinty bosom! How would the depths of their long ears, cotton-stuffed in vain, ache to the spray-thunder of thy cataracts! Sick, sick would be their stomachs,
[Pg 54] storm-swept in a six-oared cutter into the jaws of Staffa! That sight is sufficient to set the most saturnine on the guffaw—the Barry Cornwall himself, crossing a chasm a hundred yards deep,

"On the uncertain footing of a spar,"

on a tree felled where it stood, centuries ago, by steel or storm, into a ledgeless bridge, oft sounding and shaking to the hunter's feet in chase of the red-deer! The Cockneys do not like us Scotchmen—because of our high cheek-bones. They are sometimes very high indeed, very coarse, and very ugly, and give a Scotchman a grim and gaunt look, assuredly not to be sneezed at, with any hope of impunity, on a dark day and in a lonesome place, by the most heroic chief of the most heroic clan in all the level land of Lud, travelling all by himself in a horse and gig, and with a black boy in a cockaded glazed hat, through the Heelands o' Scotland, passing of course, at the very least, for a captain of Hussars! Then Scotchmen canna keep their backs straught, it seems, and are always booin' and booin' afore a great man. Cannot they, indeed? Do they, indeed? Ascend with that Scottish shepherd yon mountain's breast—swim with him that mountain loch—a bottle of Glenlivet, who first stands in shallow water, on the Oak Isle—and whose back will be straughtest, that of the Caledonian or the Cockney? The little Luddite will be puking among the heather, about some five hundred feet above the level of the sea—higher for the first time in his life than St Paul's, and nearer than he ever will again be, either in the spirit or the flesh, to heaven. The little Luddite will be puking in the hitherto unpolluted loch, after some seven strokes or so, with a strong Scottish weed twisted like an eel round its thigh, and shrieking out for the nearest resuscitating machine in a country, where, alas! there is no Humane Society. The back of the shepherd—even in presence of that "great man"—will be as straught as—do not tremble, Cockney—this Crutch. Conspicuous from afar like a cairn, from the inn-door at Arrochar, in an hour he will be turning up his little finger so—on the Cobler's head; or, in twenty minutes, gliding like a swan, or shooting like a salmon, his back being still straught—leaving Luss, he will be shaking the dewdrops from his brawny body on the silver sand of Inch Morren.

And happy were we, Christopher North, happy were we in the parish in which Fate delivered us
[Pg 55] up to Nature, that, under her tuition our destinies might be fulfilled. A parish! Why it was in itself a kingdom—a world. Thirty miles long by twenty at the broadest, and five at the narrowest; and is not that a kingdom—is not that a world worthy of any monarch that ever wore a crown? Was it level? Yes, league-long levels were in it of greensward, hard as the sand of the sea-shore, yet springy and elastic, fit training-ground for Childers, or Eclipse, or Hambletonian, or Smolensko, or for a charge of cavalry in some great pitched battle, while artillery might keep playing against artillery from innumerous affronting hills. Was it boggy? Yes, black bogs were there, which extorted a panegyric from the roving Irishman in his richest brogue—bogs in which forests had of old been buried, and armies with all their banners. Was it hilly? Ay, there the white sheep nibbled, and the black cattle grazed; there they baa'd and they lowed upon a thousand hills—a crowd of cones, all green as emerald. Was it mountainous? Give answer from afar, ye mist-shrouded summits, and ye clouds cloven by the eagle's wing! But whether ye be indeed mountains, or whether ye be clouds, who can tell, bedazzled as are his eyes by that long-lingering sunset, that drenches heaven and earth in one indistinguishable glory, setting the West on fire, as if the final conflagration were begun! Was it woody? Hush, hush, and you will hear a pine-cone drop in the central silence of a forest—a silent and solitary wilderness—in which you may wander a whole day long, unaccompanied but by the cushat, the corby, the falcon, the roe, and they are all shy of human feet, and, like thoughts, pass away in a moment; so if you long for less fleeting farewells from the native dwellers in the wood, lo! the bright brown queen of the butterflies, gay and gaudy in her glancings through the solitude, the dragon-fly whirring bird-like over the pools in the glade; and if your ear desire music, the robin and the wren may haply trill you a few notes among the briery rocks, or the bold blackbird open wide his yellow bill in his holly-tree, and set the squirrels a-leaping all within reach of his ringing roundelay. Any rivers? one—to whom a thousand torrents are tributary—as he himself is tributary to the sea. Any lochs? how many we know not—for we never counted them twice alike—omitting perhaps some forgotten tarns, or
[Pg 56] counting twice over some one of our more darling waters, worthy to dash their waves against the sides of ships—alone wanting to the magnificence of those inland seas! Yes, it was as level, as boggy, as hilly, as mountainous, as woody, as lochy, and as rivery a parish, as ever laughed to scorn Colonel Mudge and his Trigonometrical Survey.

Was not that a noble parish for apprenticeship in sports and pastimes of a great master? No need of any teacher. On the wings of joy we were borne over the bosom of nature, and learnt all things worthy and needful to be learned, by instinct first, and afterwards by reason. To look at a wild creature—winged with feathers, or mere feet—and not desire to destroy or capture it—is

impossible to passion—to imagination—to fancy. Thus had we longed to feel and handle the glossy plumage of the beaked birds—the wide-winged Birds of Prey—before our finger had ever touched a trigger. Their various flight, in various weather, we had watched and noted with something even of the eye of a naturalist—the wonder of a poet; for among the brood of boys there are hundreds and thousands of poets who never see manhood—the poetry dying away—the boy growing up into mere prose;—yet to some even of the paragraphs of these Three Fyttes do we appeal, that a few sparks of the sacred light are yet alive within us; and sad to our old ears would be the sound of "Put out the light, and then—put out the light!" Thus were we impelled, even when a mere child, far away from the manse, for miles, into the moors and woods. Once it was feared that poor wee Kit was lost; for having set off all by himself, at sunrise, to draw a night-line from the distant Black Loch, and look at a trap set for a glead, a mist overtook him on the moor on his homeward way, with an eel as long as himself hanging over his shoulder, and held him prisoner for many hours within its shifting walls, frail indeed, and opposing no resistance to the hand, yet impenetrable to the feet of fear as the stone dungeon's thraldom. If the mist had remained, that would have been nothing; only a still cold wet seat on a stone; but as "a trot becomes a gallop soon, in spite of curb and rein," so a Scotch mist becomes a shower—and a shower a flood—and a flood a storm—and a storm a tempest—and a tempest thunder and lightning—and thunder and lightning heavenquake and earthquake—till the heart of poor wee Kit
[Pg 57] quaked, and almost died within him in the desert. In this age of Confessions, need we be ashamed to own, in the face of the whole world, that we sat us down and cried! The small brown Moorland bird, as dry as a toast, hopped out of his heather-hole, and cheerfully cheeped comfort. With crest just a thought lowered by the rain, the green-backed, white-breasted peaseweep, walked close by us in the mist; and sight of wonder, that made even in that quandary by the quagmire our heart beat with joy—lo! never seen before, and seldom since, three wee peaseweeps, not three days old, little bigger than shrew-mice, all covered with blackish down, interspersed with long white hair, running after their mother! But the large hazel eye of the she peaseweep, restless even in the most utter solitude, soon spied us glowering at her, and her young ones, through our tears; and not for a moment doubting—Heaven forgive her for the shrewd but cruel suspicion!—that we were Lord Eglinton's gamekeeper—with a sudden shrill cry that thrilled to the marrow in our cold backbone—flapped and fluttered herself away into the mist, while the little black bits of down disappeared, like devils, into the moss. The croaking of the frogs grew terrible. And worse and worse, close at hand, seeking his lost cows through the mist, the bellow of the notorious red bull! We began saying our prayers; and just then the sun forced himself out into the open day, and, like the sudden opening of the shutters of a room, the whole world was filled with light. The frogs seemed to sink among the powheads—as for the red bull who had tossed the tinker, he was cantering away, with his tail towards us, to a lot of cows on the hill; and hark—a long, a loud, an oft-repeated halloo! Rab Roger, honest fellow, and Leezy Muir, honest lass, from the manse, in search of our dead body! Rab pulls our ears lightly, and Leezy kisses us from the one to the other—wrings the rain out of our long yellow hair—(a pretty contrast to the small grey sprig now on the crown of our pericranium, and the thin tail acock behind)—and by-and-by stepping into Hazel-Deanhead for a drap and a "chitterin' piece," by the time we reach the manse we are as dry as a whistle—take our scold and our pawmies from the minister—and, by way of punishment and penance, after a little hot whisky-toddy, with brown sugar and a bit of bun, are bundled off to bed in the daytime!

[Pg 58] Thus we grew up a Fowler, ere a loaded gun was in our hand—and often guided the city-fowler to the haunts of the curlew, the plover, the moorfowl, and the falcon. The falcon! yes—in the higher region of clouds and cliffs. For now we had shot up into a stripling—and how fast had we so shot up you may know, by taking notice of the schoolboy on the play-green, and two years afterwards, discovering, perhaps, that he is that fine tall ensign carrying the colours among the light-bobs of the regiment, to the sound of clarion and flute, cymbal and great drum, marching into the city a thousand strong.

We used in early boyhood, deceived by some uncertainty in size, not to distinguish between a kite and a buzzard, which was very stupid, and unlike us—more like Poietes in Salmonia. The flight of the buzzard, as may be seen in Selby, is slow—and except during the season of incubation, when it often soars to a considerable height, it seldom remains long on the wing. It is indeed a heavy, inactive bird, both in disposition and appearance, and is generally seen perched upon some old and decayed tree, such being its favourite haunt. Him we soon thought little or nothing about—and the last one we shot, it was, we remember, just as he was coming out of the deserted nest of a crow, which he had taken possession of out of pure laziness; and we killed him for not building a house of his own in a country where there was no want of sticks. But the kite or glead, as the same distinguished ornithologist rightly says, is proverbial for the ease and gracefulness of its flight, which generally consists of large and sweeping circles, performed with a motionless wing, or at least with a slight and almost imperceptible stroke of its pinions, and at very distant intervals. In this manner, and directing its course by its tail, which acts as a rudder, whose slightest motion produces effect, it frequently soars to such a height as to become almost invisible to the human eye. Him we loved to slay, as a bird worthy of our barrel. Him and her have we watched for days, like a lynx, till we were led, almost as if by an instinct, to their nest in the heart of the forest—a nest lined with wool, hair, and other soft materials, in the fork of some large tree. They will not, of course, utterly forsake their nest, when they have young, fire at them as you will, though they become more wary, and seem as if they heard a leaf fall, so suddenly will they start and soar to heaven. We remember, from an ambuscade in a briery dell in the forest,
[Pg 59] shooting one flying overhead to its nest; and, on going up to him as he lay on his back, with clenched talons and fierce eyes, absolutely shrieking and yelling with fear, and rage, and pain,

we intended to spare his life, and only take him prisoner, when we beheld beside him on the sod, a chicken from the brood of famous ginger piles, then, all but his small self, following the feet of their clucking mother at the manse! With visage all inflamed, we gave him the butt on his double organ of destructiveness, then only known to us by the popular name of "back o' the head," exclaiming

> "Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas
> Immolat"—

Quivered every feather, from beak to tail and talon, in his last convulsion,

> "Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras!"

In the season of love what combats have we been witness to—Umpire—between birds of prey! The Female Falcon, she sat aloof like a sultana, in her soft, sleek, glossy plumes, the iris in her eye of wilder, more piercing, fiery, cruel, fascinating, and maddening lustre, than ever lit the face of the haughtiest human queen, adored by princes on her throne of diamonds. And now her whole plumage shivers—and is ruffled—for her own Gentle Peregrine appears, and they two will enjoy their dalliance on the edge of the cliff-chasm—and the Bride shall become a wife in that stormy sunshine on the loftiest precipice of all these our Alps. But a sudden sugh sweeps down from heaven, and a rival Hawk comes rushing in his rage from his widowed eyry, and will win and wear this his second selected bride—for her sake, tearing, or to be torn, to pieces. Both struck down from heaven, fall a hundred fathom to the heather, talon-locked, in the mutual gripe of death. Fair play, gentlemen, and attend to the Umpire. It is, we understand, to be an up-and-down fight. Allow us to disentangle you—and without giving advantage to either—elbow-room to both. Neither of you ever saw a human face so near before—nor ever were captive in a human hand. Both fasten their momentarily frightened eyes on us, and, holding back their heads, emit a wild ringing cry. But now they catch sight of each other, and in an instant are one bunch of torn, bloody plumes. Perhaps their wings are broken, and they can soar no more—so up we fling them
[Pg 60] both into the air—and wheeling each within a short circle, clash again go both birds together, and the talons keep tearing throats till they die. Let them die, then, for both are for ever disabled to enjoy their lady-love. She, like some peerless flower in the days of chivalry at a fatal tournament, seeing her rival lovers dying for her sake, nor ever to wear her glove or scarf in the front of battle, rising to leave her canopy in tears of grief and pride—even like such Angelica, the Falcon unfolds her wings, and flies slowly away from her dying ravishers, to bewail her virginity on the mountains. "O, Frailty! thy name is woman!" A third Lover is already on the wing, more fortunate than his preceding peers—and Angelica is won, wooed, and sitting, about to lay an egg in an old eyry, soon repaired and furbished up for the honey-week, with a number of small birds lying on the edge of the hymeneal couch, with which, when wearied with love, and yawp with hunger, Angelica may cram her maw till she be ready to burst, by her bridegroom's breast.

Forgotten all human dwellings, and all the thoughts and feelings that abide by firesides, and doorways, and rooms, and roofs—delightful was it, during the long long midsummer holiday, to lie all alone, on the greensward of some moor-surrounded mount, not far from the foot of some range of cliffs, and with our face up to the sky, wait, unwearying, till a speck was seen to cross the blue cloudless lift, and steadying itself after a minute's quivering into motionless rest, as if hung suspended there by the counteracting attraction of heaven and earth, known to be a Falcon! Balanced far above its prey, and, soon as the right moment came, ready to pounce down, and fly away with the treasure in its talons to its crying eyry! If no such speck were for hours visible in the ether, doubtless dream upon dream, rising unbidden, and all of their own wild accord, congenial with the wilderness, did, like phantasmagoria, pass to and fro, backwards and forwards, along the darkened curtain of our imagination, all the lights of reason being extinguished or removed! In that trance, not unheard, although scarcely noticed, was the cry of the curlew, the murmur of the little moorland burn, or the din, almost like dashing, of the far-off loch. 'Twas thus that the senses, in their most languid state, ministered to the fancy, and fed her for a future day, when all the imagery then received so imperfectly, and in broken fragments, into
[Pg 61] her mysterious keeping, was to arise in orderly array, and to form a world more lovely and more romantic even than the reality, which then lay hushed or whispering, glittering or gloomy, in the outward air. For the senses hear and see all things in their seeming slumbers, from all the impulses that come to them in solitude gaining more, far more, than they have lost! When we are awake, or half awake, or almost sunk into a sleep, they are ceaselessly gathering materials for the thinking and feeling soul—and it is hers, in a deep delight formed of memory and imagination, to put them together by a divine plastic power, in which she is almost, as it were, a very creator, till she exult to look on beauty and on grandeur such as this earth and these heavens never saw, products of her own immortal and immaterial energies, and BEING once, to BE for ever, when the universe, with all its suns and systems, is no more!

But oftener we and our shadows glided along the gloom at the foot of the cliffs, ear-led by the incessant cry of the young hawks in their nest, ever hungry except when asleep. Left to themselves, when the old birds are hunting, an hour's want of food is felt to be famine, and you hear the cry of the callow creatures, angry with one another, and it may be, fighting with soft beak and pointless claws, till a living lump of down tumbles over the rock-ledge, soon to be picked to the bone by insects, who likewise all live upon prey; for example. Ants of Carrion. Get you behind that briery bield, that wild-rose hanging rock, far and wide scenting the wilderness with a faint perfume; or into that cell, almost a parlour, with a Gothic roof formed by large stones leaning one against the other and so arrested, as they tumbled from the frost-riven breast of the

precipice. Wait there, though it should be for hours—but it will not be for hours; for both the old hawks are circling the sky, one over the marsh and one over the wood. She comes—she comes—the female Sparrowhawk, twice the size of her mate; and while he is plain in his dress, as a cunning and cruel Quaker, she is gay and gaudy as a Demirep dressed for the pit of the Opera—deep and broad her bosom, with an air of luxury in her eyes that glitter like a serpent's. But now she is a mother, and plays a mother's part—greedier, even than for herself, for her greedy young.
[Pg 62] The lightning flashes from the cave-mouth, and she comes tumbling, and dashing, and rattling through the dwarf bushes on the cliff-face, perpendicular and plum-down, within three yards of her murderer. Her husband will not visit his nest this day—no—nor all night long: for a father's is not as a mother's love. Your only chance of killing him, too, is to take a lynx-eyed circuit round about all the moors within half a league; and possibly you may see him sitting on some cairn, or stone, or tree-stump, afraid to fly either hither or thither, perplexed by the sudden death he saw appearing among the unaccountable smoke, scenting it yet with his fine nostrils, so as to be unwary of your approach. Hazard a long shot—for you are right behind him—and a slug may hit him on the head, and, following the feathers, split his skull-cap and scatter his brains. 'Tis done—and the eyry is orphan'd. Let the small brown moorland birds twitter Io Pæan, as they hang balanced on the bulrushes—let the stone-chat glance less fearfully within shelter of the old grey cairn—let the cushat coo his joyous gratitude in the wood—and the lark soar up to heaven, afraid no more of a demon descending from the cloud. As for the imps in the eyry, let them die of rage and hunger—for there must always be pain in the world; and 'tis well when its endurance by the savage is the cause of pleasure to the sweet—when the gore-yearning cry of the cruel is drowned in the song of the kind at feed or play—and the tribes of the peace-loving rejoice in the despair and death of the robbers and shedders of blood!

Not one fowler of fifty thousand has in all his days shot an Eagle. That royal race seems nearly extinct in Scotland. Gaze as you will over the wide circumference of a Highland heaven, calm as the bride's dream of love, or disturbed as the shipwrecked sailor's vision of a storm, and all spring and summer long you may not chance to see the shadow of an Eagle in the sun. The old kings of the air are sometimes yet seen by the shepherds on cliff or beneath cloud; but their offspring are rarely allowed to get full-fledged in spite of the rifle always lying loaded in the shieling. But in the days of our boyhood there were many glorious things on earth and air that now no more seem to exist, and among these were the Eagles. One pair had from time immemorial built on the Echo-cliff, and you could see with a telescope the eyry, with the rim of its
[Pg 63] circumference, six feet in diameter, strewn with partridges, moorfowl, and leverets—their feathers and their skeletons. But the Echo-cliff was inaccessible.

> "Hither the rainbow comes, the cloud,
> And mists that spread the flying shroud,
> And sunbeams, and the flying blast,
> That if it could, would hurry past,
> But that enormous barrier binds it fast."

No human eye ever saw the birds within a thousand feet of the lower earth; yet how often must they have stooped down on lamb and leveret, and struck the cushat in her very yew-tree in the centre of the wood! Perhaps they preyed at midnight, by the light of the waning moon—at mid-day, in the night of sun-hiding tempests—or afar off, in even more solitary wilds, carried thither on the whirlwind of their own wings, they swept off their prey from uninhabited isles,

> "Placed far amid the melancholy main,"

or vast inland glens, where not a summer shieling smiles beneath the region of eternal snows. But eagles are subject to diseases in flesh, and bone, and blood, just like the veriest poultry that die of croup and consumption on the dunghill before the byre-door. Sickness blinds the eye that God framed to pierce the seas, and weakens the wing that dallies with the tempest. Then the eagle feels how vain is the doctrine of the divine right of kings. He is hawked at by the mousing owl, whose instinct instructs him that these talons have lost their grasp and these pinions their deathblow. The eagle lies for weeks famished in his eyry, and, hunger-driven over the ledge, leaves it to ascend no more. He is dethroned, and wasted to mere bones—a bunch of feathers—his flight is now slower than that of the buzzard—he floats himself along now with difficulty from knoll to knoll, pursued by the shrieking magpies, buffeted by the corby, and lying on his back, like a recreant, before the beak of the raven, who, a month ago, was terrified to hop round the carcass till the king of the air was satiated, and gave his permission to croaking Sooty to dig into the bowels he himself had scorned. Yet he is a noble aim to the fowler still; you break a wing and a leg, but fear to touch him with your hand; Fro feels the iron-clutch of his talons constricted in
[Pg 64] the death-pang; and holding him up, you wonder that such an anatomy—for his weight is not more than three pounds—could drive his claws through that shaggy hide till blood sprung to the blow—inextricable but to yells of pain, and leaving gashes hard to heal, for virulent is the poison of rage in a dying bird of prey.

Sublime solitude of our boyhood! where each stone in the desert was sublime, unassociated though it was with dreams of memory, in its own simple native power over the human heart! Each sudden breath of wind passed by us like the voice of a spirit. There were strange meanings in the clouds—often so like human forms and faces threatening us off, or beckoning us on, with long black arms, back into the long-withdrawing wilderness of heaven. We wished then, with quaking bosoms, that we had not been all alone in the desert—that there had been another heart, whose beatings might have kept time with our own, that we might have gathered courage in the

silent and sullen gloom from the light in a brother's eye—the smile on a brother's countenance. And often had we such a Friend in these our far-off wanderings over moors and mountains, by the edge of lochs, and through the umbrage of the old pine-woods. A Friend from whom "we had received his heart, and given him back our own,"—such a friendship as the most fortunate and the most happy—and at that time we were both—are sometimes permitted by Providence, with all the passionate devotion of young and untamed imagination, to enjoy, during a bright dreamy world of which that friendship is as the Polar star. Emilius Godfrey! for ever holy be the name! a boy when we were but a child—when we were but a youth, a man. We felt stronger in the shadow of his arm—happier, bolder, better in the light of his countenance. He was the protector—the guardian of our moral being. In our pastimes we bounded with wilder glee—at our studies we sat with intenser earnestness, by his side. He it was that taught us how to feel all those glorious sunsets, and imbued our young spirit with the love and worship of nature. He it was that taught us to feel that our evening prayer was no idle ceremony to be hastily gone through—that we might lay down our head on the pillow, then soon smoothed in sleep, but a command of God, which a response from nature summoned the humble heart to obey. He it was who for ever had at
[Pg 65] command wit for the sportive, wisdom for the serious hour. Fun and frolic flowed in the merry music of his lips—they lightened from the gay glancing of his eyes; and then, all at once, when the one changed its measures, and the other gathered, as it were, a mist or a cloud, an answering sympathy chained our own tongue, and darkened our own countenance, in intercommunion of spirit felt to be indeed divine! It seemed as if we knew but the words of language—that he was a scholar who saw into their very essence. The books we read together were, every page, and every sentence of every page, all covered over with light. Where his eye fell not as we read, all was dim or dark, unintelligible or with imperfect meanings. Whether we perused with him a volume writ by a nature like our own, or the volume of the earth and the sky, or the volume revealed from heaven, next day we always knew and felt that something had been added to our being. Thus imperceptibly we grew up in our intellectual stature, breathing a purer moral and religious air, with all our finer affections towards other human beings, all our kindred and our kind, touched with a dearer domestic tenderness, or with a sweet benevolence that seemed to our ardent fancy to embrace the dwellers in the uttermost regions of the earth. No secret of pleasure or pain—of joy or grief—of fear or hope—had our heart to withhold or conceal from Emilius Godfrey. He saw it as it beat within our bosom, with all its imperfections—may we venture to say, with all its virtues. A repented folly—a confessed fault—a sin for which we were truly contrite—a vice flung from us with loathing and with shame—in such moods as these, happier were we to see his serious and his solemn smile, than when in mirth and merriment we sat by his side in the social hour on a knoll in the open sunshine, and the whole school were in ecstasies to hear tales and stories from his genius, even like a flock of birds chirping in their joy all newly-alighted in a vernal land. In spite of that difference in our years—or oh! say rather because that very difference did touch the one heart with tenderness and the other with reverence, how often did we two wander, like elder and younger brother, in the sunlight and moonlight solitudes! Woods—into whose inmost recesses we should have quaked alone to penetrate, in his company were glad as gardens, through their most awful umbrage; and there was beauty in the shadows of the old
[Pg 66] oaks. Cataracts—in whose lonesome thunder, as it pealed into those pitchy pools, we durst not by ourselves have faced the spray—in his presence, dinn'd with a merry music in the desert, and cheerful was the thin mist they cast sparkling up into the air. Too severe for our uncompanioned spirit, then easily overcome with awe, was the solitude of those remote inland lochs. But as we walked with him along the winding shores, how passing sweet the calm of both blue depths—how magnificent the white-crested waves tumbling beneath the black thunder-cloud! More beautiful, because our eyes gazed on it along with his, at the beginning or the ending of some sudden storm, the Apparition of the Rainbow! Grander in its wildness, that seemed to sweep at once all the swinging and stooping woods to our ear, because his too listened, the concerto by winds and waves played at midnight, when not one star was in the sky. With him we first followed the Falcon in her flight—he showed us on the Echo-cliff the Eagle's eyry. To the thicket he led us where lay couched the lovely-spotted Doe, or showed us the mild-eyed creature browsing on the glade with her two fawns at her side. But for him we should not then have seen the antlers of the red-deer, for the Forest was indeed a most savage place, and haunted—such was the superstition at which they who scorned it trembled—haunted by the ghost of a huntsman whom a jealous rival had murdered as he stooped, after the chase, at a little mountain well that ever since oozed out blood. What converse passed between us two in all those still shadowy solitudes! Into what depths of human nature did he teach our wondering eyes to look down! Oh! what was to become of us, we sometimes thought in sadness that all at once made our spirits sink—like a lark falling suddenly to earth, struck by the fear of some unwonted shadow from above—what was to become of us when the mandate should arrive for him to leave the Manse for ever, and sail away in a ship to India never more to return! Ever as that dreaded day drew nearer, more frequent was the haze in our eyes; and in our blindness, we knew not that such tears ought to have been far more rueful still, for that he then lay under orders for a longer and more lamentable voyage—a voyage over a narrow strait to the Eternal shore. All—all at once he drooped; on one fatal morning the dread
[Pg 67] decay began; with no forewarning, the springs on which his being had so lightly—so proudly—so grandly moved—gave way. Between one Sabbath and another his bright eyes darkened—and while all the people were assembled at the sacrament, the soul of Emilius Godfrey soared up to Heaven. It was indeed a dreadful death, serene and sainted though it were; and not a hall—not a house—not a hut—not a shieling within all the circle of those wide mountains, that did not on that night mourn as if it had lost a son. All the vast parish attended his funeral—Lowlanders and Highlanders in their own garb of grief. And have time and tempest now blackened the white marble of that monument—is that inscription now hard to be read—the name of Emilius Godfrey in green obliteration—nor haply one surviving who ever saw the light of the countenance of him

there interred! Forgotten as if he had never been! for few were that glorious orphan's kindred—and they lived in a foreign land—forgotten but by one heart, faithful through all the chances and changes of this restless world! And therein enshrined among all its holiest remembrances, shall be the image of Emilius Godfrey, till it too, like his, shall be but dust and ashes!

Oh! blame not boys for so soon forgetting one another—in absence or in death. Yet forgetting is not just the very word; call it rather a reconcilement to doom and destiny—in thus obeying a benign law of nature that soon streams sunshine over the shadows of the grave. Not otherwise could all the ongoings of this world be continued. The nascent spirit outgrows much in which it once found all delight; and thoughts delightful still, thoughts of the faces and the voices of the dead, perish not, lying sometimes in slumber—sometimes in sleep. It belongs not to the blessed season and genius of youth, to hug to its heart useless and unavailing griefs. Images of the well-beloved, when they themselves are in the mould, come and go, no unfrequent visitants, through the meditative hush of solitude. But our main business—our prime joys and our prime sorrows—ought to be, must be, with the living. Duty demands it; and Love, who would pine to death over the bones of the dead, soon fastens upon other objects with eyes and voices to smile and whisper an answer to all his vows. So was it with us. Ere the midsummer sun had withered the flowers
[Pg 68] that spring had sprinkled over our Godfrey's grave, youth vindicated its own right to happiness; and we felt that we did wrong to visit too often that corner in the kirkyard. No fears had we of any too oblivious tendencies; in our dreams we saw him—most often all alive as ever—sometimes a phantom away from that grave! If the morning light was frequently hard to be endured, bursting suddenly upon us along with the feeling that he was dead, it more frequently cheered and gladdened us with resignation, and sent us forth a fit playmate to the dawn that rang with all sounds of joy. Again we found ourselves angling down the river, or along the loch—once more following the flight of the Falcon along the woods—eying the Eagle on the Echo-cliff. Days passed by, without so much as one thought of Emilius Godfrey—pursuing our pastime with all our passion, reading our books intently—just as if he had never been! But often and often, too, we thought we saw his figure coming down the hill straight towards us—his very figure—we could not be deceived; but the love-raised ghost disappeared on a sudden—the grief-woven spectre melted into the mist. The strength, that formerly had come from his counsels, now began to grow up of itself within our own unassisted being. The world of nature became more our own, moulded and modified by all our own feelings and fancies; and with a bolder and more original eye we saw the smoke from the sprinkled cottages, and read the faces of the mountaineers on their way to their work, or coming and going to the house of God.

Then this was to be our last year in the parish—now dear to us as our birthplace; nay, itself our very birthplace—for in it from the darkness of infancy had our soul been born. Once gone and away from the region of cloud and mountain, we felt that most probably never more should we return. For others, who thought they knew us better than we did ourselves, had chalked out a future life for young Christopher North—a life that was sure to lead to honour, and riches, and a splendid name. Therefore we determined with a strong, resolute, insatiate spirit of passion, to make the most—the best—of the few months that remained to us, of that our wild, free, and romantic existence, as yet untrammelled by those inexorable laws, which, once launched into the
[Pg 69] world, all alike—young and old—must obey. Our books were flung aside—nor did our old master and minister frown—for he grudged not to the boy he loved the remnant of the dream about to be rolled away like the dawn's rosy clouds. We demanded with our eye—not with our voice—one long holiday, throughout that our last autumn, on to the pale farewell blossoms of the Christmas rose. With our rod we went earlier to the loch or river; but we had not known thoroughly our own soul—for now we angled less passionately—less perseveringly than was our wont of yore—sitting in a pensive, a melancholy, a miserable dream, by the dashing waterfall or the murmuring wave. With our gun we plunged earlier in the morning into the forest, and we returned later at eve—but less earnest—less eager were we to hear the cushat's moan from his yew-tree—to see the hawk's shadow on the glade, as he hung aloft on the sky. A thousand dead thoughts came to life again in the gloom of the woods—and we sometimes did wring our hands in an agony of grief, to know that our eyes should not behold the birch-tree brightening there with another spring.

Then every visit we paid to cottage or to shieling was felt to be a farewell; there was something mournful in the smiles on the sweet faces of the ruddy rustics, with their silken snoods, to whom we used to whisper harmless love-meanings, in which there was no evil guile; we regarded the solemn toil-and-care-worn countenances of the old with a profounder emotion than had ever touched our hearts in the hour of our more thoughtless joy; and the whole life of those dwellers among the woods, and the moors, and the mountains, seemed to us far more affecting now that we saw deeper into it, in the light of a melancholy sprung from the conviction that the time was close at hand when we should mingle with it no more. The thoughts that possessed our most secret bosom failed not by the least observant to be discovered in our open eyes. They who had liked us before, now loved us; our faults, our follies, the insolences of our reckless boyhood, were all forgotten; whatever had been our sins, pride towards the poor was never among the number; we had shunned not stooping our head beneath the humblest lintel; our mite had been given to the widow who had lost her own; quarrelsome with the young we might sometimes have been, for
[Pg 70] boyhood is soon heated, and boils before a defying eye; but in one thing at least we were Spartans, we revered the head of old age.

And many at last were the kind—some the sad farewells, ere long whispered by us at gloaming among the glens. Let them rest for ever silent amidst that music in the memory which is felt, not heard—its blessing mute though breathing, like an inarticulate prayer! But to Thee—O palest Phantom—clothed in white raiment, not like unto a ghost risen with its grave-clothes to appal,

but like a seraph descending from the skies to bless—unto Thee will we dare to speak, as through the mist of years back comes thy yet unfaded beauty, charming us, while we cannot choose but weep, with the self-same vision that often glided before us long ago in the wilderness, and at the sound of our voice would pause for a little while, and then pass by, like a white bird from the sea, floating unscared close by the shepherd's head, or alighting to trim its plumes on a knoll far up an inland glen! Death seems not to have touched that face, pale though it be—lifelike is the waving of those gentle hands—and the soft, sweet, low music which now we hear, steals not sure from lips hushed by the burial mould! Restored by the power of love, she stands before us as she stood of yore. Not one of all the hairs of her golden head was singed by the lightning that shivered the tree under which the child had run for shelter from the flashing sky. But in a moment the blue light in her dewy eyes was dimmed—and never again did she behold either flower or star. Yet all the images of all the things she had loved remained in her memory, clear and distinct as the things themselves before unextinguished eyes; and ere three summers had flown over her head—which, like the blossom of some fair perennial flower, in heaven's gracious dew and sunshine each season lifted its loveliness higher and higher in the light—she could trip her singing way through the wild wilderness, all by her joyful self, led, as all believed, nor erred they in so believing, by an angel's hand! When the primroses peeped through the reviving grass upon the vernal braes, they seemed to give themselves into her fingers; and 'twas thought they hung longer unfaded round her neck or forehead than if they had been left to drink the dew on their native bed. The linnets ceased not their lays, though her garment touched the broom-stalk
[Pg 71] on which they sang. The cushat, as she thrid her way through the wood, continued to croon in her darksome tree—and the lark, although just dropped from the cloud, was cheered by her presence into a new passion of song, and mounted over her head, as if it were his first matin hymn. All the creatures of the earth and air manifestly loved the Wanderer of the Wilderness—and as for human beings, she was named, in their pity, their wonder, and their delight, the Blind Beauty of the Moor!

She was an only child, and her mother had died in giving her birth. And now her father, stricken by one of the many cruel diseases that shorten the lives of shepherds on the hills, was bed-ridden —and he was poor. Of all words ever syllabled by human lips, the most blessed is—Charity. No manna now in the wilderness is rained from heaven—for the mouths of the hungry need it not in this our Christian land. A few goats feeding among the rocks gave them milk, and there was bread for them in each neighbour's house—neighbour though miles afar—as the sacred duty came round—and the unrepining poor sent the grateful child away with their prayers.

One evening, returning to the hut with her usual song, she danced up to her father's face on his rushy bed, and it was cold in death. If she shrieked—if she fainted—there was but one Ear that heard, one Eye that saw her in her swoon. Not now floating light like a small moving cloud unwilling to leave the flowery braes, though it be to melt in heaven, but driven along like a shroud of flying mist before the tempest, she came upon us in the midst of that dreary moss; and at the sound of our voice, fell down with clasped hands at our feet—"My father's dead!" Had the hut put already on the strange, dim, desolate look of mortality? For people came walking fast down the braes, and in a little while there was a group round us, and we bore her back again to her dwelling in our arms. As for us, we had been on our way to bid the fair creature and her father farewell. How could she have lived—an utter orphan—in such a world! The holy power that is in Innocence would for ever have remained with her; but Innocence longs to be away, when her sister Joy has departed; and 'tis sorrowful to see the one on earth, when the other has gone to Heaven! This sorrow none of us had long to see; for though a flower, when withered at the root,
[Pg 72] and doomed ere eve to perish, may yet look to the careless eye the same as when it blossomed in its pride—yet its leaves, still green, are not as once they were—its bloom, though fair, is faded—and at set of sun, the dews shall find it in decay, and fall unfelt on its petals. Ere Sabbath came, the orphan child was dead. Methinks we see now her little funeral. Her birth had been the humblest of the humble; and though all in life had loved her, it was thought best that none should be asked to the funeral of her and her father, but two or three friends; the old clergyman himself walked at the head of the father's coffin—we at the head of the daughter's—for this was granted unto our exceeding love;—and thus passed away for ever the Blind Beauty of the Moor!

Yet sometimes to a more desperate passion than had ever before driven us over the wilds, did we deliver up ourselves entire, and pursue our pastime like one doomed to be a wild huntsman under some spell of magic. Let us, ere we go away from these high haunts and be no more seen—let us away far up the Great Glen, beyond the Echo-cliff, and with our rifle—'twas once the rifle of Emilius Godfrey—let us stalk the red-deer. In that chase or forest the antlers lay not thick, as now they lie on the Atholl Braes; they were still a rare sight—and often and often had Godfrey and we gone up and down the Glen, without a single glimpse of buck or doe rising up from among the heather. But as the true angler will try every cast on the river, miles up and down, if he has reason to know that but one single fish has run up from the sea—so we, a true hunter, neither grudged nor wearied to stand for hours, still as the heron by the stream, hardly in hope, but satisfied with the possibility, that a deer might pass by us in the desert. Steadiest and strongest is self-fed passion springing in spite of circumstance. When blows the warm showery south-west wind, the trouts turn up their yellow sides at every dropping of the fly on the curling water—and the angler is soon sated with the perpetual play. But once—twice—thrice—during a long blustering day—the sullen plunge of a salmon is sufficient for that day's joy. Still, therefore, still as a cairn that stands for ever on the hill, or rather as the shadow on a dial, that though it moves is never seen to move, day after day were we on our station in the Great Glen. A loud, wild, wrathful, and savage cry from some huge animal made our heart leap to our mouth, and bathed
[Pg 73] our forehead in sweat. We looked up—and a red-deer—a stag of ten—the king of the forest—stood

with all his antlers, snuffing the wind, but yet blind to our figure overshadowed by a rock. The rifle-ball pierced his heart—and leaping up far higher than our head, he tumbled in terrific death, and lay stone-still before our starting eyes amid the rustling of the strong-bented heather! There we stood surveying him for a long triumphing hour. Ghastly were his glazed eyes—and ghastlier his long bloody tongue, bitten through at the very root in agony. The branches of his antlers pierced the sward like swords. His bulk seemed mightier in death even than when it was crowned with that kingly head, snuffing the north wind. In other two hours we were down at Moor-edge and up again, with an eager train, to the head of the Great Glen, coming and going a distance of a dozen long miles. A hay-waggon forced its way through the bogs and over the braes—and on our return into the inhabited country, we were met by shoals of peasants, men, women, and children, huzzaing over the Prey; for not for many years—never since the funeral of the old lord—had the antlers of a red-deer been seen by them trailing along the heather.

Fifty years and more—and oh! my weary soul! half a century took a long time to die away in gloom and in glory, in pain and pleasure, in storms through which were afraid to fly even the spirit's most eagle-winged raptures, in calms that rocked all her feelings like azure-plumed halcyons to rest—though now to look back upon it, what seems it all but a transitory dream of toil and trouble, of which the smiles, the sighs, the tears, the groans, were all alike vain as the forgotten sunbeams and the clouds! Fifty years and more are gone—and this is the Twelfth of August Eighteen hundred and twenty-eight; and all the Highland mountains have since dawn been astir, and thundering to the impetuous sportsmen's joys! Our spirit burns within us, but our limbs are palsied, and our feet must brush the heather no more. Lo! how beautifully these fast-travelling pointers do their work on that black mountain's breast! intersecting it into parallelograms, and squares, and circles, and now all a-stoop on a sudden, as if frozen to death! Higher up among the rocks, and cliffs, and stones, we see a stripling, whose ambition it is to strike the sky with his forehead, and wet his hair in the misty cloud, pursuing the ptarmigan now
[Pg 74] in their variegated summer-dress, seen even among the unmelted snows. The scene shiftsand high up on the heath above the Linn of Dee, in the Forest of Braemar, the Thane—God bless him—has stalked the red-deer to his lair, and now lays his unerring rifle at rest on the stump of the Witch's Oak. Never shall Eld deaden our sympathies with the pastimes of our fellow-men any more than with their highest raptures, their profoundest griefs. Blessings on the head of every true sportsman on flood, or field, or fell; nor shall we take it at all amiss should any one of them, in return for the pleasure he may have enjoyed from these our Fyttes, perused in smoky cabin during a rainy day, to the peat-reek flavour of the glorious Glenlivet, send us, by the Inverness coach, Aberdeen steam-packet, or any other rapid conveyance, a basket of game, red, black, or brown, or peradventure a haunch of the red-deer.

Reader! be thou a male, bold as the Tercel Gentle—or a female, fair as the Falcon—a male, stern as an old Stag—or a female, soft as a young Doe—we entreat thee to think kindly of Us and of our Article—and to look in love or in friendship on Christopher in his Sporting Jacket, now come to the close of his Three Fyttes, into which he had fallen—out of one into another—and from which he has now been revived by the application of a little salt to his mouth, and then a caulker. Nor think that, rambling as we have been, somewhat after the style of thinking common in sleep, there has been no method in our madness, no *lucidus ordo* in our dream. All the pages are instinct with one spirit—our thoughts and our feelings have all followed one another, according to the most approved principles of association—and a fine proportion has been unconsciously preserved. The article may be likened to some noble tree, which—although here and there a branch have somewhat overgrown its brother above or below it, an arm stretched itself out into further gloom on this side than on that, so that there are irregularities in the umbrage—is still disfigured not by those sports and freaks of nature working on a great scale, and stands, magnificent object! equal to an old castle, on the cliff above the cataract. Woe and shame to the sacrilegious hand that would lop away one budding bough! Undisturbed let the tame and wild creatures of the region, in storm or sunshine, find shelter or shade under the calm circumference of its green old age.

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TALE OF EXPIATION.

Margaret Burnside was an orphan. Her parents, who had been the poorest people in the parish, had died when she was a mere child; and as they had left no near relatives, there were few or none to care much about the desolate creature, who might be well said to have been left friendless in the world. True that the feeling of charity is seldom wholly wanting in any heart; but it is generally but a cold feeling among hard-working folk, towards objects out of the narrow circle of their own family affections, and selfishness has a ready and strong excuse in necessity. There seems, indeed, to be a sort of chance in the lot of the orphan offspring of paupers. On some the eye of Christian benevolence falls at the very first moment of their uttermost destitution—and their worst sorrows, instead of beginning, terminate with the tears shed over their parents' graves. They are taken by the hands, as soon as their hands have been stretched out for protection, and admitted as inmates into households, whose doors, had their fathers and mothers been alive, they would never have darkened. The light of comfort falls upon them during the gloom of grief, and attends them all their days. Others, again, are overlooked at the first fall of affliction, as if by some unaccountable fatality; the wretchedness with which all have become familiar, no one very tenderly pities; and thus the orphan, reconciling herself to the extreme

hardships of her condition, lives on uncheered by those sympathies out of which grow both happiness and virtue, and yielding by degrees to the constant pressure of her lot, becomes poor in spirit as in estate, and either vegetates like an almost worthless weed that is carelessly trodden on by every foot, or if by nature born a flower, in time loses her lustre, and all her days
[Pg 76] leads the life not so much of a servant as of a slave.

Such, till she was twelve years old, had been the fate of Margaret Burnside. Of a slender form and weak constitution, she had never been able for much work; and thus from one discontented and harsh master and mistress to another, she had been transferred from house to house—always the poorest—till she came to be looked on as an encumbrance rather than a help in any family, and thought hardly worth her bread. Sad and sickly she sat on the braes herding the kine. It was supposed that she was in a consumption—and as the shadow of death seemed to lie on the neglected creature's face, a feeling something like love was awakened towards her in the heart of pity, for which she showed her gratitude by still attending to all household tasks with an alacrity beyond her strength. Few doubted that she was dying—and it was plain that she thought so herself; for the Bible, which, in her friendlessness, she had always read more than other children, who were too happy to reflect often on the Word of that Being from whom their happiness flowed, was now, when leisure permitted, seldom or never out of her hands; and in lonely places, where there was no human ear to hearken, did the dying girl often support her heart, when quaking in natural fears of the grave, by singing to herself hymns and psalms. But her hour was not yet come—though by the inscrutable decrees of Providence doomed to be hideous with almost inexpiable guilt. As for herself—she was innocent as the linnet that sang beside her in the broom, and innocent was she to be up to the last throbbings of her religious heart. When the sunshine fell on the leaves of her Bible, the orphan seemed to see in the holy words, brightening through the radiance, assurances of forgiveness of all her sins—small sins indeed—yet to her humble and contrite heart exceeding great—and to be pardoned only by the intercession of Him who died for us on the tree. Often, when clouds were in the sky, and blackness covered the Book, hope died away from the discoloured page—and the lonely creature wept and sobbed over the doom denounced on all who sin, and repent not—whether in deed or in thought. And thus religion became within her an awful thing—till, in her resignation, she feared to die. But look on that flower by the hill-side path, withered, as it seems, beyond the power of sun and air and dew and
[Pg 77] rain to restore it to life. Next day, you happen to return to the place, its leaves are of a dazzling green, its blossoms of a dazzling crimson. So was it with this Orphan. Nature, as if kindling towards her in sudden love, not only restored her in a few weeks to life—but to perfect health; and ere long she, whom few had looked at, and for whom still fewer cared, was acknowledged to be the fairest girl in all the parish—while she continued to sit, as she had always done from very childhood, on the *poor's form* in the lobby of the kirk. Such a face, such a figure, and such a manner, in one so poorly attired and so meanly placed, attracted the eyes of the young Ladies in the Patron's Gallery. Margaret Burnside was taken under their especial protection—sent for two years to a superior school, where she was taught all things useful for persons in humble life—and while yet scarcely fifteen, returning to her native parish, was appointed teacher of a small school of her own, to which were sent all the girls who could be spared from home, from those of parents poor as her own had been, up to those of the farmers and small proprietors, who knew the blessings of a good education—and that without it, the minister may preach in vain. And thus Margaret Burnside grew and blossomed like the lily of the field—and every eye blessed her—and she drew her breath in gratitude, piety, and peace.

Thus a few happy and useful years passed by—and it was forgotten by all—but herself—that Margaret Burnside was an orphan. But to be without one near and dear blood-relative in all the world, must often, even to the happy heart of youthful innocence, be more than a pensive—a painful thought; and therefore, though Margaret Burnside was always cheerful among her little scholars, yet in the retirement of her own room (a pretty parlour, with a window looking into a flower-garden), and on her walks among the braes, her mien was somewhat melancholy, and her eyes wore that touching expression, which seems doubtfully to denote—neither joy nor sadness—but a habit of soul which, in its tranquillity, still partakes of the mournful, as if memory dwelt often on past sorrows, and hope scarcely ventured to indulge in dreams of future repose. That profound orphan-feeling imbued her whole character; and sometimes when the young Ladies
[Pg 78] from the Castle smiled praises upon her, she retired in gratitude to her chamber—and wept.

Among the friends at whose houses she visited were the family at Moorside, the highest hill-farm in the parish, and on which her father had been a hind. It consisted of the master, a man whose head was grey, his son and daughter, and a grandchild, her scholar, whose parents were dead. Gilbert Adamson had long been a widower—indeed his wife had never been in the parish, but had died abroad. He had been a soldier in his youth and prime of manhood; and when he came to settle at Moorside, he had been looked at with no very friendly eyes; for evil rumours of his character had preceded his arrival there—and in that peaceful pastoral parish, far removed from the world's strife, suspicions, without any good reason perhaps, had attached themselves to the morality and religion of a man, who had seen much foreign service, and had passed the best years of his life in the wars. It was long before these suspicions faded away, and with some they still existed in an invincible feeling of dislike, or even aversion. But the natural fierceness and ferocity which, as these peaceful dwellers among the hills imagined, had at first, in spite of his efforts to control them, often dangerously exhibited themselves in fiery outbreaks, advancing age had gradually subdued; Gilbert Adamson had grown a hard-working and industrious man; affected, if he followed it not in sincerity, even an austerely religious life; and as he possessed more than common sagacity and intelligence, he had acquired, at last, if not won, a certain ascendancy in the parish, even over many whose hearts never opened nor warmed towards him—

so that he was now an elder of the kirk—and, as the most unwilling were obliged to acknowledge, a just steward to the poor. His grey hairs were not honoured, but it would not be too much to say that they were respected. Many who had doubted him before came to think they had done him injustice, and sought to wipe away their fault by regarding him with esteem, and showing themselves willing to interchange all neighbourly kindnesses and services with all the family at Moorside. His son, though somewhat wild and unsteady, and too much addicted to the fascinating pastimes of flood and field, often so ruinous to the sons of labour, and rarely long pursued against the law without vitiating the whole character, was a favourite with all the parish.

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Singularly handsome, and with manners above his birth, Ludovic was welcome wherever he went, both with young and old. No merry-making could deserve the name without him; and at all meetings for the display of feats of strength and agility, far and wide through more counties than one he was the champion. Nor had he received a mean education. All that the parish schoolmaster could teach he knew; and having been the darling companion of all the gentlemen's sons in the Manse, the faculties of his mind had kept pace with theirs, and from them he had caught unconsciously that demeanour so far superior to what could have been expected from one in his humble condition, but which, at the same time, seemed so congenial with his happy nature as to be readily acknowledged to be one of its original gifts. Of his sister, Alice, it is sufficient to say, that she was the bosom-friend of Margaret Burnside, and that all who saw their friendship felt that it was just. The small parentless granddaughter was also dear to Margaret—more than perhaps her heart knew, because that, like herself, she was an orphan. But the creature was also a merry and a madcap child, and her freakish pranks, and playful perversenesses, as she tossed her head in untamable glee, and went dancing and singing, like a bird on the boughs of a tree, all day long, by some strange sympathy entirely won the heart of her who, throughout all her own childhood, had been familiar with grief, and a lonely shedder of tears. And thus did Margaret love her, it might be said, even with a very mother's love. She generally passed her free Saturday afternoons at Moorside, and often slept there all night with little Ann in her bosom. At such times Ludovic was never from home, and many a Sabbath he walked with her to the kirk—all the family together—and *once* by themselves for miles along the moor—a forenoon of perfect sunshine, which returned upon him in his agony on his dying day.

No one said, no one thought that Ludovic and Margaret were lovers—nor were they, though well worthy indeed of each other's love; for the orphan's whole heart was filled and satisfied with a sense of duty, and all its affections were centred in her school, where all eyes blessed her, and where she had been placed for the good of all those gladsome creatures, by them who had rescued her from the penury that kills the soul, and whose gracious bounty she remembered even

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in her sleep. In her prayers she beseeched God to bless them rather than the wretch on her knees —their images, their names, were ever before her eyes and on her ear; and next to that peace of mind which passeth all understanding, and comes from the footstool of God into the humble, lowly, and contrite heart, was to that orphan, day and night, waking or sleeping, the bliss of her gratitude. And thus Ludovic to her was a brother, and no more; a name sacred as that of sister, by which she always called her Alice, and was so called in return. But to Ludovic, who had a soul of fire, Margaret was dearer far than ever sister was to the brother whom, at the sacrifice of her own life, she might have rescued from death. Go where he might, a phantom was at his side—a pale fair face for ever fixed its melancholy eyes on his, as if foreboding something dismal even when they faintly smiled; and once he awoke at midnight, when all the house were asleep, crying, with shrieks, "O God of mercy! Margaret is murdered!" Mysterious passion of Love! that darkens its own dreams of delight with unimaginable horrors! Shall we call such dire bewilderment the superstition of troubled fantasy, or the inspiration of the prophetic soul!

From what seemingly insignificant sources—and by means of what humble instruments—may this life's best happiness be diffused over the households of industrious men! Here was the orphan daughter of forgotten paupers, both dead ere she could speak; herself, during all her melancholy childhood, a pauper even more enslaved than ever they had been—one of the most neglected and unvalued of all God's creatures—who, had she then died, would have been buried in some nettled nook of the kirkyard, nor her grave been watered almost by one single tear—suddenly brought out from the cold and cruel shade in which she had been withering away, by the interposition of human but angelic hands, into the heaven's most gracious sunshine, where all at once her beauty blossomed like the rose. She, who for so many years had been even begrudgingly fed on the poorest and scantiest fare, by Penury ungrateful for all her weak but zealous efforts to please by doing her best, in sickness and sorrow, at all her tasks, in or out of doors, and in all weathers, however rough and severe—was now raised to the rank of a moral, intellectual, and religious being, and presided over, tended, and instructed many little ones, far far happier in their

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childhood than it had been her lot to be, and all growing up beneath her now untroubled eyes, in innocence, love, and joy inspired into their hearts by her, their young and happy benefactress. Not a human dwelling in all the parish, that had not reason to be thankful to Margaret Burnside. She taught them to be pleasant in their manners, neat in their persons, rational in their minds, pure in their hearts, and industrious in all their habits. Rudeness, coarseness, sullenness, all angry fits, and all idle dispositions—the besetting vices and sins of the children of the poor, whose home-education is often so miserably, and almost necessarily neglected—did this sweet Teacher, by the divine influence of meekness never ruffled, and tenderness never troubled, in a few months subdue and overcome—till her school-room, every day in the week, was, in its cheerfulness, sacred as a Sabbath, and murmured from morn till eve with the hum of perpetual happiness. The effects were soon felt in every house. All floors were tidier, and order and regularity enlivened every hearth. It was the pride of her scholars to get their own little gardens behind their parents' huts to bloom like that of the Brae—and, in imitation of that flowery porch,

to train up the pretty creepers on the wall. In the kirkyard, a smiling group every Sabbath forenoon waited for her at the gate—and walked, with her at their head, into the House of God—a beautiful procession to all their parents' eyes—one by one dropping away into their own seats, as the band moved along the little lobby, and the minister, sitting in the pulpit all the while, looked solemnly down upon the fair flock—the shepherd of their souls!

It was Sabbath, but Margaret Burnside was not in the kirk. The congregation had risen to join in prayer, when the great door was thrown open, and a woman, apparelled as for the house of worship, but wild and ghastly in her face and eyes as a maniac hunted by evil spirits, burst in upon the service, and, with uplifted hands, beseeched the man of God to forgive her irreverent entrance, for that the foulest and most unnatural murder had been done, and that her own eyes had seen the corpse of Margaret Burnside lying on the moor in a pool of blood! The congregation gave one groan, and then an outcry as if the roof of the kirk had been toppling over their heads. All cheeks waxed white, women fainted, and the firmest heart quaked with terror and pity, as
[Pg 82] once and again the affrighted witness, in the same words, described the horrid spectacle, and then rushed out into the open air, followed by hundreds, who for some minutes had been palsy-stricken; and now the kirkyard was all in a tumult round the body of her who lay in a swoon. In the midst of that dreadful ferment, there were voices crying aloud that the poor woman was mad, and that such horror could not be beneath the sun; for such a perpetration on the Sabbath-day, and first heard of just as the prayers of His people were about to ascend to the Father of all mercies, shocked belief, and doubt struggled with despair as in the helpless shudderings of some dream of blood. The crowd were at last prevailed on by their pastor to disperse, and sit down on the tombstones, and water being sprinkled over the face of her who still lay in that mortal swoon, and the air suffered to circulate freely round her, she again opened her glassy eyes, and raising herself on her elbow, stared on the multitude, all gathered there so wan and silent, and shrieked out, "The Day of Judgment!—the Day of Judgment!"

The aged minister raised her on her feet, and led her to a grave, on which she sat down, and hid her face on his knees. "O that I should have lived to see the day—but dreadful are the decrees of the Most High—and she whom we all loved has been cruelly murdered! Carry me with you, people, and I will show you where lies her corpse."

"Where—where is Ludovic Adamson?" cried a hoarse voice which none there had ever heard before; and all eyes were turned in one direction; but none knew who had spoken, and all again was hush. Then all at once a hundred voices repeated the same words, "Where—where is Ludovic Adamson?" and there was no reply. Then, indeed, was the kirkyard in an angry and a wrathful ferment, and men looked far into each other's eyes for confirmation of their suspicions. And there was whispering about things, that, though in themselves light as air, seemed now charged with hideous import; and then arose sacred appeals to Heaven's eternal justice, horridly mingled with oaths and curses; and all the crowd, springing to their feet, pronounced, "that no other but he could be the murderer."

It was remembered now, that for months past Margaret Burnside had often looked melancholy—
[Pg 83] that her visits had been less frequent to Moorside; and one person in the crowd said, that a few weeks ago she had come upon them suddenly in a retired place, when Margaret was weeping bitterly, and Ludovic tossing his arms, seemingly in wrath and distraction. All agreed that of late he had led a disturbed and reckless life—and that something dark and suspicious had hung about him, wherever he went, as if he were haunted by an evil conscience. But did not strange men sometimes pass through the Moor—squalid mendicants, robber-like, from the far-off city—one by one, yet seemingly belonging to the same gang—with bludgeons in their hands—half-naked, and often drunken in their hunger, as at the doors of lonesome houses they demanded alms; or more like footpads than beggars, with stern gestures, rising up from the ditches on the wayside, stopped the frightened women and children going upon errands, and thanklessly received pence from the poor? One of them must have been the murderer! But then, again, the whole tide of suspicion would set in upon Ludovic—her lover; for the darker and more dreadful the guilt, the more welcome is it to the fears of the imagination when its waking dreams are floating in blood.

A tall figure came forward from the porch, and all was silence when the congregation beheld the Father of the suspected criminal. He stood still as a tree in a calm day—trunk, limbs, moved not—and his grey head was uncovered. He then stretched out his arm, not in an imploring, but in a commanding attitude, and essayed to speak; but his white lips quivered, and his tongue refused its office. At last, almost fiercely, he uttered, "Who dares denounce my son?" and like the growling thunder the crowd cried, "All—all—he is the murderer!" Some said that the old man smiled; but it could have been but a convulsion of the features—outraged nature's wrung-out and writhing expression of disdain, to show how a father's love brooks the cruelty of foolish falsehood and injustice.

Men, women, and children—all whom grief and horror had not made helpless—moved away towards the Moor—the woman who had seen the sight leading the way; for now her whole strength had returned to her, and she was drawn and driven by an irresistible passion to look
[Pg 84] again at what had almost destroyed her judgment. Now they were miles from the kirk, and over some brushwood, at the edge of a morass some distance from the common footpath, crows were seen diving and careering in the air, and a raven, flapping suddenly out of the covert, sailed away with a savage croak along a range of cliffs. The whole multitude stood stock-still at that carrion-sound. The guide said shudderingly, in a low hurried voice, "See, see—that is her mantle"—and there indeed Margaret lay, all in a heap, maimed, mangled, murdered, with a hundred gashes. The corpse seemed as if it had been baked in frost, and was imbedded in coagulated blood.

Shreds and patches of her dress, torn away from her bosom, bestrewed the bushes—for many yards round about, there had been the trampling of feet, and a long lock of hair that had been torn from her temples, with the dews yet unmelted on it, was lying upon a plant of broom, a little way from the corpse. The first to lift the body from the horrid bed was Gilbert Adamson. He had been long familiar with death in all its ghastliness, and all had now looked to him—forgetting for the moment that he was the father of the murderer—to perform the task from which they recoiled in horror. Resting on one knee, he placed the corpse on the other—and who could have believed, that even the most violent and cruel death could have wrought such a change on a face once so beautiful! All was distortion—and terrible it was to see the dim glazed eyes, fixedly open, and the orbs insensible to the strong sun that smote her face white as snow among the streaks as if left by bloody fingers! Her throat was all discoloured—and a silk handkerchief twisted into a cord, that had manifestly been used in the murder, was of a redder hue than when it had veiled her breast. No one knows what horror his eyes are able to look on, till they are tried. A circle of stupefied gazers was drawn by a horrid fascination closer and closer round the corpse—and women stood there holding children by the hands, and fainted not, but observed the sight, and shuddered without shrieking, and stood there all dumb as ghosts. But the body was now borne along by many hands—at first none knew in what direction, till many voices muttered, "To Moorside—to Moorside"—and in an hour it was laid on the bed in which Margaret Burnside had so often slept with her beloved little Ann in her bosom.

[Pg 85] The hand of some one had thrown a cloth over the corpse. The room was filled with people—but all their power and capacity of horror had been exhausted—and the silence was now almost like that which attends a natural death, when all the neighbours are assembled for the funeral. Alice, with little Ann beside her, kneeled at the bed, nor feared to lay her head close to the covered corpse—sobbing out syllables that showed how passionately she prayed—and that she and her little niece—and, oh! for that unhappy father—were delivering themselves up into the hands of God. That father knelt not—neither did he sit down—nor move—nor groan—but stood at the foot of the bed, with arms folded almost sternly—and with his eyes fixed on the sheet, in which there seemed to be neither ruth nor dread—but only an austere composure, which, were it indeed but resignation to that dismal decree of Providence, had been most sublime—but who can see into the heart of a man either righteous or wicked, and know what may be passing there, breathed from the gates of heaven or of hell!

Soon as the body had been found, shepherds and herdsmen, fleet of foot as the deer, had set off to scour the country far and wide, hill and glen, mountain and morass, moor and wood, for the murderer. If he be on the face of the earth, and not self-plunged in despairing suicide into some quagmire, he will be found—for all the population of many districts are now afoot, and precipices are clomb till now brushed but by the falcons. A figure, like that of a man, is seen by some of the hunters from a hill-top, lying among the stones by the side of a solitary loch. They separate, and descend upon him, and then, gathering in, they behold the man whom they seek—Ludovic Adamson, the murderer.

His face is pale and haggard, yet flushed as if by a fever centred in his heart. That is no dress for the Sabbath-day—soiled and savage-looking, and giving to the eyes that search an assurance of guilt. He starts to his feet, as they think, like some wild beast surprised in his lair, and gathering itself up to fight or fly. But—strange enormity—a Bible is in his hand! And the shepherd who first seized him, taking the book out of his grasp, looks into the page, and reads, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." On a leaf is written, in her own well-known hand,
[Pg 86] "The gift of Margaret Burnside!" Not a word is said by his captors—they offer no needless violence—no indignities—but answer all inquiries of surprise and astonishment (O! can one so young be so hardened in wickedness!) by a stern silence and upbraiding eyes, that like daggers must stab his heart. At last he walks doggedly and sullenly along, and refuses to speak; yet his tread is firm—there is no want of composure in his face, now that the first passion of fear or anger has left it; and now that they have the murderer in their clutch, some begin almost to pity him, and others to believe, or at least to hope, that he may be innocent. As yet they have said not a word of the crime of which they accuse him; but let him try to master the expression of his voice and his eyes as he may, guilt is in those stealthy glances—guilt is in those reckless tones. And why does he seek to hide his right hand in his bosom? And whatever he may affect to say—they ask him not—most certainly that stain on his shirt-collar is blood. But now they are at Moorside.

There is still a great crowd all round about the house—in the garden—and at the door—and a troubled cry announces that the criminal has been taken, and is close at hand. His father meets him at the gate; and, kneeling down, holds up his clasped hands, and says, "My son, if thou art guilty, confess, and die." The criminal angrily waves his father aside, and walks towards the door. "Fools! fools! what mean ye by this? What crime has been committed? And how dare ye to think me the criminal? Am I like a murderer?"—"We never spoke to him of the murder—we never spoke to him of the murder!" cried one of the men who now held him by the arm; and all assembled then exclaimed, "Guilty, guilty—that one word will hang him! O, pity, pity, for his father and poor sister—this will break their hearts!" Appalled, yet firm of foot, the prisoner forced his way into the house; and turning, in his confusion, into the chamber on the left, there he beheld the corpse of the murdered on the bed—for the sheet had been removed—as yet not laid out, and disfigured and deformed just as she had been found on the moor, in the same misshapen heap of death! One long insane glare—one shriek, as if all his heartstrings at once had burst—and then down fell the strong man on the floor like lead. One trial was past which no human hardihood could endure—
[Pg 87] another, and yet another, awaits him; but them he will bear as the guilty brave have often borne

them, and the most searching eye shall not see him quail at the bar or on the scaffold.

They lifted the stricken wretch from the floor, placed him in a chair, and held him upright, till he should revive from the fit. And he soon did revive; for health flowed in all his veins, and he had the strength of a giant. But when his senses returned, there was none to pity him; for the shock had given an expression of guilty horror to all his looks, and, like a man walking in his sleep under the temptation of some dreadful dream, he moved with fixed eyes towards the bed, and looking at the corpse, gabbled in hideous laughter, and then wept and tore his hair like a distracted woman or a child. Then he stooped down as he would kiss the face, but staggered back, and, covering his eyes with his hands, uttered such a groan as is sometimes heard rending the sinner's breast when the avenging Furies are upon him in his dreams. All who heard it felt that he was guilty; and there was a fierce cry through the room of, "Make him touch the body, and if he be the murderer, it will bleed!"—"Fear not, Ludovic, to touch it, my boy," said his father; "bleed afresh it will not, for thou art innocent; and savage though now they be who once were proud to be thy friends, even they will believe thee guiltless when the corpse refuses to bear witness against thee, and not a drop leaves its quiet heart!" But his son spake not a word, nor did he seem to know that his father had spoken; but he suffered himself to be led passively towards the bed. One of the bystanders took his hand and placed it on the naked breast, when out of the corners of the teeth-clenched mouth, and out of the swollen nostrils, two or three blood-drops visibly oozed; and a sort of shrieking shout declared the sacred faith of all the crowd in the dreadful ordeal. "What body is this? 'tis all over blood!" said the prisoner, looking with an idiot vacancy on the faces that surrounded him. But now the sheriff of the county entered the room, along with some officers of justice, and he was spared any further shocks from that old saving superstition. His wrists soon after were manacled. These were all the words he had uttered since he recovered from the fit; and he seemed now in a state of stupor.

[Pg 88] Ludovic Adamson, after examination of witnesses who crowded against him from many unexpected quarters, was committed that very Sabbath night to prison on a charge of murder. On the Tuesday following, the remains of Margaret Burnside were interred. All the parish were at the funeral. In Scotland it is not customary for females to join in the last simple ceremonies of death. But in this case they did; and all her scholars, in the same white dresses in which they used to walk with her at their head into the kirk on Sabbaths, followed the bier. Alice and little Ann were there, nearest the coffin, and the father of him who had wrought all this woe was one of its supporters. The head of the murdered girl rested, it might be said, on his shoulder—but none can know the strength which God gives to his servants—and all present felt for him, as he walked steadily under that dismal burden, a pity, and even an affection, which they had been unable to yield to him ere he had been so sorely tried. The Ladies from the Castle were among the other mourners, and stood by the open grave. A sunnier day had never shone from heaven, and that very grave itself partook of the brightness, as the coffin—with the gilt letters, "Margaret Burnside, Aged 18"—was let down, and in the darkness below disappeared. No flowers were sprinkled there, nor afterwards planted on the turf—vain offerings, of unavailing sorrow! But in that nook—beside the bodies of her poor parents—she was left for the grass to grow over her, as over the other humble dead; and nothing but the very simplest headstone was placed there, with a sentence from Scripture below the name. There was less weeping, less sobbing, than at many other funerals; for as sure as Mercy ruled the skies, all believed that she was there—all knew it, just as if the gates of heaven had opened and showed her a white-robed spirit at the right hand of the throne. And why should any rueful lamentation have been wailed over the senseless dust? But on the way home over the hills, and in the hush of evening beside their hearths, and in the stillness of night on their beds—all—young and old—all did nothing but weep.

For weeks—such was the pity, grief, and awe inspired by this portentous crime and lamentable calamity, that all the domestic ongoings in all the houses far and wide, were melancholy and mournful, as if the country had been fearing a visitation of the plague. Sin, it was felt, had
[Pg 89] brought not only sorrow on the parish, but shame that ages would not wipe away; and strangers, as they travelled through the moor, would point the place where the foulest murder had been committed in all the annals of crime. As for the family at Moorside, the daughter had their boundless compassion, though no eye had seen her since the funeral; but people, in speaking of the father, would still shake their heads, and put their fingers to their lips, and say to one another in whispers, that Gilbert Adamson had once been a bold, bad man—that his religion, in spite of all his repulsive austerity, wore not the aspect of truth—and that, had he held a stricter and a stronger hand on the errors of his misguided son, this foul deed had not been perpetrated, nor that wretched sinner's soul given to perdition. Yet others had gentler and humaner thoughts. They remembered him walking along God-supported beneath the bier—and at the mouth of the grave—and feared to look on that head—formerly grizzled, but now quite grey—when on the very first Sabbath after the murder he took his place in the elders' seat, and was able to stand up, along with the rest of the congregation, when the minister prayed for peace to his soul, and hoped for the deliverance out of jeopardy of him now lying in bonds. A low Amen went all round the kirk at these words; for the most hopeless called to mind that maxim of law, equity, and justice—that every man under accusation of crime should be held innocent till he is proved to be guilty. Nay, a human tribunal might condemn him, and yet might he stand acquitted before the tribunal of God.

There were various accounts of the behaviour of the prisoner. Some said that he was desperately hardened—others, sunk in sullen apathy and indifference—and one or two persons belonging to the parish who had seen him declared that he seemed to care not for himself, but to be plunged in profound melancholy for the fate of Margaret Burnside, whose name he involuntarily

mentioned, and then bowed his head on his knees and wept. His guilt he neither admitted at that interview, nor denied; but he confessed that some circumstances bore hard against him, and that
[Pg 90] he was prepared for the event of his trial—condemnation and death. "But if you are not guilty, Ludovic, *who can be the murderer*? Not the slightest shade of suspicion has fallen on any other person—and did not, alas! the body bleed when"—The unhappy wretch sprang up from the bed, it was said, at these words, and hurried like a madman back and forward along the stone floor of his cell. "Yea—yea!" at last he cried, "the mouth and nostrils of my Margaret did indeed bleed when they pressed down my hand on her cold bosom. It is God's truth!" "God's truth?"—"Yes—God's truth, I saw first one drop, and then another, trickle towards me—and I prayed to our Saviour to wipe them off before other eyes might behold the dreadful witnesses against me; but at that hour Heaven was most unmerciful—for those two small drops—as all of you saw—soon became a very stream—and all her face, neck, and breast—you saw it as well as I miserable—were at last drenched in blood. Then I may have confessed that I was guilty—did I, or did I not, confess it? Tell me—for I remember nothing distinctly;—but if I did—the judgment of offended Heaven, then punishing me for my sins, had made me worse than mad—and so had all your abhorrent eyes; and men, if I did confess, it was the cruelty of God that drove me to it—and your cruelty—which was great; for no pity had any one for me that day, though Margaret Burnside lay before me a murdered corpse—and a hoarse whisper came to my ear urging me to confess—I well believe from no human lips, but from the Father of Lies, who, at that hour, was suffered to leave the pit to ensnare my soul." Such was said to have been the main sense of what he uttered in the presence of two or three who had formerly been among his most intimate friends, and who knew not, on leaving his cell and coming into the open air, whether to think him innocent or guilty. As long as they thought they saw his eyes regarding them, and that they heard his voice speaking, they believed him innocent; but when the expression of the tone of his voice, and of the look of his eyes—which they had felt belonged to innocence—died away from their memory—then arose against him the strong, strange, circumstantial evidence, which, wisely or unwisely, lawyers and judges have said *cannot lie*—and then, in their hearts, one and all of them pronounced him guilty.

[Pg 91] But had not his father often visited the prisoner's cell? Once—and once only; for in obedience to his son's passionate prayer, beseeching him—if there were any mercy left either on earth or in heaven—never more to enter that dungeon, the miserable parent had not again entered the prison; but he had been seen one morning at dawn, by one who knew his person, walking round and round the walls, staring up at the black building in distraction, especially at one small grated window in the north tower—and it is most probable that he had been pacing his rounds there during all the night. Nobody could conjecture, however dimly, what was the meaning of his banishment from his son's cell. Gilbert Adamson, so stern to others, even to his own only daughter, had been always but too indulgent to his Ludovic—and had that lost wretch's guilt, so exceeding great, changed his heart into stone, and made the sight of his old father's grey hairs hateful to his eyes? But then the jailor, who had heard him imploring—beseeching—commanding his father to remain, till after the trial, at Moorside, said, that all the while the prisoner sobbed and wept like a child; and that when he unlocked the door of the cell, to let the old man out, it was a hard thing to tear away the arms and hands of Ludovic from his knees, while the father sat like a stone image on the bed, and kept his tearless eyes fixed sternly upon the wall, as if not a soul had been present, and he himself had been a criminal condemned next day to die.

The father had obeyed, *religiously*, that miserable injunction, and from religion it seemed he had found comfort. For Sabbath after Sabbath he was at the kirk—he stood, as he had been wont to do for years, at the poor's plate, and returned grave salutations to those who dropt their mite into the small sacred treasury—his eyes calmly, and even critically, regarded the pastor during prayer and sermon—and his deep bass voice was heard, as usual, through all the house of God, in the Psalms. On week-days he was seen by passers-by to drive his flocks afield, and to overlook his sheep on the hill-pastures, or in the pen-fold; and as it was still spring, and seed-time had been late this season, he was observed holding the plough, as of yore; nor had his skill deserted him—for the furrows were as straight as if drawn by a rule on paper—and soon bright and beautiful was the braird on all the low lands of his farm. The Comforter was with him, and, sorely as he had been tried, his heart was not yet wholly broken; and it was believed that, for years, he might
[Pg 92] outlive the blow that at first had seemed more than a mortal man might bear and be! Yet that his woe, though hidden, was dismal, all ere long knew, from certain tokens that intrenched his face—cheeks shrunk and fallen; brow not so much furrowed as scarred; eyes quenched; hair thinner and thinner far, as if he himself had torn it away in handfuls during the solitude of midnight—and now absolutely as white as snow; and over the whole man an indescribable ancientness far beyond his years—though they were many, and most of them had been passed in torrid climes—all showed how grief has its agonies as destructive as those of guilt, and those the most wasting when they work in the heart and in the brain, unrelieved by the shedding of one single tear—when the very soul turns dry as dust, and life is imprisoned, rather than mingled, in the decaying—the mouldering body!

The Day of Trial came, and all labour was suspended in the parish, as if it had been a mourning fast. Hundreds of people from this remote district poured into the circuit-town, and besieged the court-house. Horsemen were in readiness, soon as the verdict should be returned, to carry the intelligence—of life or death—to all those glens. A few words will suffice to tell the trial, the nature of the evidence, and its issue. The prisoner, who stood at the bar in black, appeared—though miserably changed from a man of great muscular power and activity, a magnificent man, into a tall thin shadow—perfectly unappalled; but in a face so white, and wasted, and woe-begone, the most profound physiognomist could read not one faintest symptom either of hope or

fear, trembling or trust, guilt or innocence. He hardly seemed to belong to this world, and stood fearfully and ghastlily conspicuous between the officers of justice, above all the crowd that devoured him with their eyes, all leaning towards the bar to catch the first sound of his voice, when to the indictment he should plead "Not Guilty." These words he did utter, in a hollow voice altogether passionless, and then was suffered to sit down, which he did in a manner destitute of all emotion. During all the many long hours of his trial, he never moved head, limbs, or body, except once, when he drank some water, which he had not asked for, but which was given to him by a friend. The evidence was entirely circumstantial, and consisted of a few damning facts, and
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of many of the very slightest sort, which, taken singly, seemed to mean nothing, but which, when considered all together, seemed to mean something against him—how much or how little, there were among the agitated audience many differing opinions. But slight as they were, either singly or together, they told fearfully against the prisoner, when connected with the fatal few which no ingenuity could ever explain away; and though ingenuity did all it could do, when wielded by eloquence of the highest order—and as the prisoner's counsel sat down, there went a rustle and a buzz through the court, and a communication of looks and whispers, that seemed to denote that there were hopes of his acquittal—yet, if such hopes there were, they were deadened by the recollection of the calm, clear, logical address to the jury by the counsel for the crown, and destroyed by the judge's charge, which amounted almost to a demonstration of guilt, and concluded with a confession due to his oath and conscience, that he saw not how the jury could do their duty to their Creator and their fellow-creatures, but by returning *one* verdict. They retired to consider it; and, during a deathlike silence, all eyes were bent on a deathlike Image.

It had appeared in evidence, that the murder had been committed, at least all the gashes inflicted —for there were also finger-marks of strangulation—with a bill-hook, such as foresters use in lopping trees; and several witnesses swore that the bill-hook which was shown them, stained with blood, and with hair sticking on the haft, belonged to Ludovic Adamson. It was also given in evidence—though some doubts rested on the nature of the precise words—that on that day, in the room with the corpse, he had given a wild and incoherent denial to the question then put to him in the din, "What he had done with the bill-hook?" Nobody had seen it in his possession since the spring before; but it had been found, after several weeks' search, in a hag in the moss, in the direction that he would have most probably taken—had he been the murderer—when flying from the spot to the loch where he was seized. The shoes which he had on when taken, fitted the footmarks on the ground, not far from the place of the murder, but not so perfectly as another pair which were found in the house. But that other pair, it was proved, belonged to the old man;
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and therefore the correspondence between the footmarks and the prisoner's shoes, though not perfect, was a circumstance of much suspicion. But a far stronger fact, in this part of the evidence, was sworn to against the prisoner. Though there was no blood on his shoes, when apprehended his legs were bare—though that circumstance, strange as it may seem, had never been noticed till he was on the way to prison! His stockings had been next day found lying on the sward, near the shore of the loch, manifestly after having been washed, and laid out to dry in the sun. At mention of this circumstance a cold shudder ran through the court; but neither that, nor indeed any other circumstance in the evidence—not even the account of the appearance which the murdered body exhibited when found on the moor, or when afterwards laid on the bed—extorted from the prisoner one groan—one sigh—or touched the imperturbable deathliness of his countenance. It was proved, that when searched—in prison, and not before (for the agitation that reigned over all assembled in the room at Moorside that dreadful day, had confounded even those accustomed to deal with suspected criminals)—there were found in his pocket a small French gold watch, and also a gold brooch, which the Ladies of the Castle had given to Margaret Burnside. On these being taken from him, he had said nothing, but looked aghast. A piece of torn and bloody paper, which had been picked up near the body, was sworn to be in his handwriting; and though the meaning of the words—yet legible—was obscure, they seemed to express a request that Margaret would meet him on the moor on that Saturday afternoon she was murdered. The words "Saturday"—"meet me"—"last time"—were not indistinct, and the paper was of the same quality and colour with some found in a drawer in his bedroom at Moorside. It was proved that he had been drinking with some dissolute persons—poachers and the like—in a public-house in a neighbouring parish all Saturday, till well on in the afternoon, when he left them in a state of intoxication—and was then seen running along the hill-side in the direction of the moor. Where he passed the night between the Saturday and the Sabbath, he could give no account, except once when unasked, and as if speaking to himself, he was overheard by the jailor to mutter, "Oh! that fatal night—that fatal night!" And then, when suddenly interrogated, "Where
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were you?" he answered, "Asleep on the hill;" and immediately relapsed into a state of mental abstraction. These were the chief circumstances against him, which his counsel had striven to explain away. That most eloquent person dwelt with affecting earnestness on the wickedness of putting any evil construction on the distracted behaviour of the wretched man when brought without warning upon the sudden sight of the mangled corpse of the beautiful girl, whom all allowed he had most passionately and tenderly loved; and he strove to prove—as he did prove to the conviction of many—that such behaviour was incompatible with such guilt, and almost of itself established his innocence. All that was sworn to *against* him, as having passed in that dreadful room, was in truth *for* him—unless all our knowledge of the best and of the worst of human nature were not, as folly, to be given to the winds. He beseeched the jury, therefore, to look at all the other circumstances that did indeed seem to bear hard upon the prisoner, in the light of his innocence, and not of his guilt, and that they would all fade into nothing. What mattered his possession of the watch and other trinkets? Lovers as they were, might not the unhappy girl have given them to him for temporary keepsakes? Or might he not have taken them from her in some playful mood, or received them—(and the brooch was cracked, and the

mainspring of the watch broken, though the glass was whole)—to get them repaired in the town, which he often visited, and she never? Could human credulity for one moment believe, that such a man as the prisoner at the bar had been sworn to be by a host of witnesses—and especially by that witness, who, with such overwhelming solemnity, had declared he loved him as his own son, and would have been proud if Heaven had given him such a son—he who had baptised him, and known him well ever since a child—that such a man could *rob* the body of her whom he had violated and murdered? If, under the instigation of the devil, he had violated and murdered her, and for a moment were made the hideous supposition, did vast hell hold that demon whose voice would have tempted the violator and murderer—suppose him both—yea, that man at the bar—sworn to by all the parish, if need were, as a man of tenderest charities, and generosity
[Pg 96] unbounded—in the lust of lucre, consequent on the satiating of another lust—to rob his victim of a few trinkets! Let loose the wildest imagination into the realms of wildest wickedness, and yet they dared not, as they feared God, to credit for a moment the union of such appalling and such paltry guilt, *in that man* who now trembled not before them, but who seemed cut off from all the sensibilities of this life by the scythe of Misery that had shorn him down! But why try to recount, however feebly, the line of defence taken by the speaker, who on that day seemed all but inspired? The sea may overturn rocks, or fire consume them till they split in pieces; but a crisis there sometimes is in man's destiny, which all the powers ever lodged in the lips of man, were they touched with a coal from heaven, cannot avert, and when even he who strives to save, feels and knows that he is striving all in vain—ay, vain as a worm—to arrest the tread of Fate about to trample down its victim into the dust. All hoped—many almost believed—that the prisoner would be acquitted—that a verdict of "Not Proven," at least, if not of "Not Guilty," would be returned; but *they* had not been sworn to do justice before man and before God—and, if need were, to seal up even the fountains of mercy in their hearts—flowing, and easily set a-flowing, by such a spectacle as that bar presented—a man already seeming to belong unto the dead!

In about a quarter of an hour the jury returned to the box—and the verdict, having been sealed with black wax, was handed up to the Judge, who read, "We unanimously find the prisoner Guilty." He then stood up to receive sentence of death. Not a dry eye was in the court during the Judge's solemn and affecting address to the criminal—except those of the Shadow on whom had been pronounced the doom. "Your body will be hung in chains on the moor—on a gibbet erected on the spot where you murdered the victim of your unhallowed lust, and there will your bones bleach in the sun, and rattle in the wind, after the insects and the birds of the air have devoured your flesh; and in all future times, the spot on which, God-forsaking and God-forsaken, you perpetrated that double crime, at which all humanity shudders, will be looked on from afar by the traveller passing through that lonesome wild with a sacred horror!" Here the voice of the Judge faltered, and he covered his face with his hands; but the prisoner stood unmoved in figure, and in
[Pg 97] face untroubled and when all was closed, was removed from the bar, the same ghostlike and unearthly phantom, seemingly unconscious of what had passed, or even of his own existence.

Surely now he will suffer his old father to visit him in his cell! "Once more only—only once more let me see him before I die!" were his words to the clergyman of the parish, whose Manse he had so often visited when a young and happy boy. That servant of Christ had not forsaken him whom now all the world had forsaken. As free from sin himself as might be mortal and fallen man—mortal because fallen—he knew from Scripture and from nature, that in "the lowest deep there is still a lower deep" in wickedness, into which all of woman born may fall, unless held back by the arm of the Almighty Being, whom they must serve steadfastly in holiness and truth. He knew, too, from the same source, that man cannot sin beyond the reach of God's mercy—if the worst of all imaginable sinners seek, in a Bible-breathed spirit at last, that mercy through the Atonement of the Redeemer. Daily—and nightly—he visited that cell; nor did he fear to touch the hand, now wasted to the bone, which, at the temptation of the Prince of the Air—who is mysteriously suffered to enter in at the gates of every human heart that is guarded not by the flaming sword of God's own Seraphim—was lately drenched in the blood of the most innocent creature that ever looked on the day. Yet a sore trial it was to his Christianity to find the criminal so obdurate. He would make no confession. Yet said that it was fit—that it was far best he should die—that he deserved death! But ever when the deed without a name was alluded to, his tongue was tied; and once in the midst of an impassioned prayer, beseeching him to listen to conscience and confess—he that prayed shuddered to behold him frown, and to hear bursting out in terrible energy, "Cease—cease to torment me, or you will drive me to deny my God!"

No father came to visit him in his cell. On the day of trial he had been missing from Moorside, and was seen next morning—(where he had been all night never was known, though it was afterwards rumoured that one like him had been seen sitting, as the gloaming darkened, on the very spot of the murder)—wandering about the hills, hither and thither, and round and round
[Pg 98] about, like a man stricken with blindness, and vainly seeking to find his home. When brought into the house, his senses were gone, and he had lost the power of speech. All he could do was to mutter some disjointed syllables, which he did continually, without one moment's cessation, one unintelligible and most rueful moan! The figure of his daughter seemed to cast no image on his eyes—blind and dumb he sat where he had been placed, perpetually wringing his hands, with his shaggy eyebrows drawn high up his forehead, and the fixed orbs—though stone-blind at least to all real things—beneath them flashing fire. He had borne up bravely—almost to the last—but had some tongue syllabled his son's doom in the solitude, and at that instant had insanity smitten him?

Such utter prostration of intellect had been expected by none; for the old man, up to the very night before the Trial, had expressed the most confident trust of his son's acquittal. Nothing had

ever served to shake his conviction of his innocence—though he had always forborne speaking about the circumstances of the murder—and had communicated to nobody any of the grounds on which he more than hoped in a case so hopeless; and though a trouble in his eyes often gave the lie to his lips, when he used to say to the silent neighbours, "We shall soon see him back at Moorside." Had his belief in his Ludovic's innocence, and his trust in God that that innocence would be established and set free, been so sacred, that the blow, when it did come, struck him like a hammer, and felled him to the ground, from which he had risen with a riven brain? In whatever way the shock had been given, it had been terrible; for old Gilbert Adamson was now a confirmed lunatic, and keepers were in Moorside—not keepers from a mad-house, for his daughter could not afford such tendence—but two of her brother's friends, who sat up with him alternately, night and day, while the arms of the old man, in his distraction, had to be bound with cords. That dreadful moaning was at an end now; but the echoes of the hills responded to his yells and shrieks; and people were afraid to go near the house. It was proposed among the neighbours to take Alice and little Ann out of it, and an asylum for them was in the Manse; but Alice would not stir at all their entreaties; and as, in such a case, it would have been too shocking
[Pg 99] to tear her away by violence, she was suffered to remain with him who knew her not, but who often—it was said—stared distractedly upon her, as if she had been some fiend sent in upon his insanity from the place of punishment. Weeks passed on, and still she was there—hiding herself at times from those terrifying eyes; and from her watching corner, waiting from morn till night, and from night till morn—for she seldom lay down to sleep, and had never undressed herself since that fatal sentence—for some moment of exhausted horror, when she might steal out, and carry some slight gleam of comfort, however evanescent, to the glimmer or the gloom in which the brain of her father swam through a dream of blood. But there were no lucid intervals; and ever as she moved towards him, like a pitying angel, did he furiously rage against her, as if she had been a fiend. At last, she who, though yet so young, had lived to see the murdered corpse of her dearest friend—murdered by her own only brother, whom, in secret, that murdered maiden had most tenderly loved—that murderous brother loaded with prison-chains, and condemned to the gibbet for inexpiable and unpardonable crimes—her father raving like a demon, self-murderous were his hands but free, nor visited by one glimpse of mercy from Him who rules the skies—after having borne more than, as she meekly said, had ever poor girl borne, she took to her bed quite heart-broken, and, the night before the day of execution, died. As for poor little Ann, she had been wiled away some weeks before; and in the blessed thoughtlessness of childhood, was not without hours of happiness among her playmates on the braes.

The Morning of that Day arose, and the Moor was all blackened with people round the tall gibbet, that seemed to have grown, with its horrid arms, out of the ground during the night. No sound of axes or hammers had been heard clinking during the dark hours—nothing had been seen passing along the road; for the windows of all the houses from which anything could have been seen, had been shut fast against all horrid sights—and the horses' hoofs and the wheels must have been muffled that had brought that hideous Framework to the Moor. But there it now stood—a dreadful Tree! The sun moved higher and higher up the sky, and all the eyes of that congregation
[Pg 100] were at once turned towards the east, for a dull sound, as of rumbling wheels and trampling feet, seemed shaking the Moor in that direction; and lo! surrounded with armed men on horseback, and environed with halberds, came on a cart, in which three persons seemed to be sitting, he in the middle all dressed in white—the death-clothes of the murderer—the unpitying shedder of most innocent blood.

There was no bell to toll there—but at the very moment he was ascending the scaffold, a black cloud knelled thunder, and many hundreds of people all at once fell down upon their knees. The man in white lifted up his eyes, and said, "O Lord God of Heaven! and Thou his blessed Son, who died to save sinners! accept this sacrifice!"

Not one in all that immense crowd could have known that that white apparition was Ludovic Adamson. His hair, that had been almost jet-black, was now white as his face—as his figure, dressed, as it seemed, for the grave. Are they going to execute the murderer in his shroud? Stone-blind, and stone-deaf, there he stood—yet had he, without help, walked up the steps of the scaffold. A hymn of several voices arose—the man of God close beside the criminal, with the Bible in his uplifted hands; but those bloodless lips had no motion—with him this world was not, though yet he was in life—in life, and no more! And was this the man who, a few months ago, flinging the fear of death from him, as a flash of sunshine flings aside the shades, had descended into that pit which an hour before had been bellowing, as the foul vapours exploded like cannons, and brought up the bodies of them who had perished in the womb of the earth? Was this he who once leapt into the devouring fire, and reappeared, after all had given over for lost the glorious boy, with an infant in his arms, while the flames seemed to eddy back, that they might scathe not the head of the deliverer, and a shower of blessings fell upon him as he laid it in its mother's bosom, and made the heart of the widow to sing for joy? It is he. And now the executioner pulls down the cord from the beam, and fastens it round the criminal's neck. His face is already covered, and that fatal handkerchief is in his hand. The whole crowd are now kneeling, and one multitudinous sob convulses the air;—when wild outcries, and shrieks, and yells, are at that moment heard from the distant gloom of the glen that opens up to Moorside, and three figures, one far in advance of
[Pg 101] the others, come flying, as on the wings of the wind, towards the gibbet. Hundreds started to their feet, and "'Tis the maniac—'tis the lunatic!" was the cry. Precipitating himself down a rocky hill-side, that seemed hardly accessible but to the goats, the maniac, the lunatic, at a few desperate leaps and bounds, just as it was expected he would have been dashed in pieces, alighted unstunned upon the level greensward; and now, far ahead of his keepers, with incredible swiftness neared the scaffold—and, the dense crowd making a lane for him in their fear and

astonishment, he flew up the ladder to the horrid platform, and, grasping his son in his arms, howled dreadfully over him; and then with a loud voice cried, "Saved—saved—saved!"

So sudden had been that wild rush, that all the officers of justice—the very executioner—stood aghast; and now the prisoner's neck is free from that accursed cord—his face is once more visible without that hideous shroud—and he sinks down senseless on the scaffold. "Seize him—seize him!" and he was seized—but no maniac, no lunatic, was the father now; for during the night, and during the dawn, and during the morn, and on to mid-day—on to the Hour of One—when all rueful preparations were to be completed—had Providence been clearing and calming the tumult in that troubled brain; and as the cottage clock struck one, memory brightened at the chime into a perfect knowledge of the past, and prophetic imagination saw the future lowering upon the dismal present. All night long, with the cunning of a madman—for all night long he had still been mad—the miserable old man had been disengaging his hands from the manacles, and that done, springing like a wild beast from his cage, he flew out of the open door, nor could a horse's speed on that fearful road have overtaken him before he reached the scaffold.

No need was there to hold the miserable man. He who had been so furious in his manacles at Moorside, seemed now, to the people at a distance, calm as when he used to sit in the elders' seat beneath the pulpit in that small kirk. But they who were on or near the scaffold saw something horrid in the fixedness of his countenance. "Let go your hold of me, ye fools!" he muttered to some of the mean wretches of the law, who still had him in their clutch—and tossing his hands on
[Pg 102] high, cried with a loud voice, "Give ear, ye Heavens! and hear, O Earth! I am the Violator—I am the Murderer!"

The moor groaned as in earthquake—and then all that congregation bowed their heads with a rustling noise, like a wood smitten by the wind. Had they heard aright the unimaginable confession? His head had long been grey—he had reached the term allotted to man's mortal life here below—threescore and ten. Morning and evening, never had the Bible been out of his hands at the hour set apart for family worship. And who so eloquent as he in expounding its most dreadful mysteries? The unregenerate heart of man, he had ever said—in scriptural phrase—was "desperately wicked." Desperately wicked indeed! And now again he tossed his arms wrathfully—so the wild motion looked—in the wrathful skies. "I ravished—I murdered her—ye know it, ye evil spirits in the depths of hell!" Consternation now fell on the minds of all—and the truth was clear as light—and all eyes knew at once that now indeed they looked on the murderer. The dreadful delusion under which all their understandings had been brought by the power of circumstances, was by that voice destroyed—the obduracy of him who had been about to die was now seen to have been the most heroic virtue—the self-sacrifice of a son, to save a father from ignominy and death.

"O monster, beyond the reach of redemption! and the very day after the murder, while the corpse was lying in blood on the Moor, he was with us in the House of God! Tear him in pieces—rend him limb from limb—tear him into a thousand pieces!"—"The Evil One had power given him to prevail against me, and I fell under the temptation. It was so written in the Book of Predestination, and the deed lies at the door of God!"—"Tear the blasphemer into pieces! Let the scaffold drink his blood!"—"So let it be, if it be so written, good people! Satan never left me since the murder till this day—he sat by my side in the kirk—when I was ploughing in the field—there—ever as I came back from the other end of the furrow—he stood on the head-rig in the shape of a black shadow. But now I see him not—he has returned to his den in the pit. I cannot imagine what I have been doing, or what has been done to me, all the time between the day of trial and
[Pg 103] this of execution. Was I mad? No matter. But you shall not hang Ludovic—he, poor boy, is innocent;—here, look at him—here—I tell you again—is the Violator and the Murderer!"

But shall the men in authority dare to stay the execution at a maniac's words? If they dare not—that multitude will, now all rising together like the waves of the sea. "Cut the cords asunder that bind our Ludovic's arms"—a thousand voices cried; and the murderer, unclasping a knife, that, all unknown to his keepers, he had worn in his breast when a maniac, sheared them asunder as the sickle shears the corn. But his son stirred not—and on being lifted *up* by his father, gave not so much as a groan. His heart had burst—and he was dead. No one touched the grey-headed murderer, who knelt down—not to pray, but to look into his son's eyes—and to examine his lips—and to feel his left breast—and to search out all the symptoms of a fainting-fit, or to assure himself—and many a corpse had the plunderer handled on the field after hush of the noise of battle—that this was death. He rose; and standing forward on the edge of the scaffold, said, with a voice that shook not, deep, strong, hollow, and hoarse—"Good people! I am *likewise* now the murderer of my daughter and of my son! and of myself!" Next moment, the knife was in his heart—and he fell down a corpse on the corpse of his Ludovic. All round the sultry horizon the black clouds had for hours been gathering—and now came the thunder and the lightning—and the storm. Again the whole multitude prostrated themselves on the moor—and the Pastor, bending over the dead bodies, said,

"This is Expiation!"

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MORNING MONOLOGUE.

"Knowledge is Power." So is Talent—so is Genius—so is Virtue. Which is the greatest? It might

seem hard to tell; but united they go forth conquering and to conquer. Nor is that union rare. Kindred in nature, they love to dwell together in the same "palace of the soul." Remember Milton. But too often they are disunited; and then, though still Powers, they are but feeble, and their defeats are frequent as their triumphs. What! is it so even with Virtue? It is, and it is not. Virtue may reign without the support of Talent and Genius; but her counsellor is Conscience, and what is Conscience but Reason rich by birthright in knowledge directly derived from the heaven of heavens beyond all the stars?

And may Genius and Talent indeed be, conceive, and execute, without the support of Virtue? You will find that question answered in the following lines by Charles Grant, which deserve the name of philosophical poetry:—

"Talents, 'tis true, quick, various, bright, has God
To Virtue oft denied, on Vice bestow'd;
Just as fond Nature lovelier colours brings
To deck the insect's than the eagle's wings.
But then of man the high-born nobler part,
The ethereal energies that touch the heart,
Creative Fancy, labouring Thought intense,
Imagination's wild magnificence,
And all the dread sublimities of Song—
These, Virtue! these, to thee alone belong."

Such is the natural constitution of humanity; and in the happiest state of social life, all its noblest Faculties would bear legitimate sway, each in its own province, within the spirit's ample domains.
[Pg 105] There, Genius would be honoured; and Poetry another name for religion. But to such a state there can, under the most favouring skies, be no more than an approximation; and the time never was when Virtue suffered no persecution, Honour no shame, Genius no neglect, nor fetters were not imposed by tyrannous power on the feet of the free. The age of Homer, the age of Solon, the age of Pericles, the age of Numa, the age of Augustus, the age of Alfred, the age of Leo, the age of Elizabeth, the age of Anne, the age of Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron, have they not been all bright and great ages? Yet had they been faithfully chronicled, over the misery and madness of how many despairing spirits fraught with heavenly fire, might we not have been called to pour forth our unavailing indignations and griefs!

Under despotic governments, again, such as have sunk deep their roots into Oriental soils, and beneath Oriental skies prosperously expanded their long-enduring umbrage, where might is right, and submission virtue, noble-minded men—for sake of that peace which is ever dearest to the human heart, and if it descend not a glad and gracious gift from Heaven, will yet not ungratefully be accepted when breathed somewhat sadly from the quieted bosom of earth by tyranny saved from trouble—have submitted, almost without mourning, to sing "many a lovely lay," that perished like the flowers around them, in praise of the Power at whose footstool they "stooped their anointed heads as low as death." Even then has Genius been honoured, because though it ceased to be august, still it was beautiful; it seemed to change fetters of iron into bands of roses, and to halo with a glory the brows of slaves. The wine-cup mantled in its light; and Love forgot in the bower Poetry built for bliss, that the bride might be torn from the bridegroom's bosom on her bridal night by a tyrant's lust. Even there Genius was happy, and diffused happiness; at its bidding was heard pipe, tabor, and dulcimer; and to its lips "warbling melody" life floated by, in the midst of all oppression, a not undelightful dream!

But how has it been with us in our Green Island of the West? Some people are afraid of revolutions. Heaven pity them! we have had a hundred since the Roman bridged our rivers, and led his highways over our mountains. And what the worse have we been of being thus revolved? We are no radicals; but we dearly love a revolution—like that of the stars. No two nights are the
[Pg 106] heavens the same—all the luminaries are revolving to the music of their own spheres. Look, we beseech you, on that new-risen star. He is elected by universal suffrage—a glorious representative of a million lesser lights; and on dissolution of *that* Parliament—how silent but how eloquent!—he is sure of his return. Why, we should dearly love the late revolution we have seen below—it is no longer called Reform—were it to fling up to free light from fettered darkness a few fine bold original spirits, who might give the whole world a new character, and a more majestic aspect to crouching life. But we look abroad and see strutting to and fro the sons of little men blown up with vanity, in a land where tradition not yet old tells of a race of giants. We are ashamed of ourselves to think we feared the throes of the times, seeing not portentous but pitiable births. Brush these away; and let us think of the great dead—let us look on the great living—and, strong in memory and hope, be confident in the cause of Freedom. "Great men *have been* among us—better none;" and can it be said that *now* there is "a want of books and men," or that those we have are mere dwarfs and duodecimos? Is there no energy, no spirit of adventure and enterprise, no passion in the character of our country? Has not wide over earth

"England sent her men, of men the chief,
To plant the Tree of Life, to plant fair Freedom's Tree?"

Has not she, the Heart of Europe and the Queen, kindled America into life, and raised up in the New World a power to balance the Old, star steadying star in their unconflicting courses? You can scarce see her shores for ships; her inland groves are crested with towers and temples; and mists brooding at intervals over her far-extended plains, tell of towns and cities, their hum

unheard by the gazer from her glorious hills. Of such a land it would need a gifted eye to look into all that is passing within the mighty heart; but it needs no gifted eye, no gifted ear, to see and hear there the glare and the groaning of great anguish, as of lurid breakers tumbling in and out of the caves of the sea. But is it or is it not a land where all the faculties of the soul are free as they ever were since the Fall? Grant that there are tremendous abuses in all departments of
[Pg 107] public and private life; that rulers and legislators have often been as deaf to the "still small voice" as to the cry of the million; that they whom they have ruled, and for whom they have legislated often so unwisely or wickedly, have been as often untrue to themselves, and in self-imposed idolatry

"Have bow'd their knees
To despicable gods."

Yet base, blind, and deaf (and better dumb) must be he who would deny, that here Genius has had, and now has, her noblest triumphs; that Poetry has here kindled purer fires on loftier altars than ever sent up their incense to Grecian skies; that Philosophy has sounded depths in which her torch was not extinguished, but, though bright, could pierce not the "heart of the mystery" into which it sent some strong illuminations; that Virtue here has had chosen champions victorious in their martyrdom; and Religion her ministers and her servants not unworthy of her whose title is from heaven.

Causes there have been, are, and ever will be, why often, even here, the very highest faculties "rot in cold obstruction." But in all the ordinary affairs of life, have not the best the best chance to win the day? Who, in general, achieve competence, wealth, splendour, magnificence, in their condition as citizens? The feeble, the ignorant, and the base, or the strong, the instructed, and the bold? Would you, at the offstart, back mediocrity with alien influence, against high talent with none but its own—the native "might that slumbers in a peasant's arm," or, nobler far, that which neither sleeps nor slumbers in a peasant's heart? There is something abhorrent from every sentiment in man's breast to see, as we too often do, imbecility advanced to high places by the mere accident of high birth. But how our hearts warm within us to behold the base born, if in Britain we may use the word, by virtue of their own irresistible energies, taking precedence, rightful and gladly-granted, of the blood of kings! Yet we have heard it whispered, insinuated, surmised, spoken, vociferated, howled, and roared in a voice of small-beer-souring thunder, that Church and State, Army and Navy, are all officered by the influence of the Back-stairs—that few or none but blockheads, by means of brass only, mount from the Bar which they have disturbed to that Bench which they disgrace; and that mankind intrust the cure of all diseases their flesh is
[Pg 108] heir to, to the exclusive care of every here and there a handful of old women.

Whether overstocked or not, 'twould be hard to say, but all professions are full—from that of Peer to that of Beggar. To live is the most many of us can do. Why then complain? Men should not complain when it is their duty as men to work. Silence need not be sullen—but better sullenness than all this outrageous outcry, as if words the winds scatter, were to drop into the soil and grow up grain. Processions! is this a time for full-grown men in holiday shows to play the part of children? If they desire advancement, let them, like their betters, turn to and work. All men worth mentioning in this country belong to the working classes. What seated Thurlow, and Wedderburne, and Scott, and Erskine, and Copley, and Brougham on the woolsack? Work. What made Wellington? For seven years war all over Spain, and finally at Waterloo—work—bloody and glorious work.

Yet still the patriot cry is of sinecures. Let the few sluggards that possess but cannot enjoy them, doze away on them till sinecures and sinecurists drop into the dust. Shall such creatures disturb the equanimity of the magnanimous working-classes of England? True to themselves in life's great relations, they need not grudge, for a little while longer, the paupers a few paltry pence out of their earnings; for they know a sure and silent deathblow has been struck against that order of things by the sense of the land, and that all who receive wages must henceforth give work. All along that has been the rule—these are the exceptions; or say, that has been the law—these are its revolutions. Let there be high rewards, and none grudge them—in honour and gold—for high work. And men of high talents—never extinct—will reach up their hands and seize them, amidst the acclamations of a people who have ever taken pride in a great ambition. If the competition is to be in future more open than ever, to know it is so will rejoice the souls of all who are not slaves. But clear the course! Let not the crowd rush in—for by doing so, they will bring down the racers, and be themselves trampled to death.

Now we say that the race is—if not always—ninety-nine times in a hundred—to the swift, and the battle to the strong. We may have been fortunate in our naval and military friends; but we cannot charge our memory with a single consummate ass holding a distinguished rank in either service.
[Pg 109] That such consummate asses are in both, we have been credibly informed, and believe it; and we have sometimes almost imagined that we heard their bray at no great distance, and the flapping of their ears. Poor creatures enough do rise by seniority or purchase, or if anybody know how else, we do not; and such will be the case to the end of the chapter of human accidents. But merit not only makes the man, but the officer on shore and at sea. They are as noble and discontented a set of fellows all, as ever boarded or stormed; and they will continue so, not till some change in the Admiralty, or at the Horse-guards, for Sir James Graham does his duty, and so does Lord Hill; but till a change in humanity, for 'tis no more than Adam did, and we attribute whatever may be amiss or awry, chiefly to the Fall. Let the Radicals set poor human nature on her legs again, and what would become of *them*? In the French service there is no rising at all, it seems, but by

merit; but there is also much running away; not in a disgraceful style, for our natural enemies and artificial friends are a brave race, but in mere indignation and disgust to see troops so shamefully ill-officered as ours, which it would be a disgrace to look in the face on the field, either in column or line. Therefore they never stand a charge, but are off in legions of honour, eagles and all, before troops that have been so uniformly flogged from time immemorial, as to have no other name but raw lobsters, led on by officers all shivering or benumbed under the "cold shade of aristocracy," like Picton and Pack.

We once thought of going ourselves to the English Bar, but were dissuaded from doing so by some judicious friends, who assured us we should only be throwing away our great talents and unexampled eloquence; for that success depended solely on interest, and we had none we knew of, either in high places or in low, and had then never seen an attorney. We wept for the fate of many dear friends in wigs, and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On our return from Palestine and other foreign parts, behold them all bending under briefs, bound by retaining fees, or, like game-hawks, wheeling in airy circuits over the rural provinces, and pouncing down on their prey, away to their eyries with talonfuls, which they devoured at their luxurious leisure, untroubled by any
[Pg 110] callow young! They now compose the Bench.

Ere we set off for Salem, we had thoughts of entering the Church, and of becoming Bishops. But it was necessary, we were told, first to be tutor to a lord. That, in our pride, we could not stomach; but if ours had not been the sin by which Satan fell, where now had been the excellent Howley? All our habits in youth led us to associate much with intending divines. A few of them are still curates; but 'twere vain to try to count the vicars, rectors, canons, deans, archdeacons, and bishops, with whom, when we were all undergraduates together at Oxford, we used to do nothing but read Greek all day, and Latin all night. Yet you hear nothing but abuse of such a Church! and are told to look at the Dissenters. We do look at them, and an uglier set we never saw; not one in a hundred, in his grimness, a gentleman. Not a single scholar have they got to show; and now that Hall is mute, not one orator. Their divinity is of the dust—and their discourses dry bones. Down with the old Universities—up with new. The old are not yet down, but the new are up; and how dazzling the contrast, even to the purblind! You may hew down trees, but not towers; and Granta and Rhedicyna will show their temples to the sun, ages after such structures shall have become hospitals. They enlighten the land. Beloved are they by all the gentlemen of England. Even the plucked think of them with tears of filial reverence, and having renewed their plumage, clap their wings, and crow defiance to all their foes. A man, you say, can get there no education to fit him for life. Bah! Tell that to the marines. Now and then one meets a man eminent in a liberal profession, who has not been at any place that could easily be called a College. But the great streams of talent in England keep perpetually flowing from the gates of her glorious Universities—and he who would deny it in any mixed company of leading men in London, would only have to open his eyes in the hush that rebuked his folly, to see that he was a Cockney, clever enough, perhaps, in his own small way, and the author of some sonnets, but even to his own feelings painfully out of place among men who had not studied at the Surrey.

We cannot say that we have any fears, this fine clear September morning, for the Church of England in England. In Ireland, deserted and betrayed, it has received a dilapidating shock. Fain
[Pg 111] would seven millions of "the finest people on the earth," and likewise the most infatuated, who are so proud of the verdure of their isle that they love to make "the green one red," see the entire edifice overthrown, not one stone left upon another, and its very name smothered in a smoky cloud of ascending dust. They have told us so in yells, over which has still been heard "the wolf's long howl," the savage cry of the O'Connell. And Ministers who pretend to be Protestants, and in reform have not yet declared against the Reformation, have tamely yielded, recreants from the truth, to brawlers who would pull down her holiest altars, and given up "pure religion, breathing household laws," a sacrifice to superstition. But there is a power enshrined in England which no Government dare seek to desecrate—in the hearts of the good and wise, grateful to an establishment that has guarded Christianity from corruption, and is venerated by all the most enlightened spirits who conscientiously worship without its pale, and know that in the peaceful shadow of its strength repose their own humbler and untroubled altars.

We have been taking a cheerful—a hopeful view of our surrounding world, as it is enclosed within these our seas, whose ideal murmur seemed a while to breathe in unison with our Monologue. We have been believing that in this our native land, the road of merit is the road to success—say happiness. And is not the law the same in the world of Literature and the Fine Arts? Give a great genius anything like fair play, and he will gain glory—nay, bread. True, he may be before his age, and may have to create his worshippers. But how few such! And is it a disgrace to an age to produce a genius whose grandeur it cannot all at once comprehend? The works of genius are surely not often incomprehensible to the highest contemporary minds, and if they win their admiration, pity not the poor Poet. But pray syllable the living Poet's name who has had reason to complain of having fallen on evil days, or who is with "darkness and with danger compassed round." From humblest birthplaces in the obscurest nooks frequently have we seen

"The fulgent head
Star-bright appear;"

from unsuspected rest among the water-lilies of the mountain mere, the snow-white swan in full
[Pg 112] plumage soar into the sky. Hush! no nonsense about Wordsworth. "Far-off his coming shone;" and what if for a while men knew not whether 'twas some mirage-glimmer, or the dawning of a new "orb of song!"

We have heard rather too much even from that great poet about the deafness and blindness of the present time. No Time but the future, he avers, has ears or eyes for divine music and light. Was Homer in his own day obscure, or Shakespeare? But Heaven forbid we should force the bard into an argument; we allow him to sit undisturbed by us in the bower nature delighted to build for him, with small help from his own hands, at the dim end of that alley green, among lake-murmur and mountain-shadow, for ever haunted by ennobling visions. But we love and respect Present Time—partly, we confess, because he has shown some little kindly feeling for ourselves, whereas we fear Future Time may forget us among many others of his worthy father's friends, and the name of Christopher North

"Die on his ears a faint unheeded sound."

But Present Time has not been unjust to William Wordsworth. Some small temporalities were so; imps running about the feet of Present Time, and sometimes making him stumble: but on raising his eyes from the ground, he saw something shining like an Apparition on the mountain-top, and he hailed, and with a friendly voice, the advent of another true Poet of nature and of man.

We must know how to read that prophet, before we preach from any text in his book of revelations.

"We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness."

Why spoke he thus? Because a deep darkness had fallen upon him all alone in a mountain-cave, and he quaked before the mystery of man's troubled life.

"He thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride;
Of him who walk'd in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain-side!"

and if they died miserably, "How may I perish!" But they wanted wisdom. Therefore the
[Pg 113] marvellous boy drank one bowl drugged with sudden, and the glorious ploughman many bowls drugged with lingering death. If we must weep over the woes of Genius, let us know for whom we may rightly shed our tears. With one drop of ink you may write the names of all

"The mighty Poets in their misery dead."

Wordsworth wrote those lines, as we said, in the inspiration of a profound but not permanent melancholy; and they must not be profaned by being used as a quotation in defence of accusations against human society, which, in some lips, become accusations against Providence. The mighty Poets have been not only wiser but happier than they knew; and what glory from heaven and earth was poured over their inward life, up to the very moment it darkened away into the gloom of the grave!

Many a sad and serious hour have we read d'Israeli, and many a lesson may all lovers of literature learn from his well-instructed books. But from the unhappy stories therein so feelingly and eloquently narrated, has many "a famous ape" drawn conclusions the very reverse of those which he himself leaves to be drawn by all minds possessed of any philosophy. Melancholy the moral of these moving tales; but we must look for it, not into the society that surrounds us, though on it too we must keep a watchful, and, in spite of all its sins, a not irreverent eye, but into our own hearts. There lies the source of evil which some evil power perhaps without us stirs up till it wells over in misery. Then fiercely turns the wretch first against "the world and the world's law," both sometimes iniquitous, and last of all against the rebellious spirit in his own breast, but for whose own innate corruption his moral being would have been victorious against all outward assaults, violent or insidious, "and to the end persisting safe arrived."

Many men of genius have died without their fame, and for their fate we may surely mourn without calumniating our kind. It was their lot to die. Such was the will of God. Many such have come and gone, ere they knew themselves what they were; their brothers and sisters and friends knew it not; knew it not their fathers and their mothers; nor the village maidens on whose
[Pg 114] bosoms they laid their dying heads. Many, conscious of the divine flame, and visited by mysterious stirrings that would not let them rest, have like vernal wildflowers withered, or been cut down like young trees in the season of leaf and blossom. Of this our mortal life what are these but beautiful evanishings! Such was our young Scottish Poet, Michael Bruce—a fine scholar, who taught a little wayside school, and died, a mere lad, of consumption. Loch Leven Castle, where Mary Stuart was imprisoned, looks not more melancholy among the dim waters for her than for its own Poet's sake! The linnet, in its joy among the yellow broom, sings not more sweetly than did he in his sadness, sitting beside his unopened grave, "one song that will not die," though the dirge but draw now and then a tear from some simple heart.

"Now spring returns—but not to me returns
The vernal joy my better years have known;
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
And all the joys of life with health are flown."

To young Genius to die is often a great gain. The green leaf was almost hidden in blossoms, and

the tree put forth beautiful promise. Cold winds blew, and clouds intercepted the sunshine; but it felt the dews of heaven, and kept flourishing fair even in the moonlight, deriving sweet sustenance from the stars. But would all those blossoms have been fruit? Many would have formed, but more perhaps dropt in unperceived decay, and the tree which "all eyes that looked on loved," might not have been the pride of the garden. Death could not permit the chance of such disappointment, stepped kindly in, and left the spring-dream "sweet but mournful to the soul," among its half-fancied memories. Such was the fate, perhaps, of Henry Kirke White. His fine moral and intellectual being was not left to pine away neglected; and if, in gratitude and ambition, twin-births in that noble heart, he laid down his life for sake of the lore he loved, let us lament the dead with no passionate ejaculations over injustice by none committed, console ourselves with the thought, in noways unkind to his merits, that he died in a mild bright spring that might have been succeeded by no very glorious summer; and that, fading away as he did
[Pg 115] among the tears of the good and great, his memory has been embalmed, not only in his own gentle inspirations, but in the immortal eulogy of Southey. But, alas! many thus endowed by nature "have waged with fortune an unequal war;" and pining away in poverty and disappointment, have died broken-hearted—and been buried—some in unhonoured, some even in unwept graves! And how many have had a far more dismal lot, because their life was not so innocent! The children of misfortune, but of error too—of frailty, vice, and sin. Once gone astray, with much to tempt them on, and no voice, no hand, to draw them back, theirs has been at first a flowery descent to death, but soon sorely beset with thorns, lacerating the friendless wretches, till, with shame and remorse their sole attendants, they have tottered into uncoffined holes and found peace.

With sorrows and sufferings like these, it would be hardly fair to blame society at large for having little or no sympathy; for they are, in the most affecting cases, borne in silence, and are unknown even to the generous and humane in their own neighbourhood, who might have done something or much to afford encouragement or relief. Nor has Charity always neglected those who so well deserved her open hand, and in their virtuous poverty might, without abatement of honourable pride in themselves, have accepted silent succour to silent distress. Pity that her blessings should be so often intercepted by worthless applicants, on their way, it may be said, to the magnanimous who have not applied at all, but spoken to her heart in a silent language, which was not meant even to express the penury it betrayed. But we shall never believe that dew twice blessed seldom descends, in such a land as ours, on the noble young head that else had sunk like a chance flower in some dank shade, left to wither among weeds. We almost venture to say, that much of such unpitied, because often unsuspected suffering, cannot cease to be without a change in the moral government of the world.

Nor has Genius a right to claim from Conscience what is due but to Virtue. None who love humanity can wish to speak harshly of its mere frailties or errors—but none who revere morality can allow privilege to its sins. All who sin suffer, with or without genius; and we are nowhere taught in the New Testament, that remorse in its agony, and penitence in its sorrow, visit men's
[Pg 116] imaginations only; but whatever way they enter, their rueful dwelling is in the heart. Poets shed no bitterer tears than ordinary men; and Fonblanque finely showed us, in one of his late little essays, clear as wells and deep as tarns, that so far from there being anything in the constitution of genius naturally kindred either to vice or misery, it is framed of light and love and happiness, and that its sins and sufferings come not from the spirit but from the flesh. Yet is its flesh as firm as, and perhaps somewhat finer than, that of the common clay; but still it is clay—for all men are dust.

But what if they who, on the ground of genius, claim exemption from our blame, and inclusion within our sympathies, even when seen suffering from their own sins, have no genius at all, but are mere ordinary men, and but for the fumes of some physical excitement, which they mistake for the airs of inspiration, are absolutely stupider than people generally go, and even without any tolerable abilities for alphabetical education? Many such run versifying about, and will not try to settle down into any easy sedentary trade, till, getting thirsty through perpetual perspiration, they take to drinking, come to you with subscription-papers for poetry, with a cock in their eye that tells of low tippling-houses, and, accepting your half-crown, slander you when melting it in the purling purlieus of their own donkey-browsed Parnassus.

Can this age be fairly charged—we speak of England and Scotland—with a shameful indifference —or worse—a cruel scorn—or worse still—a barbarous persecution of young persons of humble birth, in whom there may appear a promise of talent, or of genius? Many are the scholars in whom their early benefactors have had reason to be proud of themselves, while they have been happy to send their sons to be instructed in the noblest lore, by men whose boyhood they had rescued from the darkness of despair, and clothed it with the warmth and light of hope. And were we to speak of endowments in schools and colleges, in which so many fine scholars have been brought up from among the humbler classes, who but for them had been bred to some mean handicraft, we should show better reason still for believing that moral and intellectual worth is not overlooked, or left to pine neglected in obscure places, as it is too much the fashion with a
[Pg 117] certain set of discontented declaimers to give out; but that in no other country has such provision been made for the meritorious children of the enlightened poor as in England. But we fear that the talent and the genius which, according to them, have been so often left or sent to beggary, to the great reproach even of our national character, have not been of a kind which a thoughtful humanity would in its benefactions have recognised; for it looks not with very hopeful eyes on mere irregular sallies of fancy, least of all when spurning prudence and propriety, and symptomatic of a mental constitution easily excited, but averse to labour, and insensible to the

delight labour brings with it, when the faculties are all devoted in steadfastness of purpose to the acquisition of knowledge and the attainment of truth.

'Tis not easy to know, seeing it is so difficult to define it, whether this or that youth who thinks he has genius, has it or not: the only proof he may have given of it is perhaps a few copies of verses, which breathe the animal gladness of young life, and are tinged with tints of the beautiful, which joy itself, more imaginative than it ever again will be, steals from the sunset; but sound sense, and judgment, and taste which is sense and judgment of all finest feelings and thoughts, and the love of light dawning on the intellect, and ability to gather into knowledge facts near and from afar, till the mind sees systems, and in them understands the phenomena which, when looked at singly, perplexed the pleasure of the sight—these, and aptitudes and capacities and powers such as these, are indeed of promise, and more than promise; they are already performance, and justify in minds thus gifted, and in those who watch their workings, hopes of a wiser and happier future when the boy shall be a man.

Perhaps too much honour, rather than too little, has been shown by this age to mediocre poetry and other works of fiction. A few gleams of genius have given some writers of little worth a considerable reputation; and great waxed the pride of poetasters. But true poetry burst in beauty over the land, and we became intolerant of "false glitter." Fresh sprang its flowers from the "dædal earth," or seemed, they were so surpassingly beautiful, as if spring had indeed descended from heaven, "veiled in a shower of shadowing roses," and no longer could we suffer young
[Pg 118] gentlemen and ladies, treading among the profusion, to gather the glorious scatterings, and weaving them into fantastic or even tasteful garlands, to present them to us, as if they had been raised from the seed of their own genius, and entitled therefore "to bear their name in the wild woods." This flower-gathering, pretty pastime though it be, and altogether innocent, fell into disrepute; and then all such florists began to complain of being neglected, or despised, or persecuted, and their friends to lament over their fate, the fate of all genius, "in amorous ditties all a summer's day."

Besides the living poets of highest rank, are there not many whose claims to join the sacred band have been allowed, because their lips, too, have sometimes been touched with a fire from heaven? Second-rate indeed! Ay, well for those who are third, fourth, or fifth rate—knowing where sit Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton. Round about Parnassus run *many* parallel roads, with forests of "cedar and branching palm" between, overshadowing the sunshine on each magnificent level with a sense of something more sublime still nearer the forked summit; and each band, so that they be not ambitious overmuch, in their own region may wander or repose in grateful bliss. Thousands look up with envy from "the low-lying fields of the beautiful land" immediately without the line that goes wavingly asweep round the base of the holy mountain, separating it from the common earth. What clamour and what din from the excluded crowd! Many are heard there to whom nature has been kind, but they have not yet learned "to know themselves," or they would retire, but not afar off, and in silence adore. And so they do ere long, and are happy in the sight of "the beauty still more beauteous" revealed to their fine perceptions, though to them was not given the faculty that by combining in spiritual passion creates. But what has thither brought the self-deceived, who will not be convinced of their delusion, even were Homer or Milton's very self to frown on them with eyes no longer dim, but angry in their brightness like lowering stars?

But we must beware—perhaps too late—of growing unintelligible, and ask you, in plainer terms, if you do not think that by far the greatest number of all those who raise an outcry against the injustice of the world to men of genius, are persons of the meanest abilities, who have all their
[Pg 119] lives been foolishly fighting with their stars? Their demons have not whispered to them "have a taste," but "you have genius," and the world gives the demons the lie. Thence anger, spite, rancour, and envy eat their hearts, and they "rail against the Lord's anointed." They set up idols of clay, and fall down and worship them—or idols of brass, more worthless than clay; or they perversely, and in hatred, not in love, pretend reverence for the Fair and Good, because, forsooth, placed by man's ingratitude too far in the shade, whereas man's pity has, in deep compassion, removed the objects of their love, because of their imperfections not blameless, back in among that veiling shade, that their beauty might still be visible while their deformities were hidden in "a dim religious light."

Let none of the sons or daughters of genius hearken to such outcry but with contempt—and at all times with suspicion, when they find themselves the objects of such lamentations. The world is not—at least does not wish to be an unkind, ungenerous, and unjust world. Many who think themselves neglected, are far more thought of than they suppose; just as many who imagine the world ringing with their name, are in the world's ears nearly anonymous. Only one edition or two of your poems have sold—but is it not pretty well that five hundred or a thousand copies have been read, or glanced over, or looked at, or skimmed, or skipped, or fondled, or petted, or tossed aside "between malice and true love," by ten times that number of your fellow-creatures, not one of whom ever saw your face; while many millions of men, nearly your equals, and not a few millions your superiors far, have contentedly dropt into the grave, at the close of a long life, without having once "invoked the Muse," and who would have laughed in your face had you talked to them, even in their greatest glee, about their genius?

There is a glen in the Highlands (dearly beloved Southrons, call on us, on your way through Edinburgh, and we shall delight to instruct you how to walk our mountains) called Glencro—very unlike Glenco. A good road winds up the steep ascent, and at the summit there is a stone seat on which you read "*Rest and be thankful*." You do so—and are not a little proud—if pedestrians—of your achievement. Looking up, you see cliffs high above your head (not the Cobbler), and in the

[Pg 120] clear sky, as far above them, a balanced bird. You envy him his seemingly motionless wings, and wonder at his air-supporters. Down he darts, or aside he shoots, or right up he soars, and you wish you were an Eagle. You have reached Rest-and-be-thankful, yet rest you will not, and thankful you will not be, and you scorn the mean inscription, which many a worthier wayfarer has blessed, while sitting on that stone he has said, "give us this day our daily bread," eat his crust, and then walked away contented down to Cairndow. Just so has it been with you sitting at your appointed place—pretty high up—on the road to the summit of the Biforked Hill. You look up and see Byron—there "sitting where you may not soar,"—and wish you were a great Poet. But you are no more a great Poet than an Eagle eight feet from wing-tip to wing-tip—and will not rest-and-be-thankful that you are a man and a Christian. Nay, you are more, an author of no mean repute; and your prose is allowed to be excellent, better far than the best paragraph in this our Morning Monologue. But you are sick of walking, and nothing will satisfy you but to fly. Be contented, as we are, with feet, and weep not for wings; and let us take comfort together from a cheering quotation from the philosophic Gray—

"For they that creep and they that fly,
Just end where they began!"

[Pg 121]

THE FIELD OF FLOWERS.

A May-morning on Ulswater and the banks of Ulswater—commingled earth and heaven! Spring is many-coloured as Autumn; but now Joy scatters the hues daily brightening into greener life, then Melancholy dropt them daily dimming into yellower death. The fear of Winter then—but now the hope of Summer; and Nature rings with hymns hailing the visible advent of the perfect year. If for a moment the woods are silent, it is but to burst forth anew into louder song. The rain is over and gone—but the showery sky speaks in the streams on a hundred hills; and the wide mountain gloom opens its heart to the sunshine that on many a dripping precipice burns like fire. Nothing seems inanimate. The very clouds and their shadows look alive—the trees, never dead, are wide-awakened from their sleep—families of flowers are frequenting all the dewy places—old walls are splendid with the light of lichens—and birch-crowned cliffs up among the coves send down their fine fragrance to the Lake on every bolder breath that whitens with breaking wavelets the blue of its breezy bosom. Nor mute the voice of man. The shepherd is whooping on the hill—the ploughman calling to his team somewhere among the furrows in some small late field, won from the woods; and you hear the laughter, and the echoes of the laughter—one sound—of children busied in half-work half-play; for what else in vernal sunshine is the occupation of young rustic life? 'Tis no Arcadia—no golden age. But a lovelier scene—in the midst of all its grandeur—is not in merry and majestic England; nor did the hills of this earth ever circumscribe a pleasanter dwelling for a nobler peasantry, than these Cumbrian ranges of rocks and pastures, where the raven croaks in his own region, unregarded in theirs by the fleecy flocks. How beautiful the
[Pg 122] Church Tower!

On a knoll not far from the shore, and not high above the water, yet by an especial felicity of place gently commanding all that reach of the Lake with all its ranges of mountains—every single tree, every grove, and all the woods seeming to show or to conceal the scene at the bidding of the Spirit of Beauty—reclined two Figures—the one almost rustic, but venerable in the simplicity of old age—the other no longer young, but still in the prime of life—and though plainly apparelled, with form and bearing such as are pointed out in cities, because belonging to distinguished men. The old man behaved towards him with deference, but not humility; and between them two—in many things unlike—it was clear even from their silence that there was friendship.

A little way off, and sometimes almost running, now up and now down the slopes and hollows, was a girl about eight years old—whether beautiful or not you could not know, for her face was either half-hidden in golden hair, or when she tossed the tresses from her brow, it was so bright in the sunshine that you saw no features, only a gleam of joy. Now she was chasing the butterflies, not to hurt them, but to get a nearer sight of their delicate gauze wings—the first that had come—she wondered whence—to waver and wanton for a little while in the spring sunshine, and then, she felt, as wondrously, one and all, as by consent, to vanish. And now she stooped as if to pull some little wildflower, her hand for a moment withheld by a loving sense of its loveliness, but ever and anon adding some new colour to the blended bloom intended to gladden her father's eyes—though the happy child knew full well, and sometimes wept to know, that she herself had his entire heart. Yet gliding, or tripping, or dancing along, she touched not with fairy foot one white clover-flower on which she saw working the silent bee. Her father looked too often sad, and she feared—though what it was, she imagined not even in dreams—that some great misery must have befallen him before they came to live in the glen. And such, too, she had heard from a chance whisper, was the belief of their neighbours. But momentary the shadows on the light of childhood! Nor was she insensible to her own beauty, that with the innocence it enshrined combined to make her happy; and first met her own eyes every morning, when most beautiful,
[Pg 123] awakening from the hushed awe of her prayers. She was clad in russet like a cottager's child; but her air spoke of finer breeding than may be met with among those mountains—though natural grace accompanies there many a maiden going with her pitcher to the well—and gentle blood and old flows there in the veins of now humble men—who, but for the decay of families once high, might have lived in halls, now dilapidated, and scarcely distinguished through masses of ivy from

the circumjacent rocks!

The child stole close behind her father, and kissing his cheek, said, "Were there ever such lovely flowers seen in Ulswater before, father? I do not believe that they will ever die." And she put them in his breast. Not a smile came to his countenance—no look of love—no faint recognition—no gratitude for the gift which at other times might haply have drawn a tear. She stood abashed in the sternness of his eyes, which, though fixed on her, seemed to see her not; and feeling that her glee was mistimed—for with such gloom she was not unfamiliar—the child felt as if her own happiness had been sin, and, retiring into a glade among the broom, sat down and wept.

"Poor wretch, better far that she never had been born."

The old man looked on his friend with compassion, but with no surprise; and only said, "God will dry up her tears."

These few simple words, uttered in a solemn voice, but without one tone of reproach, seemed somewhat to calm the other's trouble, who first looking towards the spot where his child was sobbing to herself, though he heard it not, and then looking up to heaven, ejaculated for her sake a broken prayer. He then would have fain called her to him; but he was ashamed that even she should see him in such a passion of grief—and the old man went to her of his own accord, and bade her, as from her father, again to take her pastime among the flowers. Soon was she dancing in her happiness as before; and, that her father might hear she was obeying him, singing a song.

"For five years every Sabbath have I attended divine service in your chapel—yet dare I not call myself a Christian. I have prayed for faith—nor, wretch that I am, am I an unbeliever. But I fear to fling myself at the foot of the cross. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

[Pg 124] The old man opened not his lips; for he felt that there was about to be made some confession. Yet he doubted not that the sufferer had been more sinned against than sinning; for the goodness of the stranger—so called still after five years' residence among the mountains—was known in many a vale—and the Pastor knew that charity covereth a multitude of sins—and even as a moral virtue prepares the heart for heaven. So sacred a thing is solace in this woeful world.

"We have walked together, many hundred times, for great part of a day, by ourselves two, over long tracts of uninhabited moors, and yet never once from my lips escaped one word about my fates or fortunes—so frozen was the secret in my heart. Often have I heard the sound of your voice, as if it were that of the idle wind; and often the words I did hear seemed, in the confusion, to have no relation to us, to be strange syllablings in the wilderness, as from the hauntings of some evil spirit instigating me to self-destruction."

"I saw that your life was oppressed by some perpetual burden; but God darkened not your mind while your heart was disturbed so grievously; and well pleased were we all to think, that in caring so kindly for the griefs of others, you might come at last to forget your own; or if that were impossible, to feel, that with the alleviations of time, and sympathy, and religion, yours was no more than the common lot of sorrow."

They rose—and continued to walk in silence—but not apart—up and down that small sylvan enclosure overlooked but by rocks. The child saw her father's distraction—no unusual sight to her; yet on each recurrence as mournful and full of fear as if seen for the first time—and pretended to be playing aloof with her face pale in tears.

"That child's mother is not dead. Where she is now I know not—perhaps in a foreign country hiding her guilt and her shame. All say that a lovelier child was never seen than that wretch—God bless her—how beautiful is the poor creature now in her happiness singing over her flowers! Just such another must her mother have been at her age. She is now an outcast—and an adulteress."

The Pastor turned away his face, for in the silence he heard groans, and the hollow voice again spoke.—

"Through many dismal days and nights have I striven to forgive her, but never for many hours
[Pg 125] together have I been enabled to repent my curse. For on my knees I implored God to curse her—her head—her eyes—her breast—her body—mind, heart, and soul—and that she might go down a loathsome leper to the grave."

"Remember what He said to the woman—'Go, and sin no more!'"

"The words have haunted me all up and down the hills—His words and mine; but mine have always sounded liker justice at last—for my nature was created human—and human are all the passions that pronounced that holy or unholy curse!"

"Yet you would not curse her now—were she lying here at your feet—or if you were standing by her deathbed?"

"Lying here at my feet! Even here—on this very spot—not blasted, but green through all the year—within the shelter of these two rocks—she did lie at my feet in her beauty—and as I thought her innocence—my own happy bride! Hither I brought her to be blest—and blest I was even up to the measure of my misery. This world is hell to me now—but then it was heaven!"

"These awful names are of the mysteries beyond the grave."

"Hear me and judge. She was an orphan; all her father's and mother's relations were dead, but a

few who were very poor. I married her, and secured her life against this heartless and wicked world. That child was born—and while it grew like a flower—she left it—and its father—me who loved her beyond light and life, and would have given up both for her sake."

"And have not yet found heart to forgive her—miserable as she needs must be—seeing she has been a great sinner!"

"Who forgives? The father his profligate son, or disobedient daughter? No; he disinherits his firstborn, and suffers him to perish, perhaps by an ignominious death. He leaves his only daughter to drag out her days in penury—a widow with orphans. The world may condemn, but is silent; he goes to church every Sabbath, but no preacher denounces punishment on the unrelenting, the unforgiving parent. Yet how easily might he have taken them both back to his heart, and loved them better than ever! But she poisoned my cup of life when it seemed to
[Pg 126] overflow with heaven. Had God dashed it from my lips, I could have borne my doom. But with her own hand which I had clasped at the altar—and with our Lucy at her knees—she gave me that loathsome draught of shame and sorrow:—I drank it to the dregs—and it is burning all through my being—now—as if it had been hell-fire from the hands of a fiend in the shape of an angel. In what page of the New Testament am I told to forgive her? Let me see the verse—and then shall I know that Christianity is an imposture; for the voice of God within me—the conscience which is His still small voice—commands me never from my memory to obliterate that curse—never to forgive her, and her wickedness—not even if we should see each other's shadows in a future state, after the day of judgment."

His countenance grew ghastly—and staggering to a stone, he sat down and eyed the skies with a vacant stare, like a man whom dreams carry about in his sleep. His face was like ashes—and he gasped like one about to fall into a fit. "Bring me water"—and the old man motioned on the child, who, giving ear to him for a moment, flew away to the Lakeside with an urn she had brought with her for flowers; and held it to her father's lips. His eyes saw it not;—there was her sweet pale face all wet with tears, almost touching his own—her innocent mouth breathing that pure balm that seems to a father's soul to be inhaled from the bowers of paradise. He took her into his bosom—and kissed her dewy eyes—and begged her to cease her sobbing—to smile—to laugh—to sing—to dance away into the sunshine—*to be happy!* And Lucy afraid, not of her father, but of his kindness—for the simple creature was not able to understand his wild utterance of blessings—returned to the glade but not to her pastime, and couching like a fawn among the fern, kept her eyes on her father, and left her flowers to fade unheeded beside her empty urn.

"Unintelligible mystery of wickedness! That child was just three years old the very day it was forsaken—she abandoned it and me on its birthday! Twice had that day been observed by us—as the sweetest—the most sacred of holidays; and now that it had again come round—but I not present—for I was on foreign service—thus did she observe it—and disappeared with her paramour. It so happened that we went that day into action—and I committed her and our child
[Pg 127] to the mercy of God in fervent prayers; for love made me religious—and for their sakes I feared though I shunned not death. I lay all night among the wounded on the field of battle—and it was a severe frost. Pain kept me from sleep, but I saw them as distinctly as in a dream—the mother lying with her child in her bosom in our own bed. Was not that vision mockery enough to drive me mad? After a few weeks a letter came to me from herself—and I kissed it and pressed it to my heart; for no black seal was there—and I knew that little Lucy was alive. No meaning for a while seemed to be in the words—and then they began to blacken into ghastly characters—till at last I gathered from the horrid revelation that she was sunk in sin and shame, steeped for evermore in utmost pollution.

"A friend was with me, and I gave it to him to read—for in my anguish at first I felt no shame—and I watched his face as he read it, that I might see corroboration of the incredible truth, which continued to look like falsehood, even while it pierced my heart with agonising pangs. 'It may be a forgery,' was all he could utter—after long agitation; but the shape of each letter was too familiar to my eyes—the way in which the paper was folded—and I knew my doom was sealed. Hours must have passed, for the room grew dark—and I asked him to leave me for the night. He kissed my forehead—for we had been as brothers. I saw him next morning—dead—cut nearly in two—yet had he left a paper for me, written an hour before he fell, so filled with holiest friendship, that oh! how even in my agony I wept for him, now but a lump of cold clay and blood, and envied him at the same time a soldier's grave!

"And has the time indeed come that I can thus speak calmly of all that horror? The body was brought into my room, and it lay all day and all night close to my bed. But false was I to all our life-long friendship—and almost with indifference I looked upon the corpse. Momentary starts of affection seized me—but I cared little or nothing for the death of him, the tender and the true, the gentle and the brave, the pious and the noble-hearted; my anguish was all for her, the cruel and the faithless, dead to honour, to religion dead—dead to all the sanctities of nature—for her, and for her alone, I suffered all ghastliest agonies—nor any comfort came to me in my despair,
[Pg 128] from the conviction that she was worthless; for desperately wicked as she had shown herself to be—oh! crowding came back upon me all our hours of happiness—all her sweet smiles—all her loving looks—all her affectionate words—all her conjugal and maternal tendernesses; and the loss of all that bliss—the change of it all into strange, sudden, shameful, and everlasting misery, smote me till I swooned, and was delivered up to a trance in which the rueful reality was mixed up with phantasms more horrible than man's mind can suffer out of the hell of sleep!

"Wretched coward that I was to outlive that night! But my mind was weak from great loss of

blood—and the blow so stunned me that I had not strength of resolution to die. I might have torn off the bandages—for nobody watched me—and my wounds were thought mortal. But the love of life had not welled out with all those vital streams; and as I began to recover, another passion took possession of me—and I vowed that there should be atonement and revenge. I was not obscure. My dishonour was known through the whole army. Not a tent—not a hut—in which my name was not bandied about—a jest in the mouths of profligate poltroons—pronounced with pity by the compassionate brave. I had commanded my men with pride. No need had I ever had to be ashamed when I looked on our colours; but no wretch led out to execution for desertion or cowardice ever shrunk from the sun, and from the sight of human faces arrayed around him, with more shame and horror than did I when, on my way to a transport, I came suddenly on my own corps, marching to music as if they were taking up a position in the line of battle—as they had often done with me at their head—all sternly silent before an approaching storm of fire. What brought them there? To do me honour! Me, smeared with infamy, and ashamed to lift my eyes from the mire. Honour had been the idol I worshipped—alas! too, too passionately far—and now I lay in my litter like a slave sold to stripes—and heard as if a legion of demons were mocking me with loud and long huzzas; and then a confused murmur of blessings on our noble commander, so they called me—me, despicable in my own esteem—scorned, insulted, forsaken—me, who could not bind to mine the bosom that for years had touched it—a wretch so poor in power over a
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woman's heart, that no sooner had I left her to her own thoughts than she felt that she had never loved me, and, opening her fair breast to a new-born bliss, sacrificed me without remorse—nor could bear to think of me any more as her husband—not even for sake of that child whom I knew she loved—for no hypocrite was she there; and oh! lost creature though she was—even now I wonder over that unaccountable desertion—and much she must have suffered from the image of that small bed, beside which she used to sit for hours, perfectly happy from the sight of that face which I too so often blessed in her hearing, because it was so like her own! Where is my child? Have I frightened her away into the wood by my unfatherly looks? She too will come to hate me—oh! see yonder her face and her figure like a fairy's, gliding through among the broom! Sorrow has no business with her—nor she with sorrow. Yet—even her how often have I made weep! All the unhappiness she has ever known has all come from me; and would I but leave her alone to herself in her affectionate innocence, the smile that always lies on her face when she is asleep would remain there—only brighter—all the time her eyes are awake; but I dash it away by my unhallowed harshness, and people looking on her in her trouble wonder to think how sad can be the countenance even of a little child. O God of mercy! what if she were to die!"

"She will not die—she will live," said the pitying pastor; "and many happy years—my son—are yet in store even for you—sorely as you have been tried; for it is not in nature that your wretchedness can endure for ever. She is in herself all-sufficient for a father's happiness. You prayed just now that the God of Mercy would spare her life—and has He not spared it? Tender flower as she seems, yet how full of life! Let not then your gratitude to Heaven be barren in your heart; but let it produce there resignation—if need be, contrition—and, above all, forgiveness."

"Yes! I had a hope to live for—mangled as I was in body, and racked in mind—a hope that was a faith—and bittersweet it was in imagined foretaste of fruition—the hope and the faith of revenge. They said he would not aim at my life. But what was that to me who thirsted for his blood? Was he to escape death, because he dared not wound bone, or flesh, or muscle of mine, seeing that
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the assassin had already stabbed my soul? Satisfaction! I tell you that I was for revenge. Not that his blood could wipe out the stain with which my name was imbrued, but let it be mixed with the mould; and he who invaded my marriage-bed—and hallowed was it by every generous passion that ever breathed upon woman's breast—let him fall down in convulsions, and vomit out his heart's blood, at once in expiation of his guilt, and in retribution dealt out to him by the hand of him whom he had degraded in the eyes of the whole world beneath the condition even of a felon, and delivered over in my misery to contempt and scorn. I found him out;—there he was before me—in all that beauty by women so beloved—graceful as Apollo; and with a haughty air, as if proud of an achievement that adorned his name, he saluted me—*her husband*—on the field,—and let the wind play with his raven tresses—his curled love-locks—and then presented himself to my aim in an attitude a statuary would have admired. I shot him through the heart."

The good old man heard the dreadful words with a shudder—yet they had come to his ears not unexpectedly, for the speaker's aspect had gradually been growing black with wrath, long before he ended in an avowal of murder. Nor, on ceasing his wild words and distracted demeanour, did it seem that his heart was touched with any remorse. His eyes retained their savage glare—his teeth were clenched—and he feasted on his crime.

"Nothing but a full faith in Divine Revelation," solemnly said his aged friend, "can subdue the evil passions of our nature, or enable conscience itself to see and repent of sin. Your wrongs were indeed great—but without a change wrought in all your spirit, alas! my son! you cannot hope to see the kingdom of heaven."

"Who dares to condemn the deed? He deserved death—and whence was doom to come but from me the Avenger? I took his life—but once I saved it. I bore him from the battlements of a fort stormed in vain—after we had all been blown up by the springing of a mine; and from bayonets that had drunk my blood as well as his—and his widowed mother blessed me as the saviour of her son. I told my wife to receive him as a brother—and for my sake to feel towards him a sister's love. Who shall speak of temptation—or frailty—or infatuation to me? Let the fools hold their
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peace. His wounds became dearer to her abandoned heart than mine had ever been; yet had her cheek lain many a night on the scars that seamed this breast—for I was not backward in battle,

and our place was in the van. I was no coward, that she who loved heroism in him should have dishonoured her husband. True, he was younger by some years than me—and God had given him pernicious beauty—and she was young, too—oh! the brightest of all mortal creatures the day she became my bride—nor less bright with that baby at her bosom—a matron in girlhood's resplendent spring! Is youth a plea for wickedness? And was I old? I, who, in spite of all I have suffered, feel the vital blood yet boiling as to a furnace; but cut off for ever by her crime from fame and glory—and from a soldier in his proud career, covered with honour in the eyes of all my countrymen, changed in an hour into an outlawed and nameless slave. My name has been borne by a race of heroes—the blood in my veins has flowed down a long line of illustrious ancestors—and here am I now—a hidden disguised hypocrite—dwelling among peasants—and afraid—ay, afraid, because ashamed, to lift my eyes freely from the ground even among the solitudes of the mountains, lest some wandering stranger should recognise me, and see the brand of ignominy her hand and his—accursed both—burnt in upon my brow. She forsook this bosom—but tell me if it was in disgust with these my scars?"

And as he bared it, distractedly, that noble chest was seen indeed disfigured with many a gash—on which a wife might well have rested her head with gratitude not less devout because of a lofty pride mingling with life-deep affection. But the burst of passion was gone by—and, covering his face with his hands, he wept like a child.

"Oh! cruel—cruel was her conduct to me; yet what has mine been to her—for so many years! I could not tear her image from my memory—not an hour has it ceased to haunt me; since I came among these mountains, her ghost is for ever at my side. I have striven to drive it away with curses, but still there is the phantom. Sometimes—beautiful as on our marriage-day—all in purest white—adorned with flowers—it wreathes its arms around my neck—and offers its mouth to my kisses—and then all at once is changed into a leering wretch, retaining a likeness of my bride—
[Pg 132] then into a corpse. And perhaps she is dead—dead of cold and hunger: she whom I cherished in all luxury—whose delicate frame seemed to bring round itself all the purest air and sweetest sunshine—she may have expired in the very mire—and her body been huddled into some hole called a pauper's grave. And I have suffered all this to happen to her! Or have I suffered her to become one of the miserable multitude who support hated and hateful life by prostitution? Black was her crime; yet hardly did she deserve to be one of that howling crew—she whose voice was once so sweet, her eyes so pure, and her soul so innocent—for up to the hour I parted with her weeping, no evil thought had ever been hers;—then why, ye eternal Heavens! why fell she from that sphere where she shone like a star? Let that mystery that shrouds my mind in darkness be lightened—let me see into its heart—and know but the meaning of her guilt—and then may I be able to forgive it; but for five years, day and night, it has troubled and confounded me—and from blind and baffled wrath with an iniquity that remains like a pitch-black night through which I cannot grope my way, no refuge can I find—and nothing is left me but to tear my hair out by handfuls—as, like a madman, I have done—to curse her by name in the solitary glooms, and to call down upon her the curse of God. O wicked—most wicked! Yet He who judges the hearts of His creatures knows that I have a thousand and a thousand times forgiven her, but that a chasm lay between us, from which, the moment that I came to its brink, a voice drove me back—I know not whether of a good or evil spirit—and bade me leave her to her fate. But she must be dead—and needs not now my tears. O friend! judge me not too sternly—from this my confession; for all my wild words have imperfectly expressed to you but parts of my miserable being—and if I could lay it all before you, you would pity me perhaps as much as condemn—for my worst passions only have now found utterance—all my better feelings will not return nor abide for words—even I myself have forgotten them; but your pitying face seems to say, that they will be remembered at the Throne of Mercy. I forgive her." And with these words he fell down on his knees, and prayed too for pardon to his own sins. The old man encouraged him not to despair—it needed but a
[Pg 133] motion of his hand to bring the child from her couch in the cover, and Lucy was folded to her father's heart. The forgiveness was felt to be holy in that embrace.

The day had brightened up into more perfect beauty, and showers were sporting with sunshine on the blue air of Spring. The sky showed something like a rainbow—and the Lake, in some parts quite still, and in some breezy, contained at once shadowy fragments of wood and rock, and waves that would have murmured round the prow of pleasure-boat suddenly hoisting a sail. And such a very boat appeared round a promontory that stretched no great way into the water, and formed with a crescent of low meadow-land a bay that was the first to feel the wind coming down Glencoin. The boatman was rowing heedlessly along, when a sudden squall struck the sail, and in an instant the skiff was upset and went down. No shrieks were heard—and the boatman swam ashore; but a figure was seen struggling where the sail disappeared—and starting from his knees, he who knew not fear plunged into the Lake, and after desperate exertions brought the drowned creature to the side—a female meanly attired—seemingly a stranger—and so attenuated that it was plain she must have been in a dying state, and had she not thus perished, would have had but few days to live. The hair was grey—but the face, though withered, was not old—and as she lay on the greensward, the features were beautiful as well as calm in the sunshine.

He stood over her awhile—as if struck motionless—and then kneeling beside the body, kissed its lips and eyes—and said only, "It is Lucy!"

The old man was close by—and so was that child. They too knelt—and the passion of the mourner held him dumb, with his face close to the face of death—ghastly its glare beside the sleep that knows no waking, and is forsaken by all dreams. He opened the bosom—wasted to the bone—in the idle thought that she might yet breathe—and a paper dropt out into his hand, which he read

aloud to himself—unconscious that any one was near. "I am fast dying—and desire to die at your feet. Perhaps you will spurn me—it is right you should; but you will see how sorrow has killed the
[Pg 134] wicked wretch who was once your wife. I have lived in humble servitude for five years, and have suffered great hardships. I think I am a penitent—and have been told by religious persons that I may hope for pardon from Heaven! Oh! that you would forgive me too! and let me have one look at our Lucy. I will linger about the Field of Flowers—perhaps you will come there, and see me lie down and die on the very spot where we passed a summer day the week of our marriage."

"Not thus could I have kissed thy lips—Lucy—had they been red with life. White are they—and white must they long have been! No pollution on them—nor on that poor bosom now. Contrite tears had long since washed out thy sin. A feeble hand traced these lines—and in them a humble heart said nothing but God's truth. Child—behold your mother. Art thou afraid to touch the dead?"

"No—father—I am not afraid to kiss her lips—as you did now. Sometimes, when you thought me asleep, I have heard you praying for my mother."

"Oh! child! cease—cease—or my heart will burst."

People began to gather about the body—but awe kept them aloof; and as for removing it to a house, none who saw it but knew such care would have been vain, for doubt there could be none that there lay death. So the groups remained for a while at a distance—even the old pastor went a good many paces apart; and under the shadow of that tree the father and child composed her limbs, and closed her eyes, and continued to sit beside her, as still as if they had been watching over one asleep.

That death was seen by all to be a strange calamity to him who had lived long among them—had adopted many of their customs—and was even as one of themselves—so it seemed—in the familiar intercourse of man with man. Some dim notion that this was the dead body of his wife was entertained by many, they knew not why; and their clergyman felt that then there needed to be neither concealment nor avowal of the truth. So in solemn sympathy they approached the body and its watchers; a bier had been prepared: and walking at the head, as if it had been a funeral, the Father of little Lucy holding her hand, silently directed the procession towards his own house—out of the Field of Flowers.

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COTTAGES.

Have you any intention, dear reader, of building a house in the country? If you have, pray, for your own sake and ours, let it not be a Cottage. We presume that you are obliged to live, one half of the year at least, in a town. Then why change altogether the character of your domicile and your establishment? You are an inhabitant of Edinburgh, and have a house in the Circus, or Heriot Row, or Abercromby Place, or Queen Street. The said house has five or six stories, and is such a palace as one might expect in the City of Palaces. Your drawing-rooms can, at a pinch, hold some ten score of modern Athenians—your dining-room might feast one half of the contributors to *Blackwood's Magazine*—your "placens uxor" has her boudoir—your eldest daughter, now verging on womanhood, her music-room—your boys their own studio—the governess her retreat—and the tutor his den—the housekeeper sits like an overgrown spider in her own sanctum—the butler bargains for his dim apartment—and the four maids must have their front area-window. In short, from cellarage to garret all is complete, and Number Forty-two is really a splendid mansion.

Now, dear reader, far be it from us to question the propriety or prudence of such an establishment. Your house was not built for nothing—it was no easy thing to get the painters out—the furnishing thereof was no trifle—the feu-duty is really unreasonable—and taxes are taxes still, notwithstanding the principles of free trade, and the universal prosperity of the country. Servants are wasteful, and their wages absurd—and the whole style of living, with long-necked bottles, most extravagant. But still we do not object to your establishment—far from it, we admire
[Pg 136] it much; nor is there a single house in town where we make ourselves more agreeable to a late hour, or that we leave with a greater quantity of wine of a good quality under our girdle. Few things would give us more temporary uneasiness, than to hear of any embarrassment in your money concerns. We are not people to forget good fare, we assure you; and long and far may all shapes of sorrow keep aloof from the hospitable board, whether illuminated by gas, oil, or mutton.

But what we were going to say is this—that the head of such a house ought not to live, when ruralising, in a Cottage. He ought to be consistent. Nothing so beautiful as consistency. What then is so absurd as to cram yourself, your wife, your numerous progeny, and your scarcely less numerous menials, into a concern called a Cottage? The ordinary heat of a baker's oven is very few degrees above that of a brown study, during the month of July, in a substantial, low-roofed Cottage. Then the smell of the kitchen! How it aggravates the sultry closeness! A strange, compounded, inexplicable smell of animal, vegetable, and mineral matter. It is at the worst during the latter part of the forenoon, when everything has been got into preparation for cookery. There is then nothing savoury about the smell—it is dull, dead—almost catacombish. A small back-kitchen has it in its power to destroy the sweetness of any Cottage. Add a scullery,

and the three are omnipotent. Of the eternal clashing of pots, pans, plates, trenchers, and general crockery, we now say nothing; indeed, the sound somewhat relieves the smell, and the ear comes occasionally in to the aid of the nose. Such noises are windfalls; but not so the scolding of cook and butler—at first low and tetchy, with pauses—then sharp, but still interrupted—by-and-by, loud and ready in reply—finally a discordant gabble of vulgar fury, like maniacs quarrelling in Bedlam. Hear it you must—you and all the strangers. To explain it away is impossible; and your fear is, that Alecto, Tisiphone, or Megæra, will come flying into the parlour with a bloody cleaver, dripping with the butler's brains. During the time of the quarrel the spit has been standing still, and a gigot of the five-year-old black-face burnt on one side to a cinder. —"To dinner with what appetite you may."

[Pg 137] It would be quite unpardonable to forget one especial smell which irretrievably ruined our happiness during a whole summer—the smell of a dead rat. The accursed vermin died somewhere in the Cottage; but whether beneath a floor, within lath and plaster, or in roof, baffled the conjectures of the most sagacious. The whole family used to walk about the Cottage for hours every day, snuffing on a travel of discovery; and we distinctly remember the face of one elderly maiden-lady at the moment she thought she had traced the source of the fumée to the wall behind a window-shutter. But even at the very same instant we ourselves had proclaimed it with open nostril from a press in an opposite corner. Terriers were procured—but the dog Billy himself would have been at fault. To pull down the whole Cottage would have been difficult—at least to build it up again would have been so; so we had to submit. Custom, they say, is second nature, but not when a dead rat is in the house. No, none can ever become accustomed to that; yet good springs out of evil—for the live rats could not endure it, and emigrated to a friend's house, about a mile off, who has never had a sound night's rest from that day. We have not revisited our Cottage for several years; but time does wonders, and we were lately told by a person of some veracity that the smell was then nearly gone; but our informant is a gentleman of blunted olfactory nerves, having been engaged from seventeen to seventy in a soap-work.

Smoke too. More especially that mysterious and infernal sort, called back-smoke! The old proverb, "No smoke without fire," is a base lie. We have seen smoke without fire in every room in a most delightful Cottage we inhabited during the dog-days. The moment you rushed for refuge even into a closet, you were blinded and stifled; nor shall we ever forget our horror on being within an ace of smotheration in the cellar. At last, we groped our way into the kitchen. Neither cook nor jack was visible. We heard, indeed, a whirring and revolving noise—and then suddenly Girzie swearing through the mist. Yet all this while people were admiring our Cottage from a distance, and especially this self-same accursed back-smoke, some portions of which had made an excursion up the chimneys, and was wavering away in a spiral form to the sky, in a style captivating to Mr Price on the Picturesque.

[Pg 138] No doubt, there are many things very romantic about a Cottage. Creepers, for example. Why, sir, these creepers are the most mischievous nuisance that can afflict a family. There is no occasion for mentioning names, but—devil take all parasites. Some of the rogues will actually grow a couple of inches upon you in one day's time; and when all other honest plants are asleep, the creepers are hard at it all night long, stretching out their toes and their fingers, and catching an inextricable hold of every wall they can reach, till, finally, you see them thrusting their impudent heads through the very slates. Then, like other low-bred creatures, they are covered with vermin. All manner of moths—the most grievous grubs—slimy slugs—spiders spinning toils to ensnare the caterpillar—earwigs and slaters, that would raise the gorge of a country curate—wood-lice—the slaver of gowk's-spittle—midges— jocks-with-the-many-legs; in short, the whole plague of insects infest that—Virgin's bower. Open the lattice for half an hour, and you find yourself in an entomological museum. Then there are no pins fixing down the specimens. All these beetles are alive, more especially the enormous blackguard crawling behind your ear. A moth plumps into your tumbler of cold negus, and goes whirling round in meal, till he makes absolute porritch. As you open your mouth in amazement, the large blue-bottle fly, having made his escape from the spiders, and seeing that not a moment is to be lost, precipitates himself head-foremost down your throat, and is felt, after a few ineffectual struggles, settling in despair at the very bottom of your stomach. Still, no person will be so unreasonable as to deny that creepers on a Cottage are most beautiful. For the sake of their beauty, some little sacrifice must be made of one's comforts, especially as it is only for one half of the year, and last really was a most delightful summer.

How truly romantic is a thatch roof! The eaves how commodious for sparrows! What a paradise for rats and mice! What a comfortable colony of vermin! They all bore their own tunnels in every direction, and the whole interior becomes a Cretan labyrinth. Frush, frush becomes the whole cover in a few seasons; and not a bird can open his wing, not a rat switch his tail, without scattering the straw like chaff. Eternal repairs! Look when you will, and half-a-dozen thatchers [Pg 139] are riding on the rigging; of all operatives the most inoperative. Then there is always one of the number descending the ladder for a horn of ale. Without warning, the straw is all used up; and no more fit for the purpose can be got within twenty miles. They hint heather—and you sigh for slate —the beautiful sky-blue, sea-green, Ballachulish slate! But the summer is nearly over and gone, and you must be flitting back to the city; so you let the job stand over to spring, and the soaking rains and snows of a long winter search the Cottage to its heart's-core, and every floor is ere long laden with a crop of fungi—the bed-posts are ornamented curiously with lichens, and mosses bathe the walls with their various and inimitable lustre.

Everything is romantic that is pastoral—and what more pastoral than sheep? Accordingly, living in a Cottage, you kill your own mutton. Great lubberly Leicesters or Southdowns are not worth

the mastication, so you keep the small black-face. Stone walls are ugly things, you think, near a Cottage, so you have rails or hurdles. Day and night are the small black-face, out of pure spite, bouncing through or over all impediments, after an adventurous leader, and, despising the daisied turf, keep nibbling away at all your rare flowering shrubs, till your avenue is a desolation. Every twig has its little ball of wool, and it is a rare time for the nest-makers. You purchase a collie, but he compromises the affair with the fleecy nation, and contents himself with barking all night long at the moon, if there happen to be one—if not, at the firmament of his kennel. You are too humane to hang or drown Luath, so you give him to a friend. But Luath is in love with the cook, and pays her nightly visits. Afraid of being entrapped should he step into the kennel, he takes up his station, after supper, on a knoll within ear-range, and pointing his snout to the stars, joins the music of the spheres, and is himself a perfect Sirius. The gardener at last gets orders to shoot him—and the gun being somewhat rusty, bursts and blows off his left hand—so that Andrew Fairservice retires on a pension.

Of all breeds of cattle we most admire the Alderney. They are slim, delicate, wild-deer-looking creatures, that give an air to a Cottage. But they are most capricious milkers. Of course you make your own butter; that is to say, with the addition of a dozen purchased pounds weekly, you are
[Pg 140] not very often out of that commodity. Then, once or twice in a summer, they suddenly lose their temper, and chase the governess and your daughters over the edge of a gravel-pit. Nothing they like so much as the tender sprouts of cauliflower, nor do they abhor green pease. The garden-hedge is of privet—a pretty fence, and fast growing, but not formidable to a four-year-old. On going to eat a few gooseberries by sunrise, you start a covey of cows, that in their alarm plunge into the hot-bed with a smash, as if all the glass in the island had been broken—and rushing out at the gate at the critical instant little Tommy is tottering in, they leave the heir-apparent, scarcely deserving that name, half hidden in the border. There is no sale for such outlandish animals in the home-market, and it is not Martinmas, so you must make a present of them to the president or five silver-cupman of an agricultural society, and you receive in return a sorry red round, desperately saltpetred, at Christmas.

What is a Cottage in the country, unless "your banks are all furnished with bees, whose murmurs invite one to sleep?" There the hives stand, like four-and-twenty fiddlers all in a row. Not a more harmless insect in all this world than a bee. Wasps are devils incarnate, but bees are fleshly sprites, as amiable as industrious. You are strolling along in delightful mental vacuity, looking at a poem of Barry Cornwall's, when smack comes an infuriated honey-maker against your eyelid, and plunges into you the fortieth part of an inch of sting saturated in venom. The wretch clings to your lid like a burr, and it feels as if he had a million claws to hold him on while he is darting his weapon into your eyeball. Your banks are indeed well furnished with bees, but their murmurs do not invite you to sleep; on the contrary, away you fly like a madman, bolt into your wife's room, and roar out for the recipe. The whole of one side of your face is most absurdly swollen, while the other is *in statu quo*. One eye is dwindled away to almost nothing, and is peering forth from its rainbow-coloured envelope, while the other is open as day to melting charity, and shining over a cheek of the purest crimson. Infatuated man! Why could you not purchase your honey? Jemmy Thomson, the poet, would have let you have it, from Habbie's Howe, the true Pentland elixir, for
[Pg 141] five shillings the pint; for during this season both the heather and the clover were prolific of the honey-dew, and the Skeps rejoiced over all Scotland on a thousand hills.

We could tell many stories about bees, but that would be leading us away from the main argument. We remember reading in an American newspaper, some years ago, that the United States lost one of their most upright and erudite judges by bees, which stung him to death in a wood while he was going the circuit. About a year afterwards, we read in the same newspaper, "We are afraid we have lost another judge by bees;" and then followed a somewhat frightful description of the assassination of another American Blackstone by the same insects. We could not fail to sympathise with both sufferers; for in the summer of the famous comet we ourselves had nearly shared the same fate. Our Newfoundlander upset a hive in his vagaries—and the whole swarm unjustly attacked us. The buzz was an absolute roar—and for the first time in our lives we were under a cloud. Such buzzing in our hair! and of what avail were fifty-times-washed nankeen breeches against the Polish Lancers? With our trusty crutch we made thousands bite the dust—but the wounded and dying crawled up our legs, and stung us cruelly over the lower regions. At last we took to flight, and found shelter in the ice-house. But it seemed as if a new hive had been disturbed in that cool grotto. Again we sallied out, stripping off garment after garment, till, *in puris naturalibus*, we leaped into a window, which happened to be that of the drawing-room, where a large party of ladies and gentlemen were awaiting the dinner-bell—but fancy must dream the rest.

We now offer a set of *Blackwood's Magazine* to any scientific character who will answer this seemingly simple question—what is Damp? Quicksilver is a joke to it, for getting into or out of any place. Capricious as damp is, it is faithful in its affection to all Cottages ornées. What more pleasant than a bow-window? You had better, however, not sit with your back against the wall, for it is as blue and ropy as that of a charnel-house. Probably the wall is tastily papered—a vine-leaf pattern perhaps—or something spriggy—or in the aviary line—or, mayhap, haymakers, or shepherds piping in the dale. But all distinctions are levelled in the mould—Phyllis has a black patch over her eye, and Strephon seems to be playing on a pair of bellows. Damp delights to
[Pg 142] descend chimneys, and is one of smoke's most powerful auxiliaries. It is a thousand pities you hung up—just in that unlucky spot—Grecian Williams's Thebes—for now one of the finest water-colour paintings in the world is not worth six-and-eightpence. There is no living in the country without a library. Take down, with all due caution, that enormous tome, the *Excursion*, and let us

hear something of the Pedlar. There is an end to the invention of printing. Lo and behold, blank verse indeed! You cannot help turning over twenty leaves at once, for they are all amalgamated in must and mouldiness. Lord Byron himself is no better than an Egyptian mummy; and the Great Unknown addresses you in hieroglyphics.

We have heard different opinions maintained on the subject of damp sheets. For our own part, we always wish to feel the difference between sheets and cerements. We hate everything clammy. It is awkward, on leaping out of bed to admire the moon, to drag along with you, glued round your body and members, the whole paraphernalia of the couch. It can never be good for rheumatism—problematical even for fever. Now, be candid—did you ever sleep in perfectly dry sheets in a Cottage ornée? You would not like to say "No, never," in the morning—privately, to host or hostess. But confess publicly, and trace your approaching retirement from all the troubles of this life, to the dimity-curtained cubiculum on Tweedside.

We know of few events so restorative as the arrival of a coachful of one's friends, if the house be roomy. But if everything there be on a small scale, how tremendous a sudden importation of live cattle! The children are all trundled away out of the Cottage, and their room given up to the young ladies, with all its enigmatical and emblematical wall-tracery. The captain is billeted in the boudoir, on a shake-down. My lady's maid must positively pass the night in the butler's pantry, and the valet makes a dormitory of the store-room. Where the old gentleman and his spouse have been disposed of, remains as controversial a point as the authorship of Junius; but next morning at the breakfast-table, it appears that all have survived the night, and the hospitable hostess remarks, with a self-complacent smile, that small as the Cottage appears, it has wonderful
[Pg 143] accommodation, and could have easily admitted half-a-dozen more patients. The visitors politely request to be favoured with a plan of so very commodious a Cottage, but silently swear never again to sleep in a house of one story, till life's brief tale be told.

But not one half the comforts of a Cottage have yet been enumerated—nor shall they be by us at the present juncture. Suffice it to add, that the strange coachman had been persuaded to put up his horses in the outhouses, instead of taking them to an excellent inn about two miles off. The old black long-tailed steeds, that had dragged the vehicle for nearly twenty years, had been lodged in what was called the Stable, and the horse behind had been introduced into the byre. As bad luck would have it, a small, sick, and surly shelty was in his stall; and without the slightest provocation, he had, during the night-watches, so handled his heels against Mr Fox, that he had not left the senior a leg to stand upon, while he had bit a lump out of the buttocks of Mr Pitt little less than an orange. A cow, afraid of her calf, had committed an assault on the roadster, and tore up his flank with her crooked horn as clean as if it had been a ripping chisel. The party had to proceed with post-horses; and although Mr Dick be at once one of the most skilful and most moderate of veterinary surgeons, his bill at the end of autumn was necessarily as long as that of a proctor. Mr Fox gave up the ghost—Mr Pitt was put on the superannuated list—and Joseph Hume, the hack, was sent to the dogs.

To this condition, then, we must come at last, that if you build at all in the country, it must be a mansion three stories high, at the lowest—large airy rooms—roof of slates and lead—and walls of the freestone or the Roman cement. No small black-faces, no Alderneys, no beehives. Buy all your vivres, and live like a gentleman. Seldom or never be without a houseful of company. If you manage your family matters properly, you may have your time nearly as much at your own disposal as if you were the greatest of hunkses, and never gave but unavoidable dinners. Let the breakfast-gong sound at ten o'clock—quite soon enough. The young people will have been romping about the parlours or the purlieus for a couple of hours—and will all make their appearance in the beauty of high health and high spirits. Chat away as long as need be, after
[Pg 144] muffins and mutton-ham, in small groups on sofas and settees, and then slip you away to your library, to add a chapter to your novel, or your history, or to any other task that is to make you immortal. Let gigs and curricles draw up in the circle, and the wooing and betrothed wheel away across a few parishes. Let the pedestrians saunter off into the woods or to the hill-side—the anglers be off to loch or river. No great harm even in a game or two at billiards—if such be of any the cue—sagacious spinsters of a certain age, staid dowagers, and bachelors of sedentary habits, may have recourse, without blame, to the chess or backgammon board. At two lunch—and at six the dinner-gong will bring the whole flock together, all dressed—mind that—all dressed, for slovenliness is an abomination. Let no elderly gentleman, however bilious and rich, seek to monopolise a young lady—but study the nature of things. Champagne, of course, and if not all the delicacies, at least all the substantialities, of the season. Join the ladies in about two hours—a little elevated or so—almost imperceptibly—but still a little elevated or so; then music—whispering in corners—if moonlight and stars, then an hour's out-of-door study of astronomy—no very regular supper—but an appearance of plates and tumblers, and to bed, to happy dreams and slumbers light, at the witching hour. Let no gentleman or lady snore, if it can be avoided, lest they annoy the crickets; and if you hear any extraordinary noise round and round about the mansion, be not alarmed, for why should not the owls choose their own hour of revelry?

Fond as we are of the country, we would not, had we our option, live there all the year round. We should just wish to linger into the winter about as far as the middle of December—then to a city—say at once Edinburgh. There is as good skating-ground, and as good curling-ground, at Lochend and Duddingston, as anywhere in all Scotland—nor is there anywhere else better beef and greens. There is no perfection anywhere, but Edinburgh society is excellent. We are certainly agreeable citizens; with just a sufficient spice of party spirit to season the feast of reason and the flow of soul, and to prevent society from becoming drowsily unanimous. Without the fillip of a

little scandal, honest people would fall asleep; and surely it is far preferable to that to abuse
[Pg 145] one's friends with moderation. Even Literature and the Belles Lettres are not entirely useless; and our Human Life would not be so delightful as that of Mr Rogers, without a few occasional Noctes Ambrosianæ.

But the title of our article recalls our wandering thoughts, and our talk must be of Cottages. Now, think not, beloved reader, that we care not for Cottages, for that would indeed be a gross mistake. But our very affections are philosophical; our sympathies have all their source in reason; and our admiration is always built on the foundation of truth. Taste, and feeling, and thought, and experience, and knowledge of this life's concerns, are all indispensable to the true delights the imagination experiences in beholding a beautiful *bonâ fide* Cottage. It must be the dwelling of the poor; and it is that which gives it its whole character. By the poor, we mean not paupers, beggars; but families who, to eat, must work, and who, by working, may still be able to eat. Plain, coarse, not scanty, but unsuperfluous fare is theirs from year's-end to year's-end, excepting some decent and grateful change on chance holidays of nature's own appointment—a wedding or a christening, or a funeral. Yes, a funeral; for when this mortal coil is shuffled off, why should the hundreds of people that come trooping over muirs and mosses to see the body deposited, walk so many miles, and lose a whole day's work, without a dinner? And if there be a dinner, should it not be a good one? And if a good one, will the company not be social? But this is a subject for a future paper, nor need such paper be of other than a cheerful character. Poverty, then, is the builder and beautifier of all huts and cottages. But the views of honest poverty are always hopeful and prospective. Strength of muscle and strength of mind form a truly Holy Alliance; and the future brightens before the steadfast eyes of trust. Therefore, when a house is built in the valley, or on the hill-side—be it that of the poorest cottar—there is some little room, or nook, or spare place, which hope consecrates to the future. Better times may come—a shilling or two may be added to the week's wages—parsimony may accumulate a small capital in the Savings-bank sufficient to purchase an old eight-day clock, a chest of drawers for the wife, a curtained bed for the lumber-place, which a little labour will convert into a bedroom. It is not to be thought that the pasture-fields become every year greener, and the cornfields every harvest more yellow—that the
[Pg 146] hedgerows grow to thicker fragrance, and the birch-tree waves its tresses higher in the air, and expands its white-rinded stem almost to the bulk of a tree of the forest—and yet that there shall be no visible progress from good to better in the dwelling of those whose hands and hearts thus cultivate the soil into rejoicing beauty. As the whole land prospers, so does each individual dwelling. Every ten years, the observing eye sees a new expression on the face of the silent earth; the law of labour is no melancholy lot; for to industry the yoke is easy, and content is its own exceeding great reward.

Therefore, it does our heart good to look on a Cottage. Here the objections to straw-roofs have no application. A few sparrows chirping and fluttering in the eaves can do no great harm, and they serve to amuse the children. The very baby in the cradle, when all the family are in the fields, mother and all, hears the cheerful twitter, and is reconciled to solitude. The quantity of corn that a few sparrows can eat—greedy creatures as they are—cannot be very deadly; and it is chiefly in the winter-time that they attack the stacks, when there is much excuse to be made on the plea of hunger. As to the destruction of a little thatch, why, there is not a boy about the house, above ten years, who is not a thatcher, and there is no expense in such repairs. Let the honeysuckle, too, steal up the wall, and even blind unchecked a corner of the kitchen-window. Its fragrance will often cheer unconsciously the labourer's heart, as, in the mid-day hour of rest, he sits dandling his child on his knee, or converses with the passing pedlar. Let the moss-rose tree flourish, that its bright blush-balls may dazzle in the kirk the eyes of the lover of fair Helen Irwin, as they rise and fall with every movement of a bosom yet happy in its virgin innocence. Nature does not spread in vain her flowers in flush and fragrance over every obscure nook of earth. Simple and pure is the delight they inspire. Not to the poet's eye alone is their language addressed. The beautiful symbols are understood by lowliest minds; and while the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of the meanest flower that blows giving a joy too deep for tears, so do all mankind feel the exquisite truth of Burns's more simple address to the mountain-daisy which his ploughshare had
[Pg 147] upturned. The one touches sympathies too profound to be general—the other speaks as a son of the soil affected by the fate of the most familiar flower that springs from the bosom of our common dust.

Generally speaking, there has been a spirit of improvement at work, during these last twenty years, upon all the Cottages in Scotland. The villages are certainly much neater and cleaner than formerly, and in very few respects, if any, positively offensive. Perhaps none of them have—nor ever will have—the exquisite trimness, the habitual and hereditary rustic elegance, of the best villages of England. There, even the idle and worthless have an instinctive love of what is decent, and orderly, and pretty in their habitations. The very drunkard must have a well-sanded floor, a clean-swept hearth, clear-polished furniture, and uncobwebbed walls to the room in which he quaffs, guzzles, and smokes himself into stupidity. His wife may be a scold, but seldom a slattern—his children ill taught, but well apparelled. Much of this is observable even among the worst of the class; and, no doubt, such things must also have their effect in tempering and restraining excesses. Whereas, on the other hand, the house of a well-behaved, well-doing English villager is a perfect model of comfort and propriety. In Scotland, the houses of the dissolute are always dens of dirt, and disorder, and distraction. All ordinary goings-on are inextricably confused—meals eaten in different nooks, and at no regular hour—nothing in its right place or time—the whole abode as if on the eve of a flitting; while, with few exceptions, even in the dwellings of the best families in the village, one may detect occasional forgetfulness of trifling matters, that, if remembered, would be found greatly conducive to comfort—occasional insensibilities to what

would be graceful in their condition, and might be secured at little expense and less trouble—occasional blindness to minute deformities that mar the aspect of the household, and which an awakened eye would sweep away as absolute nuisances. Perhaps the very depth of their affections—the solemnity of their religious thoughts—and the reflective spirit in which they carry on the warfare of life—hide from them the perception of what, after all, is of such very inferior moment, and even create a sort of austerity of character which makes them disregard, too much, trifles that appear to have no influence or connection with the essence of weal or woe. Yet if there be any truth in this, it affords, we confess, an explanation rather than a justification.

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Our business at present, however, is rather with single Cottages than with villages. We Scottish people have, for some years past, been doing all we could to make ourselves ridiculous, by claiming for our capital the name of Modern Athens, and talking all manner of nonsense about a city which stands nobly on its own proper foundation; while we have kept our mouths comparatively shut about the beauty of our hills and vales, and the rational happiness that everywhere overflows our native land. Our character is to be found in the country; and therefore, gentle reader, behold along with us a specimen of Scottish scenery. It is not above some four miles long—its breadth somewhere about a third of its length; a fair oblong, sheltered and secluded by a line of varied eminences, on some of which lies the power of cultivation, and over others the vivid verdure peculiar to a pastoral region; while, telling of disturbed times past for ever, stand yonder the ruins of an old fortalice or keep, picturesque in its deserted decay. The plough has stopped at the edge of the profitable and beautiful coppice-woods, and encircled the tall elm-grove. The rocky pasturage, with its clovery and daisied turf, is alive with sheep and cattle—its briery knolls with birds—its broom and whins with bees—and its wimpling burn with trouts and minnows glancing through the shallows, or leaping among the cloud of injects that glitter over its pools. Here and there a cottage—not above twenty in all—one low down in the holm, another on a cliff beside the waterfall: that is the mill—another breaking the horizon in its more ambitious station—and another far up at the hill-foot, where there is not a single tree, only shrubs and brackens. On a bleak day, there is but little beauty in such a glen; but when the sun is cloudless, and all the light serene, it is a place where poet or painter may see visions and dream dreams, of the very age of gold. At such seasons, there is a home-felt feeling of humble reality, blending with the emotions of imagination. In such places, the low-born high-souled poets of old breathed forth their songs, and hymns, and elegies—the undying lyrical poetry of the heart of Scotland.

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Take the remotest Cottage first in order, HILLFOOT, and hear who are its inmates—the Schoolmaster and his spouse. The schoolhouse stands on a little unappropriated piece of ground—at least it seems to be so—quite at the head of the glen; for there the hills sink down on each side, and afford an easy access to the seat of learning from two neighbouring vales, both in the same parish. Perhaps fifty scholars are there taught—and with their small fees, and his small salary, Allan Easton is contented. Allan was originally intended for the Church; but some peccadilloes obstructed his progress with the Presbytery, and he never was a preacher. That disappointment of all his hopes was for many years grievously felt, and somewhat soured his mind with the world. It is often impossible to recover one single false step in the slippery road of life—and Allan Easton, year after year, saw himself falling farther and farther into the rear of almost all his contemporaries. One became a minister, and got a manse, with a stipend of twenty chalders; another grew into an East India Nabob; one married the laird's widow, and kept a pack of hounds—another expanded into a colonel—one cleared a plum by a cotton-mill—another became the Crœsus of a bank—while Allan, who had beat them all hollow at all the classes, wore second-hand clothes, and lived on the same fare with the poorest hind in the parish. He had married, rather too late, the partner of his frailties—and after many trials, and, as he thought, not a few persecutions, he got settled at last, when his head, not very old, was getting grey, and his face somewhat wrinkled. His wife, during his worst poverty, had gone again into service, the lot, indeed, to which she had been born; and Allan had struggled and starved upon private teaching. His appointment to the parish school had, therefore, been to them both a blessed elevation. The office was respectable—and loftier ambition had long been dead. Now they are old people—considerably upwards of sixty—and twenty years' professional life have converted Allan Easton, once the wild and eccentric genius, into a staid, solemn, formal, and pedantic pedagogue. All his scholars love him, for even in the discharge of such very humble duties, talents make themselves felt and respected; and the kindness of an affectionate and once sorely wounded, but now healed heart, is never lost upon the susceptible imaginations of the young. Allan has sometimes sent out no contemptible scholars, as scholars go in Scotland, to the universities; and his heart has warmed within him when he has read their names, in the newspaper from the manse, in the list of successful competitors for prizes. During vacation-time, Allan and his spouse leave their cottage locked up, and disappear, none know exactly whither, on visits to an old friend or two, who have not altogether forgotten them in their obscurity. During the rest of the year, his only out-of-doors amusement is an afternoon's angling, an art in which it is universally allowed he excels all mortal men, both in river and loch; and often, during the long winter nights, when the shepherd is walking by his dwelling, to visit his "ain lassie," down the burn, he hears Allan's fiddle playing, in the solitary silence, some one of those Scottish melodies, that we know not whether it be cheerful or plaintive, but soothing to every heart that has been at all acquainted with grief. Rumour says too, but rumour has not a scrupulous conscience, that the Schoolmaster, when he meets with pleasant company, either at home or a friend's house, is not averse to a hospitable cup, and that then the memories of other days crowd upon his brain, and loosen his tongue into eloquence. Old Susan keeps a sharp warning eye upon her husband on all such occasions; but Allan braves its glances, and is forgiven.

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We see only the uncertain glimmer of their dwelling through the low-lying mist; and therefore we cannot describe it, as if it were clearly before our eyes. But should you ever chance to angle your way up to HILLFOOT, admire Allan Easton's flower-garden, and the jargonelle pear-tree on the southern gable. The climate is somewhat high, but it is not cold; and, except when the spring-frosts come late and sharp, there do all blossoms and fruits abound, on every shrub and tree native to Scotland. You will hardly know how to distinguish—or rather, to speak in clerkly phrase, to analyse the sound prevalent over the fields and air; for it is made up of that of the burn, of bees, of old Susan's wheel, and the hum of the busy school. But now it is the play-hour, and Allan Easton comes into his kitchen for his frugal dinner. Brush up your Latin, and out with a few of the largest trouts in your pannier. Susan fries them in fresh butter and oatmeal—the greyhaired pedagogue asks a blessing—and a merrier man, within the limits of becoming mirth, you never passed an hour's talk withal. So much for Allan Easton and Susan his spouse.

[Pg 151] You look as if you wished to ask who inhabits the Cottage—on the left hand yonder—that stares upon us with four front windows, and pricks up its ears like a new-started hare? Why, sir, that was once a Shooting-box. It was built about twenty years ago, by a sporting gentleman of two excellent double-barrelled guns, and three stanch pointers. He attempted to live there, several times, from the 12th of August till the end of September, and went pluffing disconsolately among the hills from sunrise to sunset. He has been long dead and buried; and the Box, they say, is now haunted. It has been attempted to be let furnished, and there is now a board to that effect hung out like an escutcheon. Picturesque people say it ruins the whole beauty of the glen; but we must not think so, for it is not in the power of the ugliest house that ever was built to do that, although, to effect such a purpose, it is unquestionably a skilful contrivance. The window-shutters have been closed for several years, and the chimneys look as if they had breathed their last. It stands in a perpetual eddy, and the ground shelves so all around it, that there is barely room for a barrel to catch the rain-drippings from the slate-eaves. If it be indeed haunted, pity the poor ghost! You may have it on a lease, short or long, for merely paying the taxes. Every year it costs some pounds in advertisements. What a jointure-house it would be for a relict! By name, WINDY-KNOWE.

Nay, let us not fear to sketch the character of its last inhabitant, for we desire but to speak the truth. Drunkard, stand forward, that we may have a look at you, and draw your picture. There he stands! The mouth of the drunkard, you may observe, contracts a singularly sensitive appearance —seemingly red and rawish; and he is perpetually licking or smacking his lips, as if his palate were dry and adust. His is a thirst that water will not quench. He might as well drink air. His whole being burns for a dram. The whole world is contracted into a caulker. He would sell his soul in such extremity, were the black bottle denied him, for a gulp. Not to save his soul from eternal fire, would he, or rather could he, if left alone with it, refrain from pulling out the plug, and sucking away at destruction. What a snout he turns up to the morning air, inflamed, pimpled, snubby, and snorty, and with a nob at the end on't like one carved out of a stick by the knife of a
[Pg 152] schoolboy—rough and hot to the very eye—a nose which, rather than pull, you would submit even to be in some degree insulted. A perpetual cough harasses and exhausts him, and a perpetual expectoration. How his hand trembles! It is an effort even to sign his name: one of his sides is certainly not by any means as sound as the other; there has been a touch of palsy there; and the next hint will draw down his chin to his collar-bone, and convert him, a month before dissolution, into a slavering idiot. There is no occupation, small or great, insignificant or important, to which he can turn, for any length of time, his hand, his heart, or his head. He cannot angle—for his fingers refuse to tie a knot, much more to busk a fly. The glimmer and the glow of the stream would make his brain dizzy—to wet his feet now would, he fears, be death. Yet he thinks that he will go out—during that sunny blink of a showery day—and try the well-known pool in which he used to bathe in boyhood, with the long, matted, green-trailing water-plants depending on the slippery rocks, and the water-ousel gliding from beneath the arch that hides her "procreant cradle," and then sinking like a stone suddenly in the limpid stream. He sits down on the bank, and fumbling in his pouch for his pocket-book, brings out, instead, a pocket-pistol. Turning his fiery face towards the mild, blue, vernal sky, he pours the gurgling brandy down his throat—first one dose, and then another—till, in an hour, stupefied and dazed, he sees not the silvery crimson-spotted trouts, shooting, and leaping, and tumbling, and plunging in deep and shallow; a day on which, with one of Captain Colley's March-Browns, in an hour we could fill our pannier. Or, if it be autumn or winter, he calls, perhaps, with a voice at once gruff and feeble, an old Ponto, and will take a pluff at the partridges. In former days, down they used to go, right and left, in potato or turnip-field, broomy brae or stubble—but now his sight is dim and wavering, and his touch trembles on the trigger. The covey whirrs off, unharmed in a single feather—and poor Ponto, remembering better days, cannot conceal his melancholy, falls in at his master's heel, and will range no more. Out, as usual, comes the brandy-bottle—he is still a good shot when his mouth is the mark; and having emptied the fatal flask, he staggers homewards, with the muzzles of his double-barrel frequently pointed to his ear, both being on full cock, and his brains not blown out
[Pg 153] only by a miracle. He tries to read the newspaper—just arrived—but cannot find his spectacles. Then, by way of variety, he attempts a tune on the fiddle; but the bridge is broken, and her side cracked, and the bass-string snapped—and she is restored to her peg among the cobwebs. In comes a red-headed, stockingless lass, with her carrots in papers, and lays the cloth for dinner—salt beef and greens. But the Major's stomach scunners at the Skye-stot—his eyes roll eagerly for the hot-water—and in a couple of hours he is dead-drunk in his chair, or stoitering and staggering, in aimless dalliance with the scullion, among the pots and pans of an ever-disorderly and dirty kitchen. Mean people, in shabby sporting velveteen dresses, rise up, as he enters, from the dresser, covered with cans, jugs, and quaichs, and take off their rusty and greasy napless hats to the Major; and, to conclude the day worthily and consistently, he squelches himself down

among the reprobate crew, takes his turn at smutty jest and smuttier song, which drive even the jades out of the kitchen—falls back insensible, exposed to gross and indecent practical jokes from the vilest of the unhanged—and finally is carried to bed on a hand-barrow, with hanging head and heels, like a calf across a butcher's cart, and, with glazed eyes and lolling tongue, is tumbled upon the quilt—if ever to awake it is extremely doubtful; but if awake he do, it is to the same wretched round of brutal degradation—a career, of which the inevitable close is an unfriended deathbed and a pauper's grave. O hero! six feet high, and once with a brawn like Hercules—in the prime of life too—well born and well bred—once bearing the king's commission—and on that glorious morn, now forgotten or bitterly remembered, thanked on the field of battle by Picton, though he of the fighting division was a hero of few words—is that a death worthy of a man—a soldier—and a Christian? A dram-drinker! Faugh! faugh! Look over—lean over that stile, where a pig lies wallowing in mire—and a voice, faint and feeble, and far off, as if it came from some dim and remote world within your lost soul, will cry, that of the two beasts, that bristly one, agrunt in sensual sleep, with its snout snoring across the husk-trough, is, as a physical, moral, and intellectual being, superior to you, late Major in his Majesty's —— regiment of foot, now dram-
[Pg 154] drinker, drunkard, and dotard, and self-doomed to a disgraceful and disgusting death ere you shall have completed your thirtieth year. What a changed being from that day when you carried the colours, and were found, the bravest of the brave, and the most beautiful of the beautiful, with the glorious tatters wrapped round your body all drenched in blood, your hand grasping the broken sabre, and two grim Frenchmen lying hacked and hewed at your feet! Your father and your mother saw your name in the "Great Lord's" Despatch; and it was as much as he could do to keep her from falling on the floor, for "her joy was like a deep affright!" Both are dead now; and better so, for the sight of that blotched face and those glazed eyes, now and then glittering in fitful frenzy, would have killed them both, nor, after such a spectacle, could their old bones have rested in the grave.

Alas, Scotland—ay, well-educated, moral, religious Scotland can show, in the bosom of her bonny banks and braes, cases worse than this; at which, if there be tears in heaven, the angels weep. Look at that greyheaded man, of threescore and upwards, sitting by the wayside! He was once an Elder of the Kirk, and a pious man he was, if ever piety adorned the temples—"the lyart haffets, wearing thin and bare," of a Scottish peasant. What eye beheld the many hundred steps, that one by one, with imperceptible gradation, led him down—down—down to the lowest depths of shame, suffering, and ruin! For years before it was bruited abroad through the parish that Gabriel Mason was addicted to drink, his wife used to sit weeping alone in the spence when her sons and daughters were out at their work in the fields, and the infatuated man, fierce in the excitement of raw ardent spirits, kept causelessly raging and storming through every nook of that once so peaceful tenement, which for many happy years had never been disturbed by the loud voice of anger or reproach. His eyes were seldom turned on his unhappy wife except with a sullen scowl, or fiery wrath; but when they did look on her with kindness, there was also a rueful self-upbraiding in their expression, on account of his cruelty; and at sight of such transitory tenderness, her heart would overflow with forgiving affection, and her sunk eyes with unendurable tears. But neither domestic sin nor domestic sorrow will conceal from the eyes and
[Pg 155] the ears of men; and at last Gabriel Mason's name was a byword in the mouth of the scoffer. One Sabbath he entered the kirk in a state of miserable abandonment, and from that day he was no longer an elder. To regain his character seemed to him, in his desperation, beyond the power of man, and against the decree of God. So he delivered himself up, like a slave, to that one appetite, and in a few years his whole household had gone to destruction. His wife was a matron, almost in the prime of life, when she died; but as she kept wearing away to the other world, her face told that she felt her years had been too many in this. Her eldest son, unable, in pride and shame, to lift up his eyes at kirk or market, went away to the city, and enlisted into a regiment about to embark on foreign service. His two sisters went to take farewell of him, but never returned; one, it is said, having died of a fever in the Infirmary—just as if she had been a pauper; and the other —for the sight of sin, and sorrow, and shame, and suffering, is ruinous to the soul—gave herself up, in her beauty, an easy prey to a destroyer, and doubtless has run her course of agonies, and is now at peace. The rest of the family dropt down, one by one, out of sight, into inferior situations in far-off places; but there was a curse, it was thought, hanging over the family, and of none of them did ever a favourable report come to their native parish; while he, the infatuated sinner, whose vice seemed to have worked all the woe, remained in the chains of his tyrannical passion, nor seemed ever, for more than the short term of a day, to cease hugging them to his heart. Semblance of all that is most venerable in the character of Scotland's peasantry! Image of a perfect patriarch, walking out to meditate at eventide! What a noble forehead! Features how high, dignified, and composed! There, sitting in the shade of that old wayside tree, he seems some religious Missionary, travelling to and fro over the face of the earth, seeking out sin and sorrow, that he may tame them under the word of God, and change their very being into piety and peace. Call him not a hoary hypocrite, for he cannot help that noble—that venerable—that apostolic aspect—that dignified figure, as if bent gently by Time, loth to touch it with too heavy a hand—that holy sprinkling over his furrowed temples of the silver-soft, and the snow-white hair—
[Pg 156] these are the gifts of gracious Nature all—and Nature will not reclaim them, but in the tomb. That is Gabriel Mason—the Drunkard! And in an hour you may, if your eyes can bear the sight, see and hear him staggering up and down the village, cursing, swearing, preaching, praying—stoned by blackguard boys and girls, who hound all the dogs and curs at his heels, till, taking refuge in the smithy or the pot-house, he becomes the sport of grown clowns, and, after much idiot laughter, ruefully mingled with sighs, and groans, and tears, he is suffered to mount upon a table, and urged, perhaps, by reckless folly to give out a text from the Bible, which is nearly all engraven on his memory—so much and so many other things effaced for ever—and there, like a

wild Itinerant, he stammers forth unintentional blasphemy, till the liquor he has been allowed or instigated to swallow smites him suddenly senseless, and, falling down, he is huddled off into a corner of some lumber-room; and left to sleep—better far for such a wretch were it to death.

Let us descend, then, from that most inclement front, into the lown boundaries of the HOLM. The farm-steading covers a goodly portion of the peninsula shaped by the burn, that here looks almost like a river. With its outhouses it forms three sides of a square, and the fourth is composed of a set of jolly stacks, that will keep the thrashing-machine at work during all the winter. The interior of the square rejoices in a glorious dunghill (O, breathe not the name!) that will cover every field with luxuriant harvests—twelve bolls of oats to the acre. There the cattle—oxen yet "lean, and lank, and brown as is the ribbed sea-sand," will, in a few months, eat themselves up, on straw and turnip, into obesity. There turkeys walk demure—there geese waddle, and there the feathery-legged king of Bantam struts among his seraglio, keeping pertly aloof from double-combed Chanticleer, that squire of dames, crowing to his partlets. There a cloud of pigeons often descends among the corny chaff, and then whirrs off to the uplands. No chained mastiff looking grimly from the kennel's mouth, but a set of cheerful and sagacious collies are seen sitting on their hurdies, or "worrying ither in diversion." A shaggy colt or two, and a brood mare, with a spice of blood, and a foal at her heels, know their shed, and evidently are favourites with the family. Out comes the master, a rosy-cheeked carle, upwards of six feet
[Pg 157] high, broad-shouldered, with a blue bonnet and velveteen breeches—a man not to be jostled on the crown o' the causey, and a match for any horse-couper from Bewcastle, or gypsy from Yetholm. But let us into the kitchen. There's the wife—a bit tidy body—and pretty withal—more authoritative in her quiet demeanour than the most tyrannical mere housekeeper that ever thumped a servant lass with the beetle. These three are her daughters. First, Girzie, the eldest, seemingly older than her mother—for she is somewhat hard-favoured, and strong red hair dangling over a squint eye is apt to give an expression of advanced years, even to a youthful virgin. Vaccination was not known in Girzie's babyhood, but she is, nevertheless, a clean-skinned creature, and her full bosom is white as snow. She is what is delicately called a strapper, rosy-armed as the morning, and not a little of an Aurora about the ankles. She makes her way, in all household affairs, through every impediment, and will obviously prove, whenever the experiment is made, a most excellent wife. Mysie, the second daughter, is more composed, more genteel, and sits sewing—with her a favourite occupation, for she has very neat hands; and is, in fact, the milliner and mantua-maker for all the house. She could no more lift that enormous pan of boiling water off the fire than she could fly, which in the grasp of Girzie is safely landed on the hearth. Mysie has somewhat of a pensive look, as if in love—and we have heard that she is betrothed to young Mr Rentoul, the divinity student, who lately made a speech before the Anti-patronage Society, and therefore may reasonably expect very soon to get a kirk. But look—there comes dancing in from the ewe-bughts the bright-eyed Bessy, the flower of the flock, the most beautiful girl in Almondale, and fit to be bosom-burd of the Gentle Shepherd himself! O that we were a poet, to sing the innocence of her budding breast! But—heaven preserve us!—what is the angelic creature about? Making rumbledethumps! Now she pounds the potatoes and cabbages as with pestle and mortar! Ever and anon licking the butter off her fingers, and then dashing in the salt! Methinks her laugh is out of all bounds loud—and, unless my eyes deceived me, that stout lout whispered in her delicate ear some coarse jest, that made the eloquent blood mount up into her
[Pg 158] not undelighted countenance. Heavens and earth!—perhaps an assignation in the barn, or byre, or bush aboon Traquair. But the long dresser is set out with dinner—the gudeman's bonnet is reverently laid aside—and if any stomach assembled there be now empty, it is not likely, judging from appearances, that it will be in that state again before next Sabbath—and it is now but the middle of the week. Was it not my Lord Byron who liked not to see women eat? Poo—poo—nonsense! We like to see them not only eat—but devour. Not a set of teeth round that kitchen-dresser that is not white as the driven snow. Breath too, in spite of syboes, sweet as dawn-dew—the whole female frame full of health, freshness, spirit, and animation! Away all delicate wooers, thrice-high-fantastical! The diet is wholesome—and the sleep will be sound; therefore eat away, Bessy—nor fear to laugh, although your pretty mouth be full—for we are no poet to madden into misanthropy at your mastication; and, in spite of the heartiest meal ever virgin ate, to us these lips are roses still; "thy eyes are lode-stars, and thy breath sweet air." Would for thy sake we had been born a shepherd-groom! No—no—no! For some few joyous years mayest thou wear thy silken snood unharmed, and silence with thy songs the linnet among the broom, at the sweet hour of prime. And then mayest thou plight thy troth—in all the warmth of innocence—to some ardent yet thoughtful youth, who will carry his bride exultingly to his own low-roofed home—toil for her and the children at her knees, through summer's heat and winter's cold—and sit with her in the kirk, when long years have gone by, a comely matron, attended by daughters acknowledged to be fair—but neither so fair, nor so good, nor so pious, as their mother.

What a contrast to the jocund Holm is the ROWAN-TREE-HUT—so still, and seemingly so desolate! It is close upon the public road, and yet so low, that you might pass it without observing its turf-roof. There live old Aggy Robinson, the carrier, and her consumptive daughter. Old Aggy has borne that epithet for twenty years, and her daughter is not much under sixty. That poor creature is bed-ridden and helpless, and has to be fed almost like a child. Old Aggy has for many years had the same white pony—well named Samson—that she drives three times a-week, all the year round, to and from the nearest market-town, carrying all sorts of articles to nearly twenty
[Pg 159] different families, living miles apart. Every other day in the week—for there is but one Sabbath either to herself or Samson—she drives coals, or peat, or wood, or lime, or stones for the roads. She is clothed in a man's coat, an old rusty beaver, and a red petticoat. Aggy never was a beauty, and now she is almost frightful, with a formidable beard, and a rough voice—and violent

gestures, encouraging the overladen enemy of the Philistines. But as soon as she enters her hut, she is silent, patient, and affectionate, at her daughter's bedside. They sleep on the same chaff-mattress, and she hears, during the dead of the night, her daughter's slightest moan. Her voice is not rough at all when the poor old creature is saying her prayers; nor, we may be well assured, is its lowest whisper unheard in heaven.

Your eyes are wandering away to the eastern side of the vale, and they have fixed themselves on the Cottage of the Seven Oaks. The grove is a noble one; and, indeed, those are the only timber-trees in the valley. There is a tradition belonging to the grove, but we shall tell it some other time; now, we have to do with that mean-looking Cottage, all unworthy of such magnificent shelter. With its ragged thatch it has a cold cheerless look—almost a look of indigence. The walls are sordid in the streaked ochre-wash—a wisp of straw supplies the place of a broken pane—the door seems as if it were inhospitable—and every object about is in untended disorder. The green pool in front, with its floating straws and feathers, and miry edge, is at once unhealthy and needless; the hedgerows are full of gaps, and open at the roots; the few garments spread upon them seem to have stiffened in the weather, forgotten by the persons who placed them there; and half-starved young cattle are straying about in what once was a garden. Wretched sight it is; for that dwelling, although never beautiful, was once the tidiest and best-kept in all the district. But what has misery to do with the comfort of its habitation?

The owner of that house was once a man well to do in the world; but he minded this world's goods more than it was fitting to do, and made Mammon his god. Abilities he possessed far beyond the common run of men, and he applied them all, with all the energy of a strong mind, to the accumulation of wealth. Every rule of his life had that for its ultimate end; and he despised a
[Pg 160] bargain unless he outwitted his neighbour. Without any acts of downright knavery, he was not an honest man—hard to the poor—and a tyrannical master. He sought to wring from the very soil more than it could produce; his servants, among whom were his wife and daughter, he kept at work, like slaves, from twilight to twilight; and was a forestaller and a regrater—a character which, when Political Economy was unknown, was of all the most odious in the judgment of simple husbandmen. His spirits rose with the price of meal, and every handful dealt out to the beggar was paid like a tax. What could the Bible teach to such a man? What good could he derive from the calm air of the house of worship? He sent his only son to the city, with injunctions instilled into him to make the most of all transactions, at every hazard but that of his money; and the consequence was, in a few years, shame, ruin, and expatriation. His only daughter, imprisoned, dispirited, enthralled, fell a prey to a vulgar seducer; and being driven from her father's house, abandoned herself, in hopeless misery, to a life of prostitution. His wife, heartbroken by cruelty and affliction, was never afterwards altogether in her right mind, and now sits weeping by the hearth, or wanders off to distant places, lone houses and villages, almost in the condition of an idiot—wild-eyed, loose-haired, and dressed like a very beggar. Speculation after speculation failed—with farmyard crowded with old stacks, he had to curse three successive plentiful harvests—and his mailing was now destitute. The unhappy man grew sour, stern, fierce, in his calamity; and, when his brain was inflamed with liquor, a dangerous madman. He is now a sort of cattle-dealer—buys and sells miserable horses—and at fairs associates with knaves and reprobates, knowing that no honest man will deal with him except in pity or derision. He has more than once attempted to commit suicide; but palsy has stricken him—and in a few weeks he will totter into the grave.

There is a Cottage in that hollow, and you see the smoke—even the chimney-top, but you could not see the Cottage itself, unless you were within fifty yards of it, so surrounded is it with knolls and small green eminences, in a den of its own, a shoot or scion from the main stem of the valley. It is called The Broom, and there is something singular, and not uninteresting, in the history of its
[Pg 161] owner. He married very early in life, indeed when quite a boy, which is not, by the way, very unusual among the peasantry of Scotland, prudent and calculating as is their general character. David Drysdale, before he was thirty years of age, had a family of seven children, and a pretty family they were as might be seen in all the parish. His life was in theirs, and his mind never wandered far from his fireside. His wife was of a consumptive family, and that insidious and fatal disease never showed in her a single symptom during ten years of marriage; but one cold evening awoke it at her very heart, and in less than two months it hurried her into the grave. Poor creature, such a spectre! When her husband used to carry her, for the sake of a little temporary relief, from chair to couch, and from her couch back again to her bed, twenty times in a day, he hardly could help weeping, with all his consideration, to feel her frame as light as a bundle of leaves. The medical man said, that in all his practice he never had known soul and body keep together in such utter attenuation. But her soul was as clear as ever while racking pain was in her fleshless bones. Even he, her loving husband, was relieved from woe when she expired; for no sadness, no sorrow, could be equal to the misery of groans from one so patient and so resigned. Perhaps consumption is infectious—so, at least, it seemed here; for first one child began to droop, and then another—the elder ones first; and, within the two following years, there were almost as many funerals from this one house as from all the others in the parish. Yes—they all died—of the whole family not one was spared. Two, indeed, were thought to have pined away in a sort of fearful foreboding—and a fever took off a third—but four certainly died of the same hereditary complaint with the mother; and now not a voice was heard in the house. He did not desert the Broom; and the farm-work was still carried on, nobody could tell how. The servants, to be sure, knew their duty, and often performed it without orders. Sometimes the master put his hand to the plough, but oftener he led the life of a shepherd, and was by himself among the hills. He never smiled—and at every meal he still sat like a man about to be led out to die. But what will not retire away—recede—disappear from the vision of the souls of us mortals! Tenacious as we

are of our griefs, even more than of our joys, both elude our grasp. We gaze after them with
[Pg 162] longing or self-upbraiding aspirations for their return; but they are shadows, and like shadows vanish. Then human duties, lowly though they may be, have their sanative and salutary influence on our whole frame of being. Without their performance conscience cannot be still; with it, conscience brings peace in extremity of evil. Then occupation kills grief, and industry abates passion. No balm for sorrow like the sweat of the brow poured into the furrows of the earth, in the open air, and beneath the sunshine of heaven. These truths were felt by the childless widower, long before they were understood by him; and when two years had gone drearily, ay dismally, almost despairingly, by—he began at times to feel something like happiness again when sitting among his friends in the kirk, or at their firesides, or in the labours of the field, or even on the market-day, among this world's concerns. Thus, they who knew him and his sufferings were pleased to recognise what might be called resignation and its grave tranquillity; while strangers discerned in him nothing more than a staid and solemn demeanour, which might be natural to many a man never severely tried, and offering no interruption to the cheerfulness that pervaded their ordinary life.

He had a cousin a few years younger than himself, who had also married when a girl, and when little more than a girl had been left a widow. Her parents were both dead, and she had lived for a good many years as an upper servant, or rather companion and friend, in the house of a relation. As cousins, they had all their lives been familiar and affectionate, and Alice Gray had frequently lived for months at a time at the Broom, taking care of the children, and in all respects one of the family. Their conditions were now almost equally desolate, and a deep sympathy made them now more firmly attached than they ever could have been in better days. Still, nothing at all resembling love was in either of their hearts, nor did the thought of marriage ever pass across their imaginations. They found, however, increasing satisfaction in each other's company; and looks and words of sad and sober endearment gradually bound them together in affection stronger far than either could have believed. Their friends saw and spoke of the attachment, and of its probable result, long before they were aware of its full nature; and nobody was surprised,
[Pg 163] but, on the contrary, all were well pleased, when it was understood that they were to be man and wife. There was something almost mournful in their marriage—no rejoicing—no merry-making—but yet visible symptoms of gratitude, contentment, and peace. An air of cheerfulness was not long of investing the melancholy Broom—the very swallows twittered more gladly from the window-corners, and there was joy in the cooing of the pigeons on the sunny roof. The farm awoke through all its fields, and the farm-servants once more sang and whistled at their work. The wandering beggar, who remembered the charity of other years, looked with no cold expression on her who now dealt out his dole; and as his old eyes were dimmed for the sake of those who were gone, gave a fervent blessing on the new mistress of the house, and prayed that she might long be spared. The neighbours, even they who had best loved the dead, came in with cheerful countenances, and acknowledged in their hearts, that since change is the law of life, there was no one, far or near, whom they could have borne to see sitting in that chair but Alice Gray. The husband knew their feelings from their looks, and his fireside blazed once more with a cheerful lustre.

O, gentle reader, young perhaps, and inexperienced of this world, wonder not at this so great change! The heart is full, perhaps, of a pure and holy affection, nor can it die, even for an hour of sleep. May it never die but in the grave! Yet die it may, and leave thee blameless. The time may come when that bosom, now thy Elysium, will awaken not, with all its heaving beauty, one single passionate or adoring sigh. Those eyes, that now stream agitation and bliss into thy throbbing heart, may, on some not very distant day, be cold to thy imagination as the distant and unheeded stars. That voice, now thrilling through every nerve, may fall on thy ear a disregarded sound. Other hopes, other fears, other troubles, may possess thee wholly—and that more than angel of Heaven seem to fade away into a shape of earth's most common clay. But here there was no change—no forgetfulness—no oblivion—no faithlessness to a holy trust. The melancholy man often saw his Hannah, and all his seven sweet children—now fair in life—now pale in death. Sometimes, perhaps, the sight, the sound—their smiles and their voices—disturbed him, till his
[Pg 164] heart quaked within him, and he wished that he too was dead. But God it was who had removed them from our earth—and was it possible to doubt that they were all in blessedness? Shed your tears over change from virtue to vice, happiness to misery; but weep not for those still, sad, mysterious processes by which gracious Nature alleviates the afflictions of our mortal lot, and enables us to endure the life which the Lord our God hath given us. Ere long husband and wife could bear to speak of those who were now no more seen; when the phantoms rose before them in the silence of the night, they all wore pleasant and approving countenances, and the beautiful family often came from Heaven to visit their father in his dreams. He did not wish, much less hope, in this life, for such happiness as had once been his—nor did Alice Gray, even for one hour, imagine that such happiness it was in her power to bestow. They knew each other's hearts—what they had suffered and survived; and, since the meridian of life and joy was gone, they were contented with the pensive twilight.

Look, there is a pretty Cottage—by name Leaside—one that might almost do for a painter—just sufficiently shaded by trees, and showing a new aspect every step you take, and each new aspect beautiful. There is, it is true, neither moss, nor lichens, nor weather-stains on the roof—but all is smooth, neat, trim, deep thatch, from rigging to eaves, with a picturesque elevated window covered with the same material, and all the walls white as snow. The whole building is at all times as fresh as if just washed by a vernal shower. Competence breathes from every lattice, and that porch has been reared more for ornament than defence, although, no doubt, it is useful both in March and November winds. Every field about it is like a garden, and yet the garden is

brightly conspicuous amidst all the surrounding cultivation. The hedgerows are all clipped, for they have grown there for many and many a year; and the shears were necessary to keep them down from shutting out the vista of the lovely vale. That is the dwelling of Adam Airlie the Elder. Happy old man! This life has gone uniformly well with him and his; yet, had it been otherwise, there is a power in his spirit that would have sustained the severest inflictions of Providence. His gratitude to God is something solemn and awful, and ever accompanied with a profound sense of
[Pg 165] his utter unworthiness of all the long-continued mercies vouchsafed to his family. His own happiness, prolonged to a great age, has not closed within his heart one source of pity or affection for his brethren of mankind. In his own guiltless conscience, guiltless before man, he yet feels incessantly the frailties of his nature, and is meek, humble, and penitent as the greatest sinner. He, his wife, an old faithful female-servant, and an occasional granddaughter, now form the whole household. His three sons have all prospered in the world. The eldest went abroad when a mere boy, and many fears went with him—a bold, adventurous, and somewhat reckless creature. But consideration came to him in a foreign climate, and tamed down his ardent mind to a thoughtful, not a selfish prudence. Twenty years he lived in India—and what a blessed day was the day of his return! Yet in the prime of life, by disease unbroken, and with a heart full to overflowing with all its old sacred affections, he came back to his father's lowly cottage, and wept as he crossed the threshold. His parents needed not any of his wealth; but they were blamelessly proud, nevertheless, of his honest acquisitions—proud when he became a landholder in his native parish, and employed the sons of his old companions, and some of his old companions themselves, in the building of his unostentatious mansion, or in cultivating the wild but not unlovely moor, which was dear to him for the sake of the countless remembrances that clothed the bare banks of its lochs, and murmured in the little stream that ran among the pastoral braes. The new mansion is a couple of miles from his parental Cottage; but not a week, indeed seldom half that time, elapses, without a visit to that dear dwelling. They likewise not unfrequently visit him—for his wife is dear to them as a daughter of their own; and the ancient couple delight in the noise and laughter of his pretty flock. Yet the son understands perfectly well that the aged people love best their own roof—and that its familiar quiet is every day dearer to their habituated affections. Therefore he makes no parade of filial tenderness—forces nothing new upon them—is glad to see the uninterrupted tenor of their humble happiness; and if they are proud of him, which all the parish knows, so is there not a child within its bounds that does not know that Mr Airlie, the rich gentleman from India, loves his poor father and mother as tenderly as if he had
[Pg 166] never left their roof; and is prouder of them, too, than if they were clothed in fine raiment, and fared sumptuously every day. Mr Airlie of the Mount has his own seat in the gallery of the Kirk—his father, as an Elder, sits below the pulpit—but occasionally the pious and proud son joins his mother in the pew, where he and his brothers sat long ago; and every Sabbath one or other of his children takes its place beside the venerated matron. The old man generally leaves the churchyard leaning on his Gilbert's arm—and although the sight has long been so common as to draw no attention, yet no doubt there is always an under and unconscious pleasure in many a mind witnessing the sacredness of the bond of blood. Now and then the old matron is prevailed upon, when the weather is bad and roads miry, to take a seat home in the carriage—but the Elder always prefers walking thither with his son, and he is stout and hale, although upwards of threescore and ten years.

Walter, the second son, is now a captain in the navy, having served for years before the mast. His mind is in his profession, and he is perpetually complaining of being unemployed—a ship—a ship, is still the burden of his song. But when at home—which he often is for weeks together—he attaches himself to all the ongoings of rural life, as devotedly as if a plougher of the soil instead of the sea. His mother wonders, with tears in her eyes, why, having a competency, he should still wish to provoke the dangers of the deep; and beseeches him sometimes to become a farmer in his native vale. And perhaps more improbable things have happened; for the captain, it is said, has fallen desperately in love with the daughter of the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, and the doctor will not give his consent to the marriage, unless he promise to live, if allowed, on shore. The political state of Europe certainly seems at present favourable to the consummation of the wishes of all parties.

Of David, the third son, who has not heard, that has heard anything of the pulpit eloquence of Scotland?—Should his life be spared, there can be no doubt that he will one day or other be Moderator of the General Assembly, perhaps Professor of Divinity in a College. Be that as it may, a better Christian never expounded the truths of the gospel, although some folks pretend to say
[Pg 167] that he is not evangelical. He is, however, beloved by the poor—the orphan and the widow; and his ministrations, powerful in the kirk to a devoutly listening congregation, are so too at the sick-bed, when only two or three are gathered around it, and when the dying man feels how a fellow-creature can, by scriptural aids, strengthen his trust in the mercy of his Maker.

Every year, on the birthday of each of their sons, the old people hold a festival—in May, in August, and at Christmas. The sailor alone looks disconsolate as a bachelor, but that reproach will be wiped away before autumn; and should God grant the cottagers a few more years, some new faces will yet smile upon the holidays; and there is in their unwithered hearts warm love enough for all that may join the party. We too—yes, gentle reader—we too shall be there—as we have often been during the last ten years—and you yourself will judge, from all you know of us, whether or no we have a heart to understand and enjoy such rare felicity.

But let us be off to the mountains, and endeavour to interest our beloved reader in a Highland Cottage—in any one, taken at hap-hazard, from a hundred. You have been roaming all day among the mountains, and perhaps seen no house except at a dwindling distance. Probably you have

wished not to see any house, but a ruined shieling—a deserted hut—or an unroofed and dilapidated shed for the outlying cattle of some remote farm. But now the sun has inflamed all the western heaven, and darkness will soon descend. There is now a muteness more stern and solemn than during unfaded daylight. List—the faint, far-off, subterranean sound of the bagpipe! Some old soldier, probably, playing a gathering or a coronach. The narrow dell widens and widens into a great glen, in which you just discern the blue gleam of a loch. The martial music is more distinctly heard—loud, fitful, fierce, like the trampling of men in battle. Where is the piper? In a cave, or within the Fairies' Knowe? At the door of a hut. His eyes were extinguished by ophthalmia, and there he sits, fronting the sunlight, stone-blind. Long silver hair flows down his broad shoulders, and you perceive that, when he rises, he will rear up a stately bulk. The music stops, and you hear the bleating of goats. There they come, prancing down the rocks, and stare upon the stranger. The old soldier turns himself towards the voice of the Sassenach, and, with
[Pg 168] the bold courtesy of the camp, bids him enter the hut. One minute's view has sufficed to imprint the scene for ever on the memory—a hut whose turf walls and roof are incorporated with the living mountain, and seem not the work of man's hand, but the casual architecture of some convulsion—the tumbling down of fragments from the mountain-side by raging torrents, or a partial earthquake; for all the scenery about is torn to pieces—like the scattering of some wide ruin. The imagination dreams of the earliest days of our race, when men harboured, like the other creatures, in places provided by nature. But even here, there are visible traces of cultivation working in the spirit of a mountainous region—a few glades of the purest verdure opened out among the tall brackens, with a birch-tree or two dropped just where the eye of taste could have wished, had the painter planted the sapling, instead of the winds of heaven having wafted thither the seed—a small croft of barley, surrounded by a cairn-like wall made up of stones cleared from the soil, and a patch of potato ground, neat almost as the garden that shows in a nook its fruit-bushes and a few flowers. All the blasts that ever blew must be unavailing against the briery rock that shelters the hut from the airt of storms; and the smoke may rise under its lee, unwavering on the windiest day. There is sweetness in all the air, and the glen is noiseless, except with the uncertain murmur of the now unswollen waterfalls. That is the croak of the raven sitting on his cliff half-way up Ben-Oura; and hark, the last belling of the red-deer, as the herd lies down in the mist among the last ridge of heather, blending with the shrubless stones, rocks, and cliffs that girdle the upper regions of the vast mountain.

Within the dimness of the hut you hear greetings in the Gaelic tongue, in a female voice; and when the eye has by-and-by become able to endure the smoke, it discerns the household—the veteran's ancient dame—a young man that may be his son, or rather his grandson, but whom you soon know to be neither, with black matted locks, the keen eye, and the light limbs of the hunter—a young woman, his wife, suckling a child, and yet with a girlish look, as if but one year before her silken snood had been untied—and a lassie of ten years, who had brought home the goats, and now sits timidly in a nook eyeing the stranger. The low growl of the huge brindled stag-
[Pg 169] hound had been hushed by a word on your first entrance, and the noble animal watches his master's eye, which he obeys in his freedom throughout all the forest-chase. A napkin is taken out of an old worm-eaten chest, and spread over a strangely-carved table, that seems to have belonged once to a place of pride; and the hungry and thirsty stranger scarcely knows which most to admire, the broad bannocks of barley-meal and the huge roll of butter, or the giant bottle, whose mouth exhales the strong savour of conquering Glenlivet. The board is spread—why not fall to and eat? First be thanks given to the Lord God Almighty. The blind man holds up his hand and prays in a low chanting voice, and then breaks bread for the lips of the stranger. On such an occasion is felt the sanctity of the meal shared by human beings brought accidentally together—the salt is sacred—and the hearth an altar.

No great travellers are we, yet have we seen something of this habitable globe. The Highlands of Scotland is but a small region, nor is its interior by any means so remote as the interior of Africa. Yet 'tis remote. The life of that very blind veteran might, in better hands than ours, make an interesting history. In his youth he had been a shepherd—a herdsman—a hunter—something even of a poet. For thirty years he had been a soldier—in many climates and many conflicts. Since first he bloodied his bayonet, how many of his comrades had been buried in heaps! Flung into trenches dug on the field of battle! How many famous captains had shone in the blaze of their fame—faded into the light of common day—died in obscurity, and been utterly forgotten! What fierce passions must have agitated the frame of that now calm old man! On what dreadful scenes, when forts and towns were taken by storm, must those eyes, now withered into nothing, have glared with all the fury of man's most wrathful soul! Now peace is with him for evermore. Nothing to speak of the din of battle, but his own pipes wailing or raging among the hollow of the mountains. In relation to his campaigning career, his present life is as the life of another state. The pageantry of war has all rolled off and away for ever; all its actions but phantoms now of a dimly-remembered dream. He thinks of his former self, as sergeant in the Black Watch, and almost imagines he beholds another man. In his long, long blindness, he has created another
[Pg 170] world to himself out of new voices—the voices of new generations, and of torrents thundering all year long round about his hut. Almost all the savage has been tamed within him, and an awful religion falls deeper and deeper upon him, as he knows how he is nearing the grave. Often his whole mind is dim, for he is exceedingly old, and then he sees only fragments of his youthful life—the last forty years are as if they had never been—and he hears shouts and huzzas, that half a century ago rent the air with victory. He can still chant, in a hoarse broken voice, battle-hymns and dirges; and thus, strangely forgetful and strangely tenacious of the past, linked to this life by ties that only the mountaineer can know, and yet feeling himself on the brink of the next, Old Blind Donald Roy, the Giant of the Hut of the Three Torrents, will not scruple to quaff the "strong

waters," till his mind is awakened—brightened—dimmed—darkened—and seemingly extinguished—till the sunrise again smites him, as he lies in a heap among the heather; and then he lifts up, unashamed and remorseless, that head, which, with its long quiet hairs, a painter might choose for the image of a saint about to become a martyr.

We leave old Donald asleep, and go with his son-in-law, Lewis of the light-foot, and Maida the stag-hound, surnamed the Throttler,

> "Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trod,
> To his hills that encircle the sea."

We have been ascending mountain-range after mountain-range, before sunrise; and lo! night is gone, and nature rejoices in the day through all her solitudes. Still as death, yet as life cheerful—and unspeakable grandeur in the sudden revelation. Where is the wild-deer herd?—where, ask the keen eyes of Maida, is the forest of antlers!—Lewis of the light-foot bounds before, with his long gun pointing towards the mists now gathered up to the summits of Benevis.

Nightfall—and we are once more at the Hut of the Three Torrents. Small Amy is grown familiar now, and, almost without being asked, sings us the choicest of her Gaelic airs—a few too of Lowland melody: all merry, yet all sad—if in smiles begun, ending in a shower—or at least a tender mist of tears. Heardst thou ever such a syren as this Celtic child? Did we not always tell
[Pg 171] you that fairies were indeed realities of the twilight or moonlight world? And she is their Queen. Hark! what thunders of applause! The waterfall at the head of the great Corrie thunders *encore* with a hundred echoes. But the songs are over, and the small singer gone to her heather-bed. There is a Highland moon!—The shield of an unfallen archangel. There are not many stars—but those two—ay, that One, is sufficient to sustain the glory of the night. Be not alarmed at that low, wide, solemn, and melancholy sound. Runlets, torrents, rivers, lochs, and seas—reeds, heather, forests, caves, and cliffs, all are sound, sounding together a choral anthem.

Gracious heavens! what mistakes people have fallen into when writing about Solitude! A man leaves a town for a few months, and goes with his wife and family, and a travelling library, into some solitary glen. Friends are perpetually visiting him from afar, or the neighbouring gentry leaving their cards, while his servant-boy rides daily to the post-village for his letters and newspapers. And call you that solitude? The whole world is with you, morning, noon, and night. But go by yourself, without book or friend, and live a month in this hut at the head of Glenevis. Go at dawn among the cliffs of yonder pine-forest, and wait there till night hangs her moon-lamp in heaven. Commune with your own soul, and be still. Let the images of departed years rise, phantom-like, of their own awful accord from the darkness of your memory, and pass away into the wood-gloom or the mountain-mist. Will conscience dread such spectres? Will you quake before them, and bow down your head on the mossy root of some old oak, and sob in the stern silence of the haunted place? Thoughts, feelings, passions, spectral deeds, will come rushing around your lair, as with the sound of the wings of innumerous birds—ay, many of them, like birds of prey, to gnaw your very heart. How many duties undischarged! How many opportunities neglected! How many pleasures devoured! How many sins hugged! How many wickednesses perpetrated! The desert looks more grim—the heaven lowers—and the sun, like God's own eye, stares in upon your conscience!

But such is not the solitude of our beautiful young shepherd-girl of the Hut of the Three Torrents.
[Pg 172] Her soul is as clear, as calm as the pool pictured at times by the floating clouds that let fall their shadows through among the overhanging birch-trees. What harm could she ever do? What harm could she ever think? She may have wept—for there is sorrow without sin; may have wept even at her prayers—for there is penitence free from guilt, and innocence itself often kneels in contrition. Down the long glen she accompanies the stream to the house of God—sings her psalms—and returns wearied to her heather-bed. She is, indeed, a solitary child; the eagle, and the raven, and the red-deer see that she is so—and echo knows it when from her airy cliff she repeats the happy creature's song. Her world is within this one glen. In this one glen she may live all her days—be wooed, won, wedded, buried. Buried—said we? Oh, why think of burial when gazing on that resplendent head? Interminable tracts of the shining day await her, the lonely darling of nature; nor dare Time ever eclipse the lustre of those wild-beaming eyes! Her beauty shall be immortal, like that of her country's fairies. So, Flower of the Wilderness, we wave towards thee a joyful—though an everlasting farewell.

Where are we now? There is not on this round green earth a lovelier Loch than Achray. About a mile above Loch Vennachar, and as we approach the Brigg of Turk, we arrive at the summit of an eminence, whence we descry the sudden and wide prospect of the windings of the river that issues from Loch Achray—and the Loch itself reposing—sleeping—dreaming on its pastoral, its sylvan bed. Achray, being interpreted, signifies the "Level Field," and gives its name to a delightful farm at the west end. On "that happy, rural seat of various view," could we lie all day long; and as all the beauty tends towards the west, each afternoon hour deepens and also brightens it into mellower splendour. Not to keep constantly seeing the lovely Loch is indeed impossible—yet its still waters soothe the soul, without holding it away from the woods and cliffs, that, forming of themselves a perfect picture, are yet all united with the mountainous region of the setting sun. Many long years have elapsed—at our time of life ten are many—since we passed one delightful evening in the hospitable house that stands near the wooden bridge over the Teith, just wheeling into Loch Achray. What a wilderness of wooded rocks, containing a thousand little
[Pg 173] mossy glens, each large enough for a fairy's kingdom! Between and Loch Katrine is the Place of Roes—nor need the angler try to penetrate the underwood; for every shallow, every linn, every

pool is overshaded by its own canopy, and the living fly and moth alone ever dip their wings in the checkered waters. Safe there are all the little singing-birds from hawk or gled—and it is indeed an Aviary in the wild. Pine-groves stand here and there amid the natural woods—and among their tall gloom the cushat sits crooning in beloved solitude, rarely startled by human footstep, and bearing at his own pleasure through the forest the sound of his flapping wings.

But let us rise from the greensward, and before we pace along the sweet shores of Loch Achray, for its nearest murmur is yet more than a mile off, turn away up from the Brigg of Turk into Glenfinlas. A strong mountain-torrent, in which a painter, even with the soul of Salvator Rosa, might find studies inexhaustible for years, tumbles on the left of a ravine, in which a small band of warriors might stop the march of a numerous host. With what a loud voice it brawls through the silence, freshening the hazels, the birches, and the oaks, that in that perpetual spray need not the dew's refreshment. But the savage scene softens as you advance, and you come out of that sylvan prison into a plain of meadows and cornfields, alive with the peaceful dwellings of industrious men. Here the bases of the mountains, and even their sides high up, are without heather—a rich sward, with here and there a deep bed of brackens, and a little sheep-sheltering grove. Skeletons of old trees of prodigious size lie covered with mosses and wildflowers, or stand with their barkless trunks and white limbs unmoved when the tempest blows. Glenfinlas was anciently a deer-forest of the Kings of Scotland; but hunter's horn no more awakens the echoes of Benledi.

A more beautiful vale never inspired pastoral poet in Arcadia, nor did Sicilian shepherds of old ever pipe to each other for prize of oaten reed, in a lovelier nook than where yonder cottage stands, shaded, but scarcely sheltered, by a few birch-trees. It is in truth not a cottage—but a very SHIELING, part of the knoll adhering to the side of the mountain. Not another dwelling—even
[Pg 174] as small as itself—within a mile in any direction. Those goats, that seem to walk where there is no footing along the side of the cliff, go of themselves to be milked at evening to a house beyond the hill, without any barking dog to set them home. There are many footpaths, but all of sheep, except one leading through the coppice-wood to the distant kirk. The angler seldom disturbs those shallows, and the heron has them to himself, watching often with motionless neck all day long. Yet the Shieling is inhabited, and has been so by the same person for a good many years. You might look at it for hours, and yet see no one so much as moving to the door. But a little smoke hovers over it—very faint if it be smoke at all—and nothing else tells that within is life.

It is inhabited by a widow, who once was the happiest of wives, and lived far down the glen, where it is richly cultivated, in a house astir with many children. It so happened, that in the course of nature, without any extraordinary bereavements, she outlived all the household, except one, on whom fell the saddest affliction that can befall a human being—the utter loss of reason. For some years after the death of her husband, and all her other children, this son was her support; and there was no occasion to pity them in their poverty, where all were poor. Her natural cheerfulness never forsook her; and although fallen back in the world, and obliged in her age to live without many comforts she once had known, yet all the past gradually was softened into peace, and the widow and her son were in that shieling as happy as any family in the parish. He worked at all kinds of work without, and she sat spinning from morning to night within—a constant occupation, soothing to one before whose mind past times might otherwise have come too often, and that creates contentment by its undisturbed sameness and invisible progression. If not always at meals, the widow saw her son for an hour or two every night, and throughout the whole Sabbath-day. They slept, too, under one roof; and she liked the stormy weather when the rains were on—for then he found some ingenious employment within the shieling, or cheered her with some book lent by a friend, or with the lively or plaintive music of his native hills. Sometimes, in her gratitude, she said that she was happier now than when she had so many other causes to be so; and when occasionally an acquaintance dropt in upon her, her face gave a
[Pg 175] welcome that spoke more than resignation; nor was she averse to partake the sociality of the other huts, and sat sedate among youthful merriment, when summer or winter festival came round, and poverty rejoiced in the riches of content and innocence.

But her trials, great as they had been, were not yet over; for this her only son was laid prostrate by fever—and, when it left his body, he survived hopelessly stricken in mind. His eyes, so clear and intelligent, were now fixed in idiocy, or rolled about unobservant of all objects living or dead. To him all weather seemed the same, and if suffered, he would have lain down like a creature void of understanding, in rain or on snow, nor been able to find his way back for many paces from the hut. As all thought and feeling had left him, so had speech, all but a moaning as of pain or woe, which none but a mother could bear to hear without shuddering—but she heard it during night as well as day, and only sometimes lifted up her eyes as in prayer to God. An offer was made to send him to a place where the afflicted were taken care of; but she beseeched charity for the first time for such alms as would enable her, along with the earnings of her wheel, to keep her son in the shieling; and the means were given her from many quarters to do so decently, and with all the comforts that other eyes observed, but of which the poor object himself was insensible and unconscious. Henceforth, it may almost be said, she never more saw the sun, nor heard the torrents roar. She went not to the kirk, but kept her Sabbath where the paralytic lay—and there she sung the lonely psalm, and said the lonely prayer, unheard in Heaven as many repining spirits would have thought—but it was not so; for in two years there came a meaning to his eyes, and he found a few words of imperfect speech, among which was that of "Mother." Oh! how her heart burned within her, to know that her face was at last recognised! To feel that her kiss was returned, and to see the first tear that trickled from eyes that long had ceased to weep! Day after day, the darkness that covered his brain grew less and less deep—to her that

bewilderment gave the blessedness of hope; for her son now knew that he had an immortal soul,
[Pg 176] and in the evening joined faintly and feebly and erringly in prayer. For weeks afterwards he remembered only events and scenes long past and distant—and believed that his father, and all his brothers and sisters, were yet alive. He called upon them by their names to come and kiss him —on them, who had all long been buried in the dust. But his soul struggled itself into reason and remembrance—and he at last said, "Mother! did some accident befall me yesterday at my work down the glen?—I feel weak, and about to die!" The shadows of death were indeed around him; but he lived to be told much of what had happened—and rendered up a perfectly unclouded spirit into the mercy of his Saviour. His mother felt that all her prayers had been granted in that one boon—and, when the coffin was borne away from the shieling, she remained in it with a friend, assured that in this world there could for her be no more grief. And there in that same shieling, now that years have gone by, she still lingers, visited as often as she wishes by her poor neighbours—for to the poor sorrow is a sacred thing—who, by turns, send one of their daughters to stay with her, and cheer a life that cannot be long, but that, end when it may, will be laid down without one impious misgiving, and in the humility of a Christian's faith.

The scene shifts of itself, and we are at the head of Glenetive. Who among all the Highland maidens that danced on the greenswards among the blooming heather on the mountains of Glenetive—who so fair as Flora, the only daughter of the King's Forester, and grandchild to the Bard famous for his songs of Fairies in the Hill of Peace, and the Mermaid-Queen in her Palace of Emerald floating far down beneath the foam-waves of the sea? And who, among all the Highland youth that went abroad to the bloody wars from the base of Benevis, to compare with Ranald of the Red-Cliff, whose sires had been soldiers for centuries, in the days of the dagger and Lochaber axe—stately in his strength amid the battle as the oak in a storm, but gentle in peace as the birch-tree, that whispers with all its leaves to the slightest summer-breath? If their love was great when often fed at the light of each other's eyes, what was it when Ranald was far off among the sands of Egypt, and Flora left an orphan to pine away in her native glen? Beneath the shadow of the Pyramids he dreamt of Dalness and the deer forest, that was the dwelling of his love—and
[Pg 177] she, as she stood by the murmurs of that sea-loch, longed for the wings of the osprey, that she might flee away to the war-tents beyond the ocean, and be at rest!

But years—a few years—long and lingering as they might seem to loving hearts separated by the roar of seas—yet all too too short when 'tis thought how small a number lead from the cradle to the grave—brought Ranald and Flora once more into each other's arms. Alas! for the poor soldier! for never more was he to behold that face from which he kissed the trickling tears. Like many another gallant youth, he had lost his eyesight from the sharp burning sand—and was led to the shieling of his love like a wandering mendicant who obeys the hand of a child. Nor did his face bear that smile of resignation usually so affecting on the calm countenances of the blind. Seldom did he speak—and his sighs were deeper, longer, and more disturbed than those which almost any sorrow ever wrings from the young. Could it be that he groaned in remorse over some secret crime?

Happy—completely happy, would Flora have been to have tended him like a sister all his dark life long, or, like a daughter, to have sat beside the bed of one whose hair was getting fast grey, long before its time. Almost all her relations were dead, and almost all her friends away to other glens. But he had returned, and blindness, for which there was no hope, must bind his steps for ever within little room. But they had been betrothed almost from their childhood, and would she—if he desired it—fear to become his wife now, shrouded as he was, now and for ever, in the helpless dark? From his lips, however, her maidenly modesty required that the words should come; nor could she sometimes help wondering, in half-upbraiding sorrow, that Ranald joyed not in his great affliction to claim her for his wife. Poor were they to be sure—yet not so poor as to leave life without its comforts; and in every glen of her native Highlands, were there not worthy families far poorer than they? But weeks, months, passed on, and Ranald remained in a neighbouring hut, shunning the sunshine, and moaning, it was said, when he thought none were near, both night and day. Sometimes he had been overheard muttering to himself lamentable words—and, blind as his eyes were to all the objects of the real world, it was rumoured up and
[Pg 178] down the glen, that he saw visions of woeful events about to befall one whom he loved.

One midnight he found his way, unguided, like a man walking in his sleep—but although in a hideous trance, he was yet broad awake—to the hut where Flora dwelt, and called on her, in a dirge-like voice, to speak a few words with him ere he died. They sat down together among the heather, on the very spot where the farewell embrace had been given the morning he went away to the wars; and Flora's heart died within her, when he told her that the Curse under which his forefathers had suffered, had fallen upon him; and that he had seen his wraith pass by in a shroud, and heard a voice whisper the very day he was to die.

And was it Ranald of the Red-Cliff, the bravest of the brave, that thus shuddered in the fear of death like a felon at the tolling of the great prison-bell? Ay, death is dreadful when foreseen by a ghastly superstition. He felt the shroud already bound round his limbs and body with gentle folds, beyond the power of a giant to burst; and day and night the same vision yawned before him—an open grave in the corner of the hill burial-ground without any kirk.

Flora knew that his days were indeed numbered; for when had he ever been afraid of death—and could his spirit have quailed thus under a mere common dream? Soon was she to be all alone in this world; yet when Ranald should die, she felt that her own days would not be many, and there was sudden and strong comfort in the belief that they would be buried in one grave.

Such were her words to the dying man; and all at once he took her in his arms, and asked her "If she had no fears of the narrow house?" His whole nature seemed to undergo a change under the calm voice of her reply; and he said, "Dost thou fear not then, my Flora, to hear the words of doom?" "Blessed will they be, if in death we be not disunited." "Thou too, my wife—for my wife thou now art on earth, and mayest be so in heaven—thou too, Flora, wert seen shrouded in that apparition." It was a gentle and gracious summer night—so clear, that the shepherds on the hills were scarcely sensible of the morning's dawn. And there at earliest daylight, were Ranald and Flora found, on the greensward, among the tall heather, lying side by side, with their calm faces up to heaven, and never more to smile or weep in this mortal world.

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AN HOUR'S TALK ABOUT POETRY.

Ours is a poetical age; but has it produced one Great Poem? Not one.

Just look at them for a moment. There is "The Pleasures of Memory"—an elegant, graceful, beautiful, pensive, and pathetic poem, which it does one's eyes good to gaze on—one's ears good to listen to—one's very fingers good to touch, so smooth is the versification and the wire-wove paper. Never will "The Pleasures of Memory" be forgotten till the world is in its dotage. But is it a Great Poem? About as much so as an ant-hill, prettily grass-grown and leaf-strewn, is a mountain purple with heather and golden with woods. It is a symmetrical erection—in the shape of a cone—and the apex points heavenwards; but 'tis not a sky-piercer. You take it at a hop—and pursue your journey. Yet it endures. For the rains and the dews, and the airs and the sunshine, love the fairy knoll, and there it greens and blossoms delicately and delightfully; you hardly know whether a work of art or a work of nature.

Then there is the poetry of Crabbe. We hear it is not very popular. If so, then neither is human life. For of all our poets, he has most skilfully woven the web and woven the woof of all his compositions with the materials of human life—homespun indeed; but though often coarse, always strong—and though set to plain patterns, yet not unfrequently exceeding fine is the old weaver's workmanship. Ay—hold up the product of his loom between your eye and the light, and it glows and glimmers like the peacock's back or the breast of the rainbow. Sometimes it seems to be but of the "hodden grey;" when sunbeam or shadow smites it, and lo! it is burnished like the regal purple. But did the Boroughmonger ever produce a Great Poem? You might as well ask if he
[Pg 180] built St Paul's.

Breathes not the man with a more poetical temperament than Bowles. No wonder that his old eyes are still so lustrous; for they possess the sacred gift of beautifying creation, by shedding over it the charm of melancholy. "Pleasant but mournful to the soul is the memory of joys that are past"—is the text we should choose were we about to preach on his genius. No vain repinings, no idle regrets, does his spirit now breathe over the still receding Past. But time-sanctified are all the shows that arise before his pensive imagination; and the common light of day, once gone, in his poetry seems to shine as if it had all been dying sunset or moonlight, or the new-born dawn. His human sensibilities are so fine as to be in themselves poetical; and his poetical aspirations so delicate as to be felt always human. Hence his Sonnets have been dear to poets—having in them "more than meets the ear"—spiritual breathings that hang around the words like light around fair flowers; and hence, too, have they been beloved by all natural hearts who, having not the "faculty divine," have yet the "vision"—that is, the power of seeing and of hearing the sights and the sounds which genius alone can awaken, bringing them from afar out of the dust and dimness of evanishment.

Mr Bowles has been a poet for good fifty years; and if his genius do not burn quite so bright as it did some lustres bygone—yet we do not say there is any abatement even of its brightness: it shines with a mellower and also with a more cheerful light. Long ago, he was perhaps rather too pensive—too melancholy—too pathetic—too woe-begone—in too great bereavement. Like the nightingale, he sang with a thorn at his breast—from which one wondered the point had not been broken off by perpetual pressure. Yet, though rather monotonous, his strains were most musical as well as melancholy; feeling was often relieved by fancy; and one dreamed, in listening to his elegies, and hymns, and sonnets, of moonlit rivers flowing through hoary woods, and of the yellow sands of dim-imaged seas murmuring round "the shores of old Romance." A fine enthusiasm too was his—in those youthful years—inspired by the poetry of Greece and Rome; and in some of his happiest inspirations there was a delightful and original union—to be found
[Pg 181] nowhere else that we can remember—of the spirit of that ancient song,—the pure classical spirit that murmured by the banks of the Eurotas and Ilissus, with that of our own poetry, that like a noble Naiad dwells in the "clear well of English undefiled." In almost all his strains you felt the scholar; but his was no affected or pedantic scholarship—intrusive most when least required; but the growth of a consummate classical education, of which the career was not inglorious among the towers of Oxford. Bowles was a pupil of the Wartons—Joe and Tom—God bless their souls!—and his name may be joined, not unworthily, with theirs—and with Mason's, and Gray's, and Collins'—academics all; the works of them all showing a delicate and exquisite colouring of classical art, enriching their own English nature. Bowles's muse is always loth to forget—wherever she roam or linger—Winchester and Oxford—the Itchin and the Isis. None educated in those delightful and divine haunts will ever forget them, who can read Homer, and Pindar, and Sophocles, and Theocritus, and Bion, and Moschus, in the original; Rhedicyna's ungrateful or

renegade sons are those alone who pursued their poetical studies—in translations. They never knew the nature of the true old Greek fire.

But has Bowles written a Great Poem? If he has, publish it, and we shall make him a Bishop.

What shall we say of "The Pleasures of Hope?" That the harp from which that music breathed, was an Æolian harp placed in the window of a high hall, to catch airs from heaven when heaven was glad, as well she might be with such moon and such stars, and streamering half the region with a magnificent aurora-borealis. Now the music deepens into a majestic march—now it swells into a holy hymn—and now it dies away elegiac-like, as if mourning over a tomb. Vague, indefinite, uncertain, dream-like, and visionary all; but never else than beautiful; and ever and anon, we know not why, sublime. It ceases in the hush of night—and we awaken as if from a dream. Is it not even so?—In his youth Campbell lived where "distant isles could hear the loud Corbrechtan roar;" and sometimes his poetry is like that whirlpool—the sound as of the wheels of many chariots. Yes, happy was it for him that he had liberty to roam along the many-based, hollow-rumbling western coast of that unaccountable county Argyllshire. The sea-roar cultivated
[Pg 182] his naturally fine musical ear, and it sank too into his heart. Hence is his prime Poem bright with hope as is the sunny sea when sailors' sweethearts on the shore are looking out for ships; and from a foreign station down comes the fleet before the wind, and the very shells beneath their footsteps seem to sing for joy. As for Gertrude of Wyoming, we love her as if she were our own only daughter—filling our life with bliss, and then leaving it desolate. Even now we see her ghost gliding through those giant woods! As for "Lochiel's Warning," there was heard the voice of the Last of the Seers. The Second Sight is now extinguished in the Highland glooms—the Lament wails no more,

> "That man may not hide what God would reveal!"

The Navy owes much to "Ye Mariners of England." Sheer hulks often seemed ships till that strain arose—but ever since in our imagination have they brightened the roaring ocean. And dare we say, after that, that Campbell has never written a Great Poem? Yes—in the face even of the Metropolitan!

It was said many long years ago in the *Edinburgh Review*, that none but maudlin milliners and sentimental ensigns supposed that James Montgomery was a poet. Then is Maga a maudlin milliner—and Christopher North a sentimental ensign. We once called Montgomery a Moravian; and though he assures us that we were mistaken, yet having made an assertion, we always stick to it, and therefore he must remain a Moravian, if not in his own belief, yet in ours. Of all religious sects, the Moravians are the most simple-minded, pure-hearted, and high-souled—and these qualities shine serenely in "The Pelican Island." In earnestness and fervour, that poem is by few or none excelled; it is embalmed in sincerity, and therefore shall fade not away, neither shall it moulder—not even although exposed to the air, and blow the air ever so rudely through time's mutations. Not that it is a mummy. Say rather a fair form laid asleep in immortality—its face wearing, day and night, summer and winter, look at it when you will, a saintly—a celestial smile. That is a true image; but is "The Pelican Island" a Great Poem? We pause not for a reply.

[Pg 183] Lyrical Poetry, we opine, hath many branches—and one of them, "beautiful exceedingly" withbud, blossom, and fruit of balm and brightness, round which is ever heard the murmur of bees and of birds, hangs trailingly along the mossy greensward when the air is calm, and ever and anon, when blow the fitful breezes, it is uplifted in the sunshine, and glows wavingly aloft, as if it belonged even to the loftiest region of the Tree which is Amaranth. That is a fanciful, perhaps foolish form of expression, employed at present to signify Song-writing. Now, of all the song-writers that ever warbled, or chanted, or sung, the best, in our estimation, is verily none other than Thomas Moore. True that Robert Burns has indited many songs that slip into the heart, just like light, no one knows how, filling its chambers sweetly and silently, and leaving it nothing more to desire for perfect contentment. Or let us say, sometimes when he sings, it is like listening to a linnet in the broom, a blackbird in the brake, a laverock in the sky. They sing in the fulness of their joy, as nature teaches them—and so did he; and the man, woman, or child, who is delighted not with such singing, be their virtues what they may, must never hope to be in Heaven. Gracious Providence placed Burns in the midst of the sources of Lyrical Poetry—when he was born a Scottish peasant. Now, Moore is an Irishman, and was born in Dublin. Moore is a Greek scholar, and translated—after a fashion—Anacreon. And Moore has lived much in towns and cities—and in that society which will suffer none else to be called good. Some advantages he has enjoyed which Burns never did—but then how many disadvantages has he undergone, from which the Ayrshire Ploughman, in the bondage of his poverty, was free! You see all that at a single glance in their poetry. But all in humble life is not high—all in high life is not low; and there is as much to guard against in hovel as in hall—in "auld clay-bigging" as in marble palace. Burns sometimes wrote like a mere boor—Moore has too often written like a mere man of fashion. But take them both at their best—and both are inimitable. Both are national poets—and who shall say, that if Moore had been born and bred a peasant, as Burns was, and if Ireland had been such a land of knowledge, and virtue, and religion as Scotland is—and surely, without offence, we may say that it never was, and never will be—though we love the Green Island well—
[Pg 184] that with his fine fancy, warm heart, and exquisite sensibilities, he might not have been as natural a lyrist as Burns; while, take him as he is, who can deny that in richness, in variety, in grace, and in the power of art, he is superior to the ploughman. Of "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels," we defy you to read a page without admiration; but the question recurs, and it is easily answered, we need not say in the negative, did Moore ever write a Great Poem?

Let us make a tour of the Lakes. Rydal Mount! Wordsworth! The Bard! Here is the man who has devoted his whole life to poetry. It is his profession. He is a poet just as his brother is a clergyman. He is the Head of the Lake School, just as his brother is Master of Trinity. Nothing in this life and in this world has he had to do, beneath sun, moon, and stars, but

> "To murmur by the living brooks
> A music sweeter than their own."

What has been the result? Seven volumes (oh! why not seven more?) of poetry, as beautiful as ever charmed the ears of Pan and of Apollo. The earth—the middle air—the sky—the heaven—the heart, mind, and soul of man—are "the haunt and main region of his song." In describing external nature as she is, no poet perhaps has excelled Wordsworth—not even Thomson; in imbuing her and making her pregnant with spiritualities, till the mighty mother teems with "beauty far more beauteous" than she had ever rejoiced in till such communion—he excels all the brotherhood. Therein lies his especial glory, and therein the immortal evidences of the might of his creative imagination. All men at times "muse on nature with a poet's eye,"—but Wordsworth ever—and his soul has grown more and more religious from such worship. Every rock is an altar—every grove a shrine. We fear that there will be sectarians even in this Natural Religion till the end of time. But he is the High Priest of Nature—or, to use his own words, or nearly so, he is the High Priest "in the metropolitan temple built in the heart of mighty poets." But has he—even he—ever written a Great Poem? If he has—it is not "The Excursion." Nay, "The Excursion" is not a Poem. It is a Series of Poems, all swimming in the light of poetry; some of them sweet and simple, some
[Pg 185] elegant and graceful, some beautiful and most lovely, some of "strength and state," some majestic, some magnificent, some sublime. But though it has an opening, it has no beginning; you can discover the middle only by the numerals on the page; and the most, serious apprehensions have been very generally entertained that it has no end. While Pedlar, Poet, and Solitary breathe the vital air, may "The Excursion," stop where it will, be renewed; and as in its present shape it comprehends but a Three Days' Walk, we have but to think of an Excursion of three weeks, three months, or three years, to have some idea of Eternity. Then the life of man is not always limited to the term of threescore and ten years. What a Journal might it prove at last! Poetry in profusion till the land overflowed; but whether in one volume, as now, or in fifty, in future, not a Great Poem—nay, not a Poem at all—nor ever to be so esteemed, till the principles on which Great Poets build the lofty rhyme are exploded, and the very names of Art and Science smothered and lost in the bosom of Nature from which they arose.

Let the dullest clod that ever vegetated, provided only he be alive and hear, be shut up in a room with Coleridge, or in a wood, and subjected for a few minutes to the ethereal influence of that wonderful man's monologue, and he will begin to believe himself a Poet. The barren wilderness may not blossom like the rose, but it will seem, or rather feel to do so, under the lustre of an imagination exhaustless as the sun. You may have seen perhaps rocks suddenly so glorified by sunlight with colours manifold, that the bees seek them, deluded by the show of flowers. The sun, you know, does not always show his orb even in the daytime—and people are often ignorant of his place in the firmament. But he keeps shining away at his leisure, as you would know were he to suffer eclipse. Perhaps he—the sun—is at no other time a more delightful luminary than when he is pleased to dispense his influence through a general haze, or mist—softening all the day till meridian is almost like the afternoon, and the grove, anticipating gloaming, bursts into "dance and minstrelsy" ere the god go down into the sea. Clouds too become him well—whether thin and fleecy and braided, or piled up all round about him castle-wise and cathedral-fashion, to say
[Pg 186] nothing of temples and other metropolitan structures; nor is it reasonable to find fault with him, when, as naked as the hour he was born, "he flames on the forehead of the morning sky." The grandeur too of his appearance on setting, has become quite proverbial. Now in all this he resembles Coleridge. It is easy to talk—not very difficult to speechify—hard to speak; but to "discourse" is a gift rarely bestowed by Heaven on mortal man. Coleridge has it in perfection. While he is discoursing, the world loses all its commonplaces, and you and your wife imagine yourself Adam and Eve listening to the affable archangel Raphael in the Garden of Eden. You would no more dream of wishing him to be mute for a while, than you would a river that "imposes silence with a stilly sound." Whether you understand two consecutive sentences, we shall not stop too curiously to inquire; but you do something better, you feel the whole just like any other divine music. And 'tis your own fault if you do not

> "A wiser and a better man arise to-morrow's morn."

Reason is said to be one faculty, and Imagination another—but there cannot be a grosser mistake; they are one and indivisible; only in most cases they live like cat and dog, in mutual worrying, or haply sue for a divorce; whereas in the case of Coleridge they are one spirit as well as one flesh, and keep billing and cooing in a perpetual honeymoon. Then his mind is learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, as well as the Greeks and Romans; and though we have heard simpletons say that he knows nothing of science, we have heard him on chemistry puzzle Sir Humphrey Davy—and prove to his own entire satisfaction, that Leibnitz and Newton, though good men, were but indifferent astronomers. Besides, he thinks nothing of inventing a new science, with a complete nomenclature, in a twinkling—and should you seem sluggish of apprehension, he endows you with an additional sense or two, over and above the usual seven, till you are no longer at a loss, be it even to scent the music of fragrance, or to hear the smell of a balmy piece of poetry. All the faculties, both of soul and sense, seem amicably to interchange their functions and their provinces; and you fear not that the dream may dissolve, persuaded that you are in a future state of permanent enjoyment. Nor are we now using any exaggeration; for if

[Pg 187] you will but think how unutterably dull are all the ordinary sayings and doings of this life, spent as it is with ordinary people, you may imagine how in sweet delirium you may be robbed of yourself by a seraphic tongue that has fed since first it lisped on "honey-dew," and by lips that have "breathed the air of Paradise," and learned a seraphic language, which, all the while that it is English, is as grand as Greek and as soft as Italian. We only know this, that Coleridge is the alchymist that in his crucible melts down hours to moments—and lo! diamonds sprinkled on a plate of gold.

What a world would this be were all its inhabitants to fiddle like Paganini, ride like Ducrow, discourse like Coleridge, and do everything else in a style of equal perfection! But pray, how does the man write poetry with a pen upon paper, who thus is perpetually pouring it from his inspired lips? Read "The Ancient Mariner," "The Nightingale," and "Genevieve." In the first, you shudder at the superstition of the sea—in the second, you thrill with the melodies of the woods—in the third, earth is like heaven;—for you are made to feel that

> "All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame!"

Has Coleridge, then, ever written a Great Poem? No; for besides the Regions of the Fair, the Wild, and the Wonderful, there is another up to which his wing might not soar; though the plumes are strong as soft. But why should he who loveth to take "the wings of a dove that he may flee away" to the bosom of beauty, though there never for a moment to be at rest—why should he, like an eagle, soar into the storms that roll above this visible diurnal sphere in peals of perpetual thunder?

Wordsworth, somewhere or other, remonstrates, rather angrily, with the Public, against her obstinate ignorance shown in persisting to put into one class himself, Coleridge, and Southey, as birds of a feather, that not only flock together but warble the same sort of song. But he elsewhere tells us that he and Coleridge hold the same principles in the Art Poetical; and among his Lyrical Ballads he admitted the three finest compositions of his illustrious Compeer. The Public,
[Pg 188] therefore, is not to blame in taking him at his word, even if she had discerned no family likeness in their genius. Southey certainly resembles Wordsworth less than Coleridge does; but he lives at Keswick, which is but some dozen miles from Rydal, and perhaps with an unphilosophical though pensive Public that link of connection should be allowed to be sufficient, even were there no other less patent and material than the Macadamised turnpike road. But true it is and of verity, that Southey, among our living Poets, stands aloof and "alone in his glory;" for he alone of them all has adventured to illustrate, in Poems of magnitude, the different characters, customs, and manners of nations. "Joan of Arc" is an English and French story—"Thalaba," Arabian—"Kehama," Indian—"Madoc," Welsh and American—and "Roderick," Spanish and Moorish; nor would it be easy to say (setting aside the first, which was a very youthful work) in which of these noble poems Mr Southey has most successfully performed an achievement entirely beyond the power of any but the highest genius. In "Madoc," and especially in "Roderick," he has relied on the truth of nature—as it is seen in the history of great national transactions and events. In "Thalaba" and in "Kehama," though in them, too, he has brought to bear an almost boundless lore, he follows the leading of Fancy and Imagination, and walks in a world of wonders. Seldom, if ever, has one and the same Poet exhibited such power in such different kinds of Poetry—in Truth a Master, and in Fiction a Magician.

It is easy to assert that he draws on his vast stores of knowledge gathered from books—and that we have but to look at the multifarious accumulation of notes appended to his great Poems to see that they are not Inventions. The materials of poetry indeed are there—often the raw materials—seldom more; but the Imagination that moulded them into beautiful, or magnificent, or wondrous shapes, is all his own—and has shown itself most creative. Southey never was among the Arabians nor Hindoos, and therefore had to trust to travellers. But had he not been a Poet he might have read till he was blind, nor ever seen

> "The palm-grove inlanded amid the waste,"

where with Oneiza in her Father's Tent

> "How happily the years of Thalaba went by!"

[Pg 189] In what guidance but that of his own genius did he descend with the Destroyer into the Domdaniel Caves? And who showed him the Swerga's Bowers of Bliss? Who built for him with all its palaces that submarine City of the Dead, safe in its far-down silence from the superficial thunder of the sea? The greatness as well as the originality of Southey's genius is seen in the conception of every one of his Five Chief Works—with the exception of "Joan of Arc," which was written in very early youth, and is chiefly distinguished by a fine enthusiasm. They are one and all National Poems—wonderfully true to the customs and characters of the inhabitants of the countries in which are laid the scenes of all their various adventures and enterprises—and the Poet has entirely succeeded in investing with an individual interest each representative of a race. Thalaba is a true Arab—Madoc a true Briton—King Roderick indeed the Last of the Goths. Kehama is a personage whom we can be made to imagine only in Hindostan. Sir Walter confined himself in his poetry to Scotland—except in "Rokeby"—and his might then went not with him across the Border; though in his novels and romances he was at home when abroad—and

nowhere else more gloriously than with Saladin in the Desert. "Lalla Rookh" is full of brilliant poetry; and one of the series—the "Fire-Worshippers"—is Moore's highest effort; but the whole is too elaborately Oriental—and often in pure weariness of all that accumulation of the gorgeous imagery of the East, we shut up the false glitter, and thank Heaven that we are in one of the bleakest and barest corners of the West. But Southey's magic is more potent—and he was privileged to exclaim—

> "Come, listen to a tale of times of old!
> Come, for ye know me. I am he who framed
> Of Thalaba the wild and wondrous song.
> Come listen to my lay, and ye shall hear
> How Madoc from the shores of Britain spread
> The adventurous sail, explored the ocean path,
> And quell'd barbaric power, and overthrew
> The bloody altars of idolatry,
> And planted on its fanes triumphantly
> The Cross of Christ. Come, listen to my lay."

[Pg 190] Of all his chief Poems the conception and the execution are original; in much faulty and imperfect both; but bearing throughout the impress of original power; and breathing a moral charm, in the midst of the wildest and sometimes even extravagant imaginings, that shall preserve them for ever from oblivion, embalming them in the spirit of delight and of love. Fairy Tales, or tales of witchcraft and enchantment, seldom stir the holiest and deepest feelings of the heart; but "Thalaba" and "Kehama" do so; "the still sad music of humanity" is ever with us among all most wonderful and wild; and of all the spells, and charms, and talismans that are seen working strange effects before our eyes, the strongest are ever felt to be Piety and Virtue. What exquisite pictures of domestic affection and bliss! what sanctity and devotion! Meek as a child is Innocence in Southey's poetry, but mightier than any giant. Whether matron or maid, mother or daughter—in joy or sorrow—as they appear before us, doing or suffering, "beautiful and dutiful," with Faith, Hope and Charity their guardian angels, nor Fear ever once crossing their path! We feel, in perusing such pictures—"Purity! thy name is woman!" and are not these Great Poems? We are silent. But should you answer "yes," from us in our present mood you shall receive no contradiction.

The transition always seems to us, we scarcely know why, as natural as delightful from Southey to Scott. They alone of all the poets of the day have produced poems in which are pictured and narrated, epicly, national characters, and events, and actions, and catastrophes. Southey has heroically invaded foreign countries; Scott as heroically brought his power to bear on his own people; and both have achieved immortal triumphs. But Scotland is proud of her great national minstrel—and as long as she is Scotland, will wash and warm the laurels round his brow, with rains and winds that will for ever keep brightening their glossy verdure. Whereas England, ungrateful ever to her men of genius, already often forgets the poetry of Southey; while Little Britain abuses his patriotism in his politics. The truth is, that Scotland had forgotten her own history till Sir Walter burnished it all up till it glowed again—it is hard to say whether in his poetry or in his prose the brightest—and the past became the present. We know now the
[Pg 191] character of our own people as it showed itself in war and peace—in palace, castle, hall, hut, hovel, and shieling—through centuries of advancing civilisation, from the time when Edinburgh was first ycleped Auld Reekie, down to the period when the bright idea first occurred to her inhabitants to call her the Modern Athens. This he has effected by means of about one hundred volumes, each exhibiting to the life about fifty characters, and each character not only an individual in himself or herself, but the representative—so we offer to prove if you be sceptical—of a distinct class or order of human beings, from the Monarch to the Mendicant, from the Queen to the Gypsy, from the Bruce to the Moniplies, from Mary Stuart to Jenny Dennison. We shall never say that Scott is Shakespeare: but we shall say that he has conceived and created—you know the meaning of these words—as many characters—real living flesh-and-blood human beings—naturally, truly, and consistently, as Shakespeare; who, always transcendently great in pictures of the passions—out of their range, which surely does not comprehend all rational being—was—nay, do not threaten to murder us—not seldom an imperfect delineator of human life. All the world believed that Sir Walter had not only exhausted his own genius in his poetry, but that he had exhausted all the matter of Scottish life—he and Burns together—and that no more ground unturned-up lay on this side of the Tweed. Perhaps he thought so too for a while—and shared in the general and natural delusion. But one morning before breakfast it occurred to him, that in all his poetry he had done little or nothing—though more for Scotland than any other of her poets, except the Ploughman—and that it would not be much amiss to commence a New Century of Inventions. Hence the Prose Tales—Novels—and Romances—fresh floods of light pouring all over Scotland—and occasionally illumining England, France, and Germany, and even Palestine—whatever land had been ennobled by Scottish enterprise, genius, valour, and virtue.

Up to the era of Sir Walter, living people had some vague, general, indistinct notions about dead people mouldering away to nothing centuries ago, in regular kirkyards and chance burial-places, "'mang muirs and mosses many O," somewhere or other in that difficultly-distinguished and very debatable district called the Borders. All at once he touched their tombs with a divining-rod, and
[Pg 192] the turf streamed out ghosts—some in woodmen's dresses—most in warrior's mail: green archers leaped forth with yew-bow and quivers—and giants stalked shaking spears. The grey chronicler smiled; and, taking up his pen, wrote in lines of light the annals of the chivalrous and heroic days of auld feudal Scotland. The nation then, for the first time, knew the character of its ancestors;

for those were not spectres—not they indeed—nor phantoms of the brain—but gaunt flesh and blood, or glad and glorious;—base-born cottage churls of the olden time, because Scottish, became familiar to the love of the nation's heart, and so to its pride did the high-born lineage of palace-kings. The worst of Sir Walter is, that he has *harried* all Scotland. Never was there such a freebooter. He harries all men's cattle—kills themselves off-hand, and makes bonfires of their castles. Thus has he disturbed and illuminated all the land as with the blazes of a million beacons. Lakes lie with their islands distinct by midnight as by mid-day; wide woods glow gloriously in the gloom; and by the stormy splendour you even see ships, with all sails set, far at sea. His favourite themes in prose or numerous verse are still "Knights and Lords and mighty Earls," and their Lady-loves, chiefly Scottish—of kings that fought for fame or freedom—of fatal Flodden and bright Bannockburn—of the DELIVERER. If that be not national to the teeth, Homer was no Ionian, Tyrtæus not sprung from Sparta, and Christopher North a Cockney. Let Abbotsford, then, be cognomed by those that choose it, the Ariosto of the North—we shall continue to call him plain Sir Walter.

Now, we beg leave to decline answering our own question—has he ever written a Great Poem? We do not care one straw whether he has or not; for he has done this—he has exhibited human life in a greater variety of forms and lights, all definite and distinct, than any other man whose name has reached our ears; and therefore, without fear or trembling, we tell the world to its face, that he is, out of all sight, the greatest genius of the age, not forgetting Goethe, the Devil, and Dr Faustus.

"What? Scott a greater genius than Byron!" Yes—beyond compare. Byron had a vivid and strong, but not a wide, imagination. He saw things as they are, occasionally standing prominently and
[Pg 193] boldly out from the flat surface of this world; and in general, when his soul was up, he described them with a master's might. We speak now of the external world—of nature and of art. Now observe how he dealt with nature. In his early poems he betrayed no passionate love of nature, though we do not doubt that he felt it; and even in the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" he was an unfrequent and no very devout worshipper at her shrine. We are not blaming his lukewarmness; but simply stating a fact. He had something else to think of, it would appear; and proved himself a poet. But in the third canto, "a change came over the spirit of his dream," and he "babbled o' green fields," floods, and mountains. Unfortunately, however, for his originality, that canto is almost a cento—his model being Wordsworth. His merit, whatever it may be, is limited therefore to that of imitation. And observe, the imitation is not merely occasional or verbal; but all the descriptions are conceived in the spirit of Wordsworth, coloured by it and shaped—from it they live, and breathe, and have their being; and that so entirely, that had "The Excursion" and "Lyrical Ballads" never been, neither had any composition at all resembling, either in conception or execution, the third canto of "Childe Harold." His soul, however, having been awakened by the inspiration of the Bard of Nature, never afterwards fell asleep, nor got drowsy over her beauties or glories; and much fine description pervades most of his subsequent works. He afterwards made much of what he saw his own—and even described it after his own fashion; but a greater in that domain was his instructor and guide—nor in his noblest efforts did he ever make any close approach to those inspired passages, which he had manifestly set as models before his imagination. With all the fair and great objects in the world of art, again, Byron dealt like a poet of original genius. They themselves, and not descriptions of them, kindled it up; and thus "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," do almost entirely compose the fourth canto, which is worth, ten times over, all the rest. The impetuosity of his career is astonishing; never for a moment does his wing flag; ever and anon he stoops but to soar again with a more majestic sweep; and you see how he glories in his flight—that he is proud as Lucifer. The first two cantos are frequently cold, cumbrous, stiff, heavy, and dull; and, with the exception of perhaps a
[Pg 194] dozen stanzas, and these far from being of first-rate excellence, they are found woefully wanting in the true fire. Many passages are but the baldest prose. Byron, after all, was right in thinking—at first—but poorly of these cantos; and so was the friend, not Mr Hobhouse, who threw cold water upon them in manuscript. True, they "made a prodigious sensation," but bitter-bad stuff has often done that; while often unheeded or unheard has been an angel's voice. Had they been suffered to stand alone, long ere now had they been pretty well forgotten; and had they been followed by other two cantos no better than themselves, then had the whole four in good time been most certainly damned. But, fortunately, the poet, in his pride, felt himself pledged to proceed; and proceed he did in a superior style; borrowing, stealing, and robbing, with a face of aristocratic assurance that must have amazed the plundered; but intermingling with the spoil riches fairly won by his own genius from the exhaustless treasury of nature, who loved her wayward her wicked, and her wondrous son. Is "Childe Harold," then, a Great Poem? What! with one-half of it little above mediocrity, one quarter of it not original in conception, and in execution swarming with faults, and the remainder glorious? As for his tales—the "Giaour," "Corsair," "Lara," "Bride of Abydos," "Siege of Corinth," and so forth—they are all spirited, energetic, and passionate performances—sometimes nobly and sometimes meanly versified—but displaying neither originality nor fertility of invention, and assuredly no wide range either of feeling or of thought, though over that range a supreme dominion. Some of his dramas are magnificent—and in many of his smaller poems pathos and beauty overflow. Don Juan exhibits almost every kind of talent; and in it the degradation of poetry is perfect.

But there is another glory belonging to this age, and almost to this age alone of our poetry—the glory of Female Genius. We have heard and seen it seriously argued whether or not women are equal to men; as if there could be a moment's doubt in any mind unbesotted by sex, that they are infinitely superior; not in understanding, thank Heaven, nor in intellect, but in all other "impulses of soul and sense" that dignify and adorn human beings, and make them worthy of living on this

delightful earth. Men for the most part are such worthless wretches, that we wonder how women
[Pg 195] condescend to allow the world to be carried on; and we attribute that phenomenon solely to the hallowed yearnings of maternal affection, which breathes as strongly in maid as in matron, and may be beautifully seen in the child fondling its doll in its blissful bosom. Philoprogenitiveness! But not to pursue that interesting speculation, suffice it for the present to say, that so far from having no souls—a whim of Mahomet's, who thought but of their bodies—women are the sole spiritual beings that walk the earth not unseen; they alone, without pursuing a complicated and scientific system of deception and hypocrisy, are privileged from on high to write poetry. We—men we mean—may affect a virtue, though we have it not, and appear to be inspired by the divine afflatus. Nay, we sometimes—often—are truly so inspired, and write like gods. A few of us are subject to fits, and in them utter oracles. But the truth is too glaring to be denied, that all male rational creatures are, in the long run, vile, corrupt, and polluted; and that the best man that ever died in his bed within the arms of his distracted wife, is wickeder far than the worst woman that was ever iniquitously hanged for murdering what was called her poor husband, who in all cases righteously deserved his fate. Purity of mind is incompatible with manhood; and a monk is a monster—so is every Fellow of a College, and every Roman Catholic Priest, from Father O'Leary to Dr Doyle. Confessions, indeed! Why, had Joseph himself confessed all he ever felt and thought to Potiphar's wife, she would have frowned him from her presence in all the chaste dignity of virtuous indignation, and so far from tearing off his garment, would not have touched it for the whole world. But all women—till men by marriage, or by something, if that be possible, worse even than marriage, try in vain to reduce them nearly to their own level—are pure as dewdrops or moonbeams, and know not the meaning of evil. Their genius conjectures it; and in that there is no sin. But their genius loves best to image forth good, for 'tis the blessing of their life, its power, and its glory; and hence, when they write poetry, it is religious, sweet, soft, solemn, and divine.

Observe, however—to prevent all mistakes—that we speak but of British women—and of British women of the present age. Of the German Fair Sex we know little or nothing; but daresay that
[Pg 196] the Baroness la Motte Fouqué is a worthy woman, and as vapid as the Baron. Neither make we any allusion to Madame Genlis, or other illustrious Lemans of the French school, who charitably adopted their own natural daughters, while other less pious ladies, who had become mothers without being wives, sent theirs to Foundling Hospitals. We restrict ourselves to the Maids and Matrons of this Island—and of this Age; and as it is of poetical genius that we speak—we name the names of Joanna Baillie, Mary Tighe, Felicia Hemans, Caroline Bowles, Mary Howitt, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, and the Lovely Norton; while we pronounce several other sweet-sounding Christian surnames in whispering under-tones of affection, almost as inaudible as the sound of the growing of grass on a dewy evening.

Corinna and Sappho must have been women of transcendant genius so to move Greece. For though the Greek character was most impressible and combustible, it was so only to the finest finger and fire. In that delightful land dunces were all dumb. Where genius alone spoke and sung poetry, how hard to excel! Corinna and Sappho did excel—the one, it is said, conquering Pindar—and the other all the world but Phaon.

But our own Joanna has been visited with a still loftier inspiration. She has created tragedies which Sophocles—or Euripides—nay, even Æschylus himself, might have feared, in competition for the crown. She is our Tragic Queen; but she belongs to all places as to all times; and Sir Walter truly said—let them who dare deny it—that he saw her Genius in a sister shape sailing by the side of the Swan of Avon. Yet Joanna loves to pace the pastoral mead; and then we are made to think of the tender dawn, the clear noon, and the bright meridian of her life, passed among the tall cliffs of the silver Calder, and in the lonesome heart of the dark Strathaven Muirs.

Plays on the Passions! "How absurd!" said one philosophical writer. "This will never do!" It has done—perfectly. What, pray, is the aim of all tragedy? The Stagyrite has told us—to purify the passions by pity and terror. They ventilate and cleanse the soul—till its atmosphere is like that of a calm, bright summer day. All plays, therefore, must be on the Passions. And all that Joanna intended—and it was a great intention greatly effected—was in her Series of Dramas to steady
[Pg 197] her purposes by ever keeping one great end in view, of which the perpetual perception could not fail to make all the means harmonious, and therefore majestic. One passion was, therefore, constituted sovereign of the soul in each glorious tragedy—sovereign sometimes by divine right—sometimes an usurper—generally a tyrant. In De Monfort we behold the horrid reign of Hate. But in his sister—the seraphic sway of Love. Darkness and light sometimes opposed in sublime contrast—and sometimes the light swallowing up the darkness—or "smoothing its raven down till it smiles." Finally, all is black as night and the grave—for the light, unextinguished, glides away into some far-off world of peace. Count Basil! A woman only could have imagined that divine drama. How different the love Basil feels for Victoria from Antony's for Cleopatra! Pure, deep, high as the heaven and the sea. Yet on it we see him borne away to shame, destruction, and death. It is indeed his ruling passion. But up to the day he first saw her face his ruling passion had been the love of glory. And the hour he died by his own hand was troubled into madness by many passions; for are they not all mysteriously linked together, sometimes a dreadful brotherhood?

Do you wonder how one mind can have such vivid consciousness of the feelings of another, while their characters are cast in such different moulds? It is, indeed, wonderful—but the power is that of sympathy and genius. The dramatic poet, whose heart breathes love to all living things, and whose overflowing tenderness diffuses itself over the beauty even of unliving nature, may yet paint with his creative hand the steeled heart of him who sits on a throne of blood—the lust of

crime in a mind polluted with wickedness—the remorse of acts which could never pass in thought through his imagination as his own. For, in the act of imagination he can suppress in his mind its own peculiar feelings—its good and gracious affections—call up from their hidden places those elements of our being, of which the seeds were sown in him as in all—give them unnatural magnitude and power—conceive the disorder of passions, the perpetration of crimes, the tortures of remorse, or the scorn of that human weakness, from which his own gentle bosom and blameless life are pure and free. He can bring himself, in short, into an imaginary and momentary
[Pg 198] sympathy with the wicked, just as his mind falls of itself into a natural and true sympathy with those whose character is accordant with his own; and watching the emotions and workings of his mind in the spontaneous and in the forced sympathy, he knows and understands for himself what passes in the minds of others. What is done in the highest degree by the highest genius, is done by all of ourselves in lesser degree, and unconsciously, at every moment in our intercourse with one another. To this kind of sympathy, so essential to our knowledge of the human mind, and without which there can be neither poetry nor philosophy, are necessary a largeness of heart which willingly yields itself to conceive the feelings and states of others whose character is utterly unlike its own, and freedom from any inordinate overpowering passion which quenches in the mind the feelings of nature it has already known, and places it in habitual enmity to the affections and happiness of its kind. To paint bad passions is not to praise them; they alone can paint them well who hate, fear, or pity them; and therefore Baillie has done so—nay start not—better than Byron.

Well may our land be proud of such women. None such ever before adorned her poetical annals. Glance over that most interesting volume, "Specimens of British Poetesses," by that amiable, ingenious, and erudite man, the Reverend Alexander Dyce, and what effulgence begins to break towards the close of the eighteenth century! For ages on ages the genius of English women had ever and anon been shining forth in song; but faint though fair was the lustre, and struggling imprisoned in clouds. Some of the sweet singers of those days bring tears to our eyes by their simple pathos—for their poetry breathes of their own sorrows, and shows that they were but too familiar with grief. But their strains are mere melodies "sweetly played in tune." The deeper harmonies of poetry seem to have been beyond their reach. The range of their power was limited. Anne, Countess of Winchilsea—Catherine Phillips, known by the name of Orinda—and Mrs Anne Killigrew, who, as Dryden says, was made an angel, "in the last promotion to the skies"—showed, as they sang on earth, that they were all worthy to sing in heaven. But what were their hymns to
[Pg 199] those that are now warbled around us from many sister spirits, pure in their lives as they, but brighter far in their genius, and more fortunate in its nurture? Poetry from female lips was then half a wonder, and half a reproach. But now 'tis no longer rare—not even the highest—yes, the highest—for Innocence and Purity are of the highest hierarchies; and the thoughts and feelings they inspire, though breathed in words and tones, "gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman," are yet lofty as the stars, and humble too as the flowers beneath our feet.

We have not forgotten an order of poets, peculiar, we believe, to our own enlightened land—a high order of poets sprung from the lower orders of the people—and not only sprung from them, but bred as well as born in "the huts where poor men lie," and glorifying their condition by the light of song. Such glory belongs—we believe—exclusively to this country and to this age. Mr Southey, who in his own high genius and fame is never insensible to the virtues of his fellow-men, however humble and obscure the sphere in which they may move, has sent forth a volume—and a most interesting one—on the uneducated poets; nor shall we presume to gainsay one of his benevolent words. But this we do say, that all the verse-writers of whom he there treats, and all the verse-writers of the same sort of whom he does not treat, that ever existed on the face of the earth, shrink up into a lean and shrivelled bundle of dry leaves or sticks, compared with these Five—Burns, Hogg, Cunningham, Bloomfield, and Clare. It must be a strong soil—the soil of this Britain—which sends up such products; and we must not complain of the clime beneath which they grow to such height, and bear such fruitage. The spirit of domestic life must be sound—the natural knowledge of good and evil high—the religion true—the laws just—and the government, on the whole, good, methinks, that have all conspired to educate these children of genius, whose souls Nature had framed of the finer clay.

Such men seem to us more clearly and certainly men of genius, than many who, under different circumstances, may have effected higher achievements. For though they enjoyed in their condition ineffable blessings to dilate their spirits, and touch them with all tenderest thoughts, it is not easy to imagine, on the other hand, the deadening or degrading influences to which by that
[Pg 200] condition they were inevitably exposed, and which keep down the heaven-aspiring flame of genius, or extinguish it wholly, or hold it smouldering under all sorts of rubbish. Only look at the attempts in verse of the common run of clodhoppers. Buy a few ballads from the wall or stall—and you groan to think that you have been born—such is the mess of mire and filth which often, without the slightest intention of offence, those rural, city, or suburban bards of the lower orders prepare for boys, virgins, and matrons, who all devour it greedily, without suspicion. Strange it is that even in that mural minstrelsy, occasionally occurs a phrase or line, and even stanza, sweet and simple, and to nature true; but consider it in the light of poetry read, recited, and sung by the people, and you might well be appalled by the revelation therein made of the tastes, feelings, and thoughts of the lower orders. And yet in the midst of all the popularity of such productions, the best of Burns's poems, his "Cottar's Saturday Night," and most delicate of his songs, are still more popular, and read by the same classes with a still greater eagerness of delight. Into this mystery we shall not now inquire; but we mention it now merely to show how divine a thing true genius is, which, burning within the bosoms of a few favourite sons of nature, guards them from all such pollution, lifts them up above it all, purifies their whole being, and without consuming

their family affections or friendships, or making them unhappy with their lot, and disgusted with all about them, reveals to them all that is fair and bright and beautiful in feeling and in imagination, makes them very poets indeed, and should fortune favour, and chance and accident, gains for them wide over the world the glory of a poet's name.

From all such evil influences incident to their condition—and we are now speaking but of the evil—the Five emerged; and first and foremost—Burns. Our dearly beloved Thomas Carlyle is reported to have said at a dinner given to Allan Cunningham in Dumfries, that Burns was not only one of the greatest of poets, but likewise of philosophers. We hope not. What he did may be told in one short sentence. His genius purified and ennobled in his imagination and in his heart the character and condition of the Scottish peasantry—and reflected them, ideally true to nature, in the living waters of Song. That is what he did; but to do that, did not require the highest powers
[Pg 201] of the poet and the philosopher. Nay, had he marvellously possessed them, he never would have written a single line of the poetry of the late Robert Burns. Thank Heaven for not having made him such a man—but merely the Ayrshire Ploughman. He was called into existence for a certain work, for the fulness of time was come—but he was neither a Shakespeare, nor a Scott, nor a Goethe; and therefore he rejoiced in writing the "Saturday Night," and "The Twa Dogs," and "The Holy Fair," and "O' a' the Airts the Win' can blaw," and eke "The Vision." But forbid it, all ye Gracious Powers! that we should quarrel with Thomas Carlyle—and that, too, for calling Robert Burns one of the greatest of poets and philosophers.

Like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, we behold Burns in his golden prime; and glory gleams from the Peasant's head, far and wide over Scotland. See the shadow tottering to the tomb! frenzied with fears of a prison—for some five-pound debt—existing, perhaps, but in his diseased imagination—for, alas! sorely diseased it was, and he too, at last, seemed somewhat insane. He escapes that disgrace in the grave. Buried with his bones be all remembrances of his miseries! But the spirit of song, which was his true spirit, unpolluted and unfallen, lives, and breathes, and has its being, in the peasant-life of Scotland; his songs, which are as household and sheepfold words, consecrated by the charm that is in all the heart's purest affections, love and pity, and the joy of grief, shall never decay, till among the people have decayed the virtues which they celebrate, and by which they were inspired; and should some dismal change in the skies ever overshadow the sunshine of our national character, and savage storms end in sullen stillness, which is moral death, in the poetry of Burns the natives of happier lands will see how noble was once the degenerated race that may then be looking down disconsolately on the dim grass of Scotland with the unuplifted eyes of cowards and slaves.

The truth ought always to be spoken; and therefore we say that in fancy James Hogg—in spite of his name and his teeth—was not inferior to Robert Burns—and why not? The Forest is a better schoolroom for Fancy than ever Burns studied in; it overflowed with poetical traditions. But comparisons are always odious; and the great glory of James is, that he is as unlike Robert as
[Pg 202] ever one poet was unlike another.

Among hills that once were a forest, and still bear that name, and by the side of a river not unknown in song, lying in his plaid on a brae among the "woolly people," behold that true son of genius—The Ettrick Shepherd. We are never so happy as when praising James; but pastoral poets are the most incomprehensible of God's creatures; and here is one of the best of them all, who confesses the "Chaldee" and denies the "Noctes!"

"The Queen's Wake" is a garland of fair forest flowers, bound with a band of rushes from the moor. It is not a poem—not it—nor was it intended to be so; you might as well call a bright bouquet of flowers a flower, which, by the by, we do in Scotland. Some of the ballads are very beautiful; one or two even splendid; most of them spirited; and the worst far better than the best that ever was written by any bard in danger of being a blockhead. "Kilmeny" alone places our (ay, *our*) Shepherd among the Undying Ones. London soon loses all memory of lions, let them visit her in the shape of any animal they please. But the Heart of the Forest never forgets. It knows no such word as absence. The Death of a Poet there is but the beginning of a Life of Fame. His songs no more perish than do flowers. There are no Annuals in the Forest. All are perennial; or if they do indeed die, their fadings away are invisible in the constant succession—the sweet unbroken series of everlasting bloom. So will it be in his native haunts with the many songs of the Ettrick Shepherd. The lochs may be drained—corn may grow where once the Yarrow flowed—nor is such change much more unlikely than in the olden time would have been thought the extirpation of all the vast oak-woods, where the deer trembled to fall into the den of the wolf, and the wild boar farrowed beneath the eagle's eyrie. All extinct now! But obsolete never shall be the Shepherd's plaintive or pawky, his melancholy or merry, lays. The ghost of "Mary Lee" will be seen in the moonlight coming down the hills; the "Witch of Fife" on the clouds will still bestride her besom; and the "Gude Grey Cat" will mew in imagination, were even the last mouse on his last legs, and the feline species swept off by war, pestilence, and famine, and heard to purr no more!

[Pg 203] It is here where Burns was weakest, that the Shepherd is strongest—the world of shadows. The airy beings that to the impassioned soul of Burns seemed cold, bloodless, unattractive, rise up lovely in their own silent domains, before the dreaming fancy of the tender-hearted Shepherd. The still green beauty of the pastoral hills and vales where he passed all his days, inspired him with ever-brooding visions of Fairy Land, till, as he lay musing on the brae, the world of shadows seemed, in the clear depths, a softened reflection of real life, like the hills and heavens in the water of his native lake. When he speaks of Fairy Land, his language becomes aerial as the very voice of the fairy people, serenest images rise up with the music of the verse, and we almost believe in the being of those unlocalised realms of peace, and of which he sings like a native

minstrel.

Yes, James—thou wert but a poor shepherd to the last—poor in this world's goods—though Altrive Lake is a pretty little bit farmie—given thee by the best of Dukes—with its few laigh sheep-braes—its somewhat stony hayfield or two—its pasture where Crummie might unhungered graze—nyuck for the potato's bloomy or ploomy shaws—and path-divided from the porch the garden, among whose flowers "wee Jamie" played. But nature had given thee, to console thy heart in all disappointments from the "false smiling of fortune beguiling," a boon which thou didst hug to thy heart with transport on the darkest day—the "gift o' genie," and the power of immortal song.

And has Scotland to the Ettrick Shepherd been just—been generous—as she was—or was not—to the Ayrshire peasant?—has she, in her conduct to him, shown her contrition for her sin—whatever that may have been—to Burns? It is hard to tell. Fashion tosses the feathered head—and gentility turns away her painted cheek from the Mountain Bard; but when, at the shrine of true poetry, did ever such votaries devoutly worship? Cold, false, and hollow, ever has been their admiration of genius—and different, indeed, from their evanescent ejaculations, has ever been the enduring voice of fame. Scorn be to the scorners! But Scott, and Wordsworth, and Southey, and Byron, and other great bards, have all loved the Shepherd's lays—and Joanna the palm-crowned, and Felicia the muse's darling, and Caroline the Christian poetess, and all the other fair
[Pg 204] female spirits of song. And in his native land, all hearts that love her streams, and her hills, and her cottages, and her kirks, the bee-humming garden and the primrose-circled fold, the white hawthorn and the green fairy-knowe, all delight in "Kilmeny" and "Mary Lee," and in many another vision that visited the Shepherd in the Forest.

And what can surpass many of the Shepherd's songs? The most undefinable of all undefinable kinds of poetical inspiration are surely—Songs. They seem to start up indeed from the dew-sprinkled soil of a poet's soul, like flowers; the first stanza being root, the second leaf, the third bud, and all the rest blossom, till the song is like a stalk laden with its own beauty, and laying itself down in languid delight on the soft bed of moss—song and flower alike having the same "dying fall!"

A fragment! And the more piteous because a fragment. Go in search of the pathetic, and you will find it tear-steeped, sigh-breathed, moan-muttered, and groaned in fragments. The poet seems often struck dumb by woe—his heart feels that suffering is at its acme—and that he should break off and away from a sight too sad to be longer looked on—haply too humiliating to be disclosed. So, too, it sometimes is with the beautiful. The soul in its delight seeks to escape from the emotion that oppresses it—is speechless—and the song falls mute. Such is frequently the character—and the origin of that character—of our auld Scottish Sangs. In their mournfulness are they not almost like the wail of some bird distracted on the bush from which its nest has been harried, and then suddenly flying away for ever into the woods? In their joyfulness, are they not almost like the hymn of some bird, that love-stricken suddenly darts from the tree-top down to the caresses that flutter through the spring? And such, too, are often the airs to which those dear auld sangs are sung. From excess of feeling—fragmentary; or of one divine part to which genius may be defied to conceive another, because but one hour in all time could have given it birth.

You may call this pure nonsense—but 'tis so pure that you need not fear to swallow it. All great song-writers, nevertheless, have been great thieves. Those who had the blessed fate to flourish
[Pg 205] first—to be born when "this auld cloak was new,"—the cloak we mean which nature wears—scrupled not to creep upon her as she lay asleep beneath the shadow of some single tree among

> "The grace of forest woods decay'd,
> And pastoral melancholy,"

and to steal the very pearls out of her hair—out of the silken snood which enamoured Pan himself had not untied in the Golden Age. Or if she ventured, as sometimes she did, to walk along the highways of the earth, they robbed her in the face of day of her dew-wrought reticule—without hurting, however, the hand from which they brushed that net of gossamer.

Then came the Silver Age of Song, the age in which we now live—and the song-singers were thieves still—stealing and robbing from them who had stolen and robbed of old; yet, how account you for this phenomenon—all parties remain richer than ever—and Nature, especially, after all this thieving and robbery, and piracy and plunder, many million times richer than the day on which she received her dowry,

> "The bridal of the earth and sky;"

and with "golden store" sufficient in its scatterings to enable all the sons of genius she will ever bear, to "set up for themselves" in poetry, accumulating capital upon capital, till each is a Crœsus, rejoicing to lend it out without any other interest than cent per cent, paid in sighs, smiles, and tears, and without any other security than the promise of a quiet eye,

> "That broods and sleeps on its own heart!"

Amongst the most famous thieves in our time have been Rob, James, and Allan. Burns never saw or heard a jewel or tune of a thought or a feeling, but he immediately made it his own—that is, stole it. He was too honest a man to refrain from such thefts. The thoughts and feelings—to whom by divine right did they belong? To Nature. But Burns beheld them "waif and stray," and in peril of being lost for ever. He seized then on those "snatches of old songs," wavering away into

the same oblivion that lies on the graves of the nameless bards who first gave them being; and now, spiritually interfused with his own lays, they are secured against decay—and like them
[Pg 206] immortal. So hath the Shepherd stolen many of the Flowers of the Forest—whose beauty had breathed there ever since Flodden's fatal overthrow; but they had been long fading and pining away in the solitary places, wherein so many of their kindred had utterly disappeared, and beneath the restoring light of his genius their bloom and their balm were for ever renewed. But the thief of all thieves is the Nithsdale and Galloway thief—called by Sir Walter, most characteristically, "Honest Allan!" Thief and forger as he is—we often wonder why he is permitted to live. Many is the sweet stanza he has stolen from Time—that silly old carle who kens not even his own—many the lifelike line—and many the strange single word that seems to possess the power of all the parts of speech. And, having stolen them, to what use did he turn the treasures? Why, unable to give back every man his own—for they were all dead, buried, and forgotten—by a potent prayer he evoked from his Pool-Palace, overshadowed by the Dalswinton woods, the Genius of the Nith, to preserve the gathered flowers of song for ever unwithered, for that they all had grown ages ago beneath and around the green shadows of Criffel, and longed now to be embalmed in the purity of the purest river that Scotland sees flowing in unsullied silver to the sea. But the Genius of the Nith—frowning and smiling—as he looked upon his son alternately in anger, love, and pride—refused the votive offering, and told him to be gone; for that he—the Genius—was not a Cromek—and could distinguish with half an eye what belonged to antiquity, from what had undergone, in Allan's hands, change into "something rich and rare;" and above all, from what had been blown to life that very year by the breath of Allan's own genius, love-inspired by "his ain lassie," the "lass that he loe'd best," springing from seeds itself had sown, and cherished by the dews of the same gracious skies, that filled with motion and music the transparency of the river-god's never-failing urn.

We love Allan's "Maid of Elvar." It beats with a fine, free, bold, and healthful spirit. Along with the growth of the mutual love of Eustace and Sybil, he paints peasant-life with a pen that reminds us of the pencil of Wilkie. He is as familiar with it all as Burns; and Burns would have perused with tears many of these pictures, even the most cheerful—for the flood-gates of Robin's heart
[Pg 207] often suddenly flung themselves open to a touch, while a rushing gush—wondering gazers knew not why—bedimmed the lustre of his large black eyes. Allan gives us descriptions of Washings and Watchings o' claes, as Homer has done before him in the Odyssey, and that other Allan in the Gentle Shepherd—of Kirks, and Christenings, and Halloweens, and other Festivals. Nor has he feared to string his lyre—why should he?—to such themes as the Cottar's Saturday Night—and the simple ritual of our faith, sung and said

> "In some small kirk upon the sunny brae,
> That stands all by itself on some sweet Sabbath-day."

Ay, many are the merits of this "Rustic Tale." To appreciate them properly, we must carry along with us, during the perusal of the poem, a right understanding and feeling of that pleasant epithet—Rustic. Rusticity and Urbanity are polar opposites—and there lie between many million modes of Manners, which you know are Minor Morals. But not to puzzle a subject in itself sufficiently simple, the same person may be at once rustic and urbane, and that too, either in his character of man or of poet, or in his twofold capacity of both; for observe that, though you may be a man without being a poet, we defy you to be a poet without being a man. A Rustic is a clodhopper; an Urbane is a paviour. But it is obvious that the paviour in a field hops the clod; that the clodhopper in a street paces the pavé. At the same time, it is equally obvious that the paviour, in hopping the clod, performs the feat with a sort of city smoke, which breathes of bricks; that the clodhopper, in pacing the pavé, overcomes the difficulty with a kind of country air, that is redolent of broom. Probably, too, Urbanus through a deep fallow is seen ploughing his way in pumps; Rusticus along the shallow stones is heard clattering on clogs. But to cease pursuing the subject through all its variations, suffice it for the present (for we perceive that we must resume the discussion another time), to say, that Allan Cunningham is a living example and lively proof of the truth of our Philosophy—it being universally allowed in the best circles of town and country, that he is an Urbane Rustic.

Now, that is the man for our love and money, when the work to be done is a Poem on Scottish
[Pg 208] Life.

We can say of Allan what Allan says of Eustace,—

> "Far from the pasture moor
> He comes; the fragrance of the dale and wood
> Is scenting all his garments, green and good."

The rural imagery is fresh and fair; not copied Cockney wise, from pictures in oil or water-colours —from mezzotintoes or line-engravings— but from the free open face of day, or the dim retiring face of eve, or the face, "black but comely," of night—by sunlight or moonlight, ever Nature. Sometimes he gives us—Studies. Small, sweet, sunny spots of still or dancing day-stream-gleam—grove-glow—sky-glimpse—or cottage-roof, in the deep dell sending up its smoke to the high heavens. But usually Allan paints with a sweeping pencil. He lays down his landscapes, stretching wide and far, and fills them with woods and rivers, hills and mountains, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle; and of all sights in life and nature, none so dear to his eyes as the golden grain, ebbing like tide of sea before a close long line of glancing sickles; no sound so sweet as—rising up into the pure harvest-air, frost-touched though sunny—beneath the shade of hedgerow-tree, after

their mid-day meal, the song of the jolly reapers. But are not his pictures sometimes too crowded? No. For there lies the power of the pen over the pencil. The pencil can do much, the pen everything; the Painter is imprisoned within a few feet of canvass, the Poet commands the horizon with an eye that circumnavigates the globe; even that glorious pageant, a painted Panorama, is circumscribed by bounds, over which imagination, feeling them all too narrow, is uneasy till she soars; but the Poet's Panorama is commensurate with the soul's desires, and may include the Universe.

This Poem reads as if it had been written during the "dewy hour of prime." Allan must be an early riser. But, if not so now, some forty years ago he was up every morning with the lark,

> "Walking to labour by that cheerful song,"

away up the Nith, through the Dalswinton woods; or, for anything we know to the contrary, intersecting with stone-walls, that wanted not their scientific coping, the green pastures of Sanquhar. Now he is familiar with Chantrey's form-full statues; then, with the shapeless cairn on
[Pg 209] the moor, the rude headstone on the martyr's grave. And thus it is that the present has given him power over the past—that a certain grace and delicacy, inspired by the pursuits of his prime, blend with the creative dreams that are peopled with the lights and shadows of his youth—that the spirit of the old ballad breathes still in its strong simplicity through the composition of his "New Poem"—and that art is seen harmoniously blending there with nature.

We have said already that we delight in the story; for it belongs to an "order of *fables* grey," which has been ever dear to Poets. Poets have ever loved to bring into the pleasant places and paths of lowly life, persons (we eschew all manner of *personages* and *heroes* and *heroines*, especially with the epithet "*our*" prefixed) whose native lot lay in a higher sphere: for they felt that by such contrast, natural though rare, a beautiful light was mutually reflected from each condition, and that sacred revelations were thereby made of human character, of which all that is pure and profound appertains equally to all estates of this our mortal being, provided only that happiness knows from whom it comes, and that misery and misfortune are alleviated by religion. Thus Electra appears before us at her Father's Tomb, the virgin-wife of the peasant Auturgus, who reverently abstains from the intact body of the daughter of the king. Look into Shakespeare. Rosalind was not so lovable at court as in the woods. Her beauty might have been more brilliant, and her conversation too, among lords and ladies; but more touching both, because true to tenderer nature, when we see and hear her in dialogue with the neat-herdess—Rosalind and *Audrey!* And trickles not the tear down thy cheek, fair reader—burns not the heart within thee, when thou thinkest of Florizel and Perdita on the Farm in the Forest?

Nor from those visions need we fear to turn to Sybil Lesley. We see her in Elvar Tower, a high-born Lady—in Dalgonar Glen, a humble bondmaid. The change might have been the reverse—as with the lassie beloved by the Gentle Shepherd. Both are best. The bust that gloriously set off the burnishing of the rounded silk, not less divinely shrouded its enchantment beneath the swelling russet. Graceful in bower or hall were those arms, and delicate those fingers when moving white along the rich embroidery, or across the strings of the sculptured harp; nor less so when before
[Pg 210] the cottage door they woke the homely music of the humming wheel, or when on the brae beside the Pool, they playfully intertwined their softness with the new-washed fleeces, or when among the laughing lasses at the Linn, not loth were they to lay out the coarse linen in the bleaching sunshine, conspicuous She the while among the rustic beauties, as was Nausicaa of old among her nymphs at the Fountain.

We are in love with Sybil Lesley. She is full of *spunk*. That is not a vulgar word; or if it have been so heretofore, henceforth let it cease to be so, and be held synonymous with spirit. She shows it in her defiance of Sir Ralph on the shore of Solway—in her flight from the Tower of Elvar; and the character she displays then and there, prepares us for the part she plays in the peasant's cot in the glen of Dalgonar. We are not surprised to see her take so kindly to the duties of a rustic service; for we call to mind how she sat among the humble good-folks in the hall, when Thrift and Waste figured in that rude but wise Morality, and how the gracious lady showed she sympathised with the cares and contentments of lowly life.

England has singled out John Clare from among her humble sons (Ebenezer Elliott belongs altogether to another order)—as the most conspicuous for poetical genius, next to Robert Bloomfield. That is a proud distinction—whatever critics may choose to say; and we cordially sympathise with the beautiful expression of his gratitude to the Rural Muse, when he says—

> "Like as the little lark from off its nest,
> Beside the mossy hill, awakes in glee,
> To seek the morning's throne, a merry guest—
> So do I seek thy shrine, if that may be,
> To win by new attempts another smile from thee."

Now, England is out of all sight the most beautiful country in the whole world—Scotland alone excepted—and, thank heaven, they two are one kingdom—divided by no line, either real or imaginary—united by the Tweed. We forget at this moment—if ever we knew it—the precise number of her counties; but we remember that one and all of them—"alike, but oh! how different"—are fit birthplaces and abodes for poets. Some of them, we know well, are flat—and
[Pg 211] we in Scotland, with hills or mountains for ever before our eyes, are sometimes disposed to find fault with them on that ground—as if nature were not at liberty to find her own level. Flat indeed!

So is the sea. Wait till you have walked a few miles in among the Fens—and you will be wafted along like a little sail-boat, up and down undulations green and gladsome as waves. Think ye there is no scenery there? Why, you are in the heart of a vast metropolis!—yet have not the sense to see the silent city of mole-hills sleeping in the sun. Call that pond a lake—and by a word how is it transfigured? Now you discern flowers unfolding on its low banks and braes—and the rustle of the rushes is like that of a tiny forest—how appropriate to the wild! Gaze—and to your gaze what colouring grows! Not in green only, or in russet brown, doth nature choose to be apparelled in this her solitude—nor ever again will you call her dreary here—for see how every one of those fifty flying showers lightens up its own line of beauty along the plain—instantaneous as dreams—or stationary as waking thought—till, ere you are aware that all was changing, the variety has all melted away into one harmonious glow, attempered by that rainbow.

Let these few words suffice to show that we understand and feel the flattest—dullest—tamest places, as they are most ignorantly called—that have yet been discovered in England. Not in such did John Clare abide—but many such he hath traversed; and his studies have been from childhood upwards among scenes which to ordinary eyes might seem to afford small scope and few materials for contemplation. But his are not ordinary eyes—but gifted; and in every nook and corner of his own county the Northamptonshire Peasant has, during some twoscore years and more, every spring found without seeking either some lovelier aspect of "the old familiar faces," or some new faces smiling upon him, as if mutual recognition kindled joy and amity in their hearts.

John Clare often reminds us of James Grahame. They are two of our most artless poets. Their versification is mostly very sweet, though rather flowing forth according to a certain fine natural sense of melody, than constructed on any principles of music. So, too, with their imagery, which seems seldom selected with much care; so that, while it is always true to nature, and often
[Pg 212] possesses a charm from its appearing to rise up of itself, and with little or no effort on the poet's part to form a picture, it is not unfrequently chargeable with repetition—sometimes, perhaps, with a sameness which, but for the inherent interest in the objects themselves, might be felt a little wearisome—there is so much still life. They are both most affectionately disposed towards all manner of birds. Grahame's "Birds of Scotland" is a delightful poem; yet its best passages are not superior to some of Clare's about the same charming creatures—and they are both ornithologists after Audubon's and our own heart. Were all that has been well written in English verse about birds to be gathered together, what a sweet set of volumes it would make! And how many, think ye—three, six, twelve? That would be indeed an aviary—the only one we can think of with pleasure—out of the hedgerows and the woods. Tories as we are, we never see a wild bird on the wing without inhaling in silence "the Cause of Liberty all over the world!" We feel then that it is indeed "like the air we breathe—without it we die." So do they. We have been reading lately, for a leisure hour or two of an evening—a volume by a worthy German, Doctor Bechstein—on Cage Birds. The slave-dealer never for a moment suspects the wickedness of kidnapping young and old—crimping them for life—teaching them to draw water—and, *oh nefas!* to sing! He seems to think that only in confinement do they fulfil the ends of their existence—even the skylark. Yet he sees them, one and all, subject to the most miserable diseases—and rotting away within the wires. Why could not the Doctor have taken a stroll into the country once or twice a-week, and in one morning or evening hour laid in sufficient music to serve him during the intervening time, without causing a single bosom to be ruffled for his sake? Shoot them—spit them—pie them—pickle them—eat them—but imprison them not; we speak as Conservatives—murder rather than immure them—for more forgivable far it is to cut short their songs at the height of glee, than to protract them in a rueful simulation of music, in which you hear the same sweet notes, but if your heart thinks at all, "a voice of weeping and of loud lament," all unlike, alas! to the congratulation that from the free choirs is ringing so exultingly in their native woods.

[Pg 213] How prettily Clare writes of the "insect youth."

"These tiny loiterers on the barley's beard,
And happy units of a numerous herd
Of playfellows, the laughing Summer brings,
Mocking the sunshine on their glittering wings,
How merrily they creep, and run, and fly!
No kin they bear to labour's drudgery,
Smoothing the velvet of the pale hedge-rose,
And where they fly for dinner no one knows—
The dewdrops feed them not—they love the shine
Of noon, whose sons may bring them golden wine.
All day they're playing in their Sunday dress—
When night repose, for they can do no less;
Then to the heathbell's purple hood they fly,
And like to princes in their slumbers lie,
Secure from rain, and dropping dews, and all,
In silken beds and roomy painted hall.
So merrily they spend their summer-day,
Now in the cornfields, now in the new-mown hay.
One almost fancies that such happy things,
With colour'd hoods and richly-burnish'd wings,
Are fairy folk in splendid masquerade
Disguised, as if of mortal folk afraid.

Keeping their joyous pranks a mystery still,
Lest glaring day should do their secrets ill."

Time has been—nor yet very long ago—when such unpretending poetry as this—humble indeed in every sense, but nevertheless the product of genius which speaks for itself audibly and clearly in lowliest strains—would not have passed by unheeded or unbeloved; nowadays it may, to many who hold their heads high, seem of no more worth than an old song. But as Wordsworth says,

"Pleasures newly found are sweet,
Though they lie about our feet;"

and if stately people would but stoop and look about their paths, which, do not always run along the heights, they would often make discoveries of what concerned them more than speculations among the stars.

It is not to be thought, however, that the Northamptonshire Peasant does not often treat earnestly of the common pleasures and pains, the cares and occupations, of that condition of life in which he was born, and has passed all his days. He knows them well, and has illustrated them
[Pg 214] well, though seldomer in his later than in his earlier poems; and we cannot help thinking that he might greatly extend his popularity, which in England is considerable, by devoting his Rural Muse to subjects lying within his ken, and of everlasting interest. Bloomfield's reputation rests on his "Farmer's Boy"—on some exquisite passages in "News from the Farm"—and on some of the tales and pictures in his "May-day with the Muses." His smaller poems are very inferior to those of Clare—but the Northamptonshire Peasant has written nothing in which all honest English hearts must delight, at all comparable with those truly rural compositions of the Suffolk shoemaker. It is in his power to do so—would he but earnestly set himself to the work. He must be more familiar with all the ongoings of rural life than his compeer could have been; nor need he fear to tread again the same ground, for it is as new as if it had never been touched, and will continue to be so till the end of time. The soil in which the native virtues of the English character grow, is unexhausted and inexhaustible; let him break it up on any spot he chooses, and poetry will spring to light like clover from lime. Nor need he fear being an imitator. His mind is an original one, his most indifferent verses prove it; for though he must have read much poetry since his earlier day—doubtless all our best modern poetry—he retains his own style, which, though it be not marked by any very strong characteristics, is yet sufficiently peculiar to show that it belongs to himself, and is a natural gift. Pastorals—eclogues—and idyls—in a hundred forms—remain to be written by such poets as he and his brethren; and there can be no doubt at all that, if he will scheme something of the kind, and begin upon it, without waiting to know fully or clearly what he may be intending, before three winters, with their long nights, are gone, he will find himself in possession of more than mere materials for a volume of poems that will meet with general acceptation, and give him a permanent place by the side of him he loves so well—Robert Bloomfield.

Ebenezer Elliott (of whom more another day)[1] claims with pride to be the Poet of the Poor—and the poor might well be proud, did they know it, that they have such a poet. Not a few of them
[Pg 215] know it now, and many will know it in future; for a muse of fire like his will yet send its illumination "into dark deep holds." May it consume all the noxious vapours that infest such regions—and purify the atmosphere—till the air breathed there be the breath of life. But the poor have other poets besides him—Crabbe and Burns. We again mention their names—and no more. Kindly spirits were they both; but Burns had experienced all his poetry—and therefore his poetry is an embodiment of national character. We say it not in disparagement or reproof of Ebenezer—conspicuous over all—for let all men speak as they think or feel—but how gentle in all his noblest inspirations was Robin! He did not shun sins or sorrows; but he told the truth of the poor man's life, when he showed that it was, on the whole, virtuous and happy—bear witness those immortal strains, "The Twa Dogs," "The Vision," "The Cottar's Saturday Night," the sangs voiced all braid Scotland thorough by her boys and virgins, say rather her lads and lasses—while the lark sings aloft and the linnet below, the mavis in the golden broom accompanying the music in the golden cloud. We desire—not in wilful delusion, but in earnest hope, in devout trust—that poetry shall show that the paths of the peasant poor are paths of pleasantness and peace. If they should seem in that light even pleasanter and more peaceful than they ever now can be below the sun, think not that any evil can arise "to mortal man who liveth here by toil" from such representations—for imagination and reality are not two different things—they blend in life; but there the darker shadows do often, alas! prevail—and sometimes may be felt even by the hand; whereas in poetry the lights are triumphant—and gazing on the glory men's hearts burn within them—and they carry the joy in among their own griefs, till despondency gives way to exultation, and the day's darg of this worky world is lightened by a dawn of dreams.

[1] *Professor Wilson's Works*, vol. vi., page 224.

This is the effect of all good poetry—according to its power—of the poetry of Robert Bloomfield as of the poetry of Robert Burns. John Clare, too, is well entitled to a portion of such praise; and therefore his name deserves to become a household word in the dwellings of the rural poor. Living in leisure among the scenes in which he once toiled, may he once more contemplate them
[Pg 216] all without disturbance. Having lost none of his sympathies, he has learnt to refine them all and see into their source—and wiser in his simplicity than they who were formerly his yoke-fellows are in theirs, he knows many things well which they know imperfectly or not at all, and is privileged therein to be their teacher. Surely in an age when the smallest contribution to science

is duly estimated, and useful knowledge not only held in honour but diffused, poetry ought not to be despised, more especially when emanating from them who belong to the very condition which they seek to illustrate, and whose ambition it is to do justice to its natural enjoyments and appropriate virtues. In spite of all they have suffered, and still suffer, the peasantry of England are a race that may be regarded with better feelings than pride. We look forward confidently to the time when education—already in much good—and, if the plans of the wisest counsellors prevail, about to become altogether good—will raise at once their condition and their character. The Government has its duties to discharge—clear as day. And what is not in the power of the gentlemen of England? Let them exert that power to the utmost—and then indeed they will deserve the noble name of "Aristocracy." We speak not thus in reproach—for they better deserve that name than the same order in any other country; but in no other country are such interests given to that order in trust—and as they attend to that trust is the glory or the shame, the blessing or the curse, of their high estate.

But let us retrace our footsteps in moralising mood, not unmixed with sadness—to the Mausoleum of Burns. Scotland is abused by England for having starved Burns to death, or for having suffered him to drink himself to death, out of a cup filled to the brim with bitter disappointment and black despair. England lies. There is our gage-glove, let her take it up, and then for mortal combat with sword and spear—only not on horseback—for, for reasons on which it would be idle to be more explicit, we always fight now on foot, and have sent our high horse to graze all the rest of his life on the mountains of the moon. Well then, Scotland met Burns, on his first sunburst, with one exulting acclaim. Scotland bought and read his poetry, and Burns, for a poor man, became rich—rich to his heart's desire—and reached the summit of his ambition, in the way of this world's life, in a—Farm. Blithe Robin would have scorned "an awmous" from any
[Pg 217] hands but from those of nature; nor in those days needed he help from woman-born. True, that times began by-and-by to go rather hard with him, and he with them; for his mode of life was not

"Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,"

and as we sow we must reap. His day of life began to darken ere meridian—and the darkness doubtless had brought disturbance before it had been perceived by any eyes but his own—for people are always looking to themselves and their own lot; and how much mortal misery may for years be daily depicted in the face, figure, or manners even of a friend, without our seeing or suspecting it! Till all at once he makes a confession, and we then know that he has been long numbered among the most wretched of the wretched—the slave of his own sins and sorrows—or thralled beneath those of another, to whom fate may have given sovereign power over his whole life. Well, then—or rather ill, then—Burns behaved as most men do in misery,—and the farm going to ruin—that is, crop and stock to pay the rent—he desired to be, and was made—an Exciseman. And for that—you ninny—you are whinnying scornfully at Scotland! Many a better man than yourself—beg your pardon—has been, and is now, an Exciseman. Nay, to be plain with you—we doubt if your education has been sufficiently intellectual for an Exciseman. We never heard it said of you,

"And even the story ran that he could gauge."

Burns then was made what he desired to be—what he was fit for, though you are not—and what was in itself respectable—an Exciseman. His salary was not so large certainly as that of the Bishop of Durham—or even of London—but it was certainly larger than that of many a curate at that time doing perhaps double or treble duty in those dioceses, without much audible complaint on their part, or outcry from Scotland against blind and brutal English bishops, or against beggarly England, for starving her pauper-curates, by whatever genius or erudition adorned. Burns died an Exciseman, it is true, at the age of thirty-seven; on the same day died an English curate we could name, a surpassing scholar, and of stainless virtue, blind, palsied, "old and miserably poor"—without as much money as would bury him; and no wonder, for he never had
[Pg 218] the salary of a Scotch Exciseman.

Two blacks—nay twenty—won't make a white. True—but one black is as black as another—and the Southern Pot, brazen as it is, must not abuse with impunity the Northern Pan. But now to the right nail, and let us knock it on the head. What did England do for her own Bloomfield? He was not in genius to be spoken of in the same year with Burns—but he was beyond all compare, and out of all sight, the best poet that had arisen produced by England's lower orders. He was the most spiritual shoemaker that ever handled an awl. The "Farmer's Boy" is a wonderful poem—and will live in the poetry of England. Did England, then, keep Bloomfield in comfort, and scatter flowers along the smooth and sunny path that led him to the grave? No. He had given him by some minister or other, we believe Lord Sidmouth, a paltry place in some office or other—most uncongenial with all his nature and all his habits—of which the shabby salary was insufficient to purchase for his family even the bare necessaries of life. He thus dragged out for many long obscure years a sickly existence, as miserable as the existence of a good man can be made by narrowest circumstances—and all the while Englishmen were scoffingly scorning, with haughty and bitter taunts, the patronage that at his own earnest desire made Burns an Exciseman. Nay, when Southey, late in Bloomfield's life, and when it was drawing mournfully to a close, proposed a contribution for his behoof, and put down his own five pounds, how many purse-strings were untied? how much fine gold was poured out for the indigent son of genius and virtue? Shame shuffles the sum out of sight—for it was not sufficient to have bought the manumission of an old negro slave.

It was no easy matter to deal rightly with such a man as Burns. In those disturbed and distracted times, still more difficult was it to carry into execution any designs for his good—and much was there even to excuse his countrymen then in power for looking upon him with an evil eye. But Bloomfield led a pure, peaceable, and blameless life. Easy, indeed, would it have been to make him happy—but he was as much forgotten as if he had been dead; and when he died—did England mourn over him—or, after having denied him bread, give him so much as a stone? No. He dropt into the grave with no other lament we ever heard of but a few copies of poorish verses [Pg 219] in some of the Annuals, and seldom or never now does one hear a whisper of his name. O fie! well may the white rose blush red—and the red rose turn pale. Let England then leave Scotland to her shame about Burns; and, thinking of her own treatment of Bloomfield, cover her own face with both her hands, and confess that it was pitiful. At least, if she will not hang down her head in humiliation for her own neglect of her own "poetic child," let her not hold it high over Scotland for the neglect of hers—palliated as that neglect was by many things—and since, in some measure, expiated by a whole nation's tears shed over her great poet's grave.

What! not a word for Allan Ramsay? Theocritus was a pleasant Pastoral, and Sicilia sees him among the stars. But all his dear Idyls together are not equal in worth to the "Gentle Shepherd." Habbie's Howe is a hallowed place now among the green airy Pentlands. Sacred for ever the solitary murmur of that waterfa'!

> "A flowerie howm, between twa verdant braes,
> Where lassies use to wash and bleach their claes;
> A trotting burnie, wimpling through the ground,
> Its channel pebbles, shining, smooth, and round:
> Here view twa barefoot beauties, clean and clear,
> 'Twill please your eye, then gratify your ear;
> While Jenny what she wishes discommends,
> And Meg, with better sense, true love defends!"

"About them and siclike" is the whole poem. Yet "faithful love shall memorise the song." Without any scenery but that of rafters, which overhead fancy may suppose a grove, 'tis even yet sometimes acted by rustics in the barn, though nothing on this earth will ever persuade a low-born Scottish lass to take a part in a play; while delightful is felt, even by the lords and ladies of the land, the simple Drama of humble life; and we ourselves have seen a high-born maiden look "beautiful exceedingly" as Patie's Betrothed, kilted to the knee in the kirtle of a Shepherdess.

We have been gradually growing national overmuch, and are about to grow even more so, therefore ask you to what era, pray, did Thomson belong? To none. Thomson had no precursor—and till Cowper no follower. He effulged all at once sunlike—like Scotland's storm-loving, mist- [Pg 220] enamoured sun, which till you have seen on a day of thunder, you cannot be said ever to have seen the sun. Cowper followed Thomson merely in time. We should have had "The Task," even had we never had "The Seasons." These two were "heralds of a mighty train ensuing;" add them, then, to the worthies of our own age, and they belong to it—and all the rest of the poetry of the modern world—to which add that of the ancient—if multiplied by ten in quantity—and by twenty in quality—would not so variously, so vigorously, and so truly image the form and pressure, the life and spirit of the mother of us all—Nature. Are then "The Seasons" and "The Task" Great Poems? Yes.—Why? What! Do you need to be told that that Poem must be great, which was the first to paint the rolling mystery of the year, and to show that all its Seasons are but the varied God? The idea was original and sublime; and the fulfilment thereof so complete, that some six thousand years having elapsed between the creation of the world and of that poem, some sixty thousand, we prophesy, will elapse between the appearance of that poem and the publication of another equally great, on a subject external to the mind, equally magnificent. We further presume, that you hold sacred the "hearth." Now, in "The Task," the "hearth" is the heart of the poem, just as it is of a happy house. No other poem is so full of domestic happiness—humble and high; none is so breathed over by the spirit of the Christian religion.

Poetry, which, though not dead, had long been sleeping in Scotland, was restored to waking life by Thomson. His genius was national; and so, too, was the subject of his first and greatest song. By saying that his genius was national, we mean that its temperament was enthusiastic and passionate, and that, though highly imaginative, the sources of its power lay in the heart. "The Castle of Indolence" is distinguished by purer taste and finer fancy; but with all its exquisite beauties, that poem is but the vision of a dream. "The Seasons" are glorious realities; and the charm of the strain that sings the "rolling year" is its truth. But what mean we by saying that "The Seasons" are a national subject?—do we assert that they are solely Scottish? That would be too bold, even for us; but we scruple not to assert, that Thomson has made them so, as far as [Pg 221] might be without insult, injury, or injustice, to the rest of the globe. His suns rise and set in Scottish heavens; his "deep-fermenting tempests are brewed in grim evening" Scottish skies; Scottish is his thunder of cloud and cataract; his "vapours, and snows, and storms" are Scottish; and, strange as the assertion would have sounded in the ears of Samuel Johnson, Scottish are his woods, their sugh, and their roar; nor less their stillness, more awful amidst the vast multitude of steady stems, than when all the sullen pine-tops are swinging to the hurricane. A dread love of his native land was in his heart when he cried in the solitude—

> "Hail, kindred glooms! congenial horrors, hail!"

The genius of Home was national—and so, too, was the subject of his justly famous Tragedy of

"Douglas." He had studied the old Ballads; their simplicities were sweet to him as wallflowers on ruins. On the story of Gill Morice, who was an Earl's son, he founded the Tragedy, which surely no Scottish eyes ever witnessed without tears. Are not these most Scottish lines?—

"Ye woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom
Accords with my soul's sadness!"

And these even more so,—

"Red came the river down, and loud and oft
The angry Spirit of the water shriek'd!"

The Scottish Tragedian in an evil hour crossed the Tweed, riding on horseback all the way to London. His genius got Anglified, took a consumption, and perished in the prime of life. But nearly half a century afterwards, on seeing the Siddons in *Lady Randolph*, and hearing her low, deep, wild, woe-begone voice exclaim, "My beautiful! my brave!" "the aged harper's soul awoke," and his dim eyes were again lighted up for a moment with the fires of genius—say rather for a moment bedewed with the tears of sensibility re-awakened from decay and dotage.

The genius of Beattie was national, and so was the subject of his charming song—"The Minstrel." For what is its design? He tells us, to trace the progress of a poetical genius born in a rude age, from the first dawning of reason and fancy, till that period at which he may be supposed capable
[Pg 222] of appearing in the world as a Scottish Minstrel; that is, as an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.

"There lived in Gothic days, as legends tell,
  A shepherd swain, a man of low degree;
Whose sires perchance in Fairyland might dwell,
  Sicilian groves and vales of Arcady;
But he, I ween, was of the North Countrie;
  A nation famed for song and beauty's charms;
Zealous, yet modest; innocent, though free;
  Patient of toil, serene amid alarms;
  Inflexible in faith, invincible in arms.

The shepherd swain, of whom I mention made,
  On Scotia's mountains fed his little flock;
The sickle, scythe, or plough he never sway'd:
  An honest heart was almost all his stock;
His drink the living waters from the rock;
  The milky dams supplied his board, and lent
Their kindly fleece to baffle winter's shock;
  And he, though oft with dust and sweat besprent,
  Did guide and guard their wanderings, wheresoe'er they went."

Did patriotism ever inspire genius with sentiment more Scottish than *that*? Did imagination ever create scenery more Scottish, Manners, Morals, Life?

"Lo! where the stripling rapt in wonder roves
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves
From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine:
While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,
And echo swells the chorus to the skies!"

Beattie chants there like a man who had been at the Linn of Dee. He wore a wig, it is true; but at times, when the fit was on him, he wrote like the unshorn Apollo.

The genius of Grahame was national, and so too was the subject of his first and best poem—"The Sabbath."

"How still the morning of the hallow'd day!"

is a line that could have been uttered only by a holy Scottish heart. For we alone know what is
[Pg 223] indeed Sabbath silence—an earnest of everlasting rest. To our hearts, the very birds of Scotland sing holily on that day. A sacred smile is on the dewy flowers. The lilies look whiter in their loveliness; the blush-rose reddens in the sun with a diviner dye; and with a more celestial scent the hoary hawthorn sweetens the wilderness. Sorely disturbed of yore, over the glens and hills of Scotland, was the Day of Peace!

"O, the great goodness of the *Saints of Old*!"

the Covenanters. Listen to the Sabbath bard,—

"With them each day was holy; but that morn
On which the angel said, 'See where the Lord
Was laid,' joyous arose; to die that day

Was bliss. Long ere the dawn by devious ways,
O'er hills, through woods, o'er dreary wastes, they sought
The upland muirs, where rivers, there but brooks,
Dispart to different seas. Fast by such brooks
A little glen is sometimes scoop'd, a plat
With greensward gay, and flowers that strangers seem
Amid the heathery wild, that all around
Fatigues the eye: in solitudes like these,
Thy persecuted children, Scotia, foil'd
A tyrant's and a bigot's bloody laws.
There, leaning on his spear (one of the array
Whose gleam, in former days, had scathed the rose
On England's banner, and had powerless struck
The infatuate monarch, and his wavering host!)
The lyart veteran heard the word of God
By Cameron thunder'd, or by Renwick pour'd
In gentle stream; then rose the song, the loud
Acclaim of praise. The wheeling plover ceased
Her plaint; the solitary place was glad;
And on the distant cairn the watcher's ear
Caught doubtfully at times the breeze-borne note.
But years more gloomy follow'd; and no more
The assembled people dared, in face of day,
To worship God, or even at the dead
Of night, save when the wintry storm raved fierce,
And thunder-peals compell'd the men of blood
To couch within their dens; then dauntlessly
The scatter'd few would meet, in some deep dell
By rocks o'ercanopied, to hear the voice,
Their faithful pastor's voice. He by the gleam
Of sheeted lightning oped the sacred book,
[Pg 224] And words of comfort spake; over their souls
His accents soothing came, as to her young
The heathfowl's plumes, when, at the close of eve,
She gathers in, mournful, her brood dispersed
By murderous sport, and o'er the remnant spreads
Fondly her wings; close nestling 'neath her breast
They cherish'd cower amid the purple bloom."

Not a few other sweet singers or strong, native to this nook of our isle, might we now in these humble pages lovingly commemorate; and "four shall we mention, dearer than the rest," for sake of that virtue, among many virtues, which we have been lauding all along, their nationality;—These are Aird and Motherwell (of whom another hour), Moir and Pollok.

Of Moir, our own "delightful Delta," as we love to call him—and the epithet now by right appertains to his name—we shall now say simply this, that he has produced many original pieces which will possess a permanent place in the poetry of Scotland. Delicacy and grace characterise his happiest compositions; some of them are beautiful in a cheerful spirit that has only to look on nature to be happy; and others breathe the simplest and purest pathos. His scenery, whether sea-coast or inland, is always truly Scottish; and at times his pen drops touches of light on minute objects, that till then had slumbered in the shade, but now "shine well where they stand" or lie, as component and characteristic parts of our lowland landscapes. Let others labour away at long poems, and for their pains get neglect or oblivion; Moir is seen as he is in many short ones, which the Scottish Muses may "not willingly let die." And that must be a pleasant thought when it touches the heart of the mildest and most modest of men, as he sits by his family-fire, beside those most dear to him, after a day past in smoothing, by his skill, the bed and the brow of pain, in restoring sickness to health, in alleviating sufferings that cannot be cured, or in mitigating the pangs of death.

Pollok had great original genius strong in a sacred sense of religion. Such of his short compositions as we have seen, written in early youth, were but mere copies of verses, and gave little or no promise of power. But his soul was working in the green moorland solitudes round
[Pg 225] about his father's house, in the wild and beautiful parishes of Eaglesham and Mearns, separated by thee, O Yearn! sweetest of pastoral streams that murmur through the west, asunder those broomy and birken banks and trees, where the grey-linties sing, is formed the clear junction of the rills, issuing, the one from the hill-spring above the Black-waterfall, and the other from the Brother-loch. The poet in prime of youth (he died in his twenty-seventh year) embarked on a high and adventurous emprise, and voyaged the illimitable Deep. His spirit expanded its wings, and in a holy pride felt them to be broad, as they hovered over the dark abyss. "The Course of Time," for so young a man, was a vast achievement. The book he loved best was the Bible, and his style is often Scriptural. Of our poets, he had studied, we believe, but Milton, Young, and Byron. He had much to learn in composition; and, had he lived, he would have looked almost with humiliation on much that is at present eulogised by his devoted admirers. But the soul of poetry is there, though often dimly developed, and many passages there are, and long ones too, that heave, and hurry, and glow along in a divine enthusiasm.

"His ears he closed, to listen to the strains
That Sion's bards did consecrate of old,
And fix'd his Pindus upon Lebanon."

Let us fly again to England, and leaving for another hour Shelley and Hunt and Keats, and Croly and Milman and Heber, and Sterling and Milnes and Tennyson, with some younger aspirants of our own day; and Gray, Collins, and Goldsmith, and lesser stars of that constellation, let us alight on the verge of that famous era when the throne was occupied by Dryden, and then by Pope—searching still for a Great Poem. Did either of them ever write one? No—never. Sir Walter says finely of glorious John,

"And Dryden in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald King and Court,
Bade him play on to make them sport,
The world defrauded of the high design,
Profaned the God-given strength, and marr'd the lofty line."

[Pg 226] But why, we ask, did Dryden suffer a ribald king and court to debase and degrade him, and strangle his immortal strain? Because he was poor! But could he not have died of cold, thirst, and hunger—of starvation? Have not millions of men and women done so, rather than sacrifice their conscience? And shall we grant to a great poet that indulgence which many a humble hind would have flung with scorn in our teeth, and rather than have availed himself of it, faced the fagot, or the halter, or the stake set within the sea-flood? But it is satisfactory to know that Dryden, though still glorious John, was not a Great Poet. He was seldom visited by the pathetic or the sublime—else had his genius held fast its integrity—been ribald to no ribald—and indignantly kicked to the devil both court and king. But what a master of reasoning in verse! And of verse what a volume of fire! "The long-resounding march and energy divine." Pope, again, with the common frailties of humanity, was an ethereal creature—and played on his own harp with finest taste, and wonderful execution. We doubt, indeed, if such a finished style has ever been heard since from any one of the King Apollo's musicians. His versification may be monotonous, but without a sweet and potent charm only to ears of leather. That his poetry has no passion is the creed of critics "of Cambyses' vein;" "Heloïse" and "The Unfortunate Lady" have made the world's heart to throb. As for Imagination, we shall continue till such time as that Faculty has been distinguished from Fancy, to see it shining in "The Rape of the Lock," with a lambent lustre; if high intellect be not dominant in his "Epistles" and his "Essay on Man," you will look for it in vain in the nineteenth century; all other Satires seem complimentary to their victims when read after "The Dunciad"—and could a man, whose heart was not heroic, have given us another Iliad, which, all unlike as it is to the Greek, may be read with transport, even after Homer's?

We have not yet, it would seem, found the object of our search—a Great Poem. Let us extend our quest into the Elizabethan age. We are at once sucked into the theatre. With the whole drama of that age we are conversant and familiar; but whether we understand it or not, is another question. It aspires to give representations of Human Life in all its infinite varieties, and
[Pg 227] inconsistencies, and conflicts, and turmoils produced by the Passions. Time and space are not suffered to interpose their unities between the Poet and his vast design, who, provided he can satisfy the spectators by the pageant of their own passions moving across the stage, may exhibit there whatever he wills from life, death, or the grave. 'Tis a sublime conception—and sometimes has given rise to sublime performance; but has been crowned with full success in no hands but those of Shakespeare. Great as was the genius of many of the dramatists of that age, not one of them has produced a Great Tragedy. A Great Tragedy indeed! What! without harmony or proportion in the plan—with all puzzling perplexities and inextricable entanglements in the plot—and with disgust and horror in the catastrophe? As for the characters, male and female—saw ye ever such a set of swaggerers and rantipoles as they often are in one act—Methodist preachers and demure young women at a love-feast in another—absolute heroes and heroines of high calibre in a third—and so on, changing and shifting name and nature, according to the laws of the Romantic Drama forsooth—but in hideous violation of the laws of nature—till the curtain falls over a heap of bodies huddled together, without regard to age or sex, as if they had been overtaken in liquor. We admit that there is gross exaggeration in the picture; but there is always truth in a tolerable caricature—and this is one of a tragedy of Webster, Ford, or Massinger.

It is satisfactory to know that the good sense, and good feeling, and good taste of the people of England, will not submit to be belaboured by editors and critics into unqualified admiration of such enormities. The Old English Drama lies buried in the dust with all its tragedies. Never more will they move across the stage. Scholars read them, and often with delight, admiration, and wonder; for genius is a strange spirit, and has begotten strange children on the body of the Tragic Muse. In the closet it is pleasant to peruse the countenances, at once divine, human, and brutal, of the incomprehensible monsters—to scan their forms, powerful though misshapen—to watch their movements, vigorous though distorted—and to hold up one's hands in amazement on hearing them not seldom discourse most excellent music. But we should shudder to see them on the stage enacting the parts of men and women—and call for the manager. All has been done for the least deformed of the tragedies of the Old English Drama that humanity could do, enlightened
[Pg 228] by the Christian religion; but nature has risen up to vindicate herself against such misrepresentations as they afford; and sometimes finds it all she can do to stomach Shakespeare.

But the monstrosities we have mentioned are not the worst to be found in the Old English Drama.

Others there are that, till civilised Christendom fall back into barbarous Heathendom, must for ever be unendurable to human ears, whether long or short—we mean the obscenities. That sin is banished for ever from our literature. The poet who might dare to commit it, would be immediately hooted out of society, and sent to roost in barns among the owls. But the Old English Drama is stuffed with ineffable pollutions; and full of passages that the street-walker would be ashamed to read in the stews. We have not seen that volume of the Family Dramatists which contains Massinger. But if made fit for female reading, his plays must be mutilated and mangled out of all likeness to the original wholes. To free them even from the grossest impurities, without destroying their very life, is impossible; and it would be far better to make a selection of fine passages, after the manner of Lamb's Specimens—but with a severer eye—than to attempt in vain to preserve their character as plays, and at the same time to expunge all that is too disgusting, perhaps, to be dangerous to boys and virgins. Full-grown men may read what they choose—perhaps without suffering from it; but the modesty of the young clear eye must not be profaned—and we cannot, for our own part, imagine a *Family* Old English Dramatist.

And here again bursts upon us the glory of the Greek Drama. The Athenians were as wicked, as licentious, as polluted, and much more so, we hope, than ever were the English; but they debased not with their gross vices their glorious tragedies. Nature in her higher moods alone, and most majestic aspects, trod their stage. Buffoons, and ribalds, and zanies, and "rude indecent clowns," were confined to comedies; and even there they too were idealised, and resembled not the obscene samples that so often sicken us in the midst of "the acting of a dreadful thing" in our old theatre. They knew that "with other ministrations, thou, O Nature!" teachest thy handmaid Art to soothe the souls of thy congregated children—congregated to behold her noble goings-on, and to
[Pg 229] rise up and depart elevated by the transcendent pageant. The Tragic muse was in those days a Priestess—tragedies were religious ceremonies; for all the ancestral stories they celebrated were under consecration—the spirit of the ages of heroes and demigods descended over the vast amphitheatre; and thus were Æschylus, and Sophocles, and Euripides, the guardians of the national character, which, we all know, was, in spite of all it suffered under, for ever passionately enamoured of all the forms of greatness.

Forgive us—spirit of Shakespeare! that seem'st to animate that high-brow'd bust—if indeed we have offered any show of irreverence to thy name and nature; for now, in the noiselessness of midnight, to our awed but loving hearts do both appear divine! Forgive us—we beseech thee—that on going to bed—which we are just about to do—we may be able to compose ourselves to sleep—and dream of Miranda and Imogen, and Desdemona and Cordelia. Father revered of that holy family! by the strong light in the eyes of Innocence we beseech thee to forgive us!—Ha! what old ghost art thou—clothed in the weeds of more than mortal misery—mad, mad, mad—come and gone—was it Lear?

We have found then, it seems—at last—the object of our search—a Great Poem—ay—four Great Poems—"Lear"—"Hamlet"—"Othello"—"Macbeth." And was the revealer of those high mysteries in his youth a deer-stealer in the parks of Warwickshire, a linkboy in London streets? And died he before his grand climacteric in a dimmish sort of a middle-sized tenement in Stratford-on-Avon, of a surfeit from an overdose of home-brewed humming ale? Such is the tradition.

Had we a daughter—an only daughter—we should wish her to be like

> "Heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb."

In that one line has Wordsworth done an unappreciable service to Spenser. He has improved upon a picture in "The Fairy Queen"—making "the beauty still more beauteous," by a single touch of a pencil dipped in moonlight, or in sunlight tender as Luna's smiles. Through Spenser's many nine-lined stanzas the lovely lady glides along her own world—and our eyes follow in delight the sinless wanderer. In Wordsworth's one single celestial line we behold her neither in time nor
[Pg 230] space—an immortal omnipresent idea at one gaze occupying the soul.

And is not "The Fairy Queen" a Great Poem? Like "The Excursion," it is at all events a long one—"slow to begin, and never ending." That fire was a fortunate one in which so many books of it were burnt. If no such fortunate fire ever took place, then let us trust that the moths drillingly devoured the manuscript—and that 'tis all safe. Purgatorial pains—unless indeed they should prove eternal—are insufficient punishment for the impious man who invented Allegory. If you have got anything to say, sir, out with it—in one or other of the many forms of speech employed naturally by creatures to whom God has given the gift of "discourse of reason." But beware of misspending your life in perversely attempting to make shadow substance, and substance shadow. Wonderful analogies there are among all created things, material and immaterial—and millions so fine that Poets alone discern them—and sometimes succeed in showing them in words. Most spiritual region of poetry—and to be visited at rare times and seasons—nor all life long ought bard there to abide. For a while let the veil of Allegory be drawn before the face of Truth, that the light of its beauty may shine through it with a softened charm—dim and drear—like the moon gradually obscuring in its own halo on a dewy night. Such air-woven veil of Allegory is no human invention. The soul brought it with her when

> "Trailing clouds of glory she did come
> From heaven, which is her home."

Sometimes, now and then, in moods strange and high—obey the bidding of the soul—and allegorise; but live not all life-long in an Allegory—even as Spenser did—Spenser the divine; for

with all his heavenly genius—and brighter visions never met mortal eyes than his—what is he but a "dreamer among men," and what may save that wondrous poem from the doom of oblivion?

To this conclusion must we come at last—that in the English language there is but one Great Poem. What! Not "Lear," Hamlet, "Othello," "Macbeth?"—"Paradise Lost."

[Pg 231]

INCH-CRUIN.

Oh! for the plumes and pinions of the poised Eagle, that we might now hang over Loch Lomond and all her isles! From what point of the compass would we come on our rushing vans? Up from Leven-banks, or down from Glenfalloch, or over the hill of Luss, or down to Rowardennan; and then up and away, as the chance currents in the sky might lead, with the Glory of Scotland, blue, bright, and breaking into foam, thousands on thousands of feet below, with every Island distinct in the peculiar beauty of its own youthful or ancient woods? For remember, that with the eagle's wing we must also have the eagle's eye; and all the while our own soul to look with such lens and such iris, and with its own endless visions to invest the pinnacles of all the far-down ruins of church or castle, encompassed with the umbrage of undying oaks.

We should as soon think of penning a critique on "Milton's Paradise Lost" as on Loch Lomond. People there are in the world, doubtless, who think them both too long; but to our minds, neither the one nor the other exceeds the due measure by a leaf or a league. Toil may, if it so pleaseth you, think it, in a mist, a Mediterranean Sea. For then you behold many miles of tumbling waves, with no land beyond; and were a ship to rise up in full sail, she would seem voyaging on to some distant shore. Or you may look on it as a great arm only of the ocean, stretched out into the mountainous mainland. Or say, rather, some river of the first order, that shows to the sun Islands never ceasing to adorn his course for a thousand leagues, in another day, about to be lost in the dominion of the sea. Or rather look on it as it is, as Loch Lomond, the Loch of a hundred Isles—of
[Pg 232] shores laden with all kinds of beauty, throughout the infinite succession of bays and harbours—huts and houses sprinkled over the sides of its green hills, that ever and anon send up a wider smoke from villages clustering round the church-tower beneath the wooded rocks—halls half-hidden in groves, for centuries the residence of families proud of their Gaelic blood—forest that, however wide be the fall beneath the axe when their hour is come, yet, far as the eye can reach, go circling round the mountain's base, inhabited by the roe and the red-deer;—but we have got into a sentence that threatens to be without end—a dim, dreary, sentence, in the middle of which the very writer himself gets afraid of ghosts, and fervently prays for the period when he shall be again chatting with the reader on a shady seat, under his own paragraph and his own pear-tree.

Oh! for our admirable friend Mr Smith of Jordanhill's matchless cutter, to glide through among the glittering archipelago! But we must be contented with a somewhat clumsy four-oared barge, wide and deep enough for a cattle ferry-boat. This morning's sunrise found us at the mouth of the Goblin's Cave on Loch Katrine, and among Lomond's lovely isles shall sunset leave us among the last glimmer of the softened gold. To which of all those lovely isles shall we drift before the wind on the small heaving and breaking waves? To Inch-Murrin, where the fallow-deer repose—or to the yew-shaded Inch-Caillach, the cemetery of Clan-Alpin—the Holy Isle of Nuns? One hushing afternoon hour may yet be ours on the waters—another of the slowly-walking twilight—that time which the gazing spirit is too wrapt to measure, while "sinks the Day-star in the ocean's bed"—and so on to midnight, the reign of silence and shadow, the resplendent Diana with her hair-halo, and all her star-nymphs, rejoicing round their Queen. Let the names of all objects be forgotten—and imagination roam over the works of nature, as if they lay in their primeval majesty, without one trace of man's dominion. Slow-sailing Heron, that cloudlike seekest thy nest on yonder lofty mass of pines—to us thy flight seems the very symbol of a long lone life of peace. As thou foldest thy wide wings on the topmost bough, beneath thee tower the unguarded Ruins, where many generations sleep. Onwards thou floatest like a dream, nor changest thy gradually descending
[Pg 233] course for the Eagle, that, far above thy line of travel, comes rushing unwearied from his prey in distant Isles of the sea. The Osprey! off—off—to Inch-Loning—or the dark cliffs of Glenfalloch, many leagues away, which he will reach almost like a thought! Close your eyes but for a moment—and when you look again, where is the Cloud-Cleaver now? Gone in the sunshine, and haply seated in his eyrie on Ben Lomond's head.

But amidst all this splendour and magnificence, our eyes are drawn against our will, and by a sort of sad fascination which we cannot resist, along the glittering and dancing waves, towards the melancholy shores of Inch-Cruin, the Island of the Afflicted. Beautiful is it by nature, with its bays, and fields, and woods, as any isle that sees its shadow in the deeps; but human sorrows have steeped it in eternal gloom, and terribly is it haunted to our imagination. Here no woodman's hut peeps from the glade—here are not seen the branching antlers of the deer moving among the boughs that stir not—no place of peace is this where the world-wearied hermit sits penitent in his cell, and prepares his soul for Heaven. Its inhabitants are a woeful people, and all its various charms are hidden from their eyes, or seen in ghastly transfiguration; for here, beneath the yew-tree's shade, sit moping, or roam about with rueful lamentation, the soul-distracted and the insane! Ay—these sweet and pleasant murmurs break round a Lunatic Asylum! And the shadows that are now and then seen among the umbrage are laughing or weeping in the eclipse of reason, and may never know again aught of the real character of this world, to which, exiled as they are from it, they are yet bound by the ties of a common nature that, though sorely

deranged, are not wholly broken, and still separate them by an awful depth of darkness from the beasts that perish.

Thither love, yielding reluctantly at last to despair, has consented that the object on which all its wise solicitudes had for years been unavailably bestowed both night and day, should be rowed over, perhaps at midnight, and when asleep, and left there with beings like itself, all dimly conscious of their doom. To many such the change may often bring little or no heed—for outward things may have ceased to impress, and they may be living in their own rueful world, different
[Pg 234] from all that we hear or behold. To some it may seem that they have been spirited away to another state of existence—beautiful, indeed, and fair to see, with all those lovely trees and shadows of trees; but still a miserable, a most miserable place, without one face they ever saw before, and haunted by glaring eyes that shoot forth fear, suspicion, and hatred. Others, again, there are, who know well the misty head of Ben Lomond, which, with joyful pleasure-parties set free from the city, they had in other years exultingly scaled, and looked down, perhaps, in a solemn pause of their youthful ecstasy, on the far-off and melancholy Inch-Cruin! Thankful are they for such a haven at last—for they are remote from the disturbance of the incomprehensible life that bewildered them, and from the pity of familiar faces that was more than could be borne.

So let us float upon our oars behind the shadow of this rock, nor approach nearer the sacred retreat of misery. Let us not gaze too intently into the glades, for we might see some figure there who wished to be seen nevermore, and recognise in the hurrying shadow the living remains of a friend. How profound the hush! No sigh—no groan—no shriek—no voice—no tossing of arms—no restless chafing of feet! God in mercy has for a while calmed the congregation of the afflicted, and the Isle is overspread with a sweet Sabbath-silence. What medicine for them like the breath of heaven—the dew—the sunshine—and the murmur of the wave! Nature herself is their kind physician, and sometimes not unfrequently brings them by her holy skill back to the world of clear intelligence and serene affection. They listen calmly to the blessed sound of the oar that brings a visit of friends—to sojourn with them for a day—or to take them away to another retirement, where they, in restored reason, may sit around the board, nor fear to meditate during the midnight watches on the dream, which, although dispelled, may in all its ghastliness return. There was a glorious burst of sunshine! And of all the Lomond Isles, what one rises up in the sudden illumination so bright as Inch-Cruin?

Methinks we see sitting in his narrow and low-roofed cell, careless of food, dress, sleep, or shelter alike, him who in the opulent mart of commerce was one of the most opulent, and devoted heart and soul to show and magnificence. His house was like a palace with its pictured and
[Pg 235] mirrored walls, and the nights wore away to dance, revelry, and song. Fortune poured riches at his feet, which he had only to gather up; and every enterprise in which he took part prospered beyond the reach of imagination. But all at once—as if lightning had struck the dome of his prosperity, and earthquake let down its foundations, it sank, crackled, and disappeared—and the man of a million was a houseless, infamous, and bankrupt beggar. In one day his proud face changed into the ghastly smiling of an idiot—he dragged his limbs in paralysis—and slavered out unmeaning words foreign to all the pursuits in which his active intellect had for many years been plunged. All his relations—to whom it was known he had never shown kindness—were persons in humble condition. Ruined creditors we do not expect to be very pitiful, and people asked what was to become of him till he died. A poor creature, whom he had seduced and abandoned to want, but who had succeeded to a small property on the death of a distant relation, remembered her first, her only love, when all the rest of the world were willing to forget him; and she it was who had him conveyed thither, herself sitting in the boat with her arm round the unconscious idiot, who now vegetates on the charity of her whom he betrayed. For fifteen years he has continued to exist in the same state, and you may pronounce his name on the busy Exchange of the city where he flourished and fell, and haply the person you speak to shall have entirely forgotten it.

The evils genius sometimes brings to its possessor have often been said and sung, perhaps with exaggerations, but not always without truth. It is found frequently apart from prudence and principle; and in a world constituted like ours, how can it fail to reap a harvest of misery or death? A fine genius, and even a high, had been bestowed on One who is now an inmate of that cottage-cell, peering between these two rocks. At College he outstripped all his compeers by powers equally versatile and profound—the first both in intellect and in imagination. He was a poor man's son—the only son of a working carpenter—and his father intended him for the church. But the youth soon felt that to him the trammels of a strict faith would be unbearable, and he lived on from year to year, uncertain what profession to choose. Meanwhile his friends, all
[Pg 236] inferior to him in talents and acquirements, followed the plain, open, and beaten path, that leads sooner or later to respectability and independence. He was left alone in his genius, useless, although admired—while those who had looked in high hopes on his early career, began to have their fears that they might never be realised. His first attempts to attract the notice of the public, although not absolute failures—for some of his compositions, both in prose and verse, were indeed beautiful—were not triumphantly successful, and he began to taste the bitterness of disappointed ambition. His wit and colloquial talents carried him into the society of the dissipated and the licentious; and, before he was aware of the fact, he had got the character of all others the most humiliating—that of a man who knew not how to estimate his own worth, nor to preserve it from pollution. He found himself silently and gradually excluded from the higher circle which he had once adorned, and sunk inextricably into a lower grade of social life. His whole habits became loose and irregular; his studies were pursued but by fits and starts; his knowledge, instead of keeping pace with that of the times, became clouded and obscure, and even

diminished; his dress was meaner; his manners hurried, and reckless, and wild, and ere long he became a slave to drunkenness, and then to every low and degrading vice.

His father died, it was said, of a broken heart—for to him his son had been all in all, and the unhappy youth felt that the death lay at his door. At last, shunned by most—tolerated but by a few for the sake of other times—domiciled in the haunts of infamy—loaded with a heap of paltry debts, and pursued by the hounds of the law, the fear of a prison drove him mad, and his whole mind was utterly and hopelessly overthrown. A few of the friends of his boyhood raised a subscription in his behoof—and within the gloom of these woods he has been shrouded for many years, but not unvisited once or twice a summer by some one, who knew, loved, and admired him in the morning of that genius that long before its meridian brightness had been so fatally eclipsed.

And can it be in cold and unimpassioned words like these that we thus speak of Thee and thy doom, thou Soul of fire, and once the brightest of the free, privileged by nature to walk along the mountain-ranges, and mix their spirits with the stars! Can it be that all thy glorious aspirations,
[Pg 237] by thyself forgotten, have no dwelling-place in the memory of one who loved thee so well, and had his deepest affection so profoundly returned! Thine was a heart once tremblingly alive to all the noblest and finest sympathies of our nature, and the humblest human sensibilities became beautiful when tinged by the light of thy imagination. Thy genius invested the most ordinary objects with a charm not their own; and the vision it created thy lips were eloquent to disclose. What although thy poor old father died, because by thy hand all his hopes were shivered, and for thy sake poverty stripped even the coverlet from his dying-bed—yet we feel as if some dreadful destiny, rather than thy own crime, blinded thee to his fast decay, and closed thine ears in deafness to his beseeching prayer. Oh! charge not to creatures such as we all the fearful consequences of our misconduct and evil ways! We break hearts we would die to heal—and hurry on towards the grave those whom to save we would leap into the devouring fire. Many wondered in their anger that thou couldst be so callous to the old man's grief—and couldst walk tearless at his coffin. The very night of the day he was buried thou wert among thy wild companions, in a house of infamy, close to the wall of the churchyard. Was not that enough to tell us all that disease was in thy brain, and that reason, struggling with insanity, had changed sorrow to despair. But perfect forgiveness— forgiveness made tender by profoundest pity—was finally extended to thee by all thy friends—frail and erring like thyself in many things, although not so fatally misled and lost, because in the mystery of Providence not so irresistibly tried. It seemed as if thou hadst offended the Guardian Genius, who, according to the old philosophy which thou knewest so well, is given to every human being at his birth; and that then the angel left thy side, and Satan strove to drag thee to perdition. And hath any peace come to thee—a youth no more—but in what might have been the prime of manhood, bent down, they say, to the ground, with a head all floating with silver hairs—hath any peace come to thy distracted soul in these woods, over which there now seems again to brood a holy horror? Yes—thy fine dark eyes are not wholly without intelligence as they look on the sun, moon, and stars; although all their courses seem now confused to thy imagination, once regular and ordered in their magnificence before that
[Pg 238] intellect which science claimed as her own. The harmonies of nature are not all lost on thy ear, poured forth throughout all seasons, over the world of sound and sight. Glimpses of beauty startle thee as thou wanderest along the shores of thy prison-isle; and that fine poetical genius, not yet extinguished altogether, although faint and flickering, gives vent to something like snatches of songs, and broken elegies, that seem to wail over the ruins of thy own soul! Such peace as ever visits them afflicted as thou art, be with thee in cell or on shore; nor lost to Heaven will be the wild moanings of—to us—thy unintelligible prayers!

But hark to the spirit-stirring voice of the bugle scaling the sky, and leaping up and down in echoes among the distant mountains! Such a strain animates the voltigeur, skirmishing in front of the line of battle, or sending flashes of sudden death from the woods. Alas for him who now deludes his yet high heart with a few notes of the music that so often was accompanied by his sword waving on to glory! Unappalled was he ever in the whizzing and hissing fire—nor did his bold broad breast ever shrink from the bayonet, that with the finished fencer's art he has often turned aside when red with death. In many of the pitched battles of the Spanish campaigns his plume was conspicuous over the dark green lines, that, breaking asunder in fragments like those of the flowing sea, only to re-advance over the bloody fields, cleared the ground that was to be debated between the great armaments. Yet in all such desperate service he never received one single wound. But on a mid-day march, as he was gaily singing a love-song, the sun smote him to the very brain, and from that moment his right hand grasped the sword no more.

Not on the face of all the earth—or of all the sea—is there a spot of profounder peace than that isle that has long been his abode. But to him all the scene is alive with the pomp of war. Every far-off precipice is a fort, that has its own Spanish name—and the cloud above seems to his eyes the tricolor, or the flag of his own victorious country. War, that dread game that nations play at, is now to the poor insane soldier a mere child's pastime, from which sometimes he himself will turn with a sigh or a smile. For sense assails him in his delirium, for a moment and no more; and
[Pg 239] he feels that he is far away, and for ever, from all his companions in glory, in an asylum that must be left but for the grave! Perhaps in such moments he may have remembered the night, when at Badajos he led the forlorn hope; but even forlorn hope now hath he none, and he sinks away back into his delusions, at which even his brother sufferers smile—so foolish does the restless campaigner seem to these men of peace!

Lo! a white ghost-like figure, slowly issuing from the trees, and sitting herself down on a stone,

with face fixed on the waters! Now she is so perfectly still, that had we not seen her motion thither, she and the rock would have seemed but one! Somewhat fantastically dressed, even in her apparent despair. Were we close to her, we should see a face yet beautiful, beneath hair white as snow. Her voice too, but seldom heard, is still sweet and low; and sometimes, when all are asleep, or at least silent, she begins at midnight to sing! She yet touches the guitar—an instrument in fashion in Scotland when she led the fashion—with infinite grace and delicacy—and the songs she loves best are those in a foreign tongue. For more than thirty years hath the unfortunate lady come to the water's edge daily, and hour after hour continue to sit motionless on that self-same stone, looking down into the loch. Her story is now almost like a dim tradition from other ages, and the history of those who come here often fades away into nothing. Everywhere else they are forgotten—here there are none who can remember. Who once so beautiful as the "Fair Portuguese?" It was said at that time that she was a Nun—but the sacred veil was drawn aside by the hand of love, and she came to Scotland with her deliverer! Yes, her deliverer! He delivered her from the gloom—often the peaceful gloom that hovers round the altar of Superstition—and after a few years of love and life and joy—she sat where you now see her sitting, and the world she had adorned moved on in brightness and in music as before! Since there has to her been so much suffering—was there on her part no sin? No—all believed her to be guiltless, except one, whose jealousy would have seen falsehood lurking in an angel's eyes; but she was utterly deserted; and being in a strange country, worse than an orphan, her mind gave way; for say not—oh say not—that innocence can always stand against shame and despair! The [Pg 240] hymns she sings at midnight are hymns to the Virgin; but all her songs are songs about love, and chivalry, and knights that went crusading to the Holy Land. He who brought her from another sanctuary into the one now before us, has been dead many years. He perished in shipwreck—and 'tis thought that she sits there gazing down into the loch, as on the place where he sank or was buried; for when told that he was drowned, she shrieked, and made the sign of the cross—and since that long-ago day that stone has in all weathers been her constant seat.

Away we go westwards—like fire-worshippers devoutly gazing on the setting sun. And another isle seems to shoot across our path, separated suddenly, as if by magic, from the mainland. How beautiful, with its many crescents, the low-lying shores, carrying here and there a single tree quite into the water, and with verdant shallows guarding the lonely seclusion even from the keel of canoe! Round and round we row, but not a single landing-place. Shall we take each of us a fair burthen in his arms, and bear it to that knoll, whispering and quivering through the twilight with a few birches whose stems glitter like silver pillars in the shade? No—let us not disturb the silent people, now donning their green array for nightly revelries. It is the "Isle of Fairies," and on that knoll hath the fishermen often seen their Queen sitting on a throne, surrounded by myriads of creatures no taller than harebells; one splash of the oar—and all is vanished. There, it is said, lives among the Folk of Peace, the fair child, who, many years ago, disappeared from her parents' shieling at Inversnayde, and whom they vainly wept over as dead. One evening she had floated away by herself in a small boat—while her parents heard, without fear, the clank—duller and duller—of the oars, no longer visible in the distant moonshine. In an hour the returning vessel touched the beech—but no child was to be seen—and they listened in vain for the music of the happy creature's songs. For weeks the loch rolled and roared like the sea—nor was the body found anywhere lying on the shore. Long, long afterwards, some little white bones were interred in Christian burial, for the parents believed them to be the remains of their child—all that had [Pg 241] been left by the bill of the raven. But not so thought many dwellers along the mountain-shores—for had not her very voice been often heard by the shepherds, when the unseen flight of Fairies sailed singing along up the solitary Glenfalloch, away over the moors of Tynedrum, and down to the sweet Dalmally, where the shadow of Cruachan darkens the old ruins of melancholy Kilchurn. The lost child's parents died in their old age—but she, 'tis said, is unchanged in shape and features—the same fair thing she was the evening that she disappeared, only a shade of sadness is on her pale face, as if she were pining for the sound of human voices, and the gleam of the peat-fire of the shieling. Ever, when the Fairy-court is seen for a moment beneath the glimpses of the moon, she is sitting by the side of the gracious Queen. Words of might there are, that if whispered at right season, would yet recall her from the shadowy world, to which she has been spirited away; but small sentinels stand at their stations all round the isle, and at nearing of human breath, a shrill warning is given from sedge and water-lily, and like dewdrops melt away the phantoms, while, mixed with peals of little laughter, overhead is heard the winnowing of wings. For the hollow of the earth, and the hollow of the air, is their Invisible Kingdom; and when they touch the herbage or flowers of this earth of ours, whose lonely places they love, then only are they revealed to human eyes—at all times else to our senses unexistent as dreams!

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A DAY AT WINDERMERE.

Old and gouty, we are confined to our chair; and occasionally, during an hour of rainless sunshine, are wheeled by female hands along the gravel-walks of our Policy, an unrepining and philosophical valetudinarian. Even the Crutch is laid up in ordinary, and is encircled with cobwebs. A monstrous spider has there set up his rest; and our still study ever and anon hearkens to the shrill buzz of some poor fly expiring between those formidable forceps—just as so many human ephemerals have breathed their last beneath the bite of his indulgent master. 'Tis pleasure to look at Domitian—so we love to call him—sallying from the centre against a wearied wasp, lying, like a silkworm, circumvoluted in the inextricable toils, and then seizing the sinner

by the nape of the neck, like Christopher with a Cockney, to see the emperor haul him away into the charnel-house. But we have often less savage recreations—such as watching our bee-hives when about to send forth colonies—feeding our pigeons, a purple people that dazzle the daylight—gathering roses as they choke our small chariot-wheels with their golden orbs—eating grapes out of vine-leaf-draperied baskets, beautifying beneath the gentle fingers of the Gentle into fairy network graceful as the gossamer—drinking elder-flower frontignac from invisible glasses, so transparent in its yellowness seems the liquid radiance—at one moment eyeing a page of "Paradise Lost," and at another of "Paradise Regained;" for what else is the face of her who often visiteth our Eden, and whose coming and whose going is ever like a heavenly dream? Then laying back our head upon the cushion of our triumphal car, and with half-shut eyes, subsiding slowly into haunted sleep or slumber, with our fine features up to heaven, a saint-like image, such as
[Pg 243] Raphael loved to paint, or Flaxman to imbue with the soul of stillness in the life-hushed marble. Such, dearest reader, are some of our pastimes—and so do we contrive to close our ears to the sound of the scythe of Saturn, ceaselessly sweeping over the earth, and leaving, at every stride of the mower, a swathe more rueful than ever after a night of shipwreck did strew with ghastliness a lee sea-shore!

Thus do we make a virtue of necessity—and thus contentment wreathes with silk and velvet the prisoner's chains. Once were we—long, long ago—restless as a sunbeam on the restless wave—rapid as a river that seems enraged with all impediments, but all the while in passionate love

"Doth make sweet music with th' enamell'd stones"—

strong as a steed let loose from Arab's tent in the oasis to slake his thirst at the desert well—fierce in our harmless joy as a red-deer belling on the hills—tameless as the eagle sporting in the storm—gay as the "dolphin on a tropic sea"—"mad as young bulls"—and wild as a whole wilderness of adolescent lions. But now—alas! and alack-a-day! the sunbeam is but a patch of sober verdure—the river is changed into a canal—the "desert-born" is foundered—the red-deer is slow as an old ram—the eagle has forsook his cliff and his clouds, and hops among the gooseberry bushes—the dolphin has degenerated into a land tortoise—without danger now might a very child take the bull by the horns—and though something of a lion still, our roar is, like that of the nightingale, "most musical, most melancholy"—and, as we attempt to shake our mane, your grandmother—fair peruser—cannot choose but weep.

It speaks folios in favour of our philanthropy, to know that, in our own imprisonment, we love to see all life free as air. Would that by a word of ours we could clothe all human shoulders with wings! Would that by a word of ours we could plume all human spirits with thoughts strong as the eagle's pinions, that they might winnow their way into the empyrean! Tories! Yes! we are Tories. Our faith is in the Divine right of kings—but easy, my boys, easy—all free men are kings, and they hold their empire from heaven. That is our political—philosophical—moral— religious
[Pg 244] creed. In its spirit we have lived—and in its spirit we hope to die—not on the scaffold like Sidney—no—no—no—not by any manner of means like Sidney on the scaffold—but like ourselves, on a hair-mattress above a feather-bed, our head decently sunk in three pillows and one bolster, and our frame stretched out unagitatedly beneath a white counterpane. But meanwhile—though almost as unlocomotive as the dead in body—there is perpetual motion in our minds. Sleep is one thing, and stagnation is another—as is well known to all eyes that have ever seen, by moonlight and midnight, the face of Christopher North, or of Windermere.

Windermere! Why, at this blessed moment we behold the beauty of all its intermingling isles. There they are—all gazing down on their own reflected loveliness in the magic mirror of the airlike water, just as many a holy time we have seen them all agaze, when, with suspended oar and suspended breath—no sound but a ripple on the Naiad's bow, and a beating at our own heart—motionless in our own motionless bark—we seemed to float midway down that beautiful abyss between the heaven above and the heaven below, on some strange terrestrial scene composed of trees and the shadows of trees, by the imagination made indistinguishable to the eye, and as delight deepened into dreams, all lost at last, clouds, groves, water, air, sky, in their various and profound confusion of supernatural peace. But a sea-born breeze is on Bowness Bay; all at once the lake is blue as the sky: and that evanescent world is felt to have been but a vision. Like swans that had been asleep in the airless sunshine, lo! where from every shady nook appear the white-sailed pinnaces; for on merry Windermere—you must know—every breezy hour has its own Regatta.

But intending to be useful, we are becoming ornamental; of us it must not be said, that

"Pure description holds the place of sense"—

therefore, let us be simple but not silly, as plain as is possible without being prosy, as instructive as is consistent with being entertaining, a cheerful companion and a trusty guide.

We shall suppose that you have left Kendal, and are on your way to Bowness. Forget, as much as may be, all worldly cares and anxieties, and let your hearts be open and free to all genial
[Pg 245] impulses about to be breathed into them from the beautiful and sublime in nature. There is no need of that foolish state of feeling called enthusiasm. You have but to be happy; and by-and-by your happiness will grow into delight. The blue mountains already set your imaginations at work; among those clouds and mists you fancy many a magnificent precipice—and in the valleys that sleep below, you image to yourselves the scenery of rivers and lakes. The landscape immediately around gradually grows more and more picturesque and romantic; and you feel that you are on

the very borders of Fairyland. The first smile of Windermere salutes your impatient eyes, and sinks silently into your heart. You know not how beautiful it may be—nor yet in what the beauty consists; but your finest sensibilities to nature are touched—and a tinge of poetry, as from a rainbow, overspreads that cluster of islands that seems to woo you to their still retreats. And now

"Wooded Winandermere, the river-lake,"

with all its bays and promontories, lies in the morning light serene as a Sabbath, and cheerful as a Holiday; and you feel that there is loveliness on this earth more exquisite and perfect than ever visited your slumbers even in the glimpses of a dream. The first sight of such a scene will be unforgotten to your dying day—for such passive impressions are deeper than we can explain—our whole spiritual being is suddenly awakened to receive them—and associations, swift as light, are gathered into one Emotion of Beauty which shall be imperishable, and which, often as memory recalls that moment, grows into genius, and vents itself in appropriate expressions, each in itself a picture. Thus may one moment minister to years; and the life-wearied heart of old age by one delightful remembrance be restored to primal joy—the glory of the past brought beamingly upon the faded present—and the world that is obscurely passing away from our eyes re-illumined with the visions of its early morn. The shows of nature are indeed evanescent, but their spiritual influences are immortal; and from that grove now glowing in the sunlight may your heart derive a delight that shall utterly perish but in the grave.

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But now you are in the White Lion, and our advice to you—perhaps unnecessary—is immediately to order breakfast. There are many parlours—some with a charming prospect, and some without any prospect at all; but remember that there are other people in the world besides yourselves—and therefore, into whatever parlour you may be shown by a pretty maid, be contented, and lose no time in addressing yourselves to your repast. That over, be in no hurry to get on the Lake. Perhaps all the boats are engaged—and Billy Balmer is at the Waterhead. So stroll into the churchyard, and take a glance over the graves. Close to the oriel-window of the church is one tomb over which one might meditate half an autumnal day. Enter the church, and you will feel the beauty of these fine lines in "The Excursion"—

"Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,
But large and massy; for duration built;
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld
By naked rafters intricately cross'd
Like leafless underboughs, 'mid some thick grove,
All wither'd by the depth of shade above!"

Go down to the low terrace-walk along the Bay. The Bay is in itself a Lake, at all times cheerful with its scattered fleet, at anchor or under weigh—its villas and cottages, each rejoicing in its garden or orchard—its meadows mellowing to the reedy margin of the pellucid water—its heath-covered boathouses—its own portion of the Isle called Beautiful—and beyond that sylvan haunt, the sweet Furness Fells, with gentle outline undulating in the sky, and among its spiral larches showing, here and there, groves and copses of the old unviolated woods. Yes, Bowness Bay is in itself a Lake; but how finely does it blend away, through its screens of oak and sycamore trees, into a larger Lake—another, yet the same—on whose blue bosom you see bearing down to windward—for the morning breeze is born—many a tiny sail. It has the appearance of a race. Yes—it is a race; and the Liverpoolian, as of yore, is eating them all out of the wind, and without another tack will make her anchorage. But hark—Music! 'Tis the Bowness Band playing "See the conquering Hero comes!"—and our old friend has carried away the gold cup from all competitors.

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Now turn your faces up the hill above the village school. That green mount is what is called a—Station. The villagers are admiring a grove of parasols, while you—the party—are admiring the village—with its irregular roofs—white, blue, grey, green, brown, and black walls—fruit-laden trees so yellow—its central church-tower—and environing groves variously burnished by autumn. Saw ye ever banks and braes and knolls so beautifully bedropt with human dwellings? There is no solitude about Windermere. Shame on human nature were Paradise uninhabited! Here, in amicable neighbourhood, are halls and huts—here rises through groves the dome of the rich man's mansion—and there the low roof of the poor man's cottage beneath its one single sycamore! Here are hundreds of small properties hereditary in the same families for hundreds of years—and never, never, O Westmoreland! may thy race of *statesmen* be extinct—nor the virtues that ennoble their humble households! See, suddenly brought forth by sunshine from among the old woods—and then sinking away into her usual unobtrusive serenity—the lake-loving Rayrig, almost level, so it seems, with the water, yet smiling over her own quiet bay from the grove-shelter of her pastoral mound. Within her walls may peace ever dwell with piety—and the light of science long blend with the lustre of the domestic hearth! Thence to Calgarth is all one forest—yet glade-broken, and enlivened by open uplands; so that the roamer, while he expects a night of umbrage, often finds himself in the open day, beneath the bright blue bow of heaven haply without a cloud. The eye travels delighted over the multitudinous tree-tops—often dense as one single tree—till it rests, in sublime satisfaction, on the far-off mountains, that lose not a woody character till the tree-sprinkled pastures roughen into rocks—and rocks tower into precipices where the falcons breed. But the lake will not suffer the eye long to wander among the distant glooms. She wins us wholly to herself—and restlessly and passionately for a while, but calmly and affectionately at last, the heart embraces all her beauty, and wishes that the vision might endure for ever, and that here our tents were pitched—to be struck no more during our earthly pilgrimage. Imagination lapses into a thousand moods. O for a fairy pinnace to glide and float for

aye over those golden waves! A hermit-cell on sweet Lady-Holm! A sylvan shieling on Loughrig side! A nest in that nameless dell, which sees but one small slip of heaven, and longs at night for
[Pg 248] the reascending visit of its few loving stars! A dwelling open to all the skyey influence on the mountain-brow, the darling of the rising or the setting sun, and often seen by eyes in the lower world glittering through the rainbow!

All this seems a very imperfect picture indeed, or panorama of Windermere, from the hill behind the school-house in the village of Bowness. So, to put a stop to such nonsense, let us descend to the White Lion—and inquire about Billy Balmer. Honest Billy has arrived from Waterhead—seems tolerably steady—Mr Ullock's boats may be trusted—so let us take a voyage of discovery on the lake. Let those who have reason to think that they have been born to die a different death from drowning, hoist a sail. We to-day shall feather an oar. Billy takes the stroke—Mr William Garnet's at the helm—and "row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Lowlands," is the choral song that accompanies the Naiad out of the bay, and round the north end of the Isle called Beautiful, under the wave-darkening umbrage of that ancient oak. And now we are in the lovely straits between that Island and the mainland of Furness Fells. The village has disappeared, but not melted away; for hark! the Church-tower tolls ten—and see the sun is high in heaven. High, but not hot—for the first September frosts chilled the rosy fingers of the morn as she bathed them in the dews, and the air is cool as a cucumber. Cool but bland—and as clear and transparent as a fine eye lighted up by a good conscience. There were breezes in Bowness Bay—but here there are none—or, if there be, they but whisper aloft in the tree-tops, and ruffle not the water, which is calm as Louisa's breast. The small isles here are but few in number—yet the best arithmetician of the party cannot count them—in confusion so rich and rare do they blend their shadows with those of the groves on the Isle called Beautiful, and on the Furness Fells. A tide imperceptible to the eye drifts us on among and above those beautiful reflections—that downward world of hanging dreams! and ever and anon we beckon unto Billy gently to dip his oar, that we may see a world destroyed and recreated in one moment of time. Yes, Billy! thou art a poet—and canst work more wonders with thine oar than could he with his pen who painted "heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb," wandering by herself in Fairyland. How is it, pray, that our souls are satiated with
[Pg 249] such beauty as this? Is it because 'tis unsubstantial all—senseless, though fair—and in its evanescence unsuited to the sympathies that yearn for the permanencies of breathing life? Dreams are delightful only as delusions within the delusion of this our mortal waking existence—one touch of what we call reality dissolves them all; blissful though they may have been, we care not when the bubble bursts—nay, we are glad again to return to our own natural world, care-haunted though in its happiest moods it be—glad as if we had escaped from glamoury; and, oh! beyond expression sweet it is once more to drink the light of living eyes—the music of living lips—after that preternatural hush that steeps the shadowy realms of the imagination, whether stretching along a sunset-heaven or the mystical imagery of earth and sky floating in the lustre of lake or sea.

Therefore "row, vassals, row, for the pride of the Lowlands;" and as rowing is a thirsty exercise, let us land at the Ferry, and each man refresh himself with a horn of ale.

There is not a prettier place on all Windermere than the Ferry-House, or one better adapted for a honey-moon. You can hand your bride into a boat almost out of the parlour window, and be off among the islands in a moment, or into nook or bay where no prying eye, even through telescope (a most unwarrantable instrument), can overlook your happiness; or you can secrete yourselves, like buck and doe, among the lady-fern on Furness Fells, where not a sunbeam can intrude on your sacred privacy, and where you may melt down hours to moments, in chaste connubial bliss, brightening futurity with plans of domestic enjoyment, like long lines of lustre streaming across the lake. But at present, let us visit the fort-looking building among the cliffs called The Station, and see how Windermere looks as we front the east. Why, you would not know it to be the same lake. The Isle called Beautiful, which heretofore had scarcely seemed an isle, appearing to belong to one or other shore of the mainland, from this point of view is an isle indeed, loading the lake with a weight of beauty, and giving it an ineffable character of richness which nowhere else does it possess; while the other lesser isles, dropt "in nature's careless haste" between it and the
[Pg 250] Furness Fells, connect it still with those lovely shores from which it floats a short way apart, without being disunited—one spirit blending the whole together within the compass of a fledgling's flight. Beyond these

> "Sister isles, that smile
> Together like a happy family
> Of beauty and of love,"

the eye meets the Rayrig woods, with but a gleam of water between, only visible in sunshine, and is gently conducted by them up the hills of Applethwaite, diversified with cultivated enclosures, "all green as emerald" to their very summits, with all their pastoral and arable grounds besprinkled with stately single trees, copses, or groves. On the nearer side of these hills is seen, stretching far off to other lofty regions—Hill-bell and High-street conspicuous over the rest—the long vale of Troutbeck, with its picturesque cottages, in "numbers without number numberless," and all its sable pines and sycamores—on the further side, that most sylvan of all sylvan mountains, where lately the Hemans warbled her native wood-notes wild in her poetic bower, fitly called Dove-nest, and beyond, Kirkstone Fells and Rydal Head, magnificent giants looking westward to the Langdale Pikes (here unseen),

> "The last that parley with the setting sun."

Immediately in front, the hills are low and lovely, sloping with gentle undulations down to the lake, here grove-girdled along all its shores. The elm-grove that overshadows the Parsonage is especially conspicuous—stately and solemn in a green old age—and though now silent, in spring and early summer clamorous with rooks in love or alarm, an ancient family, and not to be expelled from their hereditary seats. Following the line of shore to the right, and turning your eyes unwillingly away from the bright and breezy Belfield, they fall on the elegant architecture of Storr's Hall, gleaming from a glade in the thick woods, and still looking southward they see a serene series of the same forest scenery, along the heights of Gillhead and Gummer's-How, till Windermere is lost, apparently narrowed into a river, beyond Townhead and Fellfoot, where the prospect is closed by a beaconed eminence clothed with shadowy trees to the very base of the Tower. The points and promontories jutting into the lake from these and the opposite shores—
[Pg 251] which are of a humbler, though not tame character—are all placed most felicitously; and as the lights and shadows keep shifting on the water, assume endless varieties of relative position to the eye, so that often during one short hour you might think you had been gazing on Windermere with a kaleidoscopical eye, that had seemed to create the beauty which in good truth is floating there for ever on the bosom of nature.

That description, perhaps, is not so very much amiss; but should you think otherwise, be so good as give us a better: meanwhile let us descend from The Station—and its stained windows—stained into setting sunlight—frost and snow—the purpling autumn—and the first faint vernal green—and re-embark at the Ferry-House pier. Berkshire Island is fair—but we have always looked at it with an evil eye since unable to weather it in our old schooner, one day when the Victory, on the same tack, shot by us to windward like a salmon. But now we are half-way between Storr's Point and Rawlinson's Nab—so, my dear Garnet, down with the helm and let us put about (who is that catching crabs?) for a fine front view of the Grecian edifice. It does honour to the genius of Gandy—and say what people choose of a classic clime, the light of a Westmoreland sky falls beautifully on that marble-like stone, which, whether the heavens be in gloom or glory, "shines well where it stands," and flings across the lake a majestic shadow. Methought there passed along the lawn the image of one now in his tomb! The memory of that bright day returns, when Windermere glittered with all her sails in honour of the great Northern Minstrel, and of him the Eloquent, whose lips are now mute in the dust. Methinks we see his smile benign—that we hear his voice silver-sweet!

> "But away with melancholy,
> Nor doleful changes ring"—

as such thoughts came like shadows, like shadows let them depart—and spite of that which happeneth to all men—"this one day we give to merriment." Pull, Billy, pull—or we will turn you round—and in that case there is no refreshment nearer than Newby-bridge. The Naiad feels the invigorated impulse—and her cut-water murmurs to the tune of six knots through the tiny cataract foaming round her bows. The woods are all running down the lake,—and at that rate, by
[Pg 252] two *post meridiem* will be in the sea.

Commend us—on a tour—to lunch and dinner in one. 'Tis a saving both of time and money—and of all the dinner-lunches that ever were set upon a sublunary table, the *facile principes* are the dinner-lunches you may devour in the White Lion, Bowness. Take a walk—and a seat on the green that overlooks the village, almost on a level with the lead-roof of the venerable church—while Hebe is laying the cloth for a repast fit for Jove, Juno, and the other heathen gods and goddesses; and if you must have politics—why, call for the *Standard* or *Sun* (Heavens! there is that hawk already at the *Times*), and devote a few hurried and hungry minutes to the French Revolution. Why, the Green of all Greens—often traced by us of yore beneath the midnight moonlight, till a path was worn along the edge of the low wall, still called "North's Walk"—is absolutely converted into a reading-room, and our laking party into a political club. There is Louisa with the *Leeds Intelligencer*—and Matilda with the *Morning Herald*—and Harriet with that York paper worth them all put together—for it tells of Priam, and the Cardinal, and St Nicholas—but, hark! a soft footstep! And then a soft voice—no dialect or accent pleasanter than the Westmoreland—whispers that the dinner-lunch is on the table—and no leading article like a cold round of beef, or a veal pie. Let the Parisians settle their Constitution as they will—meanwhile let us strengthen ours; and after a single glass of Madeira—and a horn of home-brewed—let us off on foot—on horseback—in gig—car and chariot—to Troutbeck.

It is about a Scottish mile, we should think, from Bowness to Cook's House—along the turnpike road—half the distance lying embowered in the Rayrig woods—and half open to lake, cloud, and sky. It is pleasant to lose sight now and then of the lake along whose banks you are travelling, especially if during separation you become a Druid. The water woos you at your return with her bluest smile, and her whitest murmur. Some of the finest trees in all the Rayrig woods have had the good sense to grow by the roadside, where they can see all that is passing—and make their own observations on us deciduous plants. Few of them seem to be very old—not much older than Christopher North—and, like him, they wear well, trunk sound to the core, arms with a long
[Pg 253] sweep, and head in fine proportions of cerebral development, fortified against all storms—perfect pictures of oaks in their prime. You may see one—without looking for it—near a farmhouse called Miller-ground—himself a grove. His trunk is clothed in a tunic of moss, which shows the ancient Sylvan to great advantage, and it would be no easy matter to give him a fall. Should you wish to see Windermere in all her glory, you have but to enter a gate a few yards on this side of his shade, and ascend an eminence called by us Greenbank—but you had as well leave your red mantle in the carriage, for an enormous white, long-horned Lancashire bull has for some years

established his head-quarters not far off, and you would not wish your wife to become a widow, with six fatherless children. But the royal road of poetry is often the most splendid—and by keeping the turnpike, you soon find yourself on a terrace to which there was nothing to compare in the hanging gardens of Babylon. There is the widest breadth of water—the richest foreground of wood—and the most magnificent background of mountains—not only in Westmoreland but—believe us—in all the world. That blue roof is Calgarth—and no traveller ever pauses on this brow without giving it a blessing—for the sake of the illustrious dead; for there long dwelt in the body Richard Watson, the Defender of the Faith, and there within the shadow of his memory still dwell those, dearest on earth to his beatified spirit. So pass along in high and solemn thought, till you lose sight of Calgarth in the lone road that leads by St Catharine's, and then relapse into pleasant fancies and picturesque dreams. This is the best way by far of approaching Troutbeck. No ups and downs in this life were ever more enlivening—not even the ups and downs of a bird learning to fly. Sheep-fences, six feet high, are admirable contrivances for shutting out scenery; and by shutting out much scenery, why, you confer an unappreciable value on the little that remains visible, and feel as if you could hug it to your heart. But sometimes one does feel tempted to shove down a few roods of intercepting stone-wall higher than the horse-hair on a cuirassier's casque—though sheep should eat the suckers and scions, protected as they there shoot, at the price of the concealment of the picturesque and the poetical from beauty-searching eyes. That is a long lane, it is said, which has never a turning; so this must be a short one, which has a
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hundred. You have turned your back on Windermere—and our advice to you is, to keep your face to the mountains. Troutbeck is a jewel—a diamond of a stream—but Bobbin Mills have exhausted some of the most lustrous pools, changing them into shallows, where the minnows rove. Deep dells are his delight—and he loves the rugged scaurs that intrench his wooded banks—and the fantastic rocks that tower-like hang at intervals over his winding course, and seem sometimes to block it up; but the miner works his way out beneath galleries and arches in the living stone—sometimes silent—sometimes singing—and sometimes roaring like thunder—till subsiding into a placid spirit, ere he reaches the wooden bridge in the bonny holms of Calgarth, he glides graceful as the swan that sometimes sees his image in his breast, and through alder and willow banks murmurs away his life in the Lake.

Yes—that is Troutbeck Chapel—one of the smallest—and to our eyes the very simplest—of all the chapels among the hills. Yet will it be remembered when more pretending edifices are forgotten—just like some mild, sensible, but perhaps somewhat too silent person, whose acquaintanceship—nay, friendship—we feel a wish to cultivate we scarce know why, except that he is mild, sensible, and silent; whereas we would not be civil to the *brusque*, upsetting, and loquacious puppy at his elbow, whose information is as various as it is profound, were one word or look of courtesy to save him from the flames. For Heaven's sake, Louisa, don't sketch Troutbeck Chapel. There is nothing but a square tower—a horizontal roof—and some perpendicular walls. The outlines of the mountains here have no specific character. That bridge is but a poor feature—and the stream here very commonplace. Put them not on paper. Yet alive—is not the secluded scene felt to be most beautiful? It has a soul. The pure spirit of the pastoral age is breathing here—in this utter noiselessness there is the oblivion of all turmoil; and as the bleating of flocks comes on the ear, along the fine air, from the green pastures of the Kentmere range of soft undulating hills, the stilled heart whispers to itself, "this is peace!"

The worst of it is, that of all the people that on earth do dwell, your Troutbeck *statesmen*, we
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have heard, are the most litigious—the most quarrelsome about straws. Not a footpath, in all the parish that has not cost many pounds in lawsuits. The most insignificant style is referred to a full bench of magistrates. That gate was carried to the Quarter Sessions. No branch of a tree can shoot six inches over a march-wall without being indicted for a trespass. And should a frost-loosened stone tumble from some *skrees* down upon a neighbour's field, he will be served with a notice to quit before next morning. Many of the small properties hereabouts have been mortgaged over head and ears mainly to fee attorneys. Yet the last hoop of apples will go the same road—and the statesman, driven at last from his paternal fields, will sue for something or another *in formâ pauperis*, were it but the worthless wood and second-hand nails that may be destined for his coffin. This is a pretty picture of pastoral life—but we must take pastoral life as we find it. Nor have we any doubt that things were every whit as bad in the time of the patriarchs—else—whence the satirical sneer, "sham Abraham?" Yonder is the village straggling away up along the hill-side, till the furthest house seems a rock fallen with trees from the mountain. The cottages stand for the most part in clusters of twos or threes—with here and there what in Scotland we should call a *clachan*—many a sma' toun within the ae lang toun; but where in all braid Scotland is a mile-long scattered congregation of rural dwellings, all dropt down where the Painter and the Poet would have wished to plant them, on knolls and in dells, and on banks and braes, and below tree-crested rocks, and all bound together in picturesque confusion by old groves of ash, oak, and sycamore, and by flower-gardens and fruit-orchards, rich as those of the Hesperides?

If you have no objections—our pretty dears—we shall return to Bowness by Lowood. Let us form a straggling line of march—so that we may one and all indulge in our own silent fancies—and let not a word be spoken, virgins—under the penalty of two kisses for one syllable—till we crown the height above Briary-Close. Why, there it is already—and we hear our musical friend's voice-accompanied guitar. From the front of his cottage, the head and shoulders of Windermere are seen in their most majestic shape—and from nowhere else is the long-withdrawing Langdale so
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magnificently closed by mountains. There at sunset hangs "Cloudland, gorgeous land," by gazing on which for an hour we shall all become poets and poetesses. Who said that Windermere was too narrow? The same critic who thinks the full harvest moon too round—and despises the

twinkling of the evening star. It is all the way down—from head to foot—from the Brathay to the Leven—of the proper breadth precisely—to a quarter of an inch. Were the reeds in Poolwyke Bay—on which the birds love to balance themselves—at low or high water, to be visible longer or shorter than what they have always been in the habit of being on such occasions since first we brushed them with an oar, when landing in our skiff from the Endeavour, the beauty of the whole of Windermere would be impaired—so exquisitely adapted is that pellucid gleam to the lips of its sylvan shores. True, there are flaws in the diamond—but only when the squalls come; and as the blackness sweeps by, that diamond of the first water is again sky-bright and sky-blue as an angel's eyes. Lowood Bay—we are now embarked in Mr Jackson's prettiest pinnace—when the sun is westering—which it now is—surpasses all other bays in fresh-water mediterraneans. Eve loves to see her pensive face reflected in that serenest mirror. To flatter such a divinity is impossible—but sure she never wears a smile so divine as when adjusting her dusky tresses in that truest of all glasses, set in the richest of all frames. Pleased she retires—with a wavering motion—and casting "many a longing, lingering look behind," fades indistinctly away among the Brathay woods; while Night, her elder sister, or rather her younger—we really know not which—takes her place at the darkening mirror, till it glitters with her crescent-moon-coronet, wreathed perhaps with a white cloud, and just over the silver bow the lustre of one large yellow star.

As none of the party complain of hunger, let us crack among us a single bottle of our worthy host's choice old Madeira—and then haste in the barouche (ha! here it is) to Bowness. It is right now to laugh—and sing—and recite poetry—and talk all manner of nonsense. Didn't ye hear something crack? Can it be a spring—or merely the axle-tree? Our clerical friend from Chester assures us 'twas but a string of his guitar—so no more shrieking—and after coffee we shall have

> "Rise up, rise up, Xarifa, lay your golden cushion down!"

[Pg 257] And then we two, my dear sir, must have a contest at chess—at which, if you beat us, we shall leave our bed at midnight, and murder you in your sleep. "But where," murmurs Matilda, "are we going?" To Oresthead, love—and Elleray—for you must see a sight these sweet eyes of thine never saw before—a SUNSET.

We have often wondered if there be in the world one woman indisputably and undeniably the most beautiful of all women—or if, indeed, our first mother were "the loveliest of her daughters, Eve." What human female beauty is all men feel—but few men know—and none can tell—further than that it is perfect spiritual health, breathingly embodied in perfect corporeal flesh and blood, according to certain heaven-framed adaptations of form and hue, that by a familiar yet inscrutable mystery, to our senses and our souls express sanctity and purity of the immortal essence enshrined within, by aid of all associated perceptions and emotions that the heart and the imagination can agglomerate round them, as instantly and as unhesitatingly as the faculties of thought and feeling can agglomerate round a lily or a rose, for example, the perceptions and emotions that make them—by divine right of inalienable beauty—the Royal Families of Flowers. This definition—or description rather—of human female beauty, may appear to some, as indeed it appears to us, something vague; but all profound truths—out of the exact sciences—are something vague; and it is manifestly the design of a benign and gracious Providence that they should be so till the end of time—till mortality puts on immortality—and earth is heaven. Vagueness, therefore, is no fault in philosophy—any more than in the dawn of morning, or the gloaming of eve. Enough, if each clause of the sentence that seeks to elucidate a confessed mystery, has a meaning harmonious with all the meanings in all the other clauses—and that the effect of the whole taken together is musical—and a tune. Then it is Truth. For all Falsehood is dissonant—and verity is consent. It is our faith, that the souls of some women are angelic—or nearly so—by nature and the Christian religion; and that the faces and persons of some women are angelic, or nearly so—whose souls, nevertheless, are seen to be far otherwise—and, on that discovery, beauty fades or dies. But may not soul and body—spirit and matter—meet in perfect
[Pg 258] union at birth; and grow together into a creature, though of spiritual mould, comparable with Eve before the Fall? Such a creature—such creatures—may have been; but the question is—did you ever see one? We almost think that we have—but many long years ago;

> "She is dedde,
> Gone to her death-bedde
> All under the willow-tree."

And it may be that her image in the moonlight of memory and imagination may be more perfectly beautiful than she herself ever was, when

> "Upgrew that living flower beneath our eye."

Yes—'tis thus that we form to ourselves—incommunicably within our souls—what we choose to call Ideal Beauty—that is, a life-in-death image or Eidolon of a Being whose voice was once heard, and whose footsteps once wandered among the flowers of this earth. But it is a mistake to believe that such beauty as this can visit the soul only after the original in which it once breathed is no more. For as it can only be seen by profoundest passion—and the profoundest are the passions of Love, and Pity, and Grief—then why may not each and all of these passions—when we consider the constitution of this world and this life—be awakened in their utmost height and depth by the sight of living beauty, as well as by the memory of the dead? To do so is surely within "the reachings of our souls,"—and if so, then may the virgin beauty of his daughter, praying with folded hands and heavenward face when leaning in health on her father's knees, transcend even

the ideal beauty which shall afterwards visit his slumbers nightly, long years after he has laid her head in the grave. If by ideal beauty you mean a beauty beyond whatever breathed, and moved, and had its being on earth—then we suspect that not even "that inner eye which is the bliss of solitude" ever beheld it; but if you merely mean by ideal beauty, that which is composed of ideas, and of the feelings attached by nature to ideas, then, begging your pardon, my good sir, all beauty whatever is ideal—and you had better begin to study metaphysics.

But what we were wishing to say is this—that whatever may be the truth with regard to human
[Pg 259] female beauty—Windermere, seen by sunset from the spot where we now stand, Elleray, is at this moment the most beautiful scene on this earth. The reasons why it must be so are multitudinous. Not only can the eye take in, but the imagination, in its awakened power, can master all the component elements of the spectacle—and while it adequately discerns and sufficiently feels the influence of each, is alive throughout all its essence to the divine agency of the whole. The charm lies in its entirety—its unity, which is so perfect—so seemeth it to our eyes—that 'tis in itself a complete world—of which not a line could be altered without disturbing the spirit of beauty that lies recumbent there, wherever the earth meets the sky. There is nothing here fragmentary; and had a poet been born, and bred here all his days, nor known aught of fair or grand beyond this liquid vale, yet had he sung truly and profoundly of the shows of nature. No rude and shapeless masses of mountains—such as too often in our own dear Scotland encumber the earth with dreary desolation—with gloom without grandeur—and magnitude without magnificence. But almost in orderly array, and irregular just up to the point of the picturesque, where poetry is not needed for the fancy's pleasure, stand the Race of Giants—mist-veiled transparently—or crowned with clouds slowly settling of their own accord into all the forms that Beauty loves, when with her sister-spirit Peace she descends at eve from highest heaven to sleep among the shades of earth.

Sweet would be the hush of lake, woods, and skies, were it not so solemn! The silence is that of a temple, and, as we face the west, irresistibly are we led to adore. The mighty sun occupies with his flaming retinue all the region. Mighty yet mild—for from his disc, awhile insufferably bright, is effused now a gentle crimson light, that dyes all the west in one uniform glory, save where yet round the cloud edges lingers the purple, the green, and the yellow lustre, unwilling to forsake the violet beds of the sky, changing, while we gaze, into heavenly roses; till that prevailing crimson colour at last gains entire possession of the heavens, and all the previous splendour gives way to one, whose paramount purity, lustrous as fire, is in its steadfast beauty sublime. And, lo! the lake has received that sunset into its bosom. It, too, softly burns with a crimson glow
[Pg 260] —and, as sinks the sun below the mountains, Windermere, gorgeous in her array as the western sky, keeps fading away as it fades, till at last all the ineffable splendour expires, and the spirit that has been lost to this world in the transcendent vision, or has been seeing all things appertaining to this world in visionary symbols, returns from that celestial sojourn, and knows that its lot is, henceforth as heretofore, to walk weariedly perhaps, and woe-begone, over the no longer divine but disenchanted earth!

It is very kind in the moon and stars—just like them—to rise so soon after sunset. The heart sinks at the sight of the sky, when a characterless night succeeds such a blaze of light—like dull reality dashing the last vestiges of the brightest of dreams. When the moon is "hid in her vacant interlunar cave," and not a star can "burst its cerements," imagination in the dim blank droops her wings—our thoughts become of the earth earthly—and poetry seems a pastime fit but for fools and children. But how different our mood, when

> "Glows the firmament with living sapphires,"

and Diana, who has ascended high in heaven, without our having once observed the divinity, bends her silver bow among the rejoicing stars, while the lake, like another sky, seems to contain its own luminaries, a different division of the constellated night! 'Tis merry Windermere no more. Yet we must not call her melancholy—though somewhat sad she seems, and pensive, as if the stillness of universal nature did touch her heart. How serene all the lights—how peaceful all the shadows! Steadfast alike—as if they would brood for ever—yet transient as all loveliness—and at the mercy of every cloud. In some places, the lake has disappeared—in others, the moonlight is almost like sunshine—only silver instead of gold. Here spots of quiet light—there lines of trembling lustre—and there a flood of radiance checkered by the images of trees. Lo! the Isle called Beautiful has now gathered upon its central grove all the radiance issuing from that celestial Urn; and almost in another moment it seems blended with the dim mass of mainland, and blackness enshrouds the woods. Still as seems the night to unobservant eyes, it is fluctuating in its expression as the face of a sleeper overspread with pleasant but disturbing dreams. Never
[Pg 261] for any two successive moments is the aspect of the night the same—each smile has its own meaning, its own character; and Light is felt to be like Music, to have a melody and a harmony of its own—so mysteriously allied are the powers and provinces of eye and ear, and by such a kindred and congenial agency do they administer to the workings of the spirit.

Well, that is very extraordinary—Rain—rain—rain! All the eyes of heaven were bright as bright might be—the sky was blue as violets—that braided whiteness, that here and there floated like a veil on the brow of night, was all that recalled the memory of clouds—and as for the moon, no faintest halo yellowed round her orb, that seemed indeed "one perfect chrysolite;"—yet while all the winds seemed laid asleep till morn, and beauty to have chained all the elements into peace—overcast in a moment is the firmament—an evanishing has left it blank as mist—there is a fast, thick, pattering on the woods—yes—rain—rain— rain—and ere we reach Bowness, the party will be wet through to their skins. Nay—matters are getting still more serious—for there was

lightning—yea, lightning! Ten seconds! and hark, very respectable thunder! With all our wisdom, we have not been weather-wise—or we should have known, when we saw it, an electrical sunset. Only look now towards the West. There floats Noah's Ark—a magnificent spectacle; and now for the Flood. That far-off sullen sound proclaims cataracts. And what may mean that sighing and moaning and muttering up among the cliffs? See—see how the sheet lightning shows the long lake-shore all tumbling with foamy breakers. A strong wind is there—but here there is not a breath. But the woods across the lake are bowing their heads to the blast. Windermere is in a tumult—the storm comes flying on wings all abroad—and now we are in the very heart of the hurricane. See, in Bowness is hurrying many a light—for the people fear we may be on the lake; and faithful Billy, depend on't, is launching his life-boat to go to our assistance. Well, this is an adventure.—But soft—what ails our Argand Lamp! Our study is in such darkness that we cannot see our paper—in the midst of a thunderstorm we conclude, and to bed by a flaff of lightning.

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THE MOORS.

PROLOGUE.

Once we knew the Highlands absolutely too well—not a nook that was not as familiar to us as our brown study. We had not to complain of the lochs, glens, woods, and mountains alone, for having so fastened themselves upon us on a great scale that we found it impossible to shake them off; but the hardship in our case was, that all the subordinate parts of the scenery, many of them dull and dreary enough, and some of them intolerably tedious, had taken it upon themselves so to thrust their intimacy upon us, in all winds and weathers, that without giving them the cut direct there was no way of escaping from the burden of their friendship. To courteous and humane Christians, such as we have always been both by name and nature as far back as we can recollect, it is painful to cut even an impudent stone, or an upsetting tree that may cross our path uncalled for, or obtrude itself on our privacy when we wish to be alone in our meditations. Yet, we confess, they used sometimes sorely to try our temper. It is all very well for you, our good sir, to say in excuse for them that such objects are inanimate. So much the worse. Were they animate, like yourself, they might be reasoned with on the impropriety of interrupting the stream of any man's soliloquies. But being not merely inanimate but irrational, objects of that class know not to keep their own place, which indeed, it may be said in reply, is kept for them by nature. But that Mistress of the Ceremonies, though enjoying a fine green old age, cannot be expected to be equally attentive to the proceedings of all the objects under her control. Accordingly, often when she is not looking, what more common than for a huge hulking fellow of a rock, with an absurd tuft of trees on his head, who has observed you lying half-asleep on the greensward, to hang
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eavesdropping, as it were, over your most secret thoughts, which he whispers to the winds, and they to all the clouds! Or for some grotesque and fantastic ash, with a crooked back, and arms disproportionately long, like a giant in extreme old age dwindling into a dwarf, to jut out from the hole in the wall, and should your leaden eye chance at the time to love the ground, to put his mossy fist right in your philosophical countenance! In short, it is very possible to know a country so thoroughly well, outside and in, from mountain to mole-hill, that you get mutually tired of one another's company, and are ready to vent your quarrel in reciprocal imprecations.

So was it once with us and the Highlands. That "too much familiarity breeds contempt" we learned many a long year ago, when learning to write large text; and passages in our life have been a running commentary on the theme then set us by that incomparable caligraphist, Butterworth. All "the old familiar faces" occasionally come in for a portion of that feeling; and on that account, we are glad that we saw, but for one day and one night, Charles Lamb's. Therefore, some dozen years ago we gave up the Highlands, not wishing to quarrel with them, and confined our tender assiduities to the Lowlands, while, like two great flats as we were, we kept staring away at each other, with our lives on the same level. All the consequences that might naturally have been expected have ensued; and we are now as heartily sick of the Lowlands, and they of us. What can we do but return to our First Love?

Allow us to offer another view of the subject. There is not about Old Age one blessing more deserving gratitude to Heaven, than the gradual bedimming of memory brought on by years. In youth, all things, internal and external, are unforgetable, and by the perpetual presence of passion oppress the soul. The eye of a woman haunts the victim on whom it may have given a glance, till he leaps perhaps out of a four-story window. A beautiful lake, or a sublime mountain, drives a young poet as mad as a March hare. He loses himself in an interminable forest louring all round the horizon of a garret six feet square. It matters not to him whether his eyes be open or shut. He is at the mercy of all Life and all Nature, and not for one hour can he escape from
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their persecutions. His soul is the slave of the Seven Senses, and each is a tyrant with instruments of torture, to whom and to which Phalaris, with his brazen bull, was a pointless joke. But in old age "the heart of a man is oppressed with care" no longer; the Seven Tyrants have lost their sceptres, and are dethroned; and the grey-headed gentleman feels that his soul has "set up its rest." His eyes are dazzled no more with insufferable light—no more his ears tingle with music too exquisite to be borne—no more his touch is transport. The scents of nature, stealing from the balmy mouths of lilies and roses, are deadened in his nostrils. He is above and beyond the reach of all the long arms of many-handed misery, as he is out of the convulsive clutch of bliss. And is not this the state of best happiness for mortal man? Tranquillity! The peaceful air that we breathe

as we are westering towards the sunset-regions of our Being, and feel that we are about to drop down for ever out of sight behind the Sacred Mountains.

All this may be very fine, but cannot be said to help us far on with our Prologue. Let us try it again. Old men, we remarked, ought to be thankful to Heaven for their dim memories. Never do we feel that more profoundly than when dreaming about the Highlands. All is confusion. Nothing distinctly do we remember—not even the names of lochs and mountains. Where is Ben Cru—Cru—Cru—what's-his-name? Ay—ay—Cruachan. At this blessed moment we see his cloud-capped head—but we have clean forgotten the silver sound of the name of the county he encumbers. Ross-shire? Nay, that won't do—he never was at Tain. We are assured by Dr Reid's, Dr Beattie's, and Dugald Stewart's great Instinctive First Principle Belief, that oftener than once, or ten times either, have we been in a day-long hollow among precipices dear to eagles, called Glen-Etive. But where begins or where ends that "severe sojourn" is now to us a mystery—though we hear the sound of the sea and the dashing of cataracts. Yet though all is thus dim in our memory, would you believe it that nothing is utterly lost? No, not even the thoughts that soared like eagles vanishing in the light—or that dived like ravens into the gloom. They all reappear—those from the Empyrean—these from Hades—reminding us of the good or the evil borne in other days, within the spiritual regions of our boundless being. The world of eye and ear is not in reality narrowed
[Pg 265] because it glimmers; ever and anon as years advance, a light direct from heaven dissipates the gloom, and bright and glorious as of yore the landscape laughs to the sea, the sea to heaven, and heaven back again to the gazing spirit that leaps forward to the hailing light with something of the same divine passion that gave wings to our youth.

All this may be still finer, yet cannot be said, any more than the preceding paragraph, much to help us on with our Prologue. To come then, if possible, to the point at once—We are happy that our dim memory and our dim imagination restore and revive in our mind none but the characteristic features of the scenery of the Highlands, unmixed with baser matter, and all floating magnificently through a spiritual haze, so that the whole region is now more than ever idealised; and in spite of all his present, past, and future prosiness—Christopher North, soon as in thought his feet touch the heather, becomes a poet.

It has long been well known to the whole world that we are a sad egotist—yet our egotism, so far from being a detraction from our attraction, seems to be the very soul of it, making it impossible in nature for any reasonable being to come within its sphere, without being drawn by sweet compulsion to the old wizard's heart. He is so *humane*! Only look at him for a few minutes, and liking becomes love—love becomes veneration. And all this even before he has opened his lips—by the mere power of his ogles and his temples. In his large mild blue eyes is written not only his nature, but miraculously, in German text, his very name, Christopher North. Mrs Gentle was the first to discover it; though we remember having been asked more than once in our youth, by an alarmed virgin on whom we happened at the time to be looking tender, "If we were aware that there was something preternatural in our eyes?" Christopher is conspicuous in our right eye—North in our left; and when we wish to be incog., we either draw their fringed curtains, or, nun-like, keep the tell-tale orbs fixed on the ground. Candour whispers us to confess, that some years ago a child was exhibited at sixpence with William Wood legible in its optics—having been
[Pg 266] affiliated, by ocular evidence, on a gentleman of that name, who, with his dying breath, disowned the soft impeachment. But in that case nature had written a vile scrawl—in ours her hand is firm, and goes off with a flourish.

Have you ever entered, all alone, the shadows of some dilapidated old burial-place, and in a nook made beautiful by wild-briers and a flowering thorn, beheld the stone image of some long-forgotten worthy lying on his grave? Some knight who perhaps had fought in Palestine,—or some holy man, who in the Abbey—now almost gone—had led a long still life of prayer? The moment you knew that you were standing among the dwellings of the dead, how impressive became the ruins! Did not that stone image wax more and more lifelike in its repose? And as you kept your eyes fixed on the features Time had not had the heart to obliterate, seemed not your soul to hear the echoes of the Miserere sung by the brethren?

So looks Christopher—on his couch—in his alcove. He is taking his siesta—and the faint shadows you see coming and going across his face are dreams. 'Tis a pensive dormitory, and hangs undisturbed in its spiritual region as a cloud on the sky of the Longest Day when it falls on the Sabbath.

What think you of our Father, alongside of the Pedlar in "The Excursion?" Wordsworth says—

> "Amid the gloom,
> Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,
> Appear'd a roofless hut; four naked walls
> That stared upon each other! I look'd round,
> And to my wish and to my hope espied
> Him whom I sought; a man of reverend age,
> But stout and hale, for travel unimpair'd.
> There was he seen upon the cottage bench,
> Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;
> An iron-pointed staff lay at his side."

Alas! "stout and hale" are words that could not be applied, without cruel mocking, to our figure. "Recumbent in the shade" unquestionably he is—yet, "recumbent" is a clumsy word for such

quietude; and, recurring to our former image, we prefer to say, in the words of Wilson,—

"Still is he as a frame of stone
That in its stillness lies alone,
With silence breathing from its face,
For ever in some holy place,
[Pg 267] Chapel or aisle—on marble laid,
With pale hands on his pale breast spread,
An image humble, meek, and low,
Of one forgotten long ago!"

No "iron-pointed staff lies at his side"—but "Satan's dread," THE CRUTCH! Wordsworth tells us over again that the Pedlar—

"With no appendage but a staff,
The prized memorial of *relinquish'd* toils,
Upon the cottage-bench reposed his limbs,
Screen'd from the sun."

On his couch, in his Alcove, Christopher is reposing—not his limbs alone, but his very essence. THE CRUTCH is, indeed, both *de jure* and *de facto* the prized memorial of toils—but, thank Heaven, not *relinquished* toils; and then how characteristic of the dear merciless old man—hardly distinguishable among the fringed draperies of his canopy, the dependent and independent KNOUT!

Was the Pedlar absolutely asleep? We shrewdly suspect not—'twas but a doze. "Recumbent in the shade, *as if asleep*"—"Upon that cottage-bench *reposed* his limbs" induce us to lean to the opinion that he was but on the border of the Land of Nod. Nay, the poet gets more explicit, and with that minute particularity so charming in poetical description, finally informs us that

"Supine the wanderer lay,
His eyes, as if in drowsiness, half shut,
The shadows of the breezy elms above
Dappling his face."

It would appear, then, on an impartial consideration of all the circumstances of the case, that the "man of reverend age," though "recumbent" and "supine" upon the "cottage bench," "as if asleep," and "his eyes, as if in drowsiness, half shut," was in a mood between sleeping and waking; and this creed is corroborated by the following assertion—

"He had not heard the sound
Of my approaching steps, and in the shade
Unnoticed did I stand some minutes' space.
At length I hail'd him, seeing that his hat
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim
Had newly scoop'd a running stream."

[Pg 268] He rose; and so do We, for probably by this time you may have discovered that we have been describing Ourselves in our siesta or mid-day snooze—as we have been beholding in our mind's eye our venerated and mysterious Double.

We cannot help flattering ourselves—if indeed it be flattery—that though no relative of his, we have a look of the Pedlar—as he is elaborately painted by the hand of a great master in the aforesaid Poem.

"Him had I mark'd the day before—alone,
And station'd in the public way, with, face
Turn'd to the sun then setting, while that staff
Afforded to the figure of the man,
Detain'd for contemplation or repose,
Graceful support," &c.

As if it were yesterday, we remember our first interview with the Bard. It was at the Lady's Oak, between Ambleside and Rydal. We were then in the very flower of our age—just sixty; so we need not say the century had then seen but little of this world. The Bard was a mere boy of some six lustres, and had a lyrical-ballad look that established his identity at first sight, all unlike the lackadaisical. His right hand was within his vest on the region of the heart, and he ceased his crooning as we stood face to face. What a noble countenance! at once austere and gracious—haughty and benign—of a man conscious of his greatness while yet companioning with the humble—an unrecognised power dwelling in the woods. Our figure at that moment so impressed itself on his imagination, that it in time supplanted the image of the real Pedlar, and grew into the *Emeritus of the Three Days*. We were standing in that very attitude—having deposited on the coping of the wall our Kit, since adopted by the British Army, with us at once a library and a larder.

And again—and even more characteristically,—

"Plain was his garb:
Such as might suit a rustic sire, prepared
For Sabbath duties; yet he was a man
Whom no one could have pass'd without remark,
Active and nervous was his gait; his limbs
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.
Time had compress'd the freshness of his cheeks
Into a narrower circle of deep red,
[Pg 269] But had not tamed his eye, that under brows,
Shaggy and grey, had meanings, which it brought
From years of youth; whilst, like a being made
Of many beings, he had wondrous skill
To blend with knowledge of the years to come,
Human, or such as lie beyond the grave."

In our intellectual characters we indulge the pleasing hope that there are some striking points of resemblance, on which, however, our modesty will not permit us to dwell—and incur acquirements, more particularly in Plane and Spherical Trigonometry:—

"While yet he linger'd in the rudiments
Of science, and among her simplest laws,
His triangles—they were the stars of heaven,
The silent stars! oft did he take delight
To measure the altitude of some tall crag,
That is the eagle's birthplace," &c.

So it was with us. Give us but a base and a quadrant—and when a student in Jemmy Millar's class, we could have given you the altitude of any steeple in Glasgow or the Gorbals.

Occasionally, too, in a small party of friends, though, not proud of the accomplishment, we have been prevailed on, as you may have heard, to delight humanity with a song—"The Flowers of the Forest," "Roy's Wife," "Flee up, flee up, thou bonnie bonnie Cock," or "Auld Langsyne"—just as the Pedlar

"At request would sing
Old songs, the product of his native hills;
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,
Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed
As cool refreshing water, by the care
Of the industrious husbandman diffused
Through a parch'd meadow-field in time of drought."

Our natural disposition, too, is as amiable as that of the "Vagrant Merchant."

"And surely never did there live on earth
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports
And teasing ways of children vex'd not him:
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue
Of garrulous age; nor did the sick man's tale,
To his fraternal sympathy address'd,
Obtain reluctant hearing."

[Pg 270] Who can read the following lines, and not think of Christopher North?

"Birds and beasts,
And the mute fish that glances in the stream,
And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,
And gorgeous insect hovering in the air,
The fowl domestic, and the household dog—
In his capacious mind he loved them all."

True, that our love of

"The mute fish that glances in the stream,"

is not incompatible with the practice of the "angler's silent trade," or with the pleasure of "filling our pannier." The Pedlar, too, we have reason to know, was like his poet and ourselves, in that art a craftsman, and for love beat the mole-catcher at busking a batch of May-flies. We question whether Lascelles himself were his master at a green dragon. "The harmless reptile coiling in the sun" we are not so sure about, having once been bit by an adder, whom in our simplicity we mistook for a slow-worm—the very day, by the by, on which we were poisoned by a dish of toadstools, by our own hand gathered for mushrooms. But we have long given over chasing butterflies, and feel, as the Pedlar did, that they are beautiful creatures, and that 'tis a sin between finger and thumb to compress their mealy wings. The household dog we do indeed dearly love, though when old Surly looks suspicions we prudently keep out of the reach of his chain. As for "the domestic fowl," we breed scores every spring, solely for the delight of seeing them at their *walks*

"Among the rural villages and farms;"

and though game to the back-bone, they are allowed to wear the spurs nature gave them—to crow unclipped, challenging but the echoes; nor is the sward, like the *sod*, ever reddened with their heroic blood, for hateful to our ears the war-song,

"Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory!"

'Tis our way, you know, to pass from gay to grave matter, and often from a jocular to a serious view of the same subject—it being natural to us—and having become habitual too, from our
[Pg 271] writing occasionally in *Blackwood's Magazine*. All the world knows our admiration of Wordsworth, and admits that we have done almost as much as Jeffrey or Taylor to make his poetry popular among the "educated circles." But we are not a nation of idolaters, and worship neither graven image nor man that is born of a woman. We may seem to have treated the Pedlar with insufficient respect in that playful parallel between him and Ourselves; but there you are wrong again, for we desire thereby to do him honour. We wish now to say a few words on the wisdom of making such a personage the chief character in a Philosophical Poem.

He is described as endowed by nature with a great intellect, a noble imagination, a profound soul, and a tender heart. It will not be said that nature keeps these her noblest gifts for human beings born in this or that condition of life: she gives them to her favourites—for so, in the highest sense, they are to whom such gifts befall; and not unfrequently, in an obscure place, of one of the FORTUNATI

"The fulgent head
Star-bright appears."

Wordsworth appropriately places the birth of such a being in a humble dwelling in the Highlands of Scotland.

"Among the hills of Atholl he was born;
Where on a small hereditary farm,
An unproductive slip of barren ground,
His parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt;
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor."

His childhood was nurtured at home in Christian love and truth—and acquired other knowledge at a winter school; for in summer he "tended cattle on the hill,"—

"that stood
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge."

And the influence of such education and occupation among such natural objects, Wordsworth expounds in some as fine poetry as ever issued from the cells of philosophic thought.

"So the foundations of his mind were laid."

The boy had small need of books—

"For many a tale
Traditionary, round the mountains hung,
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,
[Pg 272] Nourish'd Imagination in her growth,
And gave the mind that apprehensive power
By which she is made quick to recognise
The moral properties and scope of things."

But in the Manse there were books—and he read

"Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied,
The life and death of martyrs, who sustain'd,
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs,
Triumphantly display'd in records left
Of persecution and the Covenant."

Can you not believe that by the time he was as old as you were when you used to ride to the races on a pony, by the side of your sire the Squire, this boy was your equal in knowledge, though you had a private tutor all to yourself, and were then a promising lad, as indeed you are now after the lapse of a quarter of a century? True, as yet he "had small Latin, and no Greek;" but the elements of these languages may be learned—trust us—by slow degrees—by the mind rejoicing in the consciousness of its growing faculties—during leisure hours from other studies—as they were by the Atholl adolescent. A Scholar—in your sense of the word—he might not be called, even when he had reached his seventeenth year, though probably he would have puzzled you in Livy and Virgil; nor of English poetry had he read much—the less the better for such a mind—at that age, and in that condition—for

"Accumulated feelings press'd his heart
With still increasing weight; he was o'erpower'd
By nature, by the turbulence subdued
Of his own mind, by mystery and hope,
And the first virgin passion of a soul
Communing with the glorious Universe."

But he had read Poetry—ay, the same Poetry that Wordsworth's self read at the same age—and

"Among the hills
He gazed upon that mighty Orb of Song,
The divine Milton."

Thus endowed, and thus instructed,

"By Nature, that did never yet betray
The heart that loved her,"

[Pg 273] the youth was "greater than he knew;" yet that there was something great in, as well as about him, he felt—

"Thus daily thirsting in that lonesome life,"

for some diviner communication than had yet been vouchsafed to him by the Giver and Inspirer of his restless Being.

"In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,
Thus was he rear'd; much wanting to assist
The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,
And every moral feeling of his soul
Strengthen'd and braced, by breathing in content
The keen, the wholesome air of poverty,
And drinking from the well of homely life."

But he is in his eighteenth year, and

"Is summon'd to select the course
Of humble industry that promised best
To yield him no unworthy maintenance."

For a season he taught a village school, which many a fine, high, and noble spirit has done and is doing; but he was impatient of the hills he loved, and

"That stern yet kindly spirit, who constrains
The Savoyard to quit his native rocks,
The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales
(Spirit attach'd to regions mountainous
Like their own steadfast clouds), did now impel
His restless mind to look abroad with hope."

It had become his duty to choose a profession—a trade—a calling. He was not a gentleman, mind ye, and had probably never so much as heard a rumour of the existence of a silver fork: he had been born with a wooden spoon in his mouth—and had lived, partly from choice and partly from necessity, on a vegetable diet. He had not ten pounds in the world he could call his own; but he could borrow fifty, for his father's son was to be trusted to that amount by any family that chanced to have it among the Atholl hills—therefore he resolved on "a hard service," which

"Gain'd merited respect in simpler times;
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt
In rustic sequestration, all dependent
Upon the Pedlar's toil, supplied their wants,
Or pleased their fancies with the ware he brought.

[Pg 274] Would Alfred have ceased to be Alfred had he lived twenty years in the hut where he spoiled the bannocks? Would Gustavus have ceased to be Gustavus had he been doomed to dree an ignoble life in the obscurest nook in Dalecarlia? Were princes and peers in our day degraded by working, in their expatriation, with head or hand for bread? Are the Polish patriots degraded by working at eighteenpence a-day, without victuals, on embankments of railroads? "At the risk of giving a shock to the prejudices of artificial society, I have ever been ready to pay homage to the aristocracy of nature, under a conviction that vigorous human-heartedness is the constituent principle of true taste." These are Wordsworth's own words, and deserve letters of gold. He has given many a shock to the prejudices of artificial society; and in ten thousand cases, where the heart of such society was happily sound at the core, notwithstanding the rotten kitchen-stuff with which it was encrusted, the shocks have killed the prejudices; and men and women, encouraged to consult their own breasts, have heard responses there to the truths uttered in music by the high-souled Bard, assuring them of an existence there of capacities of pure delight, of which they had had either but a faint suspicion, or, because "of the world's dread laugh," feared to indulge,

and nearly let die.

Mr Wordsworth quotes from Heron's *Scotland* an interesting passage, illustrative of the life led in our country at that time by that class of persons from whom he has chosen one—not, mind you, imaginary, though for purposes of imagination—adding that "his own personal knowledge emboldened him to draw the portrait." In that passage Heron says, "As they wander, each alone, through thinly-inhabited districts, they form habits of reflection and of sublime contemplation, and that, with all their qualifications, no wonder they should contribute much to polish the roughness and soften the rusticity of our peasantry. In North America," says he, "travelling merchants from the settlements have done and continue to do much more towards civilising the Indian natives than all the missionaries, Papist or Protestant, who have ever been sent among them;" and, speaking again of Scotland, he says, "it is not more than twenty or thirty years, since a young man going from any part of Scotland to England for the purpose to *carry the pack*, was considered as going to lead the life, and acquire the fortune of a gentleman. When, after twenty
[Pg 275] years' absence in that honourable line of employment, he returned with his acquisitions to his native country, he was regarded as a gentleman to all intents and purposes." We have ourselves known gentlemen who had carried the pack—one of them a man of great talents and acquirements—who lived in his old age in the highest circles of society. Nobody troubled their head about his birth and parentage—*for he was then very rich*; but you could not sit ten minutes in his company without feeling that he was "one of God Almighty's gentlemen," belonging to the "aristocracy of Nature."

You have heard, we hope, of Alexander Wilson, the illustrious Ornithologist, second not even to Audubon—and sometimes absurdly called the Great American Ornithologist, because with pen and pencil he painted in colours that will never die—the Birds of the New World. He was a weaver—a Paisley weaver—a useful trade, and a pleasant place—where these now dim eyes of ours first saw the light. And Sandy was a pedlar. Hear his words in an autobiography unknown to the Bard: "I have this day, I believe, measured the height of an hundred stairs, and explored the recesses of twice that number of miserable habitations; and what have I gained by it?—only two shillings of worldly pelf! but an invaluable treasure of observation. In this elegant dome, wrapt up in glittering silks, and stretched on the downy sofa, recline the fair daughters of wealth and indolence—the ample mirror, flowery floor, and magnificent couch, their surrounding attendants; while, suspended in his wiry habitation above, the shrill-piped canary warbles to enchanting echoes. Within the confines of that sickly hovel, hung round with squadrons of his brother-artists, the pale-faced weaver plies the resounding lay, or launches the melancholy murmuring shuttle. Lifting this simple latch, and stooping for entrance to the miserable hut, there sits poverty and ever-moaning disease, clothed in dunghill rags, and ever shivering over the fireless chimney. Ascending this stair, the voice of joy bursts on my ear—the bridegroom and bride, surrounded by their jocund companions, circle the sparkling glass and humorous joke, or join in the raptures of the noisy dance—the squeaking fiddle breaking through the general uproar in sudden intervals,
[Pg 276] while the sounding floor groans beneath its unruly load. Leaving these happy mortals, and ushering into this silent mansion, a more solemn—a striking object presents itself to my view. The windows, the furniture, and everything that could lend one cheerful thought, are hung in solemn white; and there, stretched pale and lifeless, lies the awful corpse, while a few weeping friends sit, black and solitary, near the breathless clay. In this other place, the fearless sons of Bacchus extend their brazen throats, in shouts like bursting thunder, to the praise of their gorgeous chief. Opening this door, the lonely matron explores, for consolation, her Bible; and in this house the wife brawls, the children shriek, and the poor husband bids me depart, lest his termagant's fury should vent itself on me. In short, such an inconceivable variety daily occurs to my observation in real life, that would, were they moralised upon, convey more maxims of wisdom, and give a juster knowledge of mankind, than whole volumes of Lives and Adventures, that perhaps never had a being except in the prolific brains of their fantastic authors."

At a subsequent period he retraced his steps, taking with him copies of his poems to distribute among subscribers, and endeavour to promote a more extensive circulation. Of this excursion also he has given an account in his journal, from which it appears that his success was far from encouraging. Among amusing incidents, sketches of character, occasional sound and intelligent remarks upon the manners and prospects of the common classes of society into which he found his way, there are not a few severe expressions indicative of deep disappointment, and some that merely bespeak the keener pangs of the wounded pride founded on conscious merit. "You," says he, on one occasion, "whose souls are susceptible of the finest feelings, who are elevated to rapture with the least dawnings of hope, and sunk into despondency with the slightest thwartings of your expectations—think what I felt." Wilson himself attributed his ill fortune, in his attempts to gain the humble patronage of the poor for his poetical pursuits, to his occupation. "A *packman* is a character which none esteems, and almost every one despises. The idea that people of all ranks entertain of them is, that they are mean-spirited loquacious liars, cunning and illiterate, watching every opportunity, and using every mean art within their power, to cheat." This is a sad
[Pg 277] account of the estimation in which a trade was then held in Scotland, which the greatest of our living poets has attributed to the chief character in a poem comprehensive of philosophical discussions on all the highest interests of humanity. But both Wilson and Wordsworth are in the right: both saw and have spoken truth. Most small packmen were then, in some measure, what Wilson says they were generally esteemed to be—peddling pilferers, and insignificant swindlers. Poverty sent them swarming over bank and brae, and the "sma' kintra touns"—and for a plack people will forget principle who have, as we say in Scotland, missed the world. Wilson knew that to a man like himself there was degradation in such a calling; and he latterly vented his contemptuous sense of it, exaggerating the baseness of the name and nature of *packman*. But

suppose such a man as Wilson to have been in better times one of but a few packmen travelling regularly for years over the same country, each with his own district or domain, and there can be no doubt that he would have been an object both of interest and of respect—his opportunities of seeing the very best and the very happiest of humble life, in itself very various, would have been very great; and with his original genius, he would have become, like Wordsworth's Pedlar, a good moral Philosopher.

Without, therefore, denying the truth of his picture of packmanship, we may believe the truth of a picture entirely the reverse, from the hand and heart of a still wiser man—though his wisdom has been gathered from less immediate contact with the coarse garments and clay floors of the labouring poor.

It is pleasant to hear Wordsworth speak of his own "personal knowledge" of packmen or pedlars. We cannot say of him in the words of Burns, "the fient a pride, nae pride had he;" for pride and power are brothers on earth, whatever they may prove to be in heaven. But his prime pride is his poetry; and he had not now been "sole king of rocky Cumberland," had he not studied the character of his subjects in "huts where poor men lie"—had he not "stooped his anointed head" beneath the doors of such huts, as willingly as he ever raised it aloft, with all its glorious laurels, in the palaces of nobles and princes. Yes, the inspiration he "derived from the light of setting
[Pg 278] suns," was not so sacred as that which often kindled within his spirit all the divinity of Christian man, when conversing charitably with his brother-man, a wayfarer on the dusty high-road, or among the green lanes and alleys of merry England. You are a scholar, and love poetry? Then here you have it of the finest, and will be sad to think that heaven had not made you a pedlar.

"In days of yore how fortunately fared
The Minstrel! wandering on from Hall to Hall,
Baronial Court or Royal; cheer'd with gifts
Munificent, and love, and Ladies' praise;
Now meeting on his road an armed Knight,
Now resting with a Pilgrim by the side
Of a clear brook;—beneath an Abbey's roof
One evening sumptuously lodged; the next
Humbly, in a religious Hospital;
Or with some merry Outlaws of the wood;
Or haply shrouded in a Hermit's cell.
Him, sleeping or awake, the Robber spared;
He walk'd—protected from the sword of war
By virtue of that sacred Instrument
His Harp, suspended at the Traveller's side,
His dear companion wheresoe'er he went,
Opening from Land to Land an easy way
By melody, and by the charm of verse.
Yet not the noblest of that honour'd Race
Drew happier, loftier, more impassion'd thoughts
From his long journeyings and eventful life,
Than this obscure Itinerant had skill
To gather, ranging through the tamer ground
Of these our unimaginative days;
Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise,
Accoutred with his burden and his staff;
And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

"What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite School
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,
Look'd on this Guide with reverential love?
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued
Our journey—beneath favourable skies.
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light
Unfailing: not a hamlet could we pass,
Rarely a house, that did not yield to him
Remembrances; or from his tongue call forth
Some way-beguiling tale.
[Pg 279] —Nor was he loth to enter ragged huts,
Huts where his charity was blest; his voice
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.
And, sometimes, where the Poor Man held dispute
With his own mind, unable to subdue
Impatience, through inaptness to perceive
General distress in his particular lot;
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain
Struggling against it, with a soul perplex'd,
And finding in herself no steady power
To draw the line of comfort that divides
Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,
From the injustice of our brother men;
To him appeal was made as to a judge;

Who, with an understanding heart, allay'd
The perturbation; listen'd to the plea;
Resolved the dubious point; and sentence gave
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard
With soften'd spirit—e'en when it condemn'd."

What was to hinder such a man—thus born and thus bred—with such a youth and such a prime—from being in his old age worthy of walking among the mountains with Wordsworth, and descanting

"On man, on nature, and on human life?"

And remember he was a *Scotsman*—compatriot of CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

What would you rather have had the Sage in "The Excursion" to have been? The Senior Fellow of a College? A head? A retired Judge? An Ex-Lord Chancellor? A Nabob? A Banker? A Millionaire? or, at once to condescend on individuals, Natus Consumere Fruges, Esquire? or the Honourable Custos Rotulorum?

You have read, bright bold neophyte, the Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle, upon the restoration of Lord Clifford, the Shepherd, to the estates and honours of his ancestors?

"Who is he that bounds with joy
On Carrock's side, a shepherd boy?
No thoughts hath he but thoughts that pass
Light as the wind along the grass.
[Pg 280] Can this be He that hither came
In secret, like a smother'd flame?
For whom such thoughtful tears were shed.
For shelter and a poor man's bread?"

Who but the same noble boy whom his high-born mother in disastrous days had confided when an infant to the care of a peasant. Yet there he is no longer safe—and

"The Boy must part from Mosedale groves,
And leave Blencathara's ragged coves,
And quit the flowers that summer brings
To Glenderamakin's lofty springs;
Must vanish, and his careless cheer
Be turn'd to heaviness and fear."

Sir Launcelot Threlkeld shelters him till again he is free to set his foot on the mountains.

"Again he wanders forth at will,
And tends a flock from hill to hill:
His garb is humble; ne'er was seen
Such garb with such a noble mien;
Among the shepherd grooms no mate
Hath he, a child of strength and state."

So lives he till he is restored.

"Glad were the vales, and every cottage hearth;
The shepherd-lord was honour'd more and more;
And, ages after he was laid in earth,
'The good Lord Clifford' was the name he bore!"

Now mark—that Poem has been declared by one and all of the "Poets of Britain" to be equal to anything in the language; and its greatness lies in the perfect truth of the profound philosophy which so poetically delineates the education of the naturally noble character of Clifford. Does he sink in our esteem because at the Feast of the Restoration he turns a deaf ear to the fervent harper who sings,

"Happy day and mighty hour,
When our shepherd in his power,
Mounted, mail'd, with lance and sword,
To his ancestors restored,
Like a reappearing star,
Like a glory from afar,
First shall head the flock of war"?

[Pg 281] No—his generous nature is true to its generous nurture; and now deeply imbued with the goodness he had too long loved in others ever to forget, he appears noblest when showing himself faithful in his own hall to the "huts where poor men lie;" while we know not, at the solemn close, which life the Poet has most glorified—the humble or the high—whether the Lord did the Shepherd more ennoble, or the Shepherd the Lord.

Now, we ask, is there any essential difference between what Wordsworth thus records of the

high-born Shepherd-Lord in the Feast of Brougham Castle, and what he records of the low-born Pedlar in "The Excursion?" None. They are both educated among the hills; and according to the nature of their own souls and that of their education, is the progressive growth and ultimate formation of their character. Both are exalted beings—because both are wise and good—but to his own coeval he has given, besides eloquence and genius,

"The vision and the faculty divine,"

that

"When years had brought the philosophic mind"

he might walk through the dominions of the Intellect and the Imagination, a Sage and a Teacher.

Look into life, and watch the growth of character. Men are not what they seem to the outward eye—mere machines moving about in customary occupations—productive labourers of food and wearing apparel—slaves from morn to night at taskwork set them by the Wealth of Nations. They are the Children of God. The soul never sleeps—not even when its wearied body is heard snoring by people living in the next street. All the souls now in this world are for ever awake; and this life, believe us, though in moral sadness it has often been rightly called so, is no dream. In a dream we have no will of our own, no power over ourselves; ourselves are not felt to be ourselves; our familiar friends seem strangers from some far-off country; the dead are alive, yet we wonder not; the laws of the physical world are suspended, or changed, or confused by our phantasy; Intellect, Imagination, the Moral Sense, Affection, Passion, are not possessed by us in the same way we possess them out of that mystery: were Life a Dream, or like a Dream, it would never lead to
[Pg 282] Heaven.

Again, then, we say to you, look into life and watch the growth of character. In a world where the ear cannot listen without hearing the clank of chains, the soul may yet be free as if it already inhabited the skies. For its Maker gave it Liberty of Choice of Good or of Evil; and if it has chosen the good it is a King. All its faculties are then fed on their appropriate food provided for them in nature. It then knows where the necessaries and the luxuries of its life grow, and how they may be gathered—in a still sunny region inaccessible to blight—"no mildewed ear blasting his wholesome brother." In the beautiful language of our friend Aird,—

"And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the Hills of God."

Go, read the Excursion then—venerate the Pedlar—pity the Solitary—respect the Priest, and love the Poet.

So charmed have we been with the sound of our own voice—of all sounds on earth the sweetest surely to our ears—and, therefore, we so dearly love the monologue, and from the dialogue turn averse, impatient of him ycleped the interlocutor, who, like a shallow brook, will keep prattling and babbling on between the still deep pools of our discourse, which nature feeds with frequent waterfalls—so charmed have we been with the sound of our own voice, that, scarcely conscious the while of more than a gentle ascent along the sloping sward of a rural Sabbath-day's journey, we perceive now that we must have achieved a Highland league—five miles—of rough uphill work, and are standing tiptoe on the Mountain-top. True that his altitude is not very great—somewhere, we should suppose, between two and three thousand feet—much higher than the Pentlands—somewhat higher than the Ochils—a middle-sized Grampian. Great painters and poets know that power lies not in mere measurable bulk. Atlas, it is true, is a giant, and he has need to be so, supporting the globe. So is Andes; but his strength has never been put to proof, as he carries but clouds. The Cordilleras—but we must not be personal—so suffice it to say, that soul, not size, equally in mountains and in men, is and inspires the true sublime. Mont Blanc might be as big again; but what then, if without his glaciers?

These mountains are neither immense nor enormous—nor are there any such in the British Isles.
[Pg 283] Look for a few of the highest on Riddell's ingenious Scale—in Scotland Ben-nevis, Helvellyn in England, in Ireland the Reeks; and you see that they are mere mole-hills to Chimborazo. Nevertheless, they are the hills of the Eagle. And think ye not that an Eagle glorifies the sky more than a Condor? That Vulture—for Vulture he is—flies league-high—the Golden Eagle is satisfied to poise himself half a mile above the loch, which, judged by the rapidity of its long river's flow, may be based a thousand feet or more above the level of the sea. From that height methinks the Bird-Royal, with the golden eye, can see the rising and the setting sun, and his march on the meridian, without a telescope. If ever he fly by night—and we think we have seen a shadow passing the stars that was on the wing of life—he must be a rare astronomer.

"High from the summit of a craggy cliff
Hung o'er the deep, such as amazing frown
On utmost Kilda's shore, whose lonely race
Resign the setting sun to Indian worlds,
The Royal Eagle rears his vigorous young,
Strong-pounced and burning with paternal fire.
Now fit to raise a kingdom of their own
He drives them from his fort, the towering seat
For ages of his empire; which in peace
Unstain'd he holds, while many a league to sea

He wings his course, and preys in distant isles."

Do you long for wings, and envy the Eagle? Not if you be wise. Alas! such is human nature, that in one year's time the novelty of pinions would be over, and you would skim undelighted the edges of the clouds. Why do we think it a glorious thing to fly from the summit of some inland mountain away to distant isles? Because our feet are bound to the dust. We enjoy the eagle's flight far more than the eagle himself driving headlong before the storm; for imagination dallies with the unknown power, and the wings that are denied to our bodies are expanded in our souls. Sublime are the circles the sun-staring creature traces in the heavens, to us who lie stretched among the heather bloom. Could we do the same, we should still be longing to pierce through the atmosphere to some other planet; and an elevation of leagues above the snows of the Himalayas would not satisfy our aspirations. But we can calculate the distances of the stars, and are happy
[Pg 284] as Galileo in his dungeon.

Yet an Eagle we are, and therefore proud of You our Scottish mountains, as you are of Us. Stretch yourself up to your full height as we now do to ours—and let "Andes, giant of the Western Star," but dare to look at us, and we will tear the "meteor standard to the winds unfurled" from his cloudy hands. There you stand—and were you to rear your summits much higher into heaven, you would alarm the hidden stars.

Yet we have seen you higher—but it was in storm. In calm like this you do well to look beautiful—your solemn altitude suits the sunny season, and the peaceful sky. But when the thunder at mid-day would hide your heads in a night of cloud, you thrust them through the blackness, and show them to the glens, crowned with fire.

Are they a sea of mountains! No—they are mountains in a sea. And what a sea! Waves of water, when at the prodigious, are never higher than the foretop of a man-of-war. Waves of vapour—they alone are seen flying mountains high—dashing, but howling not—and in their silent ascension, all held together by the same spirit, but perpetually changing its beautiful array, where order seems ever and anon to come in among disorder, there is a grandeur that settles down in the soul of youthful poet roaming in delirium among the mountain glooms, and "pacifies the fever of his heart."

Call not now these vapours waves; for movement there is none among the ledges, and ridges, and roads, and avenues, and galleries, and groves, and houses, and churches, and castles, and fairy palaces—all framed of mist. Far up among and above that wondrous region, through which you hear voices of waterfalls deepening the silence, behold hundreds of mountain-tops—blue, purple, violet—for the sun is shining straight on some and aslant on others—and on those not at all; nor can the shepherd at your side, though he has lived among them all his life, till after long pondering tell you the names of those most familiar to him; for they seem to have all interchanged sites and altitudes, and Black Benhun himself, the Eagle-Breeder, looks so serenely in his rainbow, that you might almost mistake him for Ben Louey or the Hill of Hinds.

Have you not seen sunsets in which the mountains were imbedded in masses of clouds all
[Pg 285] burning and blazing—yes, blazing—with unimaginable mixtures of all the colours that ever were born—intensifying into a glory that absolutely became insupportable to the soul as insufferable to the eyes—and that left the eyes for hours after you had retreated from the supernatural scene, even when shut, all filled with floating films of cross-lights, cutting the sky-imagery into gorgeous fragments? And were not the mountains of such sunsets, whether they were of land or of cloud, sufficiently vast for your utmost capacities and powers of delight and joy longing to commune with the Region then felt to be in very truth Heaven? Nor could the spirit, entranced in admiration, conceive at that moment any Heaven beyond—while the senses themselves seemed to have had given them a revelation, that as it was created could be felt but by an immortal spirit.

It elevates our being to be in the body near the sky—at once on earth and in heaven. In the body? Yes—we feel at once fettered and free. In Time we wear our fetters, and heavy though they be, and painfully riveted on, seldom do we welcome Death coming to strike them off—but groan at sight of the executioner. In eternity we believe that all is spiritual—and in that belief, which doubt sometimes shakes but to prove that its foundation lies rooted far down below all earthquakes, endurable is the sound of dust to dust. Poets speak of the spirit, while yet in the flesh, blending, mingling, being absorbed in the great forms of the outward universe, and they speak as if such absorption were celestial and divine. But is not this a material creed? Let Imagination beware how she seeks to glorify the objects of the senses, and having glorified them, to elevate them into a kindred being with our own, exalting them that we may claim with them that kindred being, as if we belonged to them and not they to us, forgetting that they are made to perish, we to live for ever!

But let us descend the mountain by the side of this torrent. What a splendid series of translucent pools! We carry "The Excursion" in our pocket, for the use of our friends; but our own presentation-copy is here—we have gotten it by heart. And it does our heart good to hear ourselves recite. Listen, ye Naiads, to the famous picture of the Ram:—

"Thus having reach'd a bridge, that overarch'd
The hasty rivulet, where it lay becalm'd
[Pg 286] In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw
A twofold image; on a grassy bank
A snow-white Ram, and in the crystal flood

Another and the same! Most beautiful
On the green turf, with his imperial front
Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb,
The breathing creature stood; as beautiful
Beneath him, show'd his shadowy counterpart;
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
And each seem'd centre of his own fair world.
Antipodes unconscious of each other,
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres
Blended in perfect stillness to our sight.
Ah! what a pity were it to disperse
Or to disturb so fair a spectacle,
And yet a breath can do it."

Oh! that the Solitary, and the Pedlar, and the Poet, and the Priest and his Lady, were here to see a sight more glorious far than that illustrious and visionary Ram. Two Christopher Norths—as Highland chieftains—in the Royal Tartan—one burning in the air—the other in the water—two stationary meteors, each seeming native to its own element! This setting the heather, that the linn on fire—this ablaze with war, that tempered into truce; while the Sun, astonied at the spectacle, nor knowing the refulgent substance from the resplendent shadow, bids the clouds lie still in heaven, and the winds all hold their breath, that exulting nature may be permitted for a little while to enjoy the miracle she unawares has wrought—alas! gone as she gazes, and gone for ever! Our bonnet has tumbled into the Pool—and Christopher—like the Ram in "The Excursion"—stands shorn of his beams—no better worth looking at than the late Laird of Macnab.

Now, since the truth must be told, that was but a Flight of Fancy—and our apparel is more like that of a Lowland Quaker than a Highland chief. 'Tis all of a snuffy brown—an excellent colour for hiding the dirt. Single-breasted our coatee—and we are in shorts. Were our name to be imposed by our hat, it would be Sir Cloudesly Shovel. On our back a wallet—and in our hand the Crutch. And thus, not without occasional alarm to the cattle, though we hurry no man's, we go stalking along the sward and swimming across the stream, and leaping over the quagmires—by no means
[Pg 287] unlike that extraordinary pedestrian who has been accompanying us for the last half-hour, far overhead up-by yonder, as if he meant mischief; but he will find that we are up to a trick or two, and not easily to be done brown by a native, a Cockney of Cloud-Land, a long-legged awkward fellow with a head like a dragon and proud of his red plush, in that country called thunder-and-lightning breeches, hot very, one would think, in such sultry weather—but confound us if he has not this moment stript them off, and be not pursuing his journey *in puris naturalibus*—yes, as naked as the minute he was born—our Shadow on the Clouds!

The Picture of the Ram has been declared by sumphs in search of the sublime to border on the Burlesque. They forget that a sumph may just as truly be said to border on a sage. All things in heaven and on earth, mediately and immediately, border on one another—much depends on the way you look at them—and Poets, who are strange creatures, often love to enjoy and display their power by bringing the burlesque into the region of the sublime. Of what breed was the Tup? Cheviot, Leicester, Southdown? Had he gained the Cup at the Great North Show? We believe not, and that his owner saw in him simply a fine specimen of an ordinary breed—a shapely and useful animal. In size he was not to be named on the same day with the famous Ram of Derby, "whose tail was made a rope, sir, to toll the market-bell." Jason would have thought nothing of him compared with the Golden Fleece. The Sun sees a superior sire of flocks as he enters Aries. Sorry are we to say it, but the truth must be spoken, he was somewhat bandy-legged, and rather coarse in the wool. But heaven, earth, air, and water conspired to glorify him, as the Poet and his friends chanced to come upon him at the Pool, and, more than them all united, the Poet's own soul; and a sheep that would not have sold for fifty shillings, became Lord Paramount of two worlds, his regal mind all the time unconscious of its empiry, and engrossed with the thought of a few score silly ewes.

Seldom have we seen so serene a day. It seems to have lain in one and the same spirit over all the Highlands. We have been wandering since sunrise, and 'tis now near sunset; yet not an hour without a visible heaven in all the Lochs. In the pure element overflowing so many spacious vales
[Pg 288] and glens profound, the great and stern objects of nature have all day long been looking more sublime or more beautiful in the reflected shadows, invested with one universal peace. The momentary evanescence of all that imagery at a breath touches us with the thought that all it represents, steadfast as seems its endurance, will as utterly pass away. Such visions, when gazed on in that wondrous depth and purity on a still slow-moving day, always inspire some such feeling as this; and we sigh to think how transitory must be all things, when the setting sun is seen to sink behind the mountain, and all the golden pomp at the same instant to evanish from the Loch.

Evening is preparing to let fall her shades—and Nature, cool, fresh, and unwearied, is laying herself down for a few hours' sleep. There had been a long strong summer drought, and a week ago you would have pitied—absolutely pitied the poor Highlands. You missed the cottage-girl with her pitcher at the well in the brae, for the spring scarcely trickled, and the water-cresses were yellow before their time. Many a dancing hill-stream was dead—only here and there one stronger than her sisters attempted a *pas-seul* over the shelving rocks; but all choral movements and melodies forsook the mountains, still and silent as so much painted canvass. Waterfalls first tamed their thunder, then listened alarmed to their own echoes, wailed themselves away into diminutive murmurs, gasped for life, died, and were buried at the feet of the green slippery

precipices. Tarns sank into moors; and there was the voice of weeping heard and low lament among the water-lilies. Ay, millions of pretty flowerets died in their infancy, even on their mother's breast; the bee fainted in the desert for want of the honey-dew, and the ground-cells of industry were hushed below the heather. Cattle lay lean on the brownness of a hundred hills, and the hoof of the red-deer lost its fleetness. Along the shores of lochs great stones appeared, within what for centuries had been the lowest water-mark; and whole bays, once bright and beautiful with reed-pointed wavelets, became swamps, cracked and seamed, or rustling in the aridity with a useless crop, to the sugh of the passing wind. On the shore of the sea alone you beheld no change. The tides ebbed and flowed as before—the small billows racing over the silver sands to
[Pg 289] the same goal of shells, or climbing up to the same wildflowers that bathe the foundation of some old castle belonging to the ocean.

But the windows of heaven were opened,—and, like giants refreshed with mountain-dew, the rivers flung themselves over the cliffs with roars of thunder. The autumnal woods are fresher than those of summer. The mild harvest-moon will yet repair the evil done by the outrageous sun; and, in the gracious after-growth, the green earth far and wide rejoices as in spring. Like people that have hidden themselves in caves when their native land was oppressed, out gush the torrents, and descend with songs to the plain. The hill-country is itself again when it hears the voice of streams. Magnificent army of mists! whose array encompasses islands of the sea, and who still, as thy glorious vanguard keeps deploying among the glens, rollest on in silence more sublime than the trampling of the feet of horses, or the sound of the wheels of chariots, to the heath-covered mountains of Scotland, we bid thee hail!

In all our wanderings through the Highlands, towards night we have always found ourselves at home. What though no human dwelling was at hand? We cared not—for we could find a bedroom among the casual inclinations of rocks, and of all curtains the wild-brier forms itself into the most gracefully-festooned draperies, letting in green light alone from the intercepted stars. Many a cave we know of—cool by day, and warm by night—how they happen to be so, we cannot tell—where no man but ourselves ever slept, or ever will sleep; and sometimes, on startling a doe at evening in a thicket, we have lain down in her lair, and in our slumbers heard the rain pattering on the roofing birk-tree, but felt not one drop on our face, till at dawning we struck a shower of diamonds from the fragrant tresses. But to-night we shall not need to sleep among the sylvans; for our Tail has pitched our Tent on the Moor—and is now sweeping the mountain with telescope for sight of our descending feet. Hark! signal-gun and bagpipe hail our advent, and the Pyramid brightens in its joy, independent of the sunlight, that has left but one streak in the sky.

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THE MOORS.

FLIGHT FIRST.—GLEN-ETIVE.

Yes! all we have to do is to let down their lids—to will what our eyes shall see—and, lo! there it is—a creation! Day dawns, and for our delight in soft illumination from the dim obscure floats slowly up a visionary loch—island after island evolving itself into settled stateliness above its trembling shadow, till, from the overpowering beauty of the wide confusion of woods and waters, we seek relief, but find none, in gazing on the sky; for the east is in all the glory of sunrise, and the heads and the names of the mountains are uncertain among the gorgeous colouring of the clouds. Would that we were a painter! Oh! how we should dash, on the day and interlace it with night! That chasm should be filled with enduring gloom, thicker and thicker, nor the sun himself suffered to assuage the sullen spirit, now lowering and threatening there, as if portentous of earthquake. Danger and fear should be made to hang together for ever on those cliffs, and half-way up the precipice be fixed the restless cloud ascending from the abyss, so that in imagination you could not choose but hear the cataract. The Shadows should seem to be stalking away like evil spirits before angels of light—for at our bidding the Splendours should prevail against them, deploying from the gates of Heaven beneath the banners of morn. Yet the whole picture should be harmonious as a hymn—as a hymn at once sublime and sweet—serene and solemn; nor should it not be felt as even cheerful—and sometimes as if there were about to be merriment in Nature's heart—for the multitude of the isles should rejoice—and the new-woke waters look as if they were waiting for the breezes to enliven them into waves, and wearied of rest to be longing for the
[Pg 291] motion already beginning to rustle by fits along the sylvan shores. Perhaps a deer or two—but we have opened a corner of the fringed curtains of our eyes—the idea is gone—and Turner or Thomson must transfer from our paper to his canvass the imperfect outline—for it is no more—and make us a present of the finished picture.

Strange that, with all our love of nature and of art, we never were a Painter. True that in boyhood we were no contemptible hand at a Lion or a Tiger—and sketches by us of such cats springing or preparing to spring in keelivine, dashed off some fifty or sixty years ago, might well make Edwin Landseer stare. Even yet we are a sort of Salvator Rosa at a savage scene, and our black-lead pencil heaps up confused shatterings of rocks, and flings a mountainous region into convulsions, as if an earthquake heaved, *in a way that is no canny*, making people shudder as if something had gone wrong with this planet of ours, and creation were falling back into chaos. But we love scenes of beautiful repose too profoundly ever to dream of "transferring them to canvass." Such employment would be felt by us to be desecration—though we look with delight on the work

when done by others—the picture without the process—the product of genius without thought of its mortal instruments. We work in words, and words are, in good truth, images, feelings, thoughts; and of these the outer world, as well as the inner, is composed, let materialists say what they will. Prose is poetry—we have proved *that* to the satisfaction of all mankind. Look! we beseech you—how a little Loch seems to rise up with its tall heronry—a central isle—and all its sylvan braes, till it lies almost on a level with the floor of our Cave, from which in three minutes we could hobble on our crutch down the inclining greensward to the Bay of Waterlilies, and in that canoe be afloat among the Swans. All birches—not any other kind of tree—except a few pines, on whose tops the large nests repose—and here and there a still bird standing as if asleep. What a place for Roes!

The great masters, were their eyes to fall on our idle words, might haply smile—not contemptuously—on our ignorance of art—but graciously on our knowledge of nature. All we have to do, then, is to learn the theory and practice of art—and assuredly we should forthwith set
[Pg 292] about doing so, had we any reasonable prospect of living long enough to open an exhibition of pictures from our own easel. As it is, we must be contented with that Gallery, richer than the Louvre, which our imagination has furnished with masterpieces beyond all price or purchase—many of them touched with her own golden finger, the rest the work of high but not superior hands. Imagination, who limns in air, has none of those difficulties to contend with that always beset, and often baffle, artists in oils or waters. At a breath she can modify, alter, obliterate, or restore; at a breath she can colour vacuity with rainbow hues—crown the cliff with its castle—swing the drawbridge over the gulf profound—through a night of woods roll the river along on its moonlit reach—by fragmentary cinctures of mist and cloud, so girdle one mountain that it has the power of a hundred—giant rising above giant, far and wide, as if the mighty multitude, in magnificent and triumphant disorder, were indeed scaling heaven.

To speak more prosaically, every true and accepted lover of nature regards her with a painter's as well as a poet's eye. He breaks not down any scene rudely, and with "many an oft-repeated stroke;" but unconsciously and insensibly he transfigures into Wholes, and all day long, from morn till dewy eve, he is preceded, as he walks along, by landscapes retiring in their perfection, one and all of them the birth of his own inspired spirit. All non-essentials do of themselves drop off and disappear—all the characteristics of the scenery range themselves round a centre recognised by the inner sense that cannot err—and thus it is that "beauty pitches her tents before him"—that sublimity companions the pilgrim in the waste wilderness—and grandeur for his sake keeps slowly sailing or settling in the clouds. With such pictures has our Gallery been so thickly hung round for many years, that we have often thought there was not room for one other single frame; yet a vacant space has always been found for every new *chef-d'œuvre* that came to add itself to our collection—and the light from that cupola so distributes itself that it falls wherever it is wanted—wherever it is wanted not how tender the shadow! or how solemn the gloom!

Why, we are now in Glen-Etive—and sitting with our sketch-book at the mouth of our Tent. Our oft-repeated passionate prayer,

> "O, for a lodge in some vast wilderness!"

[Pg 293] has once more, after more than twenty years' absence, in this haunt of our fanciful youth and imaginative manhood, been granted, and Christopher, he thinks, could again bound along these cliffs like a deer. Ay, well-nigh quarter of a century has elapsed since we pitched this self-same snow-white Tent amid the purple heather, by the Linn of Dee. How fleetly goes winnowing on the air even the weariest waving of Time's care-laden wings! A few yellow weather-stains are on the canvass—but the pole is yet sound—or call it rather mast—for we have hoisted our topgallant,

> "And lo! the silver cross, to Scotland dear,"

languidly lifts itself up, an ineffectual streamer, in the fitful morning breezes!

Bold son, or bright daughter of England! hast thou ever seen a Scottish Thrissle? What height are you—Captain of the Grenadier Guards? "Six feet four on my stocking-soles." Poo—a dwarf! Stand up with your back to that stalk. Tour head does not reach above his waist—he hangs high over you—"his radious croun of rubies." There's a Flower! dear to Lady Nature above all others, saving and excepting the Rose, and he is the Rose's husband—the Guardian Genii of the land consecrated the Union, and it has been blest. Eyeing the sun like an angry star that will not suffer eclipse either from light or shadow—but burns proudly—fiercely—in its native lustre—storm-brightened, and undishevelled by the tempest in which it swings. See! it stoops beneath the blast within reach of your hand. Grasp it ere it recoil aloft; and your hand will be as if it had crushed a sleeping wasp-swarm. But you cannot crush it—to do that would require a giant with an iron glove. Then let it alone to dally with the wind, and the sun, and the rain, and the snow—all alike dear to its spears and rubies; and as you look at the armed lustre, you will see a beautiful emblem and a stately of a people's warlike peace. The stalk indeed is slender, but it sways without danger of breaking in the blast; in the calm it reposes as gently as the gowan at its root. The softest leaf that enfolds in silk the sweetest flower of the garden, not greener than those that sting not if but tenderly you touch them, for they are green as the garments of the Fairies that
[Pg 294] dance by moonlight round the Symbol of old Scotland, and unchristened creatures though they the Fairies be, they pray heaven to let fall on the Awful Thrissle all the health and happiness that are in the wholesome stars.

The dawn is softly—slowly—stealing upon day; for the uprisen sun, though here the edge of his

disc as yet be invisible, is diffusing abroad "the sweet hour of prime," and all the eastern region is tinged with crimson, faint and fine as that which sleeps within the wreaths of the sea-sounding shells. Hark! the eagle's earliest cry, yet in his eyrie. Another hour, and he and his giant mate will be seen spirally ascending the skies, in many a glorious gyration, tutoring their offspring to dally with the sunshine, that, when their plumes are stronger, they may dally with the storm. O, Forest of Dalness! how sweet is thy name! Hundreds of red-deer are now lying half-asleep among the fern and heather, with their antlers, could our eyes now behold them, motionless as the birch-tree branches with which they are blended in their lair. At the signal-belling of their king, a hero unconquered in a hundred fights, the whole herd rises at once like a grove, and with their stately heads lifted aloft on the weather-gleam, snuff the sweet scent of the morning air, far and wide surcharged with the honey-dew yet unmelting on the heather, and eye with the looks of liberty the glad daylight that mantles the Black Mount with a many-coloured garment. Ha! the first plunge of the salmon in the Rowan-tree Pool. There again he shoots into the air, white as silver, fresh run from the sea! For Loch-Etive, you must know, is one of the many million arms of Ocean, and bright now are rolling in the billows of the far-heaving tide. Music meet for such a morn and such mountains. Straight stretches the glen for leagues, and then, bending through the blue gloom, seems to wind away with one sweep into infinitude. The Great Glen of Scotland—Glen-More itself—is not grander. But the Great Glen of Scotland is yet a living forest. Glen-Etive has few woods or none—and the want of them is sublime. For centuries ago pines and oaks in the course of nature all perished; and they exist now but in tradition wavering on the tongues of old bards, or deep down in the mosses show their black trunks to the light, when the torrents join the river in spate, and the moor divulges its secrets as in an earthquake. Sweetly sung, thou small,
[Pg 295] brown, moorland bird, though thy song be but a twitter! And true to thy time—even to a balmy minute—art thou, with thy velvet tunic of black striped with yellow, as thou windest thy small but not sullen horn—by us called in our pride Humble-Bee—but not, methinks, so very humble, while booming high in air in oft-repeated circles, wondering at our Tent, and at the flag that now unfolds its gaudy length like a burnished serpent, as if the smell of some far-off darling heather-bed had touched thy finest instinct, away thou fliest straight southward to that rich flower-store, unerringly as the carrier-pigeon wafting to distant lands some love-message on its wings. Yet humble after all thou art; for all day long, making thy industry thy delight, thou returnest at shut of day, cheerful even in thy weariness, to thy ground-cell within the knoll, where as Fancy dreams the Fairies dwell—a Silent People in the Land of Peace.

And why hast thou, wild singing spirit of the Highland Glenorchy, that cheerest the long-withdrawing vale from Inveruren to Dalmally, and from Dalmally Church-tower to the Old Castle of Kilchurn, round whose mouldering turrets thou sweepest with more pensive murmur, till thy name and existence are lost in that noble loch—why hast thou never had thy Bard? "A hundred bards have I had in bygone ages," is thy reply; "but the Sassenach understands not the traditionary strains, and the music of the Gaelic poetry is wasted on his ear." Songs of war and of love are yet awakened by the shepherds among these lonely braes; and often when the moon rises over Ben-Cruachan, and counts her attendant stars in soft reflection beneath the still waters of that long inland sea, she hears the echoes of harps chiming through the silence of departed years. Tradition tells, that on no other banks did the fairies so love to thread the mazes of their mystic dance, as on the heathy, and brackeny, and oaken banks of the Orchy, during the long summer nights when the thick-falling dews perceptibly swelled the stream, and lent a livelier music to every waterfall.

There it was, on a little river-island, that once, whether sleeping or waking we know not, we saw celebrated a Fairy's Funeral. First we heard small pipes playing, as if no bigger than hollow rushes that whisper to the night winds; and more piteous than aught that trills from earthly
[Pg 296] instrument was the scarce audible dirge! It seemed to float over the stream, every foam-bell emitting a plaintive note, till the airy anthem came floating over our couch, and then alighted without footsteps among the heather. The pattering of little feet was then heard, as if living creatures were arranging themselves in order, and then there was nothing but a more ordered hymn. The harmony was like the melting of musical dewdrops, and sang, without words, of sorrow and death. We opened our eyes, or rather sight came to them when closed, and dream was vision! Hundreds of creatures, no taller than the crest of the lapwing, and all hanging down their veiled heads, stood in a circle on a green plat among the rocks; and in the midst was a bier, framed as it seemed of flowers unknown to the Highland hills; and on the bier, a Fairy, lying with uncovered face, pale as the lily, and motionless as the snow. The dirge grew fainter and fainter, and then died quite away; when two of the creatures came from the circle, and took their station, one at the head and the other at the foot of the bier. They sang alternate measures, not louder than the twittering of the awakened wood-lark before it goes up the dewy air, but dolorous and full of the desolation of death. The flower-bier stirred; for the spot on which it lay sank slowly down, and in a few moments the greensward was smooth as ever—the very dews glittering above the buried Fairy. A cloud passed over the moon; and, with a choral lament, the funeral troop sailed duskily away, heard afar off, so still was the midnight solitude of the glen. Then the disenthralled Orohy began to rejoice as before, through all her streams and falls; and at the sudden leaping of the waters and outbursting of the moon, we awoke.

Age is the season of Imagination, youth of Passion; and having been long young, shall we repine that we are now old? They alone are rich who are full of years—the Lords of Time's Treasury are all on the staff of Wisdom; their commissions are enclosed in furrows on their foreheads, and secured to them for life. Fearless of fate, and far above fortune, they hold their heritage by the great charter of nature for behoof of all her children who have not, like impatient heirs, to wait for their decease; for every hour dispenses their wealth, and their bounty is not a late bequest,

but a perpetual benefaction. Death but sanctifies their gifts to gratitude; and their worth is more
[Pg 297] clearly seen and profoundly felt within the solemn gloom of the grave.

And said we truly that Age is the season of Imagination? That Youth is the season of Passion your own beating and bounding hearts now tell you—your own boiling blood. Intensity is its characteristic; and it burns like a flame of fire, too often but to consume. Expansion of the soul is ours, with all its feelings and all its "thoughts, that wander through eternity;" nor needeth then the spirit to have wings, for power is given her, beyond the dove's or the eagle's, and no weariness can touch her on that heavenward flight.

Yet we are all of "the earth earthy," and, young and old alike, must we love and honour our home. Your eyes are bright—ours are dim; but "it is the soul that sees," and "this diurnal sphere" is visible through the mist of tears. In that light how more than beautiful—how holy—appears even this world! All sadness, save of sin, is then most sacred; and sin itself loses its terrors in repentance, which, alas! is seldom perfect but in the near prospect of dissolution. For temptation may intercept her within a few feet of her expected rest, nay, dash the dust from her hand that she has gathered from the burial-place to strew on her head; but Youth sees flowery fields and shining rivers far-stretching before her path, and cannot imagine for a moment that among life's golden mountains there is many a Place of Tombs!

But let us speak only of this earth—this world—this life—and is not Age the season of Imagination? Imagination is Memory imbued by joy or sorrow with creative power over the past, till it becomes the present, and then, on that vision "far off the coming shines" of the future, till all the spiritual realm overflows with light. Therefore was it that, in illumined Greece, Memory was called the Mother of the Muses; and how divinely indeed they sang around her as she lay in the pensive shade!

You know the words of Milton—

> "Till old experience doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain;"

and you know, while reading them, that Experience is consummate Memory, Imagination wide as the world, another name for Wisdom, all one with Genius, and in its "prophetic strain"—
[Pg 298] Inspiration.

We would fain lower our tone—and on this theme speak like what we are, one of the humblest children of Mother Earth. We cannot leap now twenty-three feet on level ground (our utmost might be twenty-three inches), nevertheless we could "put a girdle round the globe in forty minutes,"—ay, in half an hour, were we not unwilling to dispirit Ariel. What are feats done in the flesh and by the muscle? At first, worms though we be, we cannot even crawl;—disdainful next of that acquirement, we creep, and are distanced by the earwig;—pretty lambs, we then totter to the terror of our deep-bosomed dames—till the welkin rings with admiration to behold, *sans* leading-strings, the weanlings walk;—like wildfire then we run, for we have found the use of our feet;—like wild-geese then we fly, for we may not doubt we have wings;—in car, ship, balloon, the lords of earth, sea, and sky, and universal nature. The car runs on a post—the ship on a rock—the "air hath bubbles as the water hath"—the balloon is one of them, and bursts like a bladder—and we become the prey of sharks, surgeons, or sextons. Where, pray, in all this is there a single symptom or particle of Imagination? It is of Passion "all compact."

True, this is not a finished picture—'tis but a slight sketch of the season of Youth; but paint it as you will, and if faithful to nature you will find Passion in plenty, and a dearth of Imagination. Nor is the season of Youth therefore to be pitied—for Passion respires and expires in bliss ineffable, and so far from being eloquent as the unwise lecture, it is mute as a fish, and merely gasps. In Youth we are the creatures, the slaves of the senses. But the bondage is borne exultingly in spite of its severity; for ere long we come to discern through the dust of our own raising, the pinnacles of towers and temples serenely ascending into the skies, high and holy places for rule, for rest, or for religion, where as kings we may reign, as priests minister, as saints adore.

We do not deny, excellent youth, that to your eyes and ears beautiful and sublime are the sights and sounds of Nature—and of Art her Angel. Enjoy thy pupilage, as we enjoyed ours, and deliver thyself up withouten dread, or with a holy dread, to the gloom of woods, where night for ever dwells—to the glory of skies, where morn seems enthroned for ever. Coming and going a
[Pg 299] thousand and a thousand times, yet, in its familiar beauty, ever new as a dream—let thy soul span the heavens with the rainbow. Ask thy heart in the wilderness if that "thunder, heard remote," be from cloud or cataract; and ere it can reply, it may shudder at the shuddering moor, and your flesh creep upon your bones, as the heather seems to creep on the bent, with the awe of a passing earthquake. Let the sea-mew be thy guide up the glen, if thy delight be in peace profounder than ever sat with her on the lull of summer waves! For the inland loch seems but a vale overflowing with wondrous light—and realities they all look, these trees and pastures, and rocks and hills, and clouds—not softened images, as they are, of realities that are almost stern even in their beauty, and in their sublimity over-awing; look at yon precipice that dwindles into pebbles the granite blocks that choke up the shore!

Now all this, and a million times more than all this, have we too done in our Youth, and yet 'tis all nothing to what we do whenever we will it in our Age. For almost all *that* is passion; spiritual passion indeed—and as all emotions are akin, they all work with, and into one another's hands, and, however remotely related, recognise and welcome one another, like Highland cousins,

whenever they meet. Imagination is not the Faculty to stand aloof from the rest, but gives the one hand to Fancy and the other to Feeling, and *sets* to Passion, who is often so swallowed up in himself as to seem blind to their *vis-à-vis*, till all at once he hugs all the Three, as if he were demented, and as suddenly sporting *dos-à-dos*—is off on a gallopade by himself right slick away over the mountain-tops.

To the senses of a schoolboy a green sour crab is as a golden pippin, more delicious than any pine-apple—the tree which he climbs to pluck it seems to grow in the garden of Eden—and the parish, moorland though it be, over which he is let loose to play—Paradise. It is barely possible there may be such a substance as matter, but all its qualities worth having are given it by mind. By a necessity of nature, then, we are all poets. We all make the food we feed on; nor is jealousy, the green-eyed monster, the only wretch who discolours and deforms. Every evil thought does so —every good thought gives fresh lustre to the grass—to the flowers—to the stars. And as the
[Pg 300] faculties of sense, after becoming finer and more fine, do then, because that they are earthly, gradually lose their power, the faculties of the soul, because that they are heavenly, become then more and more and more independent of such ministrations, and continue to deal with images, and with ideas which are diviner than images, nor care for either partial or total eclipse of the daylight, conversant as they are, and familiar with a more resplendent—a spiritual universe.

You still look incredulous and unconvinced of the truth of our position—but it was established in our first three paragraphs; and the rest, though proofs too, are intended merely for illustrations. Age alone understands the language of old Mother Earth—for Age alone, from his own experience, can imagine its meanings in trouble or in rest—often mysterious enough even to him in all conscience—but intelligible though inarticulate—nor always inarticulate; for though sobs and sighs are rife, and whispers and murmurs, and groans and gurgling, yea, sometimes yells and cries, as if the old Earth were undergoing a violent death—yet many a time and oft, within these few years, have we heard her slowly syllabling words out of the Bible, and as in listening we looked up to the sky, the fixed stars responded to their truth, and, like Mercy visiting Despair, the Moon bore it into the heart of the stormy clouds.

And are there not now—have there never been young Poets? Many; for Passion, so tossed as to leave, perhaps to give, the sufferer power to reflect on his ecstasy, grows poetical because creative, and loves to express itself in "Prose or numerous verse," at once its nutriment and relief. Nay, Nature sometimes gifts her children with an imaginative spirit, that, from slight experiences of passion, rejoices to idealise intentions, and incidents, and characters all coloured by it, or subject to its sway; and these are Poets, not with old heads on young shoulders, but with old hearts in young bosoms; yet such premature genius seldom escapes blight, the very springs of life are troubled, and its possessor sinks, pines, fades, and dies. So was it with Chatterton and Keats.

It may be, after all, that we have only proved Age to be the strongest season of Imagination; and
[Pg 301] if so, we have proved all we wish, for we seek not to deny, but to vindicate. Knowledge is power to the poet as it is power to all men—and indeed without Art and Science what is Poetry? Without cultivation the faculty divine can have but imperfect vision. The inner eye is dependent on the outward eye long familiar with material objects—a finer sense, cognisant of spiritualities, but acquired by the soul from constant communion with shadows—innate the capacity, but awakened into power by gracious intercourse with Nature. Thus Milton *saw*—after he became blind.

But know that Age is not made up of a multitude of years—though that be the vulgar reckoning—but of a multitude of experiences; and that a man at thirty, if good for much, must be old. How long he may continue in the prime of Age, God decrees; many men of the most magnificent minds —for example, Michael Angelo—have been all-glorious in power and majesty at fourscore and upwards; but one drop of water on the brain can at any hour make it barren as desert dust. So can great griefs.

Yestreen we had rather a hard bout of it in the Tent—the Glenlivet was pithy—and our Tail sustained a total overthrow. They are snoring as if it still were midnight. And is it thus that we sportsmen spend our time on the Moors? Yet while "so many of our poorest subjects are yet asleep," let us re-point the nib of our pen, and in the eye of the sweet-breathed morning—moralise.

Well-nigh quarter a century, we said, is over and gone since by the Linn of Dee we pitched—on that famous excursion—THE TENT. Then was the genesis of that white witch Maga—

> "Like some tall Palm her noiseless fabric grew!"

Nay, not noiseless—for the deafest wight that ever strove to hear with his mouth wide open, might have sworn that he heard the sound of ten thousand hammers. Neither grew she like a Palm—but like a Banyan-tree. Ever as she threw forth branches from her great unexhausted stem, they were borne down by the weight of their own beauty to the soil—the deep, black rich soil in which she grew, originally sown there by a bird of Paradise, that dropt the seed from her beak as she sailed along in the sunshiny ether—and every limberest spray there again taking root, reascended a stately scion, and so on ceaselessly through all the hours, each in itself a
[Pg 302] spring-season, till the figurative words of Milton have been fulfilled,—

> —"Her arms
> Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
> The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow

About the mother tree, a pillar'd shade
High overarch'd, and echoing walks between;
There oft the Ettrick Shepherd, shunning heat,
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
At loopholes cut through thickest shade."

But, alas! for the Odontist! He, the "*Deliciæ generis Humani*," is dead. The best of all the Bishops of Bristol is no more. Mansel had not a tithe of his wit—nor Kaye a tithe of his wisdom. And can it be that we have not yet edited "His Remains!" "Alas! poor Yorick!" If Hamlet could smile even with the skull of the Jester in his hands, whom when a princely boy he had loved, hanging on his neck many a thousand times, why may not we, in our mind's eye seeing that mirthful face "quite chap-fallen," and hearing as if dismally deadened by the dust, the voice that "so often set our table on a roar!" Dr Parr's wig, too, is all out of frizzle; a heavier shot has dishevelled its horsehair than ever was sent from the Shepherd's gun; no more shall it be mistaken for owl a-blink on the mid-day bough, or ptarmigan basking in the sun high up among the regions of the snow. It has vanished, with other lost things, to the Moon; and its image alone remains for the next edition of the celebrated treatise "*De Rebus Deperditis*," a suitable and a welcome frontispiece, transferred thither by the engraver's cunning from the first of those Eight Tomes that might make the Trone tremble, laid on the shoulders of Atlas who threatens to put down the Globe, by the least judicious and the most unmerciful of editors that ever imposed upon the light living the heavy dead—John Johnson, late of Birmingham, Fellow of the Royal Society, and of the Royal College of Physicians, whose practice is duller than that of all Death's doctors, and his prescriptions in that preface unchristianly severe. ODoherty, likewise, has been gathered to his fathers. The Standard-bearer has lowered his colours before the foe who alone is invincible. The Ensign, let us not fear, has been advanced to a company without purchase, in the Celestials; the
[Pg 303] Adjutant has got a Staff appointment. Tims was lately rumoured to be in a galloping consumption; but the very terms of the report, about one so sedentary, were sufficient to give it the lie. Though puny, he is far from being unwell; and still engaged in polishing tea-spoons and other plated articles, at a rate cheaper than travelling gypsies do horn. Prince Leopold is now King of the Belgians—but we must put an end in the Tent to that portentous snore.

"Arise, awake, or be for ever fallen!"

Ho—ho! gentlemen—so you have had the precaution to sleep in your clothes. The sun, like Maga, is mounting higher and higher in heaven; so let us, we beseech you, to breakfast, and then off to the Moors.

"Substantial breakfast!" by Dugald Dhu, and by Donald Roy, and by Hamish Bhan—heaped up like icebergs round the pole. How nobly stands in the centre that ten-gallon Cask of Glenlivet! Proud is that Round to court his shade. That twenty-pound Salmon lies beneath it even as yesterday he lay beneath the cliff, while a column of light falls from him on that Grouse-Pie. Is not that Ham beautiful in the calm consciousness of his protection? That Tongue mutely eloquent in his praise? Tap him with your knuckles, tenderly as if you loved him—and that with all your heart and soul you do—and is not the response firm as from the trunk of the gnarled oak? He is yet "Virgin of Proserpina"—"by Jove" he is; no wanton lip has ever touched his mouth so chaste; so knock out the bung, and let us hear him gurgle. With diviner music does he fill the pitcher, and with a diviner liquidity of light than did ever Naiad from fount of Helicon or Castaly, pour into classic urn gracefully uplifted by Grecian damsel to her graceful head, and borne away, with a thanksgiving hymn, to her bower in the olive-grove.

All eggs are good eating; and 'tis a vulgar heresy which holds that those laid by sea-fowl have a fishy taste. The egg of the Sew-mew is exceeding sweet; so is that of the Gull. Pleasant is even the yolk of the Cormorant—in the north of England ycleped the Scarth, and in the Lowlands of Scotland the Black Byuter. Try a Black Byuter's egg, my dear boy; for though not newly laid, it
[Pg 304] has since May been preserved in butter, and is as fresh as a daisy after a shower. Do not be afraid of stumbling on a brace of embryo Black Byuters in the interior of the globe, for by its weight we pronounce it an egg in no peril of parturition. You may now smack your lips, loud as if you were smacking your palms, for that yellow morsel was unknown to Vitellius. Don't crush the shell, but throw it into the Etive, that the Fairies may find it at night, and go dancing in the fragile but buoyant canoe, in fits of small shrill laughter, along with the foam-bells over the ebb-tide Rapids above Connal's raging Ferry.

The salmon is in shivers, and the grouse-pie has vanished like a dream.

"So fades, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,
All that this world is proud of!"

Only a goose remains! and would that he too were gone to return no more; for he makes us an old man. No tradition survives in the Glen of the era at which he first flourished. He seems to have belonged to some tribe of the Anseres now extinct; and as for his own single individual self, our senses tell us, in a language not to be misinterpreted, that he must have become defunct in the darkness of antiquity. But nothing can be too old for a devil—so at supper let us rectify him in Cayenne.

Oh! for David Wilkie, or William Simpson (while we send Gibb to bring away yonder Shieling and its cliff), to paint a picture—coloured, if possible, from the life—of the Interior of our airy Pyramid. Door open, and perpendicular canvass walls folded up—that settled but cloudy sky, with

here its broad blue fields, and there its broad blue glimpsing glades—this greensward mound in the midst of a wilderness of rock-strewn heather—as much of that one mountain, and as many of those others, as it can be made to hold—that bright bend of the river—a silver bow—and that white-sanded, shelly, shingly shore at Loch-Etive Head, on which a troop of Tritons are "charging with all their chivalry," still driven back and still returning, to the sound of trumpets, of "flutes and soft recorders," from the sea. On the table, all strewn and scattered "in confusion worse confounded," round the Cask, which

—"dilated stands
Like Teneriffe or Atlas *unremoved*,"

what "buttery touches" might be given to the

—"reliquias Danaum atque inmitis Achillei!"

[Pg 305] Then the camp-beds tidily covered and arranged along their own department of the circle—quaint dresses hanging from loops, all the various apparelling of hunter, shooter, fisher, and forester—rods, baskets, and nets occupying their picturesque division—fowling-pieces, double and single, rejoicing through the oil-smooth brownness of their barrels in the exquisite workmanship of a Manton and a Lancaster—American rifles, with their stocks more richly silver-chased than you could have thought within reach of the arts in that young and prosperous land—duck-guns, whose formidable and fatal length had in Lincolnshire often swept the fens—and on each side of the door, a brass carronade on idle hours to awaken the echoes—sitting erect on their hurdies, deer-hound, greyhound, lurcher, pointer, setter, spaniel, varmint, and though last, not least, O'Bronte watching Christopher with his steadfast eyes, slightly raised his large hanging triangular ears, his Thessalian bull dewlaps betokening keen anxiety to be off and away to the mountain, and with a full view of the white star on his coal-black breast;—

"Plaided and plumed in their tartan array"

our three chosen Highlanders, chosen for their strength and their fleetness from among the prime Children of the Mist—and Tickler the Tall, who keeps growing after threescore and ten like a stripling, and leaves his mark within a few inches of the top of the pole, arrayed in tights of Kendal green, bright from the skylight of the inimitable Vallance or the matchless Williams—green too his vest, and green also his tunic—while a green feather in a green bonnet dances in its airy splendour, and gold button-holes give at once lustre and relief to the glowing verdure (such was Little John, when arrayed in all his glory; to walk behind Robin Hood and Maid Marian, as they glided from tree to tree, in wait for the fallow-deer in merry Sherwood)—North in his Quaker garb—Quaker-like all but in cuffs and flaps, which, when he goes to the Forest, are not—North, with a figure combining in itself all the strength of a William Penn, *sans* its corpulency, all the agility of a Jem Belcher with far more than a Jem Belcher's bottom—with a face exhibiting in rarest union all the philosophy of a Bacon, the benevolence of a Howard, the wisdom of a
[Pg 306] Wordsworth, the fire of a Byron, the gnosticity of a John Bee, and the up-to-trappishness combined not only with perfect honesty, but with honour bright, of the Sporting Editor of *Bell's Life in London*—and then, why if Wilkie or Simpson fail in making a GEM of all that, they are not the men of genius we took them for, that is all, and the art must be at a low ebb indeed in these kingdoms.

Well, our Tail has taken wings to itself and flown away with Dugald Dhu and Donald Roy; and we, with Hamish Bhan, with Ponto, Piro, Basta, and O'Bronte, are left by ourselves in the Tent. Before we proceed farther, it may not be much amiss to turn up our little fingers—yestreen we were all a leetle opstropelous—and spermaceti is not a more "sovereign remedy for an inward bruise," than is a hair from the dog's tail that bit you an antidote to any pus that produces rabies in the shape of hydrophobia. Fill up the quaich, Hamish! a caulker of Milbank can harm no man at any hour of the day—at least in the Highlands. Sma' Stell, Hamish—assuredly Sma' Stell!

Ere we start, Hamish, play us a Gathering—and then a Pibroch. "The Campbells are coming" is like a storm from the mountain sweeping Glen-More, that roars beneath the hastening hurricane with all its woods. No earthquake like that which accompanies the trampling of ten thousand men. So, round that shoulder, Hamish—and away for a mile up the Glen—then, turning on your heel, blow till proud might be the mother that bore you; and from the Tent-mouth Christopher will keep smart fire from his Pattereroes, answered by all the echoes. Hamish—indeed

"The dun-deer's hide
On swifter foot was never tied—"

for even now as that cloud—rather thunderous in his aspect—settles himself over the Tent—ere five minutes have elapsed—a mile off is the sullen sound of the bagpipe!—music which, if it rouse you not when heard among the mountains, may you henceforth confine yourself to the Jew's harp. Ay, here's a claymore—let us fling away the scabbard—and in upon the front rank of the bayoneted muskets, till the Saxon array reels, or falls just where it has been standing, like a swathe of grass. So swept of old the Highlanders—shepherds and herdsmen—down the wooded
[Pg 307] cliffs of the pass of Killiecrankie, till Mackay's red-coats lay redder in blood among the heather, or passed away like the lurid fragments of a cloud. "The Campbells are coming"—and we will charge with the heroes in the van. The whole clan is maddening along the Moor—and Maccallum More himself is at their head. But we beseech you, O'Bronte! not to look so like a lion—and to hush in your throat and breast that truly Leonine growl—for after all, 'tis but a bagpipe with

ribands

"Streaming like meteors to the troubled air,"

and all our martial enthusiasm has evaporated in—wind.

But let us inspect Brown Bess. Till sixty, we used a single barrel. At seventy we took to a double; —but dang detonators—we stick to the flint. "Flint," says Colonel Hawker, "shoots strongest into the bird." A percussion-gun is quicker, but flint is fast enough; and it does, indeed, argue rather a confusion than a rapidity of ideas, to find fault with lightning for being too slow. With respect to the flash in the pan, it is but a fair warning to ducks, for example, to dive if they can, and get out of the way of mischief. It is giving birds a chance for their lives, and is it not ungenerous to grudge it? When our gun goes to our shoulder, that chance is but small; for with double-barrel Brown Bess, it is but a word and a blow,—the blow first, and long before you could say Jack Robinson, the gorcock plays thud on the heather. But we beg leave to set the question at rest for ever by one single clencher. We have killed fifty birds—grouse—at fifty successive shots—one bird only to the shot. And mind, not mere pouts—cheepers—for we are no chicken-butchers—but all thumpers—cocks and hens as big as their parents, and the parents themselves likewise; not one of which fell *out of bounds* (to borrow a phrase from the somewhat silly though skilful pastime of pigeon-shooting), except one that suddenly soared half-way up to the moon, and then

"Into such strange vagaries fell
As he would dance,"

and tumbled down stone-dead into a loch. Now, what more could have done a detonator in the hands of the devil himself? Satan might have shot as well, perhaps, as Christopher North—better we defy him; and we cannot doubt that his detonator—given to him in a present, we believe, by
[Pg 308] Joe Manton—is a prime article—one of the best ever manufactured on the percussion system. But what more could he have done? When we had killed our fiftieth bird in style, we put it to the Christian reader, would not the odds have been six to four on the flint? And would not Satan, at the close of the match, ten birds behind perhaps, and with a bag shamefully rich in poor pouts, that would have fallen to the ground had he but thrown salt on their tails, have looked excessively sheepish? True, that in rain or snow the percussion-lock will act, from its detonating power, more correctly than the common flint-lock, which, begging its pardon, will then often not act at all; but that is its only advantage, and we confess a great one, especially in Scotland, where it is a libel on the country to say that it always rains, for it almost as often snows. However, spite of wind and weather, we are faithful to flint; nor shall any newfangled invention, howsoever ingenious, wean us from our First Love.

Let not youthful or middle-aged sportsmen—in whose veins the blood yet gallops, canters, or trots—despise us, Monsieur Vieillard, in whose veins the blood creeps like a wearied pedestrian at twilight hardly able to hobble into the wayside inn—for thus so long preferring the steel pen to the steel barrel (the style of both is equally polished)—our Bramah to our Manton. Those two wild young fellows, Tickler and the Admiral, whose united ages amount to little more than a century and a half, are already slaughtering their way along the mountain-side, the one on Buachaille Etive, and the other on the Black Mount. But we love not to commit murder long before meridian —"gentle lover of Nature" as we are; so, in spite of the scorn of the more passionate sportsman, we shall continue for an hour or two longer inditing, ever and anon lifting our eyes from whitey-brown paper to whitey-blue sky, from memorandum-book to mountain, from ink-bottle to loch, and delight ourselves, and perchance a few thousand others, by a waking-dream description of Glen-Etive.

'Tis a vast Glen. Not one single human dwelling anywhere speck-like on the river-winding plain—or nest-like among the brushwood knolls—or rock-like among the fractured cliffs far up on the mountain region do our eyes behold, eager as they are to discover some symptom of life. Two
[Pg 309] houses we know to be in the solitude—ay, two—one of them near the head of the Loch, and the other near the head of the Glen—but both distant from this our Tent, which is pitched between, in the very heart of the Moor. We were mistaken in saying that Dalness is invisible—for yonder it looms in a sullen light, and before we have finished the sentence, may have again sunk into the moor. Ay, it is gone—for lights and shadows coming and going, we know not whence nor whither, here travel all day long—the sole tenants—very ghostlike—and seemingly in their shiftings imbued with a sort of dim uncertain life. How far off from our Tent may be the Loch? Miles—and silently as snow are seen to break the waves along the shore, while beyond them hangs an aerial haze, the great blue water. How far off from our Tent may be the mountains at the head of the Glen? Miles—for though that speck in the sky into which they upheave their mighty altitudes, be doubtless an eagle, we cannot hear its cry. What giants are these right opposite our Pyramid?—Co—grim chieftain—and his Tail. What an assemblage of thunder-riven cliffs! This is what may be well called—Nature on a grand scale. And then, how simple! We begin to feel ourselves—in spite of all we can do to support our dignity by our pride—a mighty small and insignificant personage. We are about six feet high—and everybody around us about four thousand. Yes, that is the Four Thousand Feet Club! We had no idea that in any situation we could be such dwindled dwarfs, such perfect pigmies. Our Tent is about as big as a fir-cone—and Christopher North an insect!

What a wild world of clouds all over that vast central wilderness of Northern Argyllshire lying between Cruachan and Melnatorran—Corryfinuarach and Ben Slarive, a prodigious land! defying description, and in memory resembling not realities, but like fragments of tremendous dreams. Is it a sterile region? Very. In places nothing but stones. Not a blade of grass—not a bent of heather

—not even moss. And so they go shouldering up into the sky—enormous masses—huger than churches or ships. And sometimes not unlike such and other structures—all huddled together—yet never jostling, so far as we have seen; and though often overhanging, as if the wind might blow them over with a puff, steadfast in the storm that seems rather to be an earthquake, and
[Pg 310] moving not an hair's-breadth, while all the shingly sides of the mountains—you know shingle—with an inconstant clatter—hurry-skurry—seem to be breaking up into debris.

Is that the character of the whole region? No, you darling; it has vales on vales of emerald, and mountains on mountains of amethyst, and streams on streams of silver; and, so help us Heaven!—for with these eyes we have seen them, a thousand and a thousand times—at sunrise and sunset, rivers on rivers of gold. What kind of climate? All kinds, and all kinds at once—not merely during the same season, but the same hour. Suppose it three o'clock of a summer afternoon—you have but to choose your weather. Do you desire a close sultry breathless gloom? You have it in the stifling dens of Ben-Anēa, where lions might breed. A breezy coolness, with a sprinkling of rain? Then open your vest to the green light in the dewy vales of Benlūra. Lochs look lovely in mist, and so thinks the rainbow—then away with you ere the rainbow fade—away, we beseech you, to the wild shores of Lochan-a-Lūrich. But you would rather see a storm, and hear some Highland thunder? There is one at this moment on Unimore, and Cruachlīa growls to Meallanuir, till the cataracts of Glashgour are dumb as the dry rocks of Craig-teōnan.

In those regions we were, when a boy, initiated into the highest mysteries of the Highlands. No guide dogged our steps—as well might a red-deer have asked a cur to show him the Forest of Braemar, or Beniglo—an eagle where best to build his eyrie have advised with the Glasgow Gander. O heavens! how we were bewildered among the vast objects that fed that delirium of our boyhood! We dimly recognised faces of cliffs wearing dreadful frowns; blind though they looked, they seemed sensible of our approach; and we heard one horrid monster mutter, "What brings thee here, infatuated Pech?—begone!" At his impotent malice we could not choose but smile, and shook our staff at the blockhead, as since at many a greater blockhead even than he have we shook—and more than shook our Crutch. But as through "pastures green and quiet waters by," we pursued, from sunrise to sunset, our uncompanioned way, some sweet spot, surrounded by heather, and shaded by fern, would woo us to lie down on its bosom, and enjoy a visionary sleep!
[Pg 311] Then it was that the mountains confidentially told us their names—and we got them all by heart; for each name characterised its owner by some of his peculiar and prominent qualities—as if they had been one and all christened by poets baptising them from a font

"Translucent, pure,
With touch ethereal of heaven's fiery rod."

O! happy pastor of a peaceful flock! Thou hast long gone to thy reward! One—two—three—four successors hast thou had in that manse—(now it too has been taken down and the plough gone over it)—and they all did their duty; yet still is thy memory fragrant in the glen; for deeds like thine "smell sweet, and blossom in the dust!" Under heaven, we owed our life to thy care of us in a brain fever. Sometimes thy face would grow grave, never angry, at our sallies—follies—call them what you will, but not sins. And methinks we hear the mild old man somewhat mournfully saying, "Mad boy! out of gladness often cometh grief—out of mirth misery; but our prayers, when thou leavest us, shall be, that never, never may such be thy fate!" Were those prayers heard in heaven and granted on earth? We ask our heart in awe, but its depths are silent, and make no response.

But is it our intention to sit scribbling here all day? Our fancy lets our feet enjoy their sinecure, and they stretch themselves out in indolent longitude beneath the Tent-table, while we are settled in spirit, a silent thought, on the battlements of our cloud-castle on the summit of Cruachan. What a prospect! Our cloud-castle rests upon a foundation of granite precipices; and down along their hundred chasms, from which the eye recoils, we look on Loch-Etive bearing on its bosom stationary—so it seems in the sunshine—one snow-white sail! What brings the creature there—and on what errand may she be voyaging up the uninhabited sea-arm that stretches away into the uninhabited mountains? Some poet, perhaps, steers her—sitting at the helm in a dream, and allowing her to dance her own way, at her own will, up and down the green glens and hills of the foam-crested waves—a swell rolling in the beauty of light and music for ever attendant on her, as the Sea-mew—for so we choose to name her—pursues her voyage—now on water, and now, as the breezes drop, in the air—elements at times undistinguishable, as the shadows of the
[Pg 312] clouds and of the mountains mingle their imagery in the sea. Oh! that our head, like that of a spider, were all studded with eyes—that our imagination, sitting in the "palace of the soul" (a noble expression, borrowed or stolen by Byron from Waller), might see all at once all the sights from centre to circumference, as if all rallying around her for her own delight, and oppressing her with the poetry of nature—a lyrical, an elegiac, an epic, or a tragic strain. Now the bright blue water-gleams enchain her vision, and are felt to constitute the vital, the essential spirit of the whole—Loch Awe land-serpent, large as serpent of the sea, lying asleep in the sun, with his burnished skin all bedropt with scales of silver and of gold—the lands of Lorn, mottled and speckled with innumerous lakelets, where fancy sees millions of water-lilies riding at anchor in bays where the breezes have fallen asleep—Oban, splendid among the splendours of that now almost motionless mediterranean, the mountain-loving Linnhe Loch—Jura, Islay, Colonsay, and nameless other islands, floating far and wide away on—on to Coll and Tiree, drowned beneath the faint horizon. But now all the eyes in our spider-head are lost in one blaze of undistinguishable glory; for the whole Highlands of Scotland are up in their power against us—rivers, lochs, seas, islands, cliffs, clouds, and mountains. The pen drops from our hand, and here we are—not on the

battlements of the air-palace on the summit of Cruachan, but sitting on a tripod or three-legged stool at the mouth of our Tent, with our MS. before us, and at our right hand a quaich of Glenlivet, fresh drawn from yonder ten-gallon cask—and here's to the health of "Honest men and bonny lasses" all over the globe.

So much for description—an art in which the Public (God bless her, where is she now—and shall we ever see her more?) has been often pleased to say that we excel. But let us off to the Moor. Piro! Ponto! Basta! to your paws, and O'Bronte, unfurl your tail to heaven. Pointers! ye are a noble trio. White, O Ponto! art thou as the foam of the sea. Piro! thou tan of all tans! red art thou as the dun-deer's hide, and fleet as he while thou rangest the mountain-brow, now hid in heather, and now reappearing over the rocks. Waur hawk, Basta!—for finest-scented though be thy scarlet nostrils, one bad trick alone hast thou; and whenever that grey wing glances from some pillar-
[Pg 313] stone in the wilderness, headlong goest thou, O lawless negro! But behave thyself to-day, Basta! and let the kestrel unheeded sail or sun herself on the cliff. As for thee, O'Bronte! the sable dog with the star-bright breast, keep thou like a serf at our heels, and when our course lies over the fens and marshes, thou mayest sweep like a hairy hurricane among the flappers, and haply to-day grip the old drake himself, and, with thy fan-like tail proudly spread in the wind, deposit at thy master's feet, with a smile, the monstrous mallard.

But in what direction shall we go, callants—towards what airt shall we turn our faces? Over yonder cliffs shall we ascend, and descend into Glen-Creran, where the stony regions that the ptarmigan loves melt away into miles of the grousey heather, which, ere we near the salmon-haunted Loch so beautiful, loses itself in woods that mellow all the heights of Glen Ure and Fasnacloigh with sylvan shades, wherein the cushat coos, and the roe glides through the secret covert? Or shall we away up by Kinloch-Etive, and Melnatorran, and Mealgayre, into the Solitude of Streams, that from all their lofty sources down to the far-distant Loch have never yet brooked, nor will they ever brook, the bondage of bridges, save of some huge stone flung across some chasm, or trunk of a tree—none but trunks of trees there, and all dead for centuries—that had sunk down where it grew, and spanned the flood that eddies round it with a louder music? Wild region! yet not barren; for there are cattle on a thousand hills, that, wild as the very red-deer, toss their heads as they snuff the feet of rarest stranger, and form round him in a half-alarmed and half-threatening crescent. There flocks of goats—outliers from Dalness—may be seen as if following one another on the very air, along the lichen-stained cliffs that frown down unfathomed abysses—and there is frequent heard the whirring of the gorcock's wing, and his gobble gathering together his brood, scattered by the lightning that in its season volleys through the silence, else far deeper than that of death;—for the silence of death—that is, of a churchyard filled with tombs—is nothing to the austerity of the noiselessness that prevails under the shadow of Unimore and Attchorachan, with their cliffs on which the storms have engraven strange hieroglyphical inscriptions, which, could but we read them wisely, would record the successive
[Pg 314] ages of the Earth, from the hour when fire or flood first moulded the mountains, down to the very moment that we are speaking, and with small steel-hammer roughening the edges of our flints that they may fail not to murder. Or shall we away down by Armaddy, where the Fox-Hunter dwells—and through the woods of Inverkinglass and Achran, "double, double, toil and trouble" overcome the braes of Benanea and Mealcopucaich, and drop down like two unwearied eagles into Glen-Scrae, with a peep in the distance of the young tower of Dalmally, and the old turrets of Kilchurn? Rich and rare is the shooting-ground, Hamish, which by that route lies between this our Tent and the many tarns that freshen the wildernesses of Lochanancrioch. Say the word—tip the wink—tongue on your cheek—up with your forefinger—and we shall go; for hark, Hamish, our chronometer chimes eight—a long day is yet before us—and what if we be benighted? We have a full moon and plenty of stars.

All these are splendid schemes—but what say you, Hamish, to one less ambitious, and better adapted to Old Kit? Let us beat all the best bits down by Armaddy—the Forge—Gleno, and Inveraw. We may do that well in some six or seven hours—and then let us try that famous salmon-cast nearest the mansion—(you have the rods?)—and if time permit, an hour's trolling in Loch Awe, below the Pass of the Brander, for one of those giants that have immortalised the names of a Maule, a Goldie, and a Wilson. Mercy on us, Shelty, what a beard! You cannot have been shaved since Whitsunday—and never saw we such lengthy love-locks as those dangling at your heels. But let us mount, old Surefoot—mulish in nought but an inveterate aversion to all stumbling. And now for the heather! But are you sure, gents, *that we are on*?

And has it come to this! Where is the grandson of the desert-born?

Thirty years ago, and thou Filho da Puta wert a flyer! A fencer beyond compare! Dost thou remember how, for a cool five hundred, thou clearedst yon canal in a style that rivalled that of the red-deer across the chasms of Cairngorm? All we had to do was to hold hard and not ride over the hounds, when running breast-high on the rear of Reynard the savage pack wakened the welkin with the tumultuous hubbub of their death-cry, and whipper-in and huntsman were
[Pg 315] flogging on their faltering flight in vain through fields and forests flying behind thy heels that glanced and glittered in the frosty sunshine. What steed like thee in all Britain at a steeple-chase? Thy hoofs scorned the strong stubble, and skimmed the deep fallows, in which all other horses—heavy there as dragoons—seemed fetlock-bound, or laboured on in staggerings, soil-sunk to the knees. Ditches dwindled beneath thy bounds, and rivulets were as rills; or if in flood they rudely overran their banks, into the spate plunged thy sixteen hands and a-half height, like a Polar monster leaping from an iceberg into the sea, and then lifting up thy small head and fine neck and high shoulder, like a Draco from the weltering waters, with a few proud pawings to

which the recovered greensward rang, thy whole bold, bright-brown bulk reappeared on the bank, crested by old Christopher, and after one short snorting pause, over the miry meadows—tantivy!—tantivy!—away! away! away!

Oh! son of a Rep! were not those glorious days? But Time has laid his finger on us both, Filho; and never more must we two be seen by the edge of the cover,

> "When first the hunter's startling horn is heard
> Upon the golden hills."

'Tis the last learned and highest lesson of Wisdom, Filho, in man's studious obedience to Nature's laws—*to know when to stop in his career*. Pride, Passion, Pleasure, all urge him on; while Prudence, Propriety, Peace, cry halt! halt! halt! That mandate we have timeously obeyed; and having, unblamed we hope, and blameless, carried on the pastimes of youth into manhood, and even through the prime of manhood to the verge of age—on that verge, after some few farewell vagaries up and down the debatable land, we had the resolution to drop our bridle-hand, to unloosen the spurs from our heels, and to dismount from the stateliest and swiftest steed, Filho, that ever wafted mortal man over moor and mountain like a storm-driven cloud.

You are sure *we are on*, Hamish? And that he will not run away? Come, come, Surefoot, none of your funking! A better mane for holding on by we could not imagine. Pure Shelty you say, Hamish? From his ears we should have suspected his grandfather of having been at least a Zebra.

[Pg 316]

THE MOORS.

FLIGHT SECOND—THE COVES OF CRUACHAN.

Comma—semicolon—colon—full-point! All three scent-struck into attitude steady as stones. That is beautiful. Ponto straight as a rod—Piro in a slight curve—and Basta a perfect semicircle. O'Bronte! down on your marrowbones. But there is no need, Hamish, either for hurry or haste. On such ground, and on such a day, the birds will lie as if they were asleep. Hamish, the flask!—not the powder-flask, you dotterel—but the Glenlivet. 'Tis thus we always love to steady our hand for the first shot. It gives a fine feeling to the forefinger.

Ha! the heads of the old cock and hen, like snakes, above the heather—motionless, but with glancing eyes—and preparing for the spring. Whirr—whirr—whirr—bang—bang—tapsilleery—tapsalteery—thud— thud—thud! Old cock and old hen both down, Hamish. No mean omen, no awkward augury, of the day's sport. Now for the orphan family—marked ye them round

> "The swelling instep of the mountain's foot?"

"Faith and she's the teevil's nainsel—that is she—at the shutin'; for may I tine ma mull, and never pree sneeshin' mair, if she haena richt and left murdered fowre o' the creturs!"—"Four!—why, we only covered the old people; but if younkers will cross, 'tis their own fault that they bite the heather."—"They're a' fowre spewin', sir, except ane—and her head's aff—and she's jumpin' about waur nor ony o' them, wi' her bluidy neck. I wuss she mayna tak to her wings again, and owre the
[Pg 317] knowe. But ca' in that great toozy outlandish dowg, sir, for he's devourin' them—see hoo he's flingin' them, first ane and then anither, outowre his shouther, and keppin' them afore they touch the grun' in his mouth, like a mountebank wi' a shour o' oranges!"—"Hamish, are they bagged?"—"Ou ay."—"Then away to windward, ye sons of bitches—Heavens, how they do their work!"

Up to the time of our grand climacteric we loved a wide range—and thought nothing of describing and discussing a circle of ten miles diameter in a day, up to our hips in heather. But for these dozen or twenty years bypast we have preferred a narrow beat, snugly seated on a shelty, and pad the hoof on the hill no more. Yonder is the kind of ground we now love—for why should an old man make a toil of a pleasure? 'Tis one of the many small coves belonging to Glen-Etive, and looks down from no very great elevation upon the Loch. Its bottom, and sides nearly half-way up, are green pastures, sheep-nibbled as smooth as a lawn—and a rill, dropping in diamonds from the cliffs at its upper end, betrays itself, where the water is invisible, by a line of still livelier verdure. An old dilapidated sheepfold is the only building, and seems to make the scene still more solitary. Above the green pastures are the richest beds and bosoms of heather ever bees murmured on—and above them nothing but bare cliffs. A stiff breeze is now blowing into this cove from the sea-loch; and we shall slaughter the orphan family at our leisure. 'Tis probable they have dropped—single bird after single bird—or in twos and threes—all along the first line of heather that met their flight; and if so, we shall pop them like partridges in turnips. Three points in the game! Each dog, it is manifest, stands to a different lot of feathers; and we shall slaughter them, without dismounting, *seriatim*. No, Hamish—we must dismount—give us your shoulder—that will do. The Crutch—now we are on our pins. Take a lesson. Whirr! Bang! Bag number one, Hamish. Ay, that is right, Ponto—back Basta. Ditto, ditto. Now Ponto and Basta both back Piro—right and left this time—and not one of the brood will be left to cheep of Christopher. Be ready—attend us with the other double-barrel. Whirr! Bang—bang—bang—bang!

What think you of that, you son of the mist? There is a shower of feathers! They are all at sixes
[Pg 318] and sevens upon the greensward at the edge of the heather. Seven birds at four shots! The whole family is now disposed of—father, mother, and eleven children. If such fire still be in the dry wood, what must it have been in the green? Let us lie down in the sheltered shade of the mossy walls of the sheepfold—take a drop of Glenlivet—and philosophise.

Hollo! Hamish, who are these strange, suspicious-looking strangers thitherwards-bound, as hallan-shaker a set as may be seen on an August day? Ay, ay, we ken the clan. A week's residence to a man of gumption gives an insight into a neighbourhood. Unerring physiognomists and phrenologists are we, and what with instinctive, and what with intuitive knowledge, we keek in a moment through all disguise. He in the centre of the group is the stickit minister—on his right stands the drunken dominie—on his left the captain, who in that raised look retains token of *delirium tremens*—the land-louper behind him is the land-measurer, who would be well to do in the world were he "monarch of all he surveyed,"—but has been long out at elbows, and his society not much courted since he was rude to the auld wife at the time the gudeman was at the peats. That fine tall youth, the widow's son in Gleno, and his friend the Sketcher, with his portfolio under his arm, are in indifferent company, Hamish; but who, pray, may be the phenomenon in plush, with bow and arrow, and tasseled horn, bonnet jauntily screwed to the sinister, glass stuck in socket, and precisely in the middle of his puckered mouth a cigar. You do not say so—a grocer's apprentice from the Gorbals!

No need of confabulating there, gemmen, on the knowe—come forward and confront Christopher North. We find we have been too severe in our strictures. After all, they are not a bad set of fellows, as the world goes—imprudence must not be too harshly condemned—Shakespeare taught us to see the soul of good in things evil—these two are excellent lads; and, as for impertinence, it often proceeds from *mauvais honte*, and with a glance we shall replace the archer behind his counter.

How goes it, Cappy? Rather stiff in the back, minister, with the mouth of the fowling-piece peeping out between the tails of your long coat, and the butt at the back of your head, by way of bolster? You will find it more comfortable to have her in hand. That bamboo, dominie, is well
[Pg 319] known to be an air-gun. Have you your horse-pistol with you to-day, surveyor? Sagittarius, think you, you could hit, at twoscore, a haystack flying? Sit down, gentlemen, and let's have a crack.

So ho! so ho! so ho! We see her black eyes beneath a primrose tuft on the brae. In spring all one bank of blossoms; but 'tis barish now and sheep-nibbled, though few eyes but our own could have thus detected there the brown back of Maukin. Dominie, your bamboo. Shoot her sitting? Fie fie —no, no. Kick her up, Hamish. There she goes. We are out of practice at single ball—but whizz! she has it between the shoulders. Head-over-heels she has started another—why, that's funny—give us your bow and arrow, you green grocer—twang! within an inch of her fud. Gentlemen, suppose we tip you a song. Join all in the chorus.

THE POWCHER'S SONG.

When I was boon apprentice
  In vamous Zoomerzet Shere,
Lauks! I zerved my meester truly
  Vor neerly zeven yeer,
*U*ntil I took to *Pow*ching,
  Az you zhall quickly heer.
CHO. Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
  In the zeazon of the year:
Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
  In the zeazon of the year.

Az me and ma coomerades
  Were zetting on a snere,
Lauks! the Geamkeepoors caem oop to uz;
  Vor them we did na kere,
'Case we could fight or wrestle, lads,
  Jump over ony wheere.
CHO. Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
  In the zeazon of the year:
Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
  In the zeazon of the year.

Az we went oot wan morning
  Atwixt your vive and zeex,
We cautcht a here alive, ma lads,
  We found un in a deetch;
We popt un in a bag, ma lads,
  We yoiten off vor town,

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We took un to a neeghboor's hoose,
  And we zold un vor a crown.
We zold un vor a crown, ma lads,
  But a wont tell ye wheere.

Cho. Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
In the zeazon of the year:
Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
In the zeazon of the year.

Then here's success to Powching,
Vor A doos think it feere,
And here's look to ere a gentleman
Az wants to buy a heere,
And here's to ere a geamkeepoor,
Az woona zell it deere.
Cho. Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
In the zeazon of the year:
Ou! 'twas ma delyght in a shiny night,
In the zeazon of the year.

The Presbytery might have overlooked your fault, Mac, for the case was not a flagrant one, and you were willing, we understand, to make her an honest woman. Do you think you could recollect one of your sermons? In action and in unction you had not your superior in the Synod. Do give us a screed about Nimrod or Nebuchadnezzar. No desecration in a sermon—better omitted, we grant, prayer and psalm. Should you be unable to reproduce an entire discourse, yet by dove-tailing—that is, a bit from one and a bit from another—surely you can be at no loss for half an hour's miscellaneous matter—heads and tails. Or suppose we let you off with a View of the Church Question. You look glum and shake your head. Can you, Mac, how can you resist that Pulpit?

Behold in that semicircular low-browed cliff, backed by a range of bonny green braes dipping down from the hills that do themselves come shelving from the mountains, what appears at first sight to be a cave, but is merely a blind window, as it were, a few feet deep, arched and faced like a beautiful work of masonry, though chisel never touched it, nor man's hand dropped the line along the living stone thus wrought by nature's self, who often shows us, in her mysterious processes, resemblances of effects produced by us her children on the same materials by our
[Pg 321] more most elaborate art. It is a very pulpit, and that projecting slab is the sounding-board. That upright stone in front of it, without the aid of fancy, may well be thought the desk. To us sitting here, this spot of greensward is the floor; the sky that hangs low, as if it loved it, the roof of the sanctuary; nor is there any harm in saying, that we, if we choose to think so, are sitting in a kirk.

Shall we mount the pulpit by that natural flight of steps, and, like a Sedgwick or a Buckland, with a specimen in one hand, and before our eyes mountains whose faces the scars of thunder have intrenched, tell you how the globe, after formation on formation, became fit residence for new-created man, and habitable no more to flying dragons? Or shall we, rather, taking the globe as we find it, speculate on the changes wrought on its surface by us, whom God gave feet to tread the earth, and faces to behold the heavens, and souls to soar into the heaven of heavens, on the wings of hope, aspiring through temporal shades to eternal light?

Brethren!—The primary physical wants of the human being are food, clothing, shelter, and defence. To supply these he has invented all his arts. Hunger and Thirst cultivate the earth. Fear builds castles and embattles cities. The animal is clothed by nature against cold and storm, and shelters himself in his den. Man builds his habitation, and weaves his clothing. With horns, or teeth, or claws, the strong and deadly weapons with which nature has furnished them, the animal kinds wage their war; he forges swords and spears, and constructs implements of destruction that will send death almost as far as his eye can mark his foe, and sweep down thousands together. The animal that goes in quest of his food, that pursues or flies from his enemy, has feet, or wings, or fins; but man bids the horse, the camel, the elephant, bear him, and yokes them to his chariot. If the strong animal would cross the river, he swims. Man spans it with a bridge. But the most powerful of them all stands on the beach and gazes on the ocean. Man constructs a ship, and encircles the globe. Other creatures must traverse the element nature has assigned, with means she has furnished. He chooses his element, and makes his means. Can the fish
[Pg 322] traverse the waters? So can he. Can the bird fly the air? So can he. Can the camel speed over the desert? He shall bear man as his rider.

"That's beautifu'!" "Tuts, haud your tongue, and tak a chow. There's some shag." "Is he gaun to be lang, Hamish?" "Wheesht! you micht as weel be speakin in the kirk."

But to see what he owes to inventive art, we should compare man, not with inferior creatures, but with himself, looking over the face of human society, as history or observation shows it. We shall find him almost sharing the life of brutes, or removed from them by innumerable differences, and incalculable degrees. In one place we see him harbouring in caves, naked, living, we might almost say, on prey, seeking from chance his wretched sustenance, food which he eats just as he finds it. He lives like a beggar on the alms of nature. Turn to another land, and you see the face of the earth covered with the works of his hand—his habitation, widespreading stately cities—his clothing and the ornaments of his person culled and fashioned from the three kingdoms of nature. For his food the face of the earth bears him tribute; and the seasons and changes of heaven concur with his own art in ministering to his board. This is the difference which man has made in his own condition by the use of his intellectual powers, awakened and goaded on by the necessities of his physical constitution.

The various knowledge, the endlessly multiplied observation, the experience and reasonings of man added to man, of generation following generation, which were required to bring to a moderate state of advancement the great primary arts subservient to physical life—the arts of providing food, habitation, clothing, and defence, *we* are utterly unable to conceive. We are *born* to the knowledge which was collected by the labours of many ages. How slowly were those arts reared up which still remain to us! How many which had laboriously been brought to perfection, have been displaced by superior invention, and fallen into oblivion! Fenced in as we are by the works of our predecessors, we see but a small part of the power of man contending with the difficulties of his lot. But what a wonderful scene would be opened before our eyes, with what intense interest should we look on, if we could indeed behold him armed only with his own implanted powers, and going forth to conquer the creation! If we could see him beginning by [Pg 323] subduing evils, and supplying painful wants—going on to turn those evils and wants into the means of enjoyment—and at length, in the wantonness and pride of his power, filling his existence with luxuries;—if we could see him from his first step, in the untamed though fruitful wilderness, advancing to subdue the soil, to tame and multiply the herds—from bending the branches into a bower, to fell the forest and quarry the rock—seizing into his own hands the element of fire, directing its action on substances got from the bowels of the earth—fashioning wood, and stone, and metal, to the will of his thought—searching the nature of plants to spin their fibres, or with their virtues to heal his diseases;—if we could see him raise his first cities, launch his first ship, calling the winds and waters to be his servants, and to do his work—changing the face of the earth—forming lakes and rivers—joining seas, or stretching the continent itself into the dominion of the sea;—if we could do all this in imagination, then should we understand something of what man's intellect has done for his physical life, and what the necessities of his physical life have done in forcing into action all the powers of his intelligence.

But there are still higher considerations arising from the influence of man's physical necessities on the destiny of the species. It is this subjugation of natural evil, and this created dominion of art, that prepares the earth to be the scene of his social existence. His hard conquest was not the end of his toil. He has conquered the kingdom in which he was to dwell in his state. The full unfolding of his moral powers was only possible in those states of society which are thus brought into being by his conflict with all his physical faculties against all the stubborn powers of the material universe; for out of the same conquest Wealth is created. In this progress, and by means thus brought into action, society is divided into classes. Property itself, the allotment of the earth, takes place, because it is the bosom of the earth that yields food. That great foundation of the stability of communities is thus connected with the same necessity; and in the same progress, and out of the same causes, arise the first great Laws by which society is held together in order. [Pg 324] Thus that whole wonderful development of the Moral Nature of man, in all those various forms which fill up the history of the race, in part arises out of, and is always intimately blended with, the labours to which he has been aroused by those first great necessities of his physical nature. But had the tendency to increase his numbers been out of all proportion to the means provided by nature, and infinitely multipliable by art, for the subsistence of human beings, how could this magnificent march have moved on?

Hence we may understand on what ground the ancient nations revered so highly, and even deified, the authors of the primary arts of life. They considered not the supply of the animal wants merely; but they contemplated that mighty change in the condition of mankind to which these arts have given origin. It is on this ground that they had raised the character of human life, that Virgil assigns them their place in the dwellings of bliss, among devoted patriots and holy priests, among those whom song or prophecy had inspired, among those benefactors of the race whose names were to live for ever, giving his own most beautiful expression to the common sentiment of mankind.

> "Hic manus ob patriam pugnando vulnera passi,
> Quique sacerdotes casti, dum vita manebat,
> Quique pii vates, et Phœbo digna locuti,
> *Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes*,
> Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo;
> *Omnibus his* niveâ cinguntur tempora vittâ."

"That's Latin for the minister and the dominie." "Wheesht! Heard you ever the like o' that? Though I dinna understand a word o't, it gars me a' grue." "Wheesht! wheesht!—we maun pit him intil Paurliment"—"Rather intil the General Assembly, to tussle wi' the wild men." "He's nae Moderate, man; and gin I'm no sair mistaen, he's a wild man himsel, and wull uphaud the Veto." "Wheesht! wheesht! wheesht!"

True, that in savage life men starve. But is that any proof that nature has cursed the race with a fatal tendency to multiply beyond the means of subsistence? None whatever. Attend for a little to this point. Of the real power of the bodily appetites for food, and the sway they may attain over the moral nature of the mind, we, who are protected by our place among the arrangements of [Pg 325] civil society from greatly suffering under it, can indeed form no adequate conception. Let us not now speak of those dreadful enormities which, in the midst of dismal famine, are recorded to have been perpetrated by civilised men, when the whole moral soul, with all its strongest affections and instinctive abhorrences, has sunk prostrate under the force of that animal suffering. But the power of which we speak, as attained by this animal feeling, subsists habitually among whole tribes and nations. It is that power which it acquires over the mind of the savage, who is frequently exposed to suffer its severity, and who hunts for himself the food with which he

is to appease it. Compare the mind of the human being as you are accustomed to behold him, knowing the return of this sensation only as a grateful incitement to take the ready nourishment which is spread for his repast, with that of his fellow-man bearing through the lonely woods the gnawing pang that goads him to his prey. Hunger *is* in his heart; hunger bears along his unfatiguing feet; hunger lies in the strength of his arm; hunger watches in his eye; hunger listens in his ear; as he couches down in his covert, silently waiting the approach of his expected spoil, this is the sole thought that fills his aching breast—"I shall satisfy my hunger!" When his deadly aim has brought his victim to the ground, this is the thought that springs up as he rushes to seize it, "I have got food for my hungry soul!" What must be the usurpation of animal nature here over the whole man! It is not merely the simple pain, as if it were the forlornness of a human creature bearing about his famishing existence in helplessness and despair—though that, too, is indeed a true picture of some states of our race; but here is not a suffering and sinking wretch—he is a strong hunter, and puts forth his strength fiercely under the urgency of this passion. All his might in the chase—all pride of speed, and strength, and skill—all thoughts of long and hard endurance —all images of perils past—all remembrances and all foresight—are gathered on that one strong and keen desire—are bound down to the sense of that one bitter animal want. These feelings recurring day by day in the sole toil of his life, bring upon his soul a vehemence and power of desire in this object, of which we can have no conception, till he becomes subjected to hunger as
[Pg 326] to a mighty animal passion—a passion such as it rages in those fierce animal kinds which it drives with such ferocity on their prey. He knows hunger as the wolf knows it—he goes forth with his burning heart, like the tiger to lap blood. But turn to man in another condition to which he has been brought by the very agency of his physical on his intellectual and moral being! How far removed is he now from that daily contention with such evils as these! How much does he feel himself assured against them by belonging to the great confederacy of social life! How much is it veiled from his eyes by the many artificial circumstances in which the satisfaction of the want is involved! The work in which he labours the whole day—on which his eyes are fixed and his hands toil—is something altogether unconnected with his own wants—connected with distant wants and purposes of a thousand other men in which he has no participation. And as far as it is a work of skill, he has to fix his mind on objects and purposes so totally removed from himself, that they all tend still more to sever his thoughts from his own necessities; and thus it is that civilisation raises his moral character, when it protects almost every human being in a country from that subjection to this passion, to which even noble tribes are bound down in the wilderness of nature.

"It's an awfu' thing hunger, Hamish, sure aneuch; but I wush he was dune; for that vice o' his sing-sangin is makin me unco sleepy—and ance I fa' owre, I'm no easy waukenin. But wha's that snorin?"

Yet it is the most melancholy part of all such speculation, to observe what a wide gloom is cast over them by this severe necessity, which is nevertheless the great and constant cause of the improvement of their condition. It is not suffering alone—for *that* they may be inured to bear,—but the darkness of the understanding, and the darkness of the heart, which comes on under the oppression of toil, that is miserable to see. Our fellow-men, born with the same spirit as ourselves, seem yet denied the common privileges of that spirit. They seem to bring faculties into the world that cannot be unfolded, and powers of affection and desire which not their fault but the lot of their birth will pervert and degrade. There is a humiliation laid upon our nature in the doom which seems thus to rest upon a great portion of our species, which, while it requires our most considerate compassion for those who are thus depressed, compels us to humble ourselves
[Pg 327] under the sense of our own participation in the nature from which it flows. Therefore, in estimating the worth, the virtue of our fellow-men, whom Providence has placed in a lot that yields to them the means, and little more than the means, of supporting life in themselves and those born of them, let us never forget how intimate is the necessary union between the wants of the body and the thoughts of the soul. Let us remember, that over a great portion of humanity the soul is in a struggle for its independence and power with the necessities of that nature in which it is enveloped. It has to support itself against sickening, or irritating, or maddening thoughts, inspired by weariness, lassitude, want, or the fear of want. It is chained down to the earth by the influence of one great and constant occupation—that of providing the means of its mortal existence. When it shows itself shook and agitated, or overcome in the struggle, what ought to be the thoughts and feelings of the wise for poor humanity! When, on the other hand, we see nature preserving itself pure, bold, and happy amidst the perpetual threatenings or assaults of those evils from which it cannot fly, and though oppressed by its own weary wants, forgetting them all in that love which ministers to the wants of others,—when we see the brow wrinkled and drenched by incessant toil, the body in the power of its prime bowed down to the dust, and the whole frame in which the immortal spirit abides marked, but not dishonoured, by its slavery to fate,—and when, in the midst of all this ceaseless depression and oppression, from which man must never hope to escape on earth, we see him still seeking and still finding joy, delight, and happiness in the finer affections of his spiritual being, giving to the lips of those he loves the scanty morsel earned by his own hungry and thirsty toil, purchasing by sweat, sickness, and fever, Education and Instruction and Religion to the young creatures who delight him who is starving for their sakes, resting with gratitude on that day, whose return is ever like a fresh fountain to his exhausted and weary heart, and preserving a profound and high sense of his own immortality among all the earth-born toils and troubles that would in vain chain him down to the dust;—when we see all this, and think of all this, we feel indeed how rich may be the poorest of
[Pg 328] the poor, and learn to respect the moral being of man in its triumphs over the power of his physical nature. But we do not learn to doubt or deny the wisdom of the Creator. We do not learn from all these struggles, and all these defeats, and all these victories, and all these triumphs, that

God sent us His creatures into this life to starve, because the air, the earth, and the waters have not wherewithal to feed the mouths that gape for food through all the elements! Nor do we learn that want is a crime, and poverty a sin—and that they who *would* toil, but cannot, and they who *can* toil, but have no work set before them, are intruders at Nature's table, and must be driven, by those who are able to pay for their seats, to famine, starvation, and death—almost denied a burial!—Finis. Amen.

Often has it been our lot, by our conversational powers to set the table on a snore. The more stirring the theme, the more soporific the sound of our silver voice. Look there, we beseech you! In a small spot of "stationary sunshine"—lie Hamish, and Surefoot, and O'Bronte, and Ponto, and Piro, and Basta, all sound asleep! Dogs are troubled sleepers—but these four are now like the dreamless dead. Horses, too, seem often to be witch-ridden in their sleep. But at this moment Surefoot is stretched more like a stone than a shelty in the land of Nod. As for Hamish, were he to lie so braxy-like by himself on the hill, he would be awakened by the bill of the raven digging into his sockets. We are Morpheus and Orpheus in one incarnation—the very Pink of Poppy—the true spirit of Opium—of Laudanum the concentrated Essence—of the black Drop the Gnome.

Indeed, gentlemen, you have reason to be ashamed of yourselves—but where is the awkward squad? Clean gone. They have stolen a march on us, and while we have been preaching they have been poaching—*sans* mandate of the Marquess and Monzie. We may catch them ere close of day; and, if they have a smell of slaughter, we shall crack their sconces with our Crutch. No apologies, Hamish—'tis only making the matter worse; but we expected better things of the Dogs. O'Bronte! fie! fie! sirrah. Your sire would not have fallen asleep during a speech of ours—and such a speech!—he would have sat it out without winking—at each more splendid passage testifying his delight by a yowl. Leap over the Crutch, you reprobate, and let us see thee scour. Look at him,
[Pg 329] Hamish, already beckoning to us on his hurdies from the hill-top. Let us scale those barriers—and away over the table-land between that summit and the head of Gleno. No sooner said than done—and here we are on the level—such a level as the ship finds on the main sea, when in the storm-lull she rides up and down the green swell, before the trade-winds that cool the tropics. The surface of this main land-sea is black in the gloom, and green in the glimmer, and purple in the light, and crimson in the sunshine. O, never looks Nature so magnificent

> "As in this varying and uncertain weather,
> When gloom and glory force themselves together,
> When calm seems stormy, and tempestuous light
> At day's meridian lowers like noon of night!"

Whose are these fine lines? Hooky Walker, OUR OWN. Dogs! Down—down—down—be stonelike, O Shelty!—and Hamish, sink thou into the heather like a lizard; for if these old dim eyes of ours may be in aught believed, yonder by the birches stands a Red-Deer snuffing the east wind! Hush! hush! hush! He suspects an enemy in that airt—but death comes upon him with stealthy foot, from the west; and if Apollo and Diana—the divinities we so long have worshipped—be now propitious, his antlers shall be entangled in the heather, and his hoofs beat the heavens. Hamish, the rifle! A tinkle as of iron, and a hiss accompanying the explosion—and the King of the Wilderness, bounding up into the air with his antlers higher than ever waved chieftain's plume, falls down stone-dead where he stood; for the blue-pill has gone through his vitals, and lightning itself could hardly have withered him into more instantaneous cessation of life!

He is an enormous animal. What antlers! Roll him over, Hamish, on his side! See, up to our breast, nearly, reaches the topmost branch. He is what the hunter of old called a "Stag of Ten." His eye has lost the flash of freedom—the tongue that browsed the brushwood is bitten through by the clenched teeth—the fleetness of his feet has felt that fatal frost—the wild heart is hushed, Hamish—tame, tame, tame; and there the Monarch of the Mountains—the King of the Cliffs—the Grand Llama of the Glens—the Sultan of the Solitudes—the Dey of the Deserts—the Royal Ranger
[Pg 330] of the Woods and Forests—yea, the very Prince of the Air and Thane of Thunder—"shorn of all his beams," lies motionless as a dead Jackass by the wayside, whose hide was not thought worth the trouble of flaying by his owners the gypsies! "To this complexion has he come at last"—he who at dawn had borrowed the wings of the wind to carry him across the cataracts!

A sudden pang shoots across our heart. What right had we to commit this murder? How, henceforth, shall we dare to hold up our head among the lovers of liberty, after having thus stolen basely from behind on him, the boldest, brightest, and most beautiful of all her sons! We, who for so many years have been just able to hobble, and no more, by aid of the Crutch—who feared to let the heather-bent touch our toe, so sensitive in its gout—We, the old and impotent, all last winter bed-ridden, and even now seated like a lameter on a shelty, strapped by a patent buckle to a saddle provided with a pummel behind as well as before—such an unwieldy and weary wretch as We—"fat, and scant of breath"—and with our hand almost perpetually pressed against our left side, when a coughing-fit of asthma brings back the stitch, seldom an absentee—to assassinate THAT RED-DEER, whose flight on earth could accompany the eagles in heaven; and not only to assassinate him, but, in a moral vein, to liken his carcass to that of a Jackass! It will not bear further reflection; so, Hamish, out with your whinger, and carve him a dish fit for the gods—in a style worthy of Sir Tristrem, Gill Morice, Robin Hood, or Lord Ranald. No; let him lie till nightfall, when we shall be returning from Inveraw with strength sufficient to bear him to the Tent.

But hark, Hamish, to that sullen croak from the cliff! The old raven of the cove already scents death—

"Sagacious of his quarry from afar!"

But where art thou, Hamish? Ay, yonder is Hamish, wriggling on his very belly, like an adder, through the heather to windward of the croaker, whose nostrils, and eyes, and bill, are now all hungrily fascinated, and as it were already fastened into the very bowels of the beast. His days are numbered. That sly serpent, by circuitous windings insinuating his limber length through among all obstructions, has ascended unseen the drooping shoulder of the cliff, and now
[Pg 331] cautiously erects his crest within a hundred yards or more of the unsuspecting savage, still uttering at intervals his sullen croak, croak, croak! Something crumbles, and old Sooty, unfolding his huge wings, lifts himself up like Satan, about to sail away for a while into another glen; but the rifle rings among the rocks—the lead has broken his spine—and look! how the demon, head-over-heels, goes tumbling down, down, down, many hundred fathoms, dashed to pieces and impaled on the sharp-pointed granite! Ere nightfall the bloody fragments will be devoured by his mate. Nothing now will disturb the carcass of the deer. No corbies dare enter the cove where the raven reigned; the hawk prefers grouse to venison, and so does the eagle, who, however, like a good Catholic as he is—this is Friday—has gone out to sea for a fish dinner, which he devours to the music of the waves on some isle-rock. Therefore lie there, dethroned king! till thou art decapitated; and ere the moon wanes, that haunch will tower gloriously on our Tent-table at the Feast of Shells.

What is your private opinion, O'Bronte, of the taste of Red-deer blood? Has it not a wild twang on the tongue and palate, far preferable to sheep's-head? You are absolutely undergoing transfiguration into a deer-hound! With your fore-paws on the flank, your tail brandished like a standard, and your crimson flews (thank you, Shepherd, for that word) licked by a long lambent tongue red as crimson, while your eyes express a fierce delight never felt before, and a stifled growl disturbs the star on your breast—just as you stand now, O'Bronte, might Edwin Landseer rejoice to paint thy picture, for which, immortal image of the wilderness, the Duke of Bedford would not scruple to give a draft on his banker for one thousand pounds!

Shooting grouse after red-deer is, for a while at first, felt to be like writing an anagram in a lady's album, after having given the finishing-touch to a tragedy or an epic poem. 'Tis like taking to catching shrimps in the sand with one's toes, on one's return from Davis' Straits in a whaler that arrived at Peterhead with sixteen fish, each calculated at ten tun of oil. Yet, 'tis strange how the human soul can descend, pleasantly at every note, from the top to the bottom of passion's and imagination's gamut.

A Tarn—a Tarn! with but a small circle of unbroken water in the centre, and all the rest of its
[Pg 332] shallowness bristling, in every bay, with reeds and rushes, and surrounded, all about the mossy flat, with marshes and quagmires! What a breeding-place—"procreant cradle" for water-fowl! Now comes thy turn, O'Bronte—for famous is thy name, almost as thy sire's, among the flappers. Crawl down to leeward, Hamish, that you may pepper them—should they take to flight overhead to the loch. Surefoot, taste that greensward, and you will find it sweet and succulent. Dogs, heel—heel!—and now let us steal, on our Crutch, behind that knoll, and open a sudden fire on the swimmers, who seem to think themselves out of shot at the edge of that line of water-lilies; but some of them will soon find themselves mistaken, whirling round on their backs, and vainly endeavouring to dive after their friends that disappear beneath the agitated surface shot-swept into spray. Long Gun! who oft to the forefinger of Colonel Hawker has swept the night-harbour of Poole all alive with widgeons, be true to the trust now reposed in thee by Kit North! And though these be neither geese, nor swans, nor hoopers, yet send thy leaden shower among them feeding in their play, till all the air be afloat with specks, as if at the shaking of a feather-bed that had burst the ticking, and the tarn covered with sprawling mawsies and mallards, in death-throes among the ducklings! There it lies on its rest—like a telescope. No eye has discovered the invention—keen as those wild eyes are of the plouterers on the shallows. Lightning and thunder! to which all the echoes roar. But we meanwhile are on our back; for of all the recoils that ever shook a shoulder, that one was the severest—but 'twill probably cure our rheumatism and—— Well done—nobly, gloriously done, O'Bronte! Heaven and earth, how otter-like he swims! Ha, Hamish! you have cut off the retreat of that airy voyager—you have given it him in his stern, Hamish—and are reloading for the flappers. One at a time in your mouth, O'Bronte! Put about with that tail for a rudder—and make for the shore. What a stately creature! as he comes issuing from the shallows, and bearing the old mallard breast-high, walks all dripping along the greensward, and then shakes from his curled ebony the flashing spray-mist. He gives us one look as we crown the knoll, and then in again with a spang and a plunge far into the tarn, caring no
[Pg 333] more for the reeds than for so many windle-straes, and, fast as a sea-serpent, is among the heart of the killed and wounded. In unerring instinct he always seizes the dead—and now a devil's dozen lie along the shore. Come hither, O'Bronte, and caress thy old master. Ay—that showed a fine feeling—did that long shake that bedrizzled the sunshine. Put thy paws over our shoulders, and round our neck, true son of thy sire—oh! that he were but alive, to see and share thy achievements: but indeed, two such dogs, living together in their prime at one era, would have been too great glory for this sublunary canine world. Therefore Sirius looked on thy sire with an evil eye, and in jealousy—

"Tantæne animis cælestibus iræ!"

growled upon some sinner to poison the Dog of all Dogs, who leapt up almost to the ceiling of the room where he slept—our own bedroom—under the agony of that accursed arsenic, gave one horrid howl, and expired. Methinka we know his murderer—his eye falls when it meets ours on

the Street of Princes; and let him scowl there but seldom—for though 'tis but suspicion, this fist, O'Bronte, doubles at the sight of the miscreant—and some day, impelled by wrath and disgust, it will smash his nose flat with the other features, till his face is a pancake. Yea! as sure as Themis holds her balance in the skies, shall the poisoner be punished out of all recognition by his parents, and be disowned by the Irish Cockney father that begot him, and the Scotch Cockney mother that bore him, as he carries home a tripe-like countenance enough to make his paramour the scullion miscarry, as she opens the door to him on the fifth flat of a common stair. But we are getting personal, O'Bronte, a vice abhorrent from our nature.

There goes our Crutch, Hamish, whirling aloft in the sky like a rainbow flight, even like the ten-pound hammer from the fling of George Scougal at the St Ronans games. Our gout is gone—so is our asthma—eke our rheumatism—and, like an eagle, we have renewed our youth. There is hop, step, and jump, for you, Hamish—we should not fear, young and agile as you are, buck, to give you a yard. But now for the flappers. Pointers all, stir your stumps and into the water. This is rich. Why, the reeds are as full of flappers as of frogs. If they can fly, the fools don't know it. Why,
[Pg 334] there is a whole musquito-fleet of yellow boys, not a month old. What a prolific old lady must she have been, to have kept on breeding till July. There she sits, cowering, just on the edge of the reeds, uncertain whether to dive or fly. By the creak and cry of the cradle of thy first-born, Hamish, spare the plumage on her yearning and quaking breast. The little yellow images have all melted away, and are now, in holy cunning of instinct, deep down beneath the waters, shifting for themselves among the very mud at the bottom of the reeds. By-and-by they will be floating with but the points of their bills above the surface, invisible among the air-bells. The parent duck has also disappeared; the drake you disposed of, Hamish, as the coward was lifting up his lumbering body, with fat doup and long neck in the air, to seek safer skies. We male creatures—drakes, ganders, and men alike—what are we, when affection pleads, in comparison with females! In our passions, we are brave, but these satiated, we turn upon our heel and disappear from danger, like dastards. But doves, and ducks, and women, are fearless in affection to the very death. Therefore have we all our days, sleeping or waking, loved the sex, virgin and matron; nor would we hurt a hair of their heads, grey or golden, for all else that shines beneath the sun.

Not the best practice this in the world, certainly, for pointers—and it may teach them bad habits on the hill; but, in some situations, all dogs and all men are alike, and cross them as you will, not a breed but shows a taint of original sin, when under a temptation sufficiently strong to bring it out. Ponto, Piro, and Basta, are now, according to their abilities, all as bad as O'Bronte—and never, to be sure, was there such a worrying in this wicked world. But now we shall cease our fire, and leave the few flappers that are left alive to their own meditations. Our conduct for the last hour must have seemed to them no less unaccountable than alarming, and something to quack over during the rest of the season. Well, we do not remember ever to have seen a prettier pile of ducks and ducklings. Hamish, take census. What do you say—two score? That beats cockfighting. Here's a hank of twine, Hamish, tie them altogether by the legs, and hang them, in two divisions of equal weights, over the crupper of Surefoot.

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THE MOORS.

FLIGHT THIRD—STILL LIFE.

We have been sufficiently slaughterous for a man of our fine sensibilities and moderate desires, Hamish; and as, somehow or other, the scent seems to be beginning not to lie well—yet the air cannot be said to be close and sultry either—we shall let Brown Bess cool herself in both barrels—relinquish, for an hour or so, our seat on Shelty, and, by way of a change, pad the hoof up that smooth ascent, strangely left stoneless—an avenue positively looking as if it were artificial, as it stretches away, with its beautiful green undulations, among the blocks; for though no view-hunter, we are, Hamish, what in fine language is called a devout worshipper of Nature, an enthusiast in the sublime; and if Nature do not show us something worth gazing at when we reach yonder altitudes, she must be a grey deceiver, and we shall never again kneel at her footstool, or sing a hymn in her praise.

The truth is, we have a rending headache, for Bess has been for some hours on the kick, and Surefoot on the jog, and our exertions in the pulpit were severe—action, Hamish, action, action, being, as Demosthenes said some two or three thousand years ago, essential to oratory; and you observed how nimbly we kept changing legs, Hamish, how strenuously brandishing arms, throughout our discourse—saving the cunning pauses, thou simpleton, when, by way of relief to our auditors, we were as gentle as sucking-doves, and folded up our wings as if about to go to roost, whereas we were but meditating a bolder flight—about to soar, Hamish, into the empyrean. Over and above all that, we could not brook Tickler's insolence, who, about the sma' hours, challenged us, you know, quaich for quaich; and though we gave him a fair back-fall, yet
[Pg 336] we suffered in the tulzie, and there is at this moment a throbbing in our temples that threatens a regular brain-fever. We burn for an air-bath on the mountain-top. Moreover, we are seized with a sudden desire for solitude—to be plain, we are getting sulky; so ascend, Surefoot, Hamish, and be off with the pointers—O'Bronte goes with us—north-west, making a circumbendibus round the *Tomhans*, where Mhairhe M'Intyre lived seven years with the fairies; and in a couple of hours or so you will find us under the Merlin Crag.

We offer to walk any man of our age in Great Britain. But what *is* our age? Confound us if we know within a score or two. Yet we cannot get rid of the impression that we are under ninety. However, as we seek no advantage, and give no odds, we challenge the octogenarians of the United Kingdom—fair toe and heel—a twelve-hour match—for love, fame, and a legitimate exchequer bill for a thousand. Why, these calves of ours would look queer, we confess, on the legs of a Leith porter; but even in our prime they were none of your big vulgar calves, but they handled like iron—now more like butter. There is still a spring in our instep; and our knees, sometimes shaky, are to-day knit as Pan's and neat as Apollo's. Poet we may not be, but Pedestrian we are; with Wordsworth we could not walk along imaginative heights, but, if not grievously out of our reckoning; on the turnpike road we could keep pace with Captain Barclay for a short distance—say from Dundee to Aberdeen.

Oh! Gemini! but we are in high spirits. Yes—delights there indeed are, which none but pedestrians know. Much—all depends on the character of the wanderer; he must have known what it is to commune with his own thoughts and feelings, and be satisfied with them even as with the converse of a chosen friend. Not that he must always, in the solitudes that await him, be in a meditative mood, for ideas and emotions will of themselves arise, and he will only have to enjoy the pleasures which his own being spontaneously affords. It would indeed be a hopeless thing, if we were always to be on the stretch for happiness. Intellect, Imagination, and Feeling, all work of their own free-will, and not at the order of any taskmaster. A rill soon becomes a stream—a stream a river—a river a loch—and a loch a sea. So it is with the current within the spirit. It carries us along, without either oar or sail, increasing in depth, breadth, and swiftness,
[Pg 337] yet all the while the easy work of our own wonderful minds. While we seem only to see or hear, we are thinking and feeling far beyond the mere notices given by the senses; and years afterwards we find that we have been laying up treasures, in our most heedless moments, of imagery, and connecting together trains of thought that arise in startling beauty, almost without cause or any traceable origin. The Pedestrian, too, must not only love his own society, but the society of any other human beings, if blameless and not impure, among whom his lot may for a short season be cast. He must rejoice in all the forms and shows of life, however simple they may be, however humble, however low; and be able to find food for his thoughts beside the ingle of the loneliest hut, where the inmates sit with few words, and will rather be spoken to than speak to the stranger. In such places he will be delighted—perhaps surprised—to find in uncorrupted strength all the primary elements of human character. He will find that his knowledge may be wider than theirs, and better ordered, but that it rests on the same foundation, and comprehends the same matter. There will be no want of sympathies between him and them; and what he knows best, and loves most, will seldom fail to be that also which they listen to with greatest interest, and respecting which there is the closest communion between the minds of stranger and host. He may know the courses of the stars according to the revelation of science—they may have studied them only as simple shepherds, "whose hearts were gladdened" walking on the mountain-top. But they know—as he does—who sowed the stars in heaven, and that their silent courses are all adjusted by the hand of the Most High.

Oh! blessed, thrice blessed years of youth! would we choose to live over again all your forgotten and unforgotten nights and days! Blessed, thrice blessed we call you, although, as we then felt, often darkened almost into insanity by self-sown sorrows springing out of our restless soul. No, we would not again face such troubles, not even for the glorious apparitions that familiarly haunted us in glens and forests, on mountains and on the great sea. But all, or nearly all, that did once so grievously disturb, we can lay in the depths of the past, so that scarcely a ghastly voice is
[Pg 338] heard, a ghastly face beheld; while all that so charmed of yore, or nearly all, although no longer the daily companions of our life, still survive to be recalled at solemn hours, and with a "beauty still more beauteous" to reinvest the earth, which neither sin nor sorrow can rob of its enchantments. We can still travel with the solitary mountain-stream from its source to the sea, and see new visions at every vista of its winding waters. The waterfall flows not with its own monotonous voice of a day or an hour, but like a choral anthem pealing with the hymns of many years. In the heart of the blind mist on the mountain-ranges we can now sit alone, surrounded by a world of images, over which time holds no power but to consecrate or solemnise. Solitude we can deepen by a single volition, and by a single volition let in upon it the stir and noise of the world and life. Why, therefore, should we complain, or why lament the inevitable loss or change that time brings with it to all that breathe? Beneath the shadow of the tree we can yet repose, and tranquillise our spirit by its rustle, or by the "green light" uncheckered by one stirring leaf. From sunrise to sunset, we can lie below the old mossy tower, till the darkness that shuts out the day, hides not the visions that glide round the ruined battlements. Cheerful as in a city can we traverse the houseless moor; and although not a ship be on the sea, we can set sail on the wings of imagination, and when wearied, sink down on savage or serene isle, and let drop our anchor below the moon and stars.

And 'tis well we are so spiritual; for the senses are of no use here, and we must draw for amusement on our internal sources. A day-like night we have often seen about midsummer, serenest of all among the Hebrides; but a night-like day, such as this, ne'er before fell on us, and we might as well be in the Heart o' Mid-Lothian. 'Tis a dungeon, and a dark one—and we know not for what crime we have been condemned to solitary confinement. Were it mere mist we should not mind; but the gloom is palpable, and makes resistance to the hand. We did not think clouds capable of such condensation—the blackness may be felt like velvet on a hearse. Would that something would rustle—but no—all is breathlessly still, and not a wind dares whistle. If there be anything visible or audible hereabout, then are we stone-blind and stone-deaf. We have
[Pg 339] a vision!

See! a great City in a mist! All is not shrouded—at intervals something huge is beheld in the sky—what we know not, tower, temple, spire, dome, or a pile of nameless structures—one after the other fading away, or sinking and settling down into the gloom that grows deeper and deeper like a night. The stream of life seems almost hushed in the blind blank, yet you hear ever and anon, now here, now there, the slow sound of feet moving to their own dull echoes, and lo! the Sun

> "Looks through the horizontal misty air,
> Shorn of his beams,"

like some great ghost. Ay, he *looks*! does he not? straight on *your* face, as if you two were the only beings there—and were held *looking* at each other in some strange communion. Surely you must sometimes have felt that emotion, when the Luminary seemed no longer luminous, but a dull-red brazen orb, sick unto the death—obscure the Shedder of Light and the Giver of Life lifeless!

The Sea has sent a tide-borne wind to the City, and you almost start in wonder to behold all the heavens clear of clouds (how beautiful was the clearing!) and bending in a mighty blue bow, that brightly overarches all the brightened habitations of men! The spires shoot up into the sky—the domes tranquilly rest there—all the roofs glitter as with diamonds, all the white walls are lustrous, save where, here and there, some loftier range of buildings hangs its steadfast shadow o'er square or street, magnifying the city, by means of separate multitudes of structures, each town-like in itself, and the whole gathered together by the outward eye, and the inward imagination, worthy indeed of the name of Metropolis.

Let us sit down on this bench below the shadow of the Parthenon. The air is now so rarified, that you can see not indistinctly the figure of a man on Arthur's Seat. The Calton, though a city hill, is as green as the Carter towering over the Border-forest. Not many years ago, no stone edifice was on his unviolated verdure—he was a true rural Mount, where the lassies bleached their claes, in a pure atmosphere, aloof from the city smoke almost as the sides and summit of Arthur's Seat. Flocks of sheep might have grazed here, had there been enclosures, and many milch cows. But in
[Pg 340] their absence a pastoral character was given to the Hill by its green silence, here and there broken by the songs and laughter of those linen-bleaching lassies, and by the arm-in-arm strolling of lovers in the morning light or the evening shade. Here married people used to walk with their children, thinking and feeling themselves to be in the country; and here elderly gentlemen, like ourselves, with gold-headed canes or simple crutches, mused and meditated on the ongoings of the noisy lower world. Such a Hill, so close to a great City, yet undisturbed by it, and imbued at all times with a feeling of sweeter peace, because of the immediate neighbourhood of the din and stir of which its green recess high up in the blue air never partook, seems now, in the mingled dream of imagination and memory, to have been a super-urban Paradise! But a city cannot, ought not to be, controlled in its growth; the natural beauty of this hill has had its day; now it is broken all round with wide walks, along which you might drive chariots abreast; broad flights of stone-stairs lead up along the once elastic brae-turf; and its bosom is laden with towers and temples, monuments and mausoleums. Along one side, where hanging gardens might have been, magnificent as those of the old Babylon, stretches the macadamised Royal Road to London, flanked by one receptacle for the quiet dead, and by another for the unquiet living—a churchyard and a prison dying away in a bridewell. But, making amends for such hideous deformities, with front nobly looking to the cliffs, over a dell of dwellings seen dimly through the smoke-mist, stands, sacred to the Muses, an Edifice that might have pleased the eye of Pericles! Alas, immediately below one that would have turned the brain of Palladio! Modern Athens indeed! Few are the Grecians among thy architects; those who are not Goths are Picts—and the King himself of the Painted People designed Nelson's Monument.

But who can be querulous on such a day? Weigh all its defects, designed and undesigned, and is not Edinburgh yet a noble city? Arthur's Seat! how like a lion! The magnificent range of Salisbury Crags, on which a battery might be built to blow the whole inhabitation to atoms! Our friend here, the Calton, with his mural crown! Our Castle on his Cliff! gloriously hung round with national histories along all his battlements! Do they not embosom him in a style of grandeur
[Pg 341] worthy, if such it be, of a "City of Palaces?" Call all things by their right names, in heaven and on earth. Palaces they are not—nor are they built of marble; but they are stately houses, framed of stone from Craig-Leith quarry, almost as pale as the Parian; and when the sun looks fitfully through the storm, or as now, serenely through the calm, richer than Parian in the tempestuous or the peaceful light. Never beheld we the city wearing such a majestic metropolitan aspect.

> "Ay, proudly fling thy white arms to the sea,
> Queen of the unconquer'd North!"

How near the Firth! Gloriously does it supply the want of a river. It is a river, though seeming, and sweeping into, the sea; but a river that man may never bridge; and though still now as the sky, we wish you saw it in its magnificent madness, when brought on the roarings of the stormful tide

> "Breaks the long wave that at the Pole began."

Coast-cities alone are Queens. All inland are but Tributaries. Earth's empiry belongs to the Power that sees its shadow in the sea. Two separate Cities, not twins—but one of ancient and one of modern birth—how harmoniously, in spite of form and features characteristically different, do they coalesce into one Capital! This miracle, methinks, is wrought by the Spirit of Nature on the

World of Art. Her great features subdue almost into similarity a Whole constructed of such various elements, for it is all felt to be kindred with those guardian cliffs. Those eternal heights hold the Double City together in an amity that breathes over both the same national look—the impression of the same national soul. In the olden time, the city gathered herself almost under the very wing of the Castle; for in her heroic heart she ever heard, unalarmed but watchful, the alarums of war, and that cliff, under heaven, was on earth the rock of her salvation. But now the foundation of that rock, whence yet the tranquil burgher hears the morning and the evening bugle, is beautified by gardens that love its pensive shadow, for it tames the light to flowers by rude feet untrodden, and yielding garlands for the brows of perpetual peace. Thence elegance and grace arose; and while antiquity breathes over that wilderness of antique structures picturesquely huddled along the blue line of sky—as Wilkie once finely said, like the spine of
[Pg 342] some enormous animal; yet all along this side of that unrivered and mound-divided dell, now shines a new world of radiant dwellings, declaring by their regular but not monotonous magnificence, that the same people, whose "perfervid genius" preserved them by war unhumbled among the nations in days of darkness, have now drawn a strength as invincible from the beautiful arts which have been cultivated by peace in the days of light.

And is the spirit of the inhabitation there worthy of the place inhabited? We are a Scotsman. And the great English Moralist has asked, where may a Scotsman be found who loves not the honour or the glory of his country better than truth? We are that Scotsman—though for our country would we die. Yet dearer too than life is to us the honour—if not the glory of our country; and had we a thousand lives, proudly would we lay them all down in the dust rather than give—or see given—one single stain

"Unto the silver cross, to Scotland dear,"

on which as yet no stain appears save those glorious weather-stains, that have fallen on its folds from the clouds of war and the storms of battle. Sufficient praise to the spirit of our land, that she knows how to love, admire, and rival—not in vain—the spirit of high-hearted and heroic England. Long as we and that other noble Isle

"Set as an emerald in the casing sea,"

in triple union breathe as one,

"Then come against us the whole world in arms,
And we will meet them!"

What is a people without pride? But let them know that its root rests on noble pillars; and in the whole range of strength and stateliness, what pillars are there stronger and statelier than those glorious two—Genius and Liberty? Here valour has fought—here philosophy has meditated—here poetry has sung. Are not our living yet as brave as our dead? All wisdom has not perished with the sages to whom we have built or are building monumental tombs. The muses yet love to breathe the pure mountain-air of Caledon. And have we not amongst us one myriad-minded man,
[Pg 343] whose name, without offence to that high-priest of nature, or his devoutest worshippers, may flow from our lips even when they utter that of SHAKESPEARE?

The Queen of the North has evaporated—and we again have a glimpse of the Highlands. But where's the Sun? We know not in what airt to look for him, for who knows but it may now be afternoon? It is almost dark enough for evening—and if it be not far on in the day, then we shall have thunder. What saith our repeater? One o'clock. Usually the brightest hour of all the twelve—but anything but bright at this moment. Can there be an eclipse going on—an earthquake at his toilette—or merely a brewing of storm? Let us consult our almanac. No eclipse set down for to-day—the old earthquake dwells in the neighbourhood of Comrie, and has never been known to journey thus far north—besides, he has for some years been bed-ridden; argal, there is about to be a storm. What a fool of a land-tortoise were we to crawl up to the top of a mountain, when we might have taken our choice of half-a-dozen glens with cottages in them every other mile, and a village at the end of each with a comfortable Change-house! And up which of its sides, pray, was it that we crawled? Not this one—for it is as steep as a church—and we never in our life peeped over the brink of an uglier abyss. Ay, Mister Merlin, 'tis wise of you to be flying home into your crevice—put your head below your wing, and do cease that cry.—Croak! croak! croak! Where is the sooty sinner? We hear he is on the wing—but he either sees or smells us, probably both, and the horrid gurgle in his throat is choked by some cloud. Surely that was the sughing of wings! A Bird! alighting within fifty yards of us—and, from his mode of folding his wings—an Eagle! This is too much—within fifty yards of an Eagle on his own mountain-top. Is he blind? Age darkens even an Eagle's eyes—but he is not old, for his plumage is perfect—and we see the glare of his far-keekers as he turns his head over his shoulder and regards his eyrie on the cliff. We would not shoot him for a thousand a-year for life. Not old—how do we know that? Because he is a creature who is young at a hundred—so says Audubon—Swainson—our brother James—and all shepherds. Little suspects he who is lying so near him with his Crutch. Our snuffy suit is of a colour with the
[Pg 344] storm-stained granite—and if he walk this way he will get a buffet. And he *is* walking this way—his head up, and his tail down,—not hopping like a filthy raven—but one foot before the other—like a man—like a King. We do not altogether like it—it is rather alarming—he may not be an Eagle after all—but something worse—"Hurra! ye Sky-scraper! Christopher is upon you! take that, and that, and that"—all one tumbling scream, there he goes, Crutch and all, over the edge of the Cliff. Dashed to death—but impossible for us to get the body. Whew! dashed to death indeed!

There he wheels, all on fire, round the thunder gloom. Is it electric matter in the atmosphere—or fear and wrath that illumine his wings?

We wish we were safe down. There is no wind here yet—none to speak of; but there is wind enough, to all appearance, in the region towards the west. The main body of the clouds is falling back on the reserve—and observing that movement the right wing deploys; as for the left, it is broken, and its retreat will soon be a flight. Fear is contagious—the whole army has fallen into irremediable disorder—has abandoned its commanding position—and in an hour will be self-driven into the sea. We call that a Panic.

Glory be to the corps that covers the retreat. We see now the cause of that retrograde movement. In the north-west, "far off its coming shone," and "in numbers without number numberless," lo! the adverse Host! Thrown out in front, the beautiful rifle brigade comes fleetly on, extending in open order along the vast plain between the aerial Pine-mountains to yon Fire-cliffs. The enemy marches in masses—the space between the divisions now widening and now narrowing—and as sure as we are alive we hear the sound of trumpets. The routed army has rallied and reappears—and, hark, on the extreme left a cannonade. Never before had the Unholy Alliance a finer park of artillery—and now its fire opens from the great battery in the centre, and the hurly-burly is general far and wide over the whole field of battle.

But these lead drops dancing on our bonnet tell us to take up our crutch and be off—for there it is sticking—by-and-by the waters will be in flood, and we may have to pass a night on the mountain. Down we go.

We do not call this the same side of the mountain we crawled up? There, all was purple except
[Pg 345] what was green—and we were happy to be a heather-legged body, occasionally skipping like a grasshopper on turf. Here, all rocks save stones. Get out of the way, ye ptarmigans. We hate shingle from the bottom of our —— oh dear! oh dear! but *this* is painful—sliddering on shingle away down what is anything but an inclined plane—feet foremost—accompanied with rattling debris—at railroad speed—every twenty yards or so dislodging a stone as big as oneself, who instantly joins the procession, and there they go hopping and jumping along with us, some before, some at each side, and, we shudder to think of it, some behind—well somersetted over our head, thou Grey Wackè—but mercy on us, and forgive us our sins, for if this lasts, in another minute we are all at the bottom of that pond of pitch. Take care of yourself, O'Bronte!

Here we are—sitting! How we were brought to assume this rather uneasy posture we do not pretend to say. We confine ourselves to the fact. Sitting beside a Tarn. Our escape appears to have been little less than miraculous, and must have been mainly owing, under Providence, to the Crutch. Who's laughing? 'Tis you, you old Witch, in hood and cloak, crouching on the cliff as if you were warming your hands at the fire. Hold your tongue—and you may sit there to all eternity if you choose—you cloud-ridden hag! No—there will be a blow-up some day—as there evidently has been here before now; but no more Geology—from the tarn, who is a 'tarnation deep 'un, runs a rill, and he offers to be our guide down to the Low Country.

Why, this does not look like the same day. No gloom here, but a green serenity—not so poetical perhaps, but, in a human light, far preferable to a "brown horror." No sulphureous smell—"the air is balm." No sultriness—how cool the circulating medium! In our youth, when we had wings on our feet, and were a feathered Mercury—Cherub we never were nor Cauliflower—by flying, in our weather-wisdom, from glen to glen, we have made one day a whole week—with, at the end, a Sabbath. For all over the really moun*taineous* region of the Highlands, every glen has its own indescribable kind of day—all vaguely comprehended under the One Day that may happen to be uppermost; and Lowland meteorologists, meeting in the evening after a long absence—having,
[Pg 346] perhaps, parted that morning—on comparing notes lose their temper, and have been even known to proceed to extremities in defence of facts well established of a most contradictory and irreconcilable nature.

Here is an angler fishing with the fly. In the glen beyond that range he would have used the minnow—and in the huge hollow behind our friends to the South-east, he might just as well try the bare hook—though it is not universally true that trouts don't rise when there is thunder. Let us see how he throws. What a cable! Flies! Tufts of heather. Hollo, you there; friend, what sport? What sport we say? No answer; are you deaf? Dumb? He flourishes his flail and is mute. Let us try what a whack on the back may elicit. Down he flings it, and staring on us with a pair of most extraordinary eyes, and a beard like a goat, is off like a shot. Alas! we have frightened the wretch out of his few poor wits, and he may kill himself among the rocks. He is indeed an idiot—an innocent. We remember seeing him near this very spot forty years ago—and he was not young then—they often live to extreme old age. No wonder he was terrified—for we are duly sensible of the *outre tout ensemble* we must have suddenly exhibited in the glimmer that visits those weak red eyes—he is an albino. That whack was rash, to say the least of it—our Crutch was too much for him; but we hear him whining—and moaning—and, good God! there he is on his knees with hands clasped in supplication—"Dinna kill me—dinna kill me—'am silly—'am silly—and folk say 'am auld—auld—auld." The harmless creature is convinced we are not going to kill him—takes from our hand what he calls his fishing-rod and tackle—and laughs like an owl. "Ony meat—ony meat—ony meat?" "Yes, innocent, there is some meat in this wallet, and you and we shall have our dinner." "Ho! ho! ho! ho! a smelled, a smelled! a can say the Lord's Prayer." "What's your name, my man?" "Daft Dooggy the Haveril." "Sit down, Dugald." A sad mystery all this—a drop of water on the brain will do it—so wise physicians say, and we believe it. For all that, the brain is not the soul. He takes the food with a kind of howl—and carries it away to some distance,

muttering "a aye eats by mysel!" He is saying grace! And now he is eating like an animal. 'Tis a saying of old, "Their lives are hidden with God!"

[Pg 347] This lovely little glen is almost altogether new to us: yet so congenial its quiet to the longings of our heart, that all at once it is familiar to us as if we had sojourned here for days—as if that cottage were our dwelling-place—and we had retired hither to await the close. Were we never here before—in the olden and golden time? Those dips in the summits of the mountain seem to recall from oblivion memories of a morning all the same as this, enjoyed by us with a different joy, almost as if then we were a different being, joy then the very element in which we drew our breath, satisfied now to live in the atmosphere of sadness often thickened with grief. 'Tis thus that there grows a confusion among the past times in the dormitory—call it not the burial-place—overshadowed by sweet or solemn imagery—in the inland regions; nor can we question the recollections as they rise—being ghosts, they are silent—their coming and their going alike a mystery—but sometimes—as now—they are happy hauntings—and age is almost gladdened into illusion of returning youth.

'Tis a lovely little glen as in all the Highlands—yet we know not that a painter would see in it the subject of a picture—for the sprinklings of young trees have been sown capriciously by nature, and there seems no reason why on that hill-side, and not on any other, should survive the remains of an old wood. Among the multitude of knolls a few are eminent with rocks and shrubs, but there is no central assemblage, and the green wilderness wantons in such disorder that you might believe the pools there to be, not belonging as they are to the same running water, but each itself a small separate lakelet fed by its own spring. True, that above its homehills there are mountains—and these are cliffs on which the eagle might not disdain to build—but the range wheels away in its grandeur to face a loftier region, of which we see here but the summits swimming in the distant clouds.

God bless that hut! and have its inmates in His holy keeping! But what Fairy is this coming unawares on us sitting by the side of the most lucid of little wells? Set down thy pitcher, my child, and let us have a look at thy happiness—for though thou mayest wonder at our words, and think us a strange old man, coming and going, once and for ever, to thee and thine a shadow and no more, yet lean thy head towards us that we may lay our hands on it and bless it—and promise, as
[Pg 348] thou art growing up here, sometimes to think of the voice that spake to thee by the Birk-tree well. Love, fear, and serve God, as the Bible teaches—and whatever happens thee, quake not, but put thy trust in Heaven.

Do not be afraid of him, sweet one! O'Bronte would submit to be flayed alive rather than bite a child: see, he offers you a paw—take it without trembling; nay, he will let thee ride on his back, my pretty dear—won't thou, O'Bronte?—and scamper with thee up and down the knolls like her coal-black charger rejoicing to bear the Fairy Queen. Thou tellest us thy father and mother, sisters and brothers, all are dead; yet with a voice cheerful as well as plaintive. Smile—laugh—sing—as thou wert doing a minute ago—as thou hast done for many a morning—and shalt do for many a morning more on thy way to the well—in the woods—on the braes—in the house,—often all by thyself when the old people are out of doors not far off—or when sometimes they have for a whole day been from home out of the glen. Forget not our words—and no evil can befall thee that may not, weak as thou art, be borne,—and nothing wicked that is allowed to walk the earth will ever be able to hurt a hair on thy head.

My stars! what a lovely little animal! A tame fawn, by all that is wild—kneeling down—to drink—no—no—at his lady's feet. The collie catched it—thou sayest—on the edge of the Auld wood—and by the time its wounds were cured, it seemed to have forgot its mother, and soon learnt to follow thee about to far-off places quite out of sight of this—and to play gamesome tricks like a creature born among human dwellings. What! it dances like a kid—does it—and sometimes you put a garland of wildflowers round its neck—and pursue it like a huntress, as it pretends to be making its escape into the forest?

Look, child, here is a pretty green purse for you, that opens and shuts with a spring—so—and in it there is a gold coin, called a sovereign, and a crooked sixpence. Don't blush—that was a graceful curtsy. Keep the crooked sixpence for good-luck, and you never will want. With the yellow fellow buy a Sunday gown and a pair of Sunday shoes, and what else you like; and now—you two, lead the way—try a race to the door—and old Christopher North will carry the pitcher—balancing it on his head—thus—ha! O'Bronte galloping along as umpire. The Fawn has it, and by a neck has beat
[Pg 349] Camilla.

We shall lunch ere we go—and lunch well too—for this is a poor man's, not a pauper's hut, and Heaven still grants his prayer—"give us this day our daily bread." Sweeter—richer bannocks of barley-meal never met the mouth of mortal man—nor more delicious butter. "We salt it, sir, for a friend in Glasgow—but now and then we tak a bite of the fresh—do oblige us a', sir, by eatin, and you'll maybe find the mutton-ham no that bad, though I've kent it fatter—and, as you hae a lang walk afore you, excuse me, sir, for being sae bauld as to suggeest a glass o' speerit in your milk. The gudeman is temperate, and he's been sae a' his life—but we keep it for a cordial—and that bottle—to be sure it's a gey big ane—and would thole replenishing—has lasted us sin' Whitsuntide."

So presseth us to take care of number one the gudewife, while the gudeman, busy as ourselves, eyes her with a well-pleased face, but saith nothing, and the bonny wee bit lassie sits on her stool at the wunnock wi' her coggie ready to do any service at a look, and supping little or nothing, out of bashfulness in presence of Christopher North, who she believes is a good, and thinks may,

perhaps, be some great man. Our third bannock has had the gooseberry jam laid on it thick by "the gudewife's ain hand,"—and we suspect at that last wide bite we have smeared the corners of our mouth—but it will only be making matters worse to attempt licking it off with our tongue. Pussie! thou hast a cunning look—purring on our knees—and though those glass een o' thine are blinking at the cream on the saucer—with which thou jalousest we intend to let thee wet thy whiskers,—we fear thou mak'st no bones of the poor birdies in the brake, and that many an unlucky leveret has lost its wits at the spring of such a tiger. Cats are queer creatures, and have an instinctive liking to Warlocks.

And these two old people have survived all their children—sons and daughters! They have told us the story of their life—and as calmly as if they had been telling of the trials of some other pair. Perhaps, in our sympathy, though we say but little, they feel a strength that is not always theirs—perhaps it is a relief from silent sorrow to speak to one who is a stranger to them, and yet, as
[Pg 350] they may think, a brother in affliction—but prayer like thanksgiving assures us that there is in this hut a Christian composure, far beyond the need of our pity, and sent from a region above the stars.

There cannot be a cleaner cottage. Tidiness, it is pleasant to know, has for a good many years past been establishing itself in Scotland among the minor domestic virtues. Once established it will never decay; for it must be felt to brighten, more than could be imagined by our fathers, the whole aspect of life. No need for any other household fairy to sweep this floor. An orderly creature we have seen she is, from all her movements out and in doors—though the guest of but an hour. They have told us that they had known what are called better days—and were once in a thriving way of business in a town. But they were born and bred in the country; and their manners, not rustic but rural, breathe of its serene and simple spirit—at once Lowland and Highland—to us a pleasant union, not without a certain charm of grace.

What loose leaves are those lying on the Bible? A few odd numbers of the Scottish Christian Herald. We shall take care, our friends, that all the Numbers, bound in three large volumes, shall, ere many weeks elapse, be lying for you at the Manse. Let us recite to you, our worthy friends, a small sacred Poem, which we have by heart. Christian, keep your eye on the page, and if we go wrong, do not fear to set us right. Can you say many psalms and hymns? But we need not ask—for

"Piety is sweet to infant minds;"

what they love they remember—for how easy—how happy—to get dear things by heart! Happiest of all—the things held holy on earth as in heaven—because appertaining here to Eternal Life.

TO THE SCOTTISH CHRISTIAN HERALD.

BY THE REV. DUNCAN GRANT, A.M., MINISTER OF FORRES.

"Beauteous on our heath-clad mountains,
May our Herald's feet appear;
Sweet, by silver lakes and fountains,
May his voice be to our ear.
Let the tenants of our rocks,
Shepherds watching o'er their flocks,
Village swain and peasant boy,
Thee salute with songs of joy!

[Pg 351] Christian Herald! spread the story
Of Redemption's wondrous plan;
'Tis Jehovah's brightest glory,
'Tis His highest gift to man;
Angels on their harps of gold,
Love its glories to unfold;
Heralds who its influence wield,
Make the waste a fruitful field.

To the fount of mercy soaring,
On the wings of faith and love;
And the depths of grace exploring,
By the light shed from above;
Show us whence life's waters flow,
And where trees of blessing grow,
Bearing fruit of heavenly bloom,
Breathing Eden's rich perfume.

Love to God and man expressing,
In thy course of mercy speed;
Lead to springs of joy and blessing,
And with heavenly manna feed
Scotland's children high and low,
Till the Lord they truly know:
As to us our fathers told,

He was known by them of old.

To the young, in season vernal,
Jesus in His grace disclose;
As the tree of life eternal,
'Neath whose shade they may repose,
Shielded from the noontide ray,
And from ev'ning's tribes of prey;
And refresh'd with fruits of love,
And with music from above.

Christian Herald! may the blessing
Of the Highest thee attend,
That, this chiefest boon possessing,
Thou may'st prove thy country's friend
Tend to make our land assume
Something of its former bloom,
When the dews of heaven were seen
Sparkling on its pastures green,

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When the voice of warm devotion
To the throne of God arose—
Mighty as the sound of ocean,
Calm as nature in repose;
Sweeter, than when Araby
Perfume breathes from flow'r and tree,
Rising 'bove the shining sphere,
To Jehovah's list'ning ear."

It is time we were going—but we wish to hear how thy voice sounds, Christian, when it reads. So read these same verses, first "into yourself," and then to us. They speak of mercies above your comprehension, and ours, and all men's; for they speak of the infinite goodness and mercy of God—but though thou hast committed in thy short life no sins, or but small, towards thy fellow-creatures—how couldst thou? yet thou knowest we are all sinful in His eyes, and thou knowest on whose merits is the reliance of our hopes of Heaven. Thank you, Christian. Three minutes from two by your house-clock—she gives a clear warning—and three minutes from two by our watch—rather curious this coincidence to such a nicety—we must take up our Crutch and go. Thank thee, bonny wee Christian—in wi' the bannocks intil our pouch—but we fear you must take us for a sad glutton.

"Zickety, dickety, dock,
The mouse ran up the nock;
The nock struck one,
Down the mouse ran,
Zickety, dickety, dock."

Come closer, Christian—and let us put it to thine ear. What a pretty face of wonder at the chime! Good people, you have work to do in the hay-field—let us part—God bless you—Good-by—farewell!

Half an hour since we parted—we cannot help being a little sad—and fear we were not so kind to the old people—not so considerate as we ought to have been—and perhaps, though pleased with us just now, they may say to one another before evening that we were too merry for our years. Nonsense. We were all merry together—daft Uncle among the lave—for the creature came

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stealing in and sat down on his own stool in the corner; and what's the use of wearing a long face at all times like a Methodist minister? A Methodist minister! Why, John Wesley was facete, and Whitfield humorous, and Rowland Hill witty—though he, we believe, was not a Methody; yet were their hearts fountains of tears—and ours is not a rock—if it be, 'tis the rock of Horeb.

Ha, Hamish! Here we are beneath the Merlin Crag. What sport? Why, five brace is not so much amiss—and they are thumpers. Fifteen brace in all. Ducks and flappers. Seven leash. We are getting on.

"But what are these,
So wither'd and so wild in their attire;
That look not like th' inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips:—you should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so!"

Shakespeare is not familiar, we find, among the natives of Loch-Etive side—else these figures would reply,

"All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Glammis!"

But not satisfied with laying their choppy fingers on their skinny lips, they now put them to their plooky noses, having first each dipped fore and thumb in his mull, and gibber Gaelic, to us unintelligible as the quacking of ducks, when a Christian auditor has been prevented from catching its meaning by the gobbling of turkeys.

Witches at the least, and about to prophesy to us some pleasant events, that are to terminate disastrously in after years. Is there no nook of earth perfectly solitary—but must natural or supernatural footsteps haunt the remotest and most central places? But now we shall have our fortunes told in choice Erse, for sure these are the Children of the Mist, and perhaps they will favour us with a running commentary on Ossian. Stout, grim, heather-legged bodies they are, one and all, and luckily we are provided with snuff and tobacco sufficient for the whole crew. Were they even ghosts they will not refuse a sneeshin, and a Highland spirit will look picturesque
[Pg 354] puffing a cigar!—Hark! we know them and their vocation. These are the Genii of the Mountain-dew; and their hidden enginery, depend on't, is not far off, but buried in the bowels of some brae. See!—a faint mist dissipating itself over the heather! There—at work, shaming the idle waste, and in use and wont to break even the Sabbath-day, is a STILL!

Do we look like Excisemen? The Crutch has indeed a suspicious family resemblance to a gauging-rod; and literary characters, like us, may well be mistaken for the Supervisor himself. But the smuggler's eye knows his enemy at a glance, as the fox knows a hound; and the whispering group discern at once that we are of a nobler breed. That one fear dispelled, Highland hospitality bids us welcome, even into the mouth of the malt-kiln, and, with a smack on our loof, the Chief volunteers to initiate us into the grand mysteries of the Worm.

The turf-door is flung outward on its lithe hinges, and already what a gracious smell! In we go, ushered by unbonneted Celts, gentlemen in manners wherever the kilt is worn; for the tartan is the symbol of courtesy, and Mac a good password all the world over between man and man. Lowland eyes are apt to water in the peat-reek, but ere long we shall have another "drappie in our ee," and drink to the Clans in the "uuchristened cretur." What a sad neglect in our education, among all the acquired lingoes extant, to have overlooked the Gaelic! Yet nobody who has ever heard P. R. preach an Erse Sermon, need despair of discoursing in that tongue after an hour's practice; so let us forget, if possible, every word of English, and the language now needed will rise up in its place.

And these figures in men's coats and women's petticoats are females? We are willing to believe it in spite of their beards. One of them absolutely suckling a child! Thank you, my dear sir, but we cannot swallow the contents of that quaich. Yet, let us try.—A little too warm, and rather harsh; but meat and drink to a man of age. That seems to be goat-milk cheese, and the scones are barley; and they and the speerit will wash one another down in an amicable plea, nor quarrel at close quarters. Honey too—heather-honey of this blessed year's produce. Hecate's forefinger mixes it in a quaich with mountain-dew—and that is Atholl-brose?

[Pg 355] There cannot be the least doubt in the world that the Hamiltonian system of teaching languages is one of the best ever invented. It will enable any pupil of common-run powers of attention to read any part of the New Testament in Greek in some twenty lessons of an hour each. But what is that to the principle of the Worm? Half a blessed hour has not elapsed since we entered into the door of this hill-house, and we offer twenty to one that we read Ossian *ad aperturam libri*, in the original Gaelic. We feel as if we could translate the works of Jeremy Bentham into that tongue—ay, even Francis Maximus Macnab's Theory of the Universe. We guarantee ourselves to do both, this identical night before we go to sleep, and if the printers are busy during the intermediate hours, to correct the press in the morning. Why, there are not above five thousand roots—but we are getting a little gizzy—into a state of civilation in the wilderness—and, gentlemen, let us drink —in solemn silence—the "Memory of Fingal."

O St Cecilia! we did not lay our account with a bagpipe! What is the competition of pipers in the Edinburgh Theatre, small as it is, to this damnable drone in an earth-cell, eight feet by six! Yet while the drums of our ears are continuing to split like old parchment title-deeds to lands nowhere existing, and all our animal economy, from finger to toe, is one agonising dirl, Æolus himself sits as proud as Lucifer in Pandemonium; and as the old soldiers keep tending the Worm in the reek as if all were silence, the male-looking females, and especially the he-she with the imp at her breast, nod, and smirk, and smile, and snap their fingers, in a challenge to a straspey—and, by all that is horrible, a red hairy arm is round our neck, and we are half choked with the fumes of whisky-kisses. An hour ago we were dreaming of Malvina! and here she is with a vengeance, while we in the character of Oscar are embraced till almost all the Lowland breath in our body expires.

And this is STILL-LIFE.

Extraordinary it is, that, go where we will, we are in a wonderfully short time discovered to be Christopher North. A few years ago, the instant we found our feet in a mine in Cornwall, after a descent of about one-third the bored earth's diameter, we were saluted by name by a grim
[Pg 356] Monops who had not seen the upper regions for years, preferring the interior of the planet; and forthwith "Christopher North," "Christopher North," reverberated along the galleries, while the gnomes came flocking in all directions, with safety-lamps, to catch a glimpse of the famous Editor. On another occasion, we remember, when coasting the south of Ireland in our schooner, falling in with a boat like a cockle-shell, well out of the Bay of Bantry, and of the three half-naked Paddies that were ensnaring the finny race, two smoked us at the helm, and bawled up, "Kitty go bragh!" Were we to go up in a balloon, and by any accident descend in the interior of Africa, we

have not the slightest doubt that Sultan Belloo would know us in a jiffy, having heard our person so frequently described by Major Denham and Captain Clapperton. So we are known, it seems, in the Still—by the men of the Worm? Yes—the principal proprietor in the concern is a schoolmaster over about Loch-Earn-Head—a man of no mean literary abilities, and an occasional contributor to the Magazine. He visits The Shop in breeches—but now mounts the kilt—and astonishes us by the versatility of his talents. In one of the most active working bees we recognise a cadie, formerly in Auld Reekie ycleped "The Despatch," now retired to the Braes of Balquhidder, and breathing strongly the spirit of his youth. With that heather-houghed gentleman, fiery-tressed as the God of Day, we were, for the quarter of a century that we held a large grazing farm, in the annual practice of drinking a gill at the Falkirk Tryst; and—wonderful, indeed, to think how old friends meet—we were present at the amputation of the right leg of that timber-toed hero with the bushy whiskers—in the Hospital of Rosetta—having accompanied Sir David Baird's splendid Indian army into Egypt.

Shying, for the present, the question in Political Economy, and viewing the subject in a moral, social, and poetical light, what, pray, is the true influence of THE STILL? It makes people idle. Idle? What species of idleness is that which consists in being up night and day—traversing moors and mountains in all weathers—constantly contriving the most skilful expedients for misleading the Excise, and which, on some disastrous day, when dragoons suddenly shake the desert—when all is lost except honour—hundreds of gallons of wash (alas! alas! a-day!) wickedly wasted among
[Pg 357] the heather-roots, and the whole beautiful Apparatus lying battered and spiritless in the sun beneath the accursed blows of the Pagans—returns, after a few weeks set apart to natural grief and indignation, with unabated energy, to the self-same work, even within view of the former ruins, and pouring out a libation of the first amalgamated hotness that deserves the name of speerit, devotes the whole Board of Excise to the Infernal Gods?

The argument of idleness has not a leg to stand on, and falls at once to the ground.—But the Still makes men dishonest. We grant that there is a certain degree of dishonesty in cheating the Excise; and we shall allow yourself to fix it, who give as fine a caulker from the sma' still as any moral writer on Honesty with whom we have the pleasure occasionally to take a family dinner. But the poor fellows either grow or purchase their own malt. They do not steal it; and many is the silent benediction that we have breathed over a bit patch of barley, far up on its stony soil among the hills, bethinking us that it would yield up its precious spirit unexcised! Neither do they charge for it any very extravagant price—for what is twelve, fourteen, twenty shillings a-gallon for such drink divine as is now steaming before us in that celestial caldron?

Having thus got rid of the charge of idleness and dishonesty, nothing more needs to be said on the Moral Influence of the Still; and we come now, in the second place, to consider it in a Social Light. The biggest bigot will not dare to deny, that without whisky the Highlands of Scotland would be uninhabitable. And if all the population were gone, or extinct, where then would be your social life? Smugglers are seldom drunkards; neither are they men of boisterous manners or savage dispositions. In general, they are grave, sedate, peaceable characters, not unlike elders of the Kirk. Even Excisemen admit them, except on rare occasions when human patience is exhausted, to be merciful. Four pleasanter men do not now exist in the bosom of the earth, than the friends with whom we are now on the hobnob. Stolen waters are sweet—a profound and beautiful reflection—and no doubt originally made by some peripatetic philosopher at a Still. The very soul of the strong drink evaporates with the touch of the gauger's wand. An evil day would it
[Pg 358] indeed be for Scotland, that should witness the extinguishment of all her free and unlicensed mountain stills! The charm of Highland hospitality would be wan and withered, and the *doch-an-dorras*, instead of a blessing, would sound like a ban.

We have said that smugglers are never drunkards, not forgetting that general rules are proved by exceptions; nay, we go farther, and declare that the Highlanders are the soberest people in Europe. Whisky is to them a cordial, a medicine, a life-preserver. Chief of the umbrella and wraprascal! were you ever in the Highlands? We shall produce a single day from any of the fifty-two weeks of the year that will out-argue you on the present subject, in half an hour. What sound is that? The rushing of rain from heaven, and the sudden outcry of a thousand waterfalls. Look through a chink in the bothy, and far as you can see for the mists, the heath-covered desert is steaming like the smoke of a smouldering fire. Winds biting as winter come sweeping on their invisible chariots armed with scythes, down every glen, and scatter far and wide over the mountains the spray of the raging lochs. Now you have a taste of the summer cold, more dangerous far than that of Yule, for it often strikes "aitches" into the unprepared bones, and congeals the blood of the shelterless shepherd on the hill. But one glorious gurgle of the speerit down the throat of a storm-stayed man! and bold as a rainbow he faces the reappearing sun, and feels assured (though there he may be mistaken) of dying at a good old age.

Then think, oh think, how miserably poor are most of those men who have fought our battles, and so often reddened their bayonets in defence of our liberties and our laws! Would you grudge them a little whisky? And depend upon it, a little is the most, taking one day of the year with another, that they imbibe. You figure to yourself two hundred thousand Highlanders, taking snuff, and chewing tobacco, and drinking whisky, all year long. Why, one pound of snuff, two of tobacco, and two gallons of whisky, would be beyond the mark of the yearly allowance of every grown-up man! Thousands never taste such luxuries at all—meal and water, potatoes and salt, their only food. The animal food, sir, and the fermented liquors of various kinds, Foreign and British, which to our certain knowledge you have swallowed within the last twelve months, would
[Pg 359] have sufficed for fifty families in our abstemious region of mist and snow. We have known you

drink a bottle of champagne, a bottle of port, and two bottles of claret, frequently at a sitting, equal, in prime cost, to three gallons of the best Glenlivet! And YOU (who, by the way, are an English clergyman, a circumstance we had entirely forgotten, and have published a Discourse against Drunkenness, dedicated to a Bishop) pour forth the Lamentations of Jeremiah over the sinful multitude of Small Stills! Hypocrisy! hypocrisy! where shalt thou hide thy many-coloured sides?

Whisky is found by experience to be, on the whole, a blessing in so misty and mountainous a country. It destroys disease and banishes death; without some such stimulant the people would die of cold. You will see a fine old Gael, of ninety or a hundred, turn up his little finger to a caulker with an air of patriarchal solemnity altogether scriptural; his great-grandchildren eyeing him with the most respectful affection, and the youngest of them toddling across the floor, to take the quaich from his huge, withered, and hairy hand, which he lays on the amiable Joseph's sleek craniology, with a blessing heartier through the Glenlivet, and with all the earnestness of religion. There is no disgrace in getting drunk—in the Highlands—not even if you are of the above standing—for where the people are so poor, such a state is but of rare occurrence; while it is felt all over the land of sleet and snow, that a 'drap o' the cretur' is a very necessary of life, and that but for its 'dew' the mountains would be uninhabitable. At fairs, and funerals, and marriages, and suchlike merry meetings, sobriety is sent to look after the sheep; but, except on charitable occasions of that kind, sobriety stays at home among the peat-reek, and is contented with crowdy. Who that ever stooped his head beneath a Highland hut would grudge a few gallons of Glenlivet to its poor but unrepining inmates? The seldomer they get drunk the better—and it is but seldom they do so; but let the rich man—the monied moralist, who bewails and begrudges the Gael a modicum of the liquor of life, remember the doom of a certain Dives, who, in a certain place that shall now be nameless, cried, but cried in vain, for a drop of water. Lord bless the Highlanders, say we, for the most harmless, hospitable, peaceable, brave people that ever
[Pg 360] despised breeches, blew pibrochs, took invincible standards, and believed in the authenticity of Ossian's poems. In that pure and lofty region ignorance is not, as elsewhere, the mother of vice—penury cannot repress the noble rage of the mountaineer as "he sings aloud old songs that are the music of the heart;" while superstition herself has an elevating influence, and will be suffered, even by religion, to show her shadowy shape and mutter her wild voice through the gloom that lies on the heads of the remote glens, and among the thousand caves of echo in her iron-bound coasts, dashed on for ever—night and day—summer and winter—by those sleepless seas, who have no sooner laid their heads on the pillow than up they start with a howl that cleaves the Orcades, and away off in search of shipwrecks round the corner of Cape Wrath.

In the third place, what shall we say of the poetical influence of STILLS? What more poetical life can there be than that of the men with whom we are now quaffing the barley-bree? They live with the moon and stars. All the night winds are their familiars. If there be such things as ghosts, and fairies, and apparitions—and that there are, no man who has travelled much by himself after sunset will deny, except from the mere love of contradiction—they see them; or when invisible, which they generally are, hear them—here—there—everywhere—in sky, forest, cave, or hollow-sounding world immediately beneath their feet. Many poets walk these wilds; nor do their songs perish. They publish not with Blackwood or with Murray—but for centuries on centuries, such songs are the preservers, often the sources, of the oral traditions that go glimmering and gathering down the stream of years. Native are they to the mountains as the blooming heather, nor shall they ever cease to invest them with the light of poetry—in defiance of large farms, Methodist preachers, and the Caledonian Canal.

People are proud of talking of solitude. It redounds, they opine, to the honour of their great-mindedness to be thought capable of living, for an hour or two, by themselves, at a considerable distance from knots or skeins of their fellow-creatures. Byron, again, thought he showed his superiority by swearing as solemnly as a man can do in the Spenserian stanza that

> "To sit alone, and muse o'er flood and fell,"

[Pg 361] has nothing whatever to do with solitude—and that, if you wish to know and feel what solitude really is, you must go to Almack's.

> "This is to be alone,—this, this is solitude."

His Lordship's opinions were often peculiar—but the passage has been much admired; therefore we are willing to believe that the Great Desert is, in point of loneliness, unable to stand a philosophical, much less a poetical comparison, with a well-frequented Fancy-ball. But is the statement not borne out by facts? Zoology is on its side—more especially two of its most interesting branches, Entomology and Ornithology.

Go to a desert and clap your back against a cliff. Do you think yourself alone? What a ninny! Your great clumsy splay feet are bruising to death a batch of beetles. See that spider whom you have widowed, running up and down your elegant leg, in distraction and despair, bewailing the loss of a husband who, however savage to the ephemerals, had always smiled sweetly upon her. Meanwhile your shoulders have crushed a colony of small red ants settled in a moss city beautifully roofed with lichens—and that accounts for the sharp tickling behind your ear, which you keep scratching, no Solomon, in ignorance of the cause of that effect. Should you sit down—we must beg to draw a veil over your hurdies, which at the moment extinguish a fearful amount of animal life—creation may be said to groan under them; and, insect as you are yourself, you are defrauding millions of insects of their little day. All the while you are supposing yourself alone!

Now, are you not, as we hinted, a prodigious ninny? But the whole wilderness—as you choose to call it—is crawling with various life. London with its million and a half of inhabitants—including of course the suburbs—is, compared with it, an empty joke. Die—and you will soon be picked to the bones. The air swarms with sharpers—and an insurrection of radicals will attack your corpse from the worm-holes of the earth. Corbies, ravens, hawks, eagles, all the feathered furies of beak and bill, will come flying ere sunset to anticipate the maggots, and carry your remains—if you will allow us to call them so—over the whole of Argyllshire in many living sepulchres. We confess ourselves unable to see the solitude of this—and begin to agree with Byron, that a man is less
[Pg 362] crowded at a masquerade.

But the same subject may be illustrated less tragically, and even with some slight comic effect. A man among mountains is often surrounded on all sides with mice and moles. What cosy nests do the former construct at the roots of heather, among tufts of grass in the rushes, and the moss on the greensward! As for the latter, though you think you know a mountain from a molehill, you are much mistaken; for what is a mountain, in many cases, but a collection of molehills—and of fairy knolls?—which again introduce a new element into the composition, and show, in still more glaring colours, your absurdity in supposing yourself to be in solitude. The "Silent People" are around you at every step. You may not see them—for they are dressed in invisible green; but they see you, and that unaccountable whispering and buzzing sound one often hears in what we call the wilderness, what is it, or what can it be, but the fairies making merry at your expense, pointing out to each other the extreme silliness of your meditative countenance, and laughing like to split at your fond conceit of being alone among a multitude of creatures far wiser than yourself.

But should all this fail to convince you that you are never less alone than when you think yourself alone, and that a man never knows what it is to be in the very heart of life till he leaves London, and takes a walk in Glen-Etive—suppose yourself to have been leaning with your back against that knoll, dreaming of the far-off race of men, when all at once the support gives way inwards, and you tumble head over heels in among a snug coterie of kilted Celts, in the very act of creating Glenlivet in a great warlock's caldron, seething to the top with the Spirit of Life!

Such fancies as these, among many others, were with us in the Still. But a glimmering and a humming and a dizzy bewilderment hangs over that time and place, finally dying away into oblivion. Here are we sitting in a glade of a birch-wood in what must be Gleno—some miles from the Still. Hamish asleep, as usual, whenever he lies down, and all the dogs yowffing in dreams, and Surefoot standing with his long beard above ours, almost the same in longitude. We have been more, we suspect, than half-seas over, and are now lying on the shore of sobriety, almost a
[Pg 363] wreck. The truth is, that the new spirit is even more dangerous than the new light. Both at first dazzle, then obfuscate, and lastly darken into temporary death. There is, we fear, but one word of one syllable in the English language that could fully express our late condition. Let our readers solve the enigma. Oh! those quaichs! By

> "What drugs, what spells,
> What conjurations, and what mighty magic"

was Christopher overthrown! A strange confusion of sexes, as of men in petticoats and women in breeches—gowns transmogrified into jackets—caps into bonnets—and thick naked hairy legs into slim ankles decent in hose—all somewhere whirling and dancing by, dim and obscure, to the sound of something groaning and yelling, sometimes inarticulately, as if it came from something instrumental, and then mixed up with a wild gibberish, as if shrieking, somehow or other, from living lips, human and brute—for a dream of yowling dogs is over all—utterly confounds us as we strive to muster in recollection the few last hours that have passed tumultuously through our brain—and then a wide black moor, sometimes covered with day, sometimes with night, stretches around us, hemmed in on all sides by the tops of mountains seeming to reel in the sky. Frequent flashes of fire, and a whirring as of the wings of birds—but sound and sight alike uncertain—break again upon our dream. Let us not mince the matter—we can afford the confession—we have been overtaken by liquor—sadly intoxicated—out with it at once! Frown not, fairest of all sweet—for we lay our calamity, not to the charge of the Glenlivet circling in countless quaichs, but at the door of that inveterate enemy to sobriety—the Fresh Air.

But now we are as sober as a judge. Pity our misfortune—rather than forgive our sin. We entered that Still in a State of innocence before the Fall. Where we fell, we know not—in divers ways and sundry places—between that magic cell on the breast of Benachochie, and this glade in Gleno. But

> "There are worse things in life than a fall among heather."

Surefoot, we suppose, kept himself tolerably sober—and O'Bronte, at each successive cloit, must have assisted us to remount—for Hamish, from his style of sleeping, must have been as bad as his
[Pg 364] master; and, after all, it is wonderful to think how we got here—over hags and mosses, and marshes, and quagmires, like those in which "armies whole have sunk." But the truth is, that never in the whole course of our lives—and that course has been a strange one—did we ever so often as once lose our way. Set us down blindfolded on Zahara, and we will beat the caravan to Timbuctoo. Something or other mysteriously indicative of the right direction touches the soles of our feet in the shape of the ground they tread; and even when our souls have gone soaring far away, or have sunk within us, still have our feet pursued the shortest and the safest path that leads to the bourne of our pilgrimage. Is not that strange? But not stranger surely than the flight

of the bee, on his first voyage over the coves of the wilderness to the far-off heather-bells—or of the dove that is sent by some Jew stock-jobber, to communicate to Dutchmen the rise or fall of the funds, from London to Hamburg, from the clear shores of silver Thames to the muddy shallows of the Zuyder Zee.

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THE MOORS.

FLIGHT FOURTH—DOWN RIVER AND UP LOCH.

Let us inspect the state of Brown Bess. Right barrel empty—left barrel—what is the meaning of this?—crammed to the muzzle! Ay, that comes of visiting Stills. We have been snapping away at the coveys and single birds all over the moor, without so much as a pluff, with the right-hand cock—and then, imagining that we had fired, have kept loading away at the bore to the left, till, see! the ramrod absolutely stands upright in the air, with only about three inches hidden in the hollow! What a narrow—a miraculous escape has the world had of losing Christopher North! Had he drawn that trigger instead of this, Brown Bess would have burst to a moral certainty, and blown the old gentleman piecemeal over the heather. "In the midst of life we are in death!" Could we but know one in a hundred of the close approachings of the skeleton, we should lead a life of perpetual shudder. Often and often do his bony fingers almost clutch our throat, or his foot is put out to give us a cross-buttock. But a saving arm pulls him back, ere we have seen so much as his shadow. We believe all this—but the belief that comes not from something steadfastly present before our eyes, is barren; and thus it is, since believing is not seeing, that we walk hoodwinked nearly all our days, and worst of all blindness is that of ingratitude and forgetfulness of Him whose shield is for ever over us, and whose mercy shall be with us in the world beyond the grave.

By all that is most beautifully wild in animated nature, a Roe! a Roe! Shall we slay him where he stands, or let him vanish in silent glidings in among his native woods? What a fool for asking ourselves such a question! Slay him where he stands to be sure—for many pleasant seasons hath
[Pg 366] he led in his leafy lairs, a life of leisure, delight, and love, and the hour is come when he must sink down on his knees in a sudden and unpainful death—fair sylvan dreamer! We have drawn that multitudinous shot—and both barrels of Brown Bess now are loaded with ball—for Hamish is yet lying with his head on the rifle. Whiz! whiz! one is through lungs, and another through neck—and seemingly rather to sleep than die (so various are the many modes of expiration!)

> "In quietness he lays him down
> Gently, as a weary wave
> Sinks, when the summer breeze has died,
> Against an anchor'd vessel's side."

Ay—Hamish—you may start to your feet—and see realised the vision of your sleep. What a set of distracted dogs! But O'Bronte first catches sight of the quarry—and clearing, with grasshopper spangs, the patches of stunted coppice, stops stock-still beside the roe in the glade, as if admiring and wondering at the beauty of the fair spotted creature! Yes, dogs have a sense of the beautiful. Else how can you account for their loving so to lie down at the feet and lick the hands of the virgin whose eyes are mild, and forehead meek, and hair of placid sunshine, rather than act the same part towards ugly women, who, coarser and coarser in each successive widow-hood, when at their fourth husband are beyond expression hideous, and felt to be so by the whole canine tribe? Spenser must have seen some dog like O'Bronte lying at the feet and licking the hand of some virgin—sweet reader, like thyself—else never had he painted the posture of that Lion who guarded through Fairyland

> "Heavenly Una and her milk-white lamb."

A divine line of Wordsworth's, which we shall never cease quoting on to the last of our inditings, even to our dying day!

But where, Hamish, are all the flappers, the mawsies, and the mallards? What! You have left them—hare, grouse, bag, and all, at the Still! We remember it now—and all the distillers are to-night to be at our Tent, bringing with them feathers, fur, and hide—ducks, pussy, and deer. But take the roe on your stalwart shoulders, Hamish, and bear it down to the sylvan dwelling at the
[Pg 367] mouth of Gleno. Surefoot has a sufficient burden in us—for we are waxing more corpulent every day—and ere long shall be a Silenus.

Ay, travel all the world over, and a human dwelling lovelier in its wildness shall you nowhere find, than the one that hides itself in the depth of its own beauty, beneath the last of the green knolls besprinkling Gleno, dropt down there in presence of the peacefulest bay of all Loch-Etive, in whose cloud-softened bosom it sees itself reflected among the congenial imagery of the skies. And, hark! a murmur as of swarming bees! 'Tis a Gaelic school—set down in this loneliest of all places, by that religious wisdom that rests not till the seeds of saving knowledge shall be sown over all the wilds. That greyhaired minister of God, whom all Scotland venerates, hath been here from the great city on one of his holy pilgrimages. And, lo! at his bidding, and that of his coadjutors in the heavenly work, a Schoolhouse has risen with its blue roof—the pure diamond-sparkling slates of Ballahulish—beneath a tuft of breeze-breaking trees. But whence come they—

the little scholars—who are all murmuring there? We said that the shores of Loch-Etive were desolate. So seem they to the eye of Imagination, that loves to gather up a hundred scenes into one, and to breathe over the whole the lonesome spirit of one vast wilderness. But Imagination was a liar ever—a romancer and a dealer in dreams. Hers are the realms of fiction,

"A boundless contiguity of shade!"

But the land of truth is ever the haunt of the heart—there her eye reposes or expatiates, and what sweet, humble, and lowly visions arise before it, in a light that fadeth not away, but abideth for ever! Cottages, huts, shielings, she sees hidden—few and far between indeed—but all filled with Christian life—among the hollows of the hills—and up, all the way up the great glens—and by the shores of the loneliest lochs—and sprinkled, not so rarely, among the woods that enclose little fields and meadows of their own—all the way down—more and more animated—till children are seen gathering before their doors the shells of the contiguous sea.

Look and listen far and wide through a sunshiny day, over a rich wooded region, with hedgerows, single trees, groves, and forests, and yet haply not one bird is to be seen or heard—neither
[Pg 368] plumage nor song. Yet many a bright lyrist is there, all mute till the harbinger-hour of sunset, when all earth, air, and heaven, shall be ringing with one song. Almost even so is it with this mountain-wilderness. Small bright-haired, bright-eyed, bright-faced children, come stealing out in the morning from many hidden huts, each solitary in its own site, the sole dwelling on its own brae or its own dell. Singing go they one and all, alone or in small bands, trippingly along the wide moors; meeting into pleasant parties at cross-paths or at fords, till one stated hour sees them all gathered together, as now in the small Schoolhouse of Gleno, and the echo of the happy hum of the simple scholars is heard soft among the cliffs. But all at once the hum now ceases, and there is a hurry out of doors, and an exulting cry; for the shadow of Hamish, with the roe on his shoulders, has passed the small lead-latticed window, and the Schoolroom has emptied itself on the green, which is now brightening with the young blossoms of life. "A roe—a roe—a roe!"—is still the chorus of their song; and the Schoolmaster himself, though educated at college for the kirk, has not lost the least particle of his passion for the chase, and with kindling eyes assists Hamish in laying down his burden, and gazes on the spots with a hunter's joy. We leave you to imagine his delight and his surprise when, at first hardly trusting his optics, he beholds Christopher on Surefoot, and then, patting the shelty on the shoulder, bows affectionately and respectfully to the Old Man, and while our hands grasp, takes a pleasure in repeating over and over again that celebrated surname—North—North—North.

After a brief and bright hour of glee and merriment, mingled with grave talk, nor marred by the sweet undisturbance of all those elves maddening on the Green around the Roe, we express a wish that the scholars may all again be gathered together in the Schoolroom, to undergo an examination by the Christian Philosopher of Buchanan Lodge. 'Tis in all things gentle, in nothing severe. All slates are instantly covered with numerals, and 'tis pleasant to see their skill in finest fractions, and in the wonder-working golden rule of three. And now the rustling of their manuals is like that of rainy breezes among the summer leaves. No fears are here that the Book of God will lose its sanctity by becoming too familiar to eye, lip, and hand. Like the sunlight in the sky,
[Pg 369] the light that shines there is for ever dear—and unlike any sunlight in any skies, never is it clouded, permanently bright, and undimmed before pious eyes by one single shadow. We ought, perhaps, to be ashamed, but we are not so—we are happy that not an urchin is there who is not fully better acquainted with the events and incidents recorded in the Old and New Testaments than ourselves; and think not that all these could have been so faithfully committed to memory without the perpetual operation of the heart. Words are forgotten unless they are embalmed in spirit; and the air of the world, blow afterwards rudely as it may, shall never shrivel up one syllable that has been steeped into their souls by the spirit of the Gospel—felt by these almost infant disciples of Christ to be the very breath of God.

It has turned out one of the sweetest and serenest afternoons that ever breathed a hush over the face and bosom of August woods. Can we find it in our mind to think, in our heart to feel, in our hand to write, that Scotland is now even more beautiful than in our youth! No—not in our heart to feel—but in our eyes to see—for they tell us it is the truth. The people have cared for the land which the Lord their God hath given them, and have made the wilderness to blossom like the rose. The same Arts that have raised their condition have brightened their habitation; Agriculture, by fertilising the loveliness of the low-lying vales, has sublimed the sterility of the stupendous mountain heights—and the thundrous tides, flowing up the lochs, bring power to the cornfields and pastures created on hill-sides once horrid with rocks. The whole country laughs with a more vivid verdure—more pure the flow of her streams and rivers—for many a fen and marsh has been made dry, and the rainbow pictures itself on clearer cataracts.

The Highlands were, in our memory, overspread with a too dreary gloom. Vast tracts there were in which Nature herself seemed miserable; and if the heart find no human happiness to repose on, Imagination will fold her wings, or flee away to other regions, where in her own visionary world she may soar at will, and at will stoop down to the homes of this real earth. Assuredly the inhabitants are happier than they then were—*better off*—and therefore the change, whatever loss
[Pg 370] it may comprehend, has been a gain in good. Alas! poverty—penury—want—even of the necessaries of life—are too often there still rife; but patience and endurance dwell there, heroic and better far, Christian—nor has Charity been slow to succour regions remote but not inaccessible, Charity acting in power delegated by Heaven to our National Councils. And thus we can think not only without sadness, but with an elevation of soul inspired by such example of

highest virtue in humblest estate, and in our own sphere exposed to other trials be induced to follow it, set to us in many "a virtuous household, though exceeding poor." What are the poetical fancies about "mountain scenery," that ever fluttered on the leaves of albums, in comparison with any scheme, however prosaic, that tends in any way to increase human comforts? The best sonnet that ever was written by a versifier from the South to the Crown of Benlomond, is not worth the worst pair of worsted stockings trotted in by a small Celt going with his dad to seek for a lost sheep among the snow-wreaths round his base. As for eagles, and ravens, and red-deer, "those magnificent creatures so stately and bright," let them shift for themselves—and perhaps in spite of all our rhapsodies—the fewer of them the better; but among geese, and turkeys, and poultry, let propagation flourish—the fleecy folk baa—and the hairy hordes bellow on a thousand hills. All the beauty and sublimity on earth—over the Four Quarters of the World—is not worth a straw if valued against a good harvest. An average crop is satisfactory; but a crop that soars high above an average—a golden year of golden ears—sends joy into the heart of heaven. No prating now of the degeneracy of the potato. We can sing now with our single voice, like a numerous chorus, of

"Potatoes drest both ways, both roasted and boiled;"

sixty bolls to the acre on a field of our own of twenty acres—mealier than any meal—Perth reds—to the hue on whose cheeks dull was that on the face of the Fair Maid of Perth, when she blushed to confess to Burn-y-win' that hand-over-hip he had struck the iron when it was hot, and that she was no more the Glover's. O bright are potato blooms!—O green are potato-shaws!—O yellow are potato-plums! But how oft are blighted summer hopes and broken summer promises! Spare not the shaw—heap high the mounds—that damp nor frost may dim a single eye; so that all winter
[Pg 371] through poor men may prosper, and spring see settings of such prolific vigour, that they shall yield a thousandfold—and the sound of rumbledethumps be heard all over the land.

Let the people eat—let them have food for their bodies, and then they will have heart to care for their souls; and the good and the wise will look after their souls with sure and certain hope of elevating them from their hovels to heaven, while prigs, with their eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, rail at railroads, and all the other vile inventions of an utilitarian age to open up and expedite communication between the Children of the Mist and the Sons and Daughters of the Sunshine, to the utter annihilation of the sublime Spirit of Solitude. Be under no sort of alarm for Nature. There is some talk, it is true, of a tunnel through Cruachan to the Black Mount, but the general impression seems to be that it will be a *great bore*. A joint-stock company that undertook to remove Ben-Nevis, is beginning to find unexpected obstructions. Feasible as we confess it appeared, the idea of draining Loch Lomond has been relinquished for the easier and more useful scheme of converting the Clyde from below Stonebyres to above the Bannatyne Fall into a canal—the chief lock being, in the opinion of the most ingenious speculators, almost ready-made at Corra Linn. Shall we never be done with our soliloquy? It may be a little longish, for age is prolix—but every whit as natural and congenial with circumstances, as Hamlet's "to be or not to be, that is the question." O beloved Albin! our soul yearneth towards thee, and we invoke a blessing on thy many thousand glens. The man who leaves a blessing on any one of thy solitary places, and gives expression to a good thought in presence of a Christian brother, is a missionary of the church. What uncomplaining and unrepining patience in thy solitary huts! What unshrinking endurance of physical pain and want, that might well shame the Stoic's philosophic pride! What calm contentment, akin to mirth, in so many lonesome households, hidden the greatest part of the year in mist and snow! What peaceful deathbeds, witnessed but by a few, a very few grave but tearless eyes! Ay, how many martyrdoms for the holy love and religion of nature, worse to endure than those of old at the stake, because protracted through years of sore distress, for ever
[Pg 372] on the very limit of famine, yet for ever far removed from despair! Such is the people among whom we seek to drop the books, whose sacred leaves are too often scattered to the winds, or buried in the dust of Pagan lands. Blessed is the fount from whose wisely-managed munificence the small house of God will rise frequent in the wide and sea-divided wilds, with its humble associate, the heath-roofed school, in which, through the silence of nature, will be heard the murmuring voices of the children of the poor, instructed in the knowledge useful for time, and of avail for eternity.

We leave a loose sovereign or two to the Bible Fund; and remounting Surefoot, while our friend the schoolmaster holds the stirrup tenderly to our toe, jog down the road which is rather alarmingly like the channel of a drought-dried torrent, and turning round on the saddle, send our farewell salutes to the gazing scholars, first, bonnet waved round our head, and then, that replaced, a kiss flung from our hand. Hamish, relieved of the roe, which will be taken up (how, you shall by-and-by hear) on our way back to the Tent, is close at our side, to be ready should Shelty stumble; O'Bronte as usual bounds in the van; and Ponto, Piro, and Basta, impatient for the next heather hill, keep close at our heels through the wood.

We do not admire that shooting-ground which resembles a poultry-yard. Grouse and barn-door fowls are constructed on opposite principles, the former being wild, and the latter tame creatures, when in their respective perfection. Of all dull pastimes, the dullest seems to us sporting in a preserve; and we believe that we share that feeling with the Grand Signior. The sign of a lonely wayside inn in the Highlands, ought not to be the Hen and Chickens. Some shooters, we know, sick of common sport, love slaughter. From sunrise to sunset of the First Day of the Moors, they must bag their hundred brace. That can only be done where pouts prevail, and cheepers keep chiding; and where you have half-a-dozen attendants to hand you double-barrels *sans* intermission, for a round dozen of hours spent in a perpetual fire. Commend us to a plentiful

sprinkling of game; to ground which seems occasionally barren, and which it needs a fine instructed eye to traverse scientifically, and thereof to detect the latent riches. Fear and Hope
[Pg 373] are the Deities whom Christopher in his Sporting Jacket worships; and were they unpropitious, the Moors would lose all their witchcraft. We are a dead shot, but not always, for the forefinger of our right hand is the most fitful forefinger in all this capricious world. Like all performers in the Fine Arts, our execution is very uncertain; and though "*toujours pret*" is the impress on one side of our shield, "*hit and miss*" is that on the other, and often the more characteristic. A gentleman ought not to shoot like a gamekeeper, any more than at billiards to play like a marker, nor with four-in-hand ought he to tool his prads like the Portsmouth Dragsman. We choose to shoot like a philosopher as we are, and to preserve the golden mean in murder. We hold, with Aristotle, that all virtue consists in the middle between the two extremes; and thus we shoot in a style equidistant from that of the gamekeeper on the one hand, and that of the bagman on the other, neither killing nor missing every bird; but, true to the spirit of the Aristotelian doctrine, leaning with a decided inclination towards the first rather than the second predicament. If we shoot too well one day, we are pretty sure to make amends for it by shooting just as much too ill another; and thus, at the close of the week, we can go to bed with a clear conscience. In short, we shoot like gentlemen, scholars, poets, philosophers as we are; and looking at us, you have a sight

> "Of him who walks (rides) in glory and in joy,
> Following his dog upon the mountain-side,"—

a man evidently not shooting for a wager, and performing a match from the mean motive of avarice or ambition, but blazing away "at his own sweet will," and, without seeming to know it, making a great noise in the world. Such, believe us, is ever the mode in which true genius displays at once the earnestness and the modesty of its character.—But, Hamish—Hamish—Hamish—look with both thine eyes on yonder bank—yonder sunny bank, beneath the shade of that fantastic cliff's superincumbent shadow—and seest thou not basking there a miraculous amount of the right sort of feathers? They have packed, Hamish—they have packed, early as it yet is in the season; and the question is—*What shall we do?* We have it. Take up a position—Hamish—about a hundred yards in the rear—on yonder knoll—with the Colonel's Sweeper. Fire
[Pg 374] from the rest—mind, from the rest, Hamishright into the centre of that bed of plumage, and we shall be ready, with Brown Bess and her sister, to pour in our quartette upon the remains as they rise—so that not escape shall one single feather. Let our coming "to the present" be your signal. —Bang! Whew!—what a flutter! Now take that—and that—and that—and that! Ha! Hamish—as at the springing of a mine, the whole company has perished. Count the dead. Twenty-one! Life is short—and by this compendious style we take Time by the forelock. But where the devil are the ducks? Oh, yes! with the deer at the Still. Bag, and be stirring. For the Salmon-pond is murmuring in our ear; and in another hour we must be at Inveraw. Who said that Cruachan was a steep mountain? Why, with a gentle, smooth, and easy slope, he dips his footsteps in the sea-salt waters of Loch Etive's tide, as if to accommodate the old gentleman who, half-a-century ago, used to beard him in his pride on his throne of clouds. Heaven bless him!—he is a kind-hearted mountain, though his forehead be furrowed, and his aspect grim in stormy weather. A million memories "o' auld lang syne" revive, as almost "smooth-sliding without a step" Surefoot travels through the sylvan haunts, by us beloved of yore, when every day was a dream, and every dream filled to overflowing with poetic visions that swarmed in every bough, on every bent, on every heather-bell, on every dewdrop, in every mote o' the sun, in every line of gossamer, all over greenwood and greensward, grey cliff, purple heath, blue lock, "wine-faced sea,"

> "with locks divinely spreading,
> Like sullen hyacinths in vernal hue,"

and all over the sky, seeming then a glorious infinitude, where light, and joy, and beauty had their dwelling in calm and storm alike for evermore.

Heaven bless thee—with all her sun, moon, and stars! there thou art, dearest to us of all the lochs of Scotland—and they are all dear—mountain-crowned, cliff-guarded, isle-zoned, grove-girdled, wide-winding, and far-stretching, with thy many-bayed banks and braes of brushwood, fern, broom, and heather, rejoicing in their huts and shielings, thou glory of Argyllshire, rill-and-river-
[Pg 375] fed, sea-arm-like, floating in thy majesty, magnificent Loch Awe!

Comparisons, so far from being odious, are always suggested to our hearts by the spirit of love. We behold Four Lochs—Loch Awe, before our bodily eyes, which sometimes sleep—Loch Lomond, Windermere, Killarney, before those other eyes of ours that are waking ever. The longest is Loch Awe, which from that bend below Sonnachan to distant Edderline, looks like a river. But cut off, with the soft scythe or sickle of fancy, twenty miles of the length of the mottled snake, who never coils himself up except in misty weather, and who is now lying outstretched in the sunshine, and the upper part, the head and shoulders, are of themselves a Loch. Pleasant are his many hills, and magnificent his one mountain. For you see but Cruachan. He is the master-spirit. Call him the noblest of Scotland's Kings. His subjects are princes; and gloriously they range around him, stretching high, wide, and far away, yet all owing visible allegiance to him, their sole and undisputed sovereign. The setting and the rising sun do him homage. Peace loves—as now—to dwell within his shadow; but high among the precipices are the halls of the storms. Green are the shores as emerald. But the dark heather with its purple bloom sleeps in sombre shadow over wide regions of dusk, and there is an austere character in the cliffs. Moors and mosses intervene between holms and meadows, and those black spots are stacks of last year's

peats—not huts, as you might think; but those other specks are huts, somewhat browner—few roofed with straw, almost all with heather—though the better houses are slated—nor is there in the world to be found slate of a more beautiful pale-green colour than in the quarries of Ballahulish. The scene is vast and wild; yet so much beauty is interfused, that at such an hour as this its character is almost that of loveliness; the rude and rugged is felt to be rural, and no more; and the eye, gliding from the cottage gardens on its banks to the islands on the bosom of the Loch, loses sight of the mighty masses heaved up to the heavens, while the heart forgets that they are there, in its sweet repose. The dim-seen ruins of castle or religious house, secluded from all the stir that disturbed the shore, carries back our dreams to the olden time, and we awake from our reveries of "sorrows suffered long ago," to enjoy the apparent happiness of the living world.

[Pg 376] Loch Lomond is a sea! Along its shores might you voyage in your swift schooner, with shifting breezes, all a summer's day, nor at sunset, when you dropped anchor, have seen half the beautiful wonders. It is many-isled; and some of them are in themselves little worlds, with woods and hills. Houses are seen looking out from among old trees, and children playing on the greensward that slopes safely into deep water, where in rushy havens are drawn up the boats of fishermen, or of woodcutters who go to their work on the mainland. You might live all your life on one of those islands, and yet be no hermit. Hundreds of small bays indent the shores, and some of a majestic character take a fine bold sweep with their towering groves, enclosing the mansion of a Colquhoun or a Campbell at enmity no more, or the turreted castle of the rich alien, who there finds himself as much at home as in his hereditary hall, Sassenach and Gael now living in gentle friendship. What a prospect from the Point of Firkin! The Loch in its whole length and breadth—the magnificent expanse unbroken, though bedropped, with unnumbered isles—and the shores diversified with jutting cape and far-shooting peninsula, enclosing sweet separate seclusions, each in itself a loch. Ships might be sailing here, the largest ships of war; and there is anchorage for fleets. But the clear course of the lovely Leven is rock-crossed and intercepted with gravelly shallows, and guards Loch Lomond from the white-winged roamers that from all seas come crowding into the Firth of Clyde, and carry their streaming flags above the woods of Ardgowan. And there stands Ben. What cares he for all the multitude of other lochs his gaze commands—what cares he even for the salt-sea foam tumbling far away off into the ocean? All-sufficient for his love is his own loch at his feet. How serenely looks down the Giant! Is there not something very sweet in his sunny smile? Yet were you to see him frown—as we have seen him—your heart would sink; and what would become of you—if all alone by your own single self, wandering over the wide moor that glooms in utter houselessness between his corries and Glenfalloch—what if you were to hear the strange mutterings we have heard, as if moaning from an earthquake among quagmires, till you felt that the sound came from the sky, and all at once from the heart of
[Pg 377] night that had strangled day burst a shattering peal that might waken the dead—for Benlomond was in wrath, and vented it in thunder?

Perennially enjoying the blessing of a milder clime, and repaying the bounty of nature by beauty that bespeaks perpetual gratitude—merry as May, rich as June, shady as July, lustrous as August, and serene as September, for in her meet the characteristic charms of every season, all delightfully mingled by the happy genius of the place commissioned to pervade the whole from heaven, most lovely yet most majestic, we breathed the music of thy name, and start in this sterner solitude at the sweet syllabling of Windermere, Windermere! Translucent thy waters as diamond without a flaw. Unstained from source to sea are all the streams soft issuing from their silver springs among those beautiful mountains. Pure are they all as dew—and purer look the white clouds within their breast. These are indeed the Fortunate Groves! Happy is every tree. Blest the "Golden Oak," which seems to shine in lustre of his own, unborrowed from the sun. Fairer far the flower-tangled grass of those wood-encircled pastures than any meads of Asphodel. Thou need'st no isles on thy heavenly bosom, for in the sweet confusion of thy shores are seen the images of many isles, fragments that one might dream had been gently loosened from the land, and had floated away into the lake till they had lost themselves in the fairy wilderness. But though thou need'st them not, yet hast thou, O Windermere! thine own steadfast and enduring isles—her called the Beautiful—and islets not far apart that seem born of her; for theirs the same expression of countenance—that of celestial calm—and, holiest of the sisterhood, one that still retains the ruins of an oratory, and bears the name of the Virgin Mother Mild, to whom prays the mariner when sailing, in the moonlight, along Sicilian seas.

Killarney! From the village of Cloghereen issued an uncouth figure, who called himself the "Man of the Mountain;" and pleased with Pan, we permitted him to blow his horn before us up to the top of Mangerton, where the Devil, 'tis believed, scooped out the sward beneath the cliffs into a Punch-bowl. No doubt he did, and the Old Potter wrought with fire. 'Tis the crater of an extinct
[Pg 378] volcano. Charles Fox, Weld says, and Wright doubts, swam the Pool. Why not? 'Tis not so cold as the Polar Sea. We swam across it—as Mulcocky, were he alive, but he is dead, could vouch; and felt braced like a drum. What a panorama! Our first feeling was one of grief that we were not an Irishman. We knew not where to fix our gaze. Surrounded by the dazzling bewilderment of all that multitudinous magnificence, the eye, as if afraid to grapple with the near glory—for such another day never shone from heaven—sought relief in the remote distance, and slid along the beautiful river Kenmare, insinuating itself among the recesses of the mountains, till it rested on the green glimmer of the far-off sea. The grandeur was felt, far off as it was, of that iron-bound coast. Coming round with an easy sweep, as the eyes of an eagle may do, when hanging motionless aloft he but turns his head, our eyes took in all the mighty range of the Reeks, and rested in awe on Carran Tual. Wild yet gentle was the blue aerial haze over the glimpses of the Upper Lake, where soft and sweet, in a girdle of rocks, seemed to be hanging, now in air and now

in water—for all was strangely indistinct in the dim confusion—masses of green light that might be islands with their lovely trees; but suddenly tipt with fire shone out the golden pinnacles of the Eagle's Nest; and as again they were tamed by cloud-shadow, the glow of Purple Mountain for a while enchained our vision, and then left it free to feast on the forests of Glena, till, wandering at the capricious will of fancy, it floated in delight over the woods of Mucruss, and long lost among the trembling imagery of the water, found lasting repose on the steadfast beauty of the sylvan isle of Inisfallen.

But now for the black mass of rapid waters that, murmuring from loch to river, rush roaring through that rainbow-arch, and bathe the green woods in freshening spray-mist through a loveliest landscape, that steals along with its meadow-sprinkling trees close to the very shore of Loch Etive, binding the two lochs together with a sylvan band—her whose calmer spirit never knows the ebb or flow of tide, and her who fluctuates even when the skies are still with the swelling and subsiding tumult duly sent up into and recalled down from the silence of her inland solitude. And now for one pool in that river, called by eminence the Salmon Pool, whose gravelly depths are sometimes paved with the blue backs of the silver-scaled shiners, all strong as
[Pg 379] sunbeams, for a while reposing there, till the river shall blacken in its glee to the floods falling in Glen-Scrae and Glenorchy, and then will they shoot through the cataract—for 'tis all one fall between the lochs—passionate of the sweet fresh waters in which the Abbey-Isle reflects her one ruined tower, or Kilchurn, at all times dim or dark in the shadow of Cruachan, see his grim turrets, momentarily less grim, imaged in the tremblings of the casual sunshine. Sometimes they lie like stones, nor, unless you stir them up with a long pole, will they stir in the gleam, more than if they were shadows breathed from trees when all winds are dead. But at other times, they are on feed; and then no sooner does the fly drop on the water in its blue and yellow gaudiness (and oh! but the brown mallard wing is bloody—bloody!) than some snout sucks it in—some snout of some swine-necked shoulder-bender; and instantly—as by dexterously dropping your elbow you give him the butt, and strike the barb through his tongue—down the long reach of the river vista'd along that straight oak-avenue—but with clear space of greensward between wood and water—shoots the giant steel-stung in his fear, bounding blue-white into the air, and then down into the liquid element with a plunge as of a man, or rather a horse, till your heart leaps to your mouth, or, as the Greeks we believe used to say, to your nose, and you are seen galloping along the banks, by spectators in search of the picturesque, and ignorant of angling, supposed in the act of making your escape, with an incomprehensible weapon in both hands, from some rural madhouse.

Eh? eh? not in our hat—not in our waistcoat—not in our jacket—not in our breeches! By the ghost of Autolycus some pickpocket, while we were moralising, has abstracted our Lascelles! We may as well tie a stone to each of our feet, and sink away from all sense of misery in the Salmon Pool. Oh! that it had been our purse! Who cares for a dozen dirty sovereigns and a score of nasty notes? And what's the use of them to us now, or indeed at any time? And what's the use of this identical rod? Hang it, if a little thing would not make us break it! A multiplying reel, indeed! The invention of a fool. The Tent sees not us again; this afternoon we shall return to Edinburgh. Don't talk to us of flies at the next village. There are no flies at the village—there is no village. O
[Pg 380] Beelzebub! O Satan! was ever man tempted as we are tempted? See—see a Fish—a fine Fish—an enormous Fish—leaping to insult us! Give us our gun that we may shoot him—no—no, dang guns—and dang this great clumsy rod! There—let it lie there for the first person that passes—for we swear never to angle more. As for the Awe, we never liked it—and wonder what infatuation brought us here. We shall be made to pay for this yet—whew! there was a twinge—that big toe of ours we'll warrant is as red as fire, and we bitterly confess that we deserve the gout. Och! och! och!

But hark! whoop and hollo, and is that too the music of the hunter's horn? Reverberating among the woods a well-known voice salutes our ear; and there! bounds Hamish over the rocks like a chamois taking his pastime. Holding up our Lascelles! he places it with a few respectful words—hoping we have not missed it—and standing aloof—leaves us to our own reflections and our flies. Nor do those amount to remorse—nor these to more than a few dozens. Samson's strength having been restored—we speak of our rod, mind ye, not of ourselves—we lift up our downcast eyes, and steal somewhat ashamed a furtive glance at the trees and stones that must have overheard and overseen all our behaviour. We leave those who have been in anything like the same predicament to confess—not publicly—there is no occasion for that—nor on their knees—but to their own consciences, if they have any, their grief and their joy, their guilt, and, we hope, their gratitude. Transported though they were beyond all bounds, we forgive them; for even those great masters of wisdom, the Stoics, were not infallible, nor were they always able to sustain, at their utmost strength, in practice the principles of their philosophy.

Phin! this Rod is thy masterpiece. And what Gut! *There she has it!* Reel-music for ever! Ten fathom are run out already—and see how she shoots, Hamish;—such a somerset as that was never thrown from a spring-board. Just the size for strength and agility—twenty pound to an ounce—jimp weight, Hamish—ha! Harlequin art thou—or Columbine? Assuredly neither Clown nor Pantaloon. Now we have turned her ladyship's nose up the stream, her lungs, if she have any, must be beginning to labour, and we almost hear her snore. What! in the sulks already—sullen
[Pg 381] among the stones. But we shall make you mudge, madam, were we to tear the very tongue out of your mouth. Ay, once more down the middle to the tune of that spirited country-dance—"Off she goes!" Set corners, and reel! The gaff, Hamish—the gaff! and the landing-net! For here is a shallow of the silver sand, spreading into the bay of a ford—and ere she recovers from her astonishment, here will we land her—with a strong pull, a long pull, and a pull altogether—just on

the edge of the greensward—and then smite her on the shoulder, Hamish—and, to make assurance doubly sure, the net under her tail, and hoist her aloft in the sunshine, a glorious prize, dazzling the daylight, and giving a brighter verdure to the woods.

He who takes two hours to kill a fish—be its bulk what it may—is no man, and is not worth his meat, nor the vital air. The proportion is a minute to the pound. This rule were we taught by the "Best at Most" among British sportsmen—Scrope the Matchless on moor, mountain, river, loch, or sea; and with exquisite nicety have we now carried it into practice. Away with your useless steelyards. Let us feel her teeth with our forefinger, and then held out at arm's length—so—we know by feeling, that she is, as we said soon as we saw her side, a twenty-pounder to a drachm, and we have been true to time, within two seconds. She has literally no head; but her snout is in her shoulders. That is the beauty of a fish—high and round shoulders, short-waisted, no loins, but all body, and not long of terminating—the shorter still the better—in a tail sharp and pointed as Diana's, when she is crescent in the sky.

And lo, and behold! there is Diana—but not crescent—for round and broad is she as the sun himself—shining in the south, with as yet a needless light—for daylight has not gone down in the west—and we can hardly call it gloaming. Chaste and cold though she seem, a nunlike luminary who has just taken the veil—a transparent veil of fine fleecy clouds—yet, alas! is she frail as of old, when she descended on the top of Latmos, to hold dalliance with Endymion. She has absolutely the appearance of being in the family way—and not far from her time. Lo! two of her children stealing from ether towards her feet. One on her right hand, and another on her left—
[Pg 382] the fairest daughters that ever charmed mother's heart—and in heaven called stars. What a celestial trio the three form in the sky! The face of the moon keeps brightening as the lesser two twinkle into darker lustre; and now, though day is still lingering, we feel that it is Night. When the one comes and when the other goes, what eye can note, what tongue can tell—but what heart feels not in the dewy hush divine—as the power of the beauty of earth decays over us, and a still dream descends upon us in the power of the beauty of heaven!

But hark! the regular twang and dip of oars coming up the river—and lo! indistinct in the distance, something moving through the moonshine—and now taking the likeness of a boat—a barge—with bonneted heads leaning back at every flashing stroke—and, Hamish, list! a choral song in thine own dear native tongue! Sent hither by the Queen of the sea-fairies to bear back in state Christopher North to the Tent? No. 'Tis the big coble belonging to the tacksman of the Awe—and the crew are going to pull her through the first few hours of the night—along with the flowing tide—up to Kinloch-Etive, to try a cast with their long net at the mouth of the river, now winding dim like a snake from King's House beneath the Black Mount, and along the bays at the head of the Loch. A rumour that we were on the river had reached them—and see an awning of tartan over the stern, beneath which, as we sit, the sun may not smite our head by day, nor the moon by night. We embark—and descending the river like a dream, rapidly but stilly, and kept in the middle of the current by cunning helmsman, without aid of idle oar, all six suspended, we drop along through the sylvan scenery, gliding serenely away back into the mountain-gloom, and enter into the wider moonshine trembling on the wavy verdure of the foam-crested sea. May this be Loch-Etive? Yea—verily; but so broad here is its bosom, and so far spreads the billowy brightness, that we might almost believe that our bark was bounding over the ocean, and marching merrily on the main. Are we—into such a dream might fancy for a moment half beguile herself—rowing back, after a day among the savage islanders, to our ship lying at anchor in the offing, on a voyage of discovery round the world?

[Pg 383] Where are all the dogs? Ponto, Piro, Basta, trembling partly with cold, partly with hunger, partly with fatigue, and partly with fear, among and below the seats of the rowers—with their noses somewhat uncomfortably laid between their fore-paws on the tarry timbers; but O'Bronte boldly sitting at our side, and wistfully eyeing the green swell as it heaves beautifully by, ready at the slightest signal to leap overboard, and wallow like a walrus in the brine, of which you might almost think he was born and bred, so native seems the element to the "Dowg o' Dowgs." Ay, these are sea-mews, O'Bronte, wheeling white as silver in the moonshine; but we *shall* not shoot them—no—no—no—we *will* not shoot you, ye images of playful peace, so fearlessly, nay, so lovingly attending our bark as it bounds over the breasts of the billows, in motion quick almost as your slowest flight, while ye linger around, and behind, and before our path, like fair spirits wiling us along up this great Loch, farther and farther through gloom and glimmer, into the heart of profounder solitude. On what errands of your own are ye winnowing your way, stooping ever and anon just to dip your wing-tips in the waves, and then up into the open air—the blue light filling this magnificent hollow—or seen glancing along the shadows of the mountains as they divide the Loch into a succession of separate bays, and often seem to block it up, till another moonlight reach is seen extending far beyond, and carries the imagination on—on—on—into inland recesses that seem to lose at last all connection with the forgotten sea. All at once the moon is like a ghost;—and we believe—Heaven knows why—in the authenticity of Ossian's Poems.

Was there ever such a man as Ossian? We devoutly hope there was—for if so, then there were a prodigious number of fine fellows, besides his Bardship, who after their death figured away as their glimmering ghosts, with noble effect, among the moonlight mists of the mountains. The poetry of Ossian has, it is true, since the days of Macpherson, in no way coloured the poetry of the island; and Mr Wordsworth, who has written beautiful lines about the old Phantom, states that fact as an argument against its authenticity. He thinks Ossian, as we now possess him, no poet; and alleges, that if these compositions had been the good things so many people have
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thought them, they would, in some way or other, have breathed their spirit over the poetical genius of the land. Who knows that they may not do so yet? The time may not have come. But must all true poetry necessarily create imitation, and a school of imitators? One sees no reason why it must. Besides, the life which the poetry of Ossian celebrates, has utterly passed away; and the poetry itself, good, bad, or indifferent, is so very peculiar, that to imitate it at all you must almost transcribe it. That, for a good many years, was often done, but naturally inspired any other feeling than delight or admiration. But the simple question is, Do the poems of Ossian delight greatly and widely? We think they do. Nor can we believe that they would not still delight such a poet as Mr Wordsworth. What dreariness overspreads them all! What a melancholy spirit shrouds all his heroes, passing before us on the cloud, after all their battles have been fought, and their tombs raised on the hill! The very picture of the old blind Hero-bard himself, often attended by the weeping virgins whom war has made desolate, is always touching, often sublime. The desert is peopled with lamenting mortals, and the mists that wrap them with ghosts, whose remembrances of this life are all dirge and elegy. True, that the images are few and endlessly reiterated; but that, we suspect, is the case with all poetry composed not in a philosophic age. The great and constant appearances of nature suffice, in their simplicity, for all its purposes. The poet seeks not to vary their character, and his hearers are willing to be charmed over and over again by the same strains. We believe that the poetry of Ossian would be destroyed by any greater distinctness or variety of imagery. And if, indeed, Fingal lived and Ossian sung, we must believe that the old bard was blind; and we suspect that in such an age, such a man would, in his blindness, think dreamily indeed of the torrents, and lakes, and heaths, and clouds, and mountains, moons and stars, which he had leapt, swam, walked, climbed, and gazed on in the days of his rejoicing youth. Then has he no tenderness—no pathos—no beauty? Alas for thousands of hearts and souls if it be even so! For then are many of their holiest dreams worthless all, and divinest melancholy a mere complaint of the understanding, which a bit of
[Pg 385] philosophical criticism will purge away, as the leech's phial does a disease of the blood.

Macpherson's "Ossian," is it not poetry? Wordsworth says it is not—but Christopher North says it is—with all reverence for the King. Let its antiquity be given up—let such a state of society as is therein described be declared impossible—let all the inconsistencies and violations of nature ever charged against it be acknowledged—let all its glaring plagiarisms from poetry of modern date inspire what derision they may—and far worse the perpetual repetition of its own imbecilities and inanities, wearying one down even to disgust and anger;—yet, in spite of all, are we not made to feel, not only that we are among the mountains, but to forget that there is any other world in existence, save that which glooms and glimmers, and wails and raves around us in mists and clouds, and storms and snows—full of lakes and rivers, sea-intersected and sea-surrounded, with a sky as troublous as the earth—yet both at times visited with a mournful beauty that sinks strangely into the soul—while the shadowy life depictured there eludes not our human sympathies; nor yet, aerial though they be—so sweet and sad are their voices—do there float by as unbeloved, unpitied, or unhonoured—single, or in bands—the ghosts of the brave and beautiful; when the few stars are dim, and the moon is felt, not seen, to be yielding what faint light there may be in the skies.

The boat in a moment is a bagpipe; and not only so, but all the mountains are bagpipes, and so are the clouds. All the bagpipes in the world are here, and they fill heaven and earth. 'Tis no exaggeration—much less a fiction—but the soul and body of truth. There Hamish stands stately at the prow; and as the boat hangs by midships on the very point that commands all the echoes, he fills the whole night with the "Campbells are coming," till the sky yells with the gathering as of all the Clans. His eyes are triumphantly fixed on ours to catch their emotions; his fingers cease their twinkling; and still that wild gathering keeps playing of itself among the mountains—fainter and fainter, as it is flung from cliff to cliff, till it dies away far—far off—as if in infinitude—sweet even and soft in its evanescence as some lover's lute.

We are now in the bay of Gleno. For though moonlight strangely alters the whole face of nature,
[Pg 386] confusing its most settled features, and with a gentle glamoury blending with the greensward what once was the grey granite, and investing with apparent woodiness what an hour ago was the desolation of herbless cliffs—yet not all the changes that wondrous nature, in ceaseless ebb and flow, ever wrought on her works, could metamorphose out of our recognition that Glen, in which, one night—long—long ago—

"In life's morning march, when our spirit was young!"

we were visited by a dream—a dream that shadowed forth in its inexplicable symbols the whole course of our future life—the graves—the tombs where many we loved are now buried—that churchyard, where we hope and believe that one day our own bones will rest.

But who shouts from the shore, Hamish—and now, as if through his fingers, sends forth a sharp shrill whistle that pierces the sky? Ah, ha! we ken his shadow in the light, with the roe on his shoulder. 'Tis the schoolmaster of Gleno, bringing down our quarry to the boat—kilted, we declare, like a true Son of the Mist. The shore here is shelving but stony, and our prow is aground. But strong-spined and loined, and strong in their withers, are the M'Dougals of Lorn; and, wading up to the red hairy knees, he has flung the roe into the boat, and followed it himself like a deer-hound. So bend to your oars, my hearties—my heroes—the wind freshens, and the tide strengthens from the sea; and at eight knots an hour we shall sweep along the shadows, and soon see the lantern, twinkling as from a lighthouse, on the pole of our Tent.

In a boat, upon a great sea-arm, at night, among mountains, who would be so senseless, so

soulless as to speak? The hour has its might,

"Because not of this noisy world, but silent and divine!"

A sound there is in the sea-green swell, and the hollows of the rocks, that keep muttering and muttering, as their entrances feel the touch of the tide. But nothing beneath the moon can be more solemn, now that her aspect is so wan, and that some melancholy spirit has obscured the lustre of the stars. We feel as if the breath of old elegiac poetry were visiting our slumber. All is sad within us, yet why we know not; and the sadness is stranger as it is deeper after a day of
[Pg 387] almost foolish pastime, spent by a being who believes that he is immortal, and that this life is but the threshold of a life to come. Poor, puny, and paltry pastimes indeed are they all! But are they more so than those pursuits of which the moral poet has sung,

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave!"

Methinks, now, as we are entering into a sabler mass of shadow, that the doctrine of eternal punishment of sins committed in time—but—

"Here's a health to all good lasses,
Here's a health to all good lasses,
Pledge it merrily, fill your glasses;
Let the bumper toast go round,
Let the bumper toast go round!"

Best on your oars, lads. Hamish! the quaich! give each man a caulker, that his oar may send a bolder twang from its rollock, and our fish-coble walk the waves like a man-of-war's gig, with the captain on board, going ashore, after a long cruise, to meet his wife. Now she spins! and lo! lights at Kinloch-Etive, and beyond on the breast of the mountain, bright as Hesperus—the Pole-star of our Tent!

Well, this is indeed the Londe of Faery! A car with a nag caparisoned at the water edge! On with the roe, and in with Christopher and the Fish. Now, Hamish, hand us the Crutch. After a cast or two, which, may they be successful as the night is auspicious, your presence, gentlemen, will be expected in the Tent. Now, Hamish, handle thou the ribbons—alias the hair-tether—and we will touch him behind, should he linger, with a weapon that might

"Create a soul under the ribs of death."

Linger! why the lightning flies from his heels, as he carries us along a fine natural causeway, like Ossian's car-borne heroes. From the size and state of the stones over which we make such a clatter, we shrewdly suspect that the parliamentary grant for destroying the old Highland torrent-roads has not extended its ravages to Glen-Etive. O'Bronte,

"Like panting Time, toils after us in vain;"

[Pg 388] and the pointers are following us by our own scent, and that of the roe, in the distant darkness. Pull up, Hamish, pull up, or otherwise we shall overshoot our mark, and meet with some accident or other, perhaps a capsize on Buachaille-Etive, or the Black Mount. We had no idea the circle of greensward in front of the Tent was so spacious. Why, there is room for the Lord Mayor of London's state-coach to turn with its eight horses, and that enormous ass, Parson Dillon, on the dickey. What could have made us think at this moment of London? Certes, the association of ideas is a droll thing, and also sometimes most magnificent. Dancing in the Tent, among strange figures! Celebration of the nuptials of some Arab chief, in an oasis in the Great Desert of Stony Arabia! Heavens! look at Tickler! How he hauls the Hizzies! There is no time to be lost—he and the Admiral must not have all the sport to themselves; and, by-and-by, spite of age and infirmity, we shall show the Tent a touch of the Highland Fling. Hollo! you landloupers! Christopher is upon you—behold the Tenth Avatar incarnated in North.

But what Apparitions at the Tent-door salute our approach?

"Back step these two fair angels, half afraid
So suddenly to see the Griesly King!"

Goat-herdesses from the cliffs of Glencreran or Glenco, kilted to the knee, and not unconscious of their ankles, one twinkle of which is sufficient to bid "Begone dull care" for ever. One hand on a shoulder of each of the mountain-nymphs—sweet liberties—and then embraced by both, half in their arms, and half on their bosoms, was ever Old Man so pleasantly let down from triumphal car, on the soft surface of his mother-earth? Ay, there lies the Red-deer! and what heaps of smaller slain! But was there ever such a rush of dogs! We shall be extinguished. Down, dogs, down—nay, ladies and gentlemen, be seated—on one another's knees as before—we beseech you —we are but men like yourselves—and

"Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh! what were man?—a world without a sun!"

[Pg 389] What it is to be the darling of gods and men, and women and children! Why the very stars burn brighter—and thou, O Moon! art like the Sun. We foresee a night of dancing and drinking—till the mountain-dew melt in the lustre of morn. Such a day should have a glorious death—and a

glorious resurrection. Hurra! Hurra!

THE MOORS FOR EVER! THE MOORS! THE MOORS!

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HIGHLAND SNOW-STORM.

What do you mean by original genius? By that fine line in the "Pleasures of Hope"—

> "To muse on Nature with a poet's eye?"

Why—genius—one kind of it at least—is transfusion of self into all outward things. The genius that does that—naturally, but novelly—is original; and now you know the meaning of one kind of original genius. Have we, then, Christopher North, that gift? Have you? Yea, both of Us. Our spirits animate the insensate earth, till she speaks, sings, smiles, laughs, weeps, sighs, groans, goes mad, and dies. Nothing easier, though perhaps it is wicked, than for original genius like ours, or yours, to drive the earth to distraction. We wave our wizard hand thus—and lo! list! she is insane. How she howls to heaven, and how the maddened heaven howls back her frenzy! Two dreadful maniacs raging apart, but in communion, in one vast bedlam! The drift-snow spins before the hurricane, hissing like a nest of serpents let loose to torment the air. What fierce flakes! furies! as if all the wasps that ever stung had been revivified, and were now careering part and parcel of the tempest. We are in a Highland Hut in the midst of mountains. But no land is to be seen any more than if we were in the middle of the sea. Yet a wan glare shows that the snow-storm is strangely shadowed by superincumbent cliffs; and though you cannot see, you *hear* the mountains. Rendings are going on, frequent, over your head—and all around the blind wilderness—the thunderous tumblings down of avalanches, mixed with the moanings, shriekings, and yellings of caves, as if spirits there were angry with the snow-drift choking up the fissures
[Pg 391] and chasms in the cliffs. Is that the creaking and groaning, and rooking and tossing of old trees, afraid of being uprooted and flung into the spate?

> "Red comes the river down, and loud and oft
> The angry spirit of the water shrieks,"

more fearful than at midnight in this night-like day—whose meridian is a total sun eclipse. The river runs by, blood-like, through the snow—and, short as is the reach you can see through the flaky gloom, that short reach shows that all his course must be terrible—more and more terrible—as, gathering his streams like a chieftain his clan—ere long he will sweep shieling, and hut, and hamlet to the sea, undermining rocks, cutting mounds asunder, and blowing up bridges that explode into the air with a roar like that of cannon. You sometimes think you hear thunder, though you know that cannot be—but sublimer than thunder is the nameless noise so like that of agonised life—that eddies far and wide around—high and huge above—fear all the while being at the bottom of your heart—an objectless, dim, dreary, undefinable fear, whose troubled presence—if any mortal feeling be so—is sublime. Your imagination is troubled, and dreams of death, but of no single corpse, of no single grave. Nor fear you for yourself—for the Hut in which you thus enjoy the storm is safer than the canopied cliff-calm of the eagle's nest; but your spirit is convulsed from its deepest and darkest foundations, and all that lay hidden there of the wild and wonderful, the pitiful and the strange, the terrible and pathetic, is now upturned in dim confusion, and imagination, working among the hoarded gatherings of the heart, creates out of them moods kindred and congenial with the hurricane, intensifying the madness of the heaven and the earth, till that which sees and that which is seen, that which hears and that which is heard, undergo alternate mutual transfiguration; and the blind Roaring Day—at once substance, shadow, and soul—is felt to be one with ourselves—the blended whole either the Live-Dead, or the Dead-Alive.

We are in a Highland Hut—if we called it a Shieling we did so merely because we love the sound of the word Shieling, and the image it at once brings to eye and ear—the rustling of leaves on a
[Pg 392] summer sylvan bower, by simple art slightly changed from the form of the growth of nature, or the waving of fern on the turf-roof and turf-walls, all covered with wildflowers and mosses, and moulded by one single season into a knoll-like beauty, beside its guardian birch-tree, insupportable to all evil spirits, but with its silvery stem and drooping tresses dear to the Silent People that won in the land of peace. Truly this is not the sweet Shieling-season, when, far away from all other human dwellings, on the dip of some great mountain, quite at the head of a day's-journey-long glen, the young herdsman, haply all alone, without one single being with him that has the use of speech, liveth for months retired far from kirk and cross—Luath his sole companion—his sole care the pasturing herds—the sole sounds he hears the croak of the raven on the cliff, or bark of the eagle in the sky. O sweet, solitary lot of lover! Haply in some oasis in the wilderness, some steadfast gleam of emerald light amid the hyacinthine-hue of the heather, that young herdsman hath pitched his tent, by one Good Spirit haunted morning, noon, and night, through the sunny, moonlight, starry months,—the Orphan-girl, whom years ago her dying father gave into his arms—the old blind soldier—knowing that the boy would shield her innocence when every blood-relation had been buried—now Orphan-girl no more, but growing there like a lily at the Shieling door, or singing within sweetlier than any bird—the happiest of all living things—her own Ronald's dark-haired Bride.

We are in a Highland Hut among a Highland Snow-storm—and all at once amidst the roar of the merciless hurricane we remember the words of Burns—the peerless Peasant. Simple as they are, with what profound pathos are they charged!

"List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle;
I think me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scaur!

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whar wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy ee?

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Ev'n you on murdering errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exiled,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cot spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats."

Burns is our Lowland bard—but poetry is poetry all over the world, when streamed from the life-blood of the human heart. So sang the Genius of inspired humanity in his bleak "auld clay-biggin," on one of the braes of Coila, and now our heart responds the strain, high up among the Celtic cliffs, central among a sea of mountains hidden in a snow-storm that enshrouds the day. Ay—the one single door of this Hut—the one single "winnock," does "rattle"—by fits—as the blast smites it, in spite of the white mound drifted hill-high all round the buried dwelling. Dim through the peat-reek cower the figures in tartan—fear has hushed the cry of the infant in the swinging cradle—and all the other imps are mute. But the household is thinner than usual at the meal-hour; and feet that loved to follow the red-deer along the bent, now fearless of pitfalls, since the first lour of morning light have been traversing the tempest. The shepherds, who sit all day long when summer hues are shining, and summer flowerets are blowing, almost idle in their plaids, beneath the shadow of some rock watching their flocks feeding above, around, and below, now expose their bold breasts to all the perils of the pastoral life. This is our Arcadia—a realm of wrath—woe—danger, and death. Here are bred the men whose blood—when the bagpipe blows—is prodigally poured forth on a thousand shores. The limbs strung to giant-force by such snows as these, moving in line of battle within the shadow of the Pyramids,

"Brought from the dust the sound of liberty,"

while the Invincible standard was lowered before the heroes of the Old Black Watch, and victory out of the very heart of defeat arose on "that thrice-repeated cry" that quails all foes that madly rush against the banners of Albyn. The storm that has frozen in his eyrie the eagle's wing, driven the deer to the comb beneath the cliffs, and all night imprisoned the wild-cat in his cell, hand-in-
[Pg 394] hand as is their wont when crossing a stream or flood, bands of Highlanders now face in its strongholds all over the ranges of mountains, come it from the wrathful inland or the more wrathful sea.

"They think upon the ourie cattle
And silly sheep,"

and man's reason goes to the help of brute instinct.

How passing sweet is that other stanza, heard like a low hymn amidst the noise of the tempest! Let our hearts once more recite it,—

"Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whar wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy ee?"

The whole earth is for a moment green again—trees whisper—streamlets murmur—and the "merry month o' Spring" is musical through all her groves. But in another moment we know that almost all those sweet-singers are now dead—or that they "cow'r the chittering wing"—never more to flutter through the woodlands, and "close the ee" that shall never more be re-illumined with love, when the Season of Nests is at hand, and bush, tree, and tower are again all a-twitter with the survivors of some gentler climate.

The poet's heart, humanised to utmost tenderness by the beauty of its own merciful thoughts, extends its pity to the poor beasts of prey. Each syllable tells—each stroke of the poet-painter's pencil depicts the life and sufferings of the wretched creatures. And then, feeling that at such an

hour all life is subject to one lot, how profound the pathos reflected back upon our own selves and our mortal condition, by these few simplest words,—

"My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats!"

They go to help the "ourie cattle" and the "silly sheep;" but who knows that they are not *sent* on an errand of higher mercy, by Him whose ear has not been shut to the prayer almost frozen on the lips of them about to perish!—an incident long forgotten, though on the eve of that day on
[Pg 395] which the deliverance happened, so passionately did we all regard it, that we felt that interference providential—as if we had indeed seen the hand of God stretched down through the mist and snow from heaven. We all said that it would never leave our memory; yet all of us soon forgot it—but now, while the tempest howls, it seems again of yesterday.

One family lived in Glencreran, and another in Glenco—the families of two brothers—seldom visiting each other on working-days—seldom meeting even on Sabbaths, for theirs was not the same parish-kirk—seldom coming together on rural festivals or holidays, for in the Highlands now these are not so frequent as of yore; yet all these sweet seldoms, taken together, to loving hearts made a happy many, and thus, though each family passed its life in its own home, there were many invisible threads stretched out through the intermediate air, connecting the two dwellings together—as the gossamer keeps floating from one tree to another, each with its own secret nest. And nest-like both dwellings were. *That* in Glenco, built beneath a treeless but high-heathered rock—lown in all storms—with greensward and garden on a slope down to a rivulet, the clearest of the clear (oh! once woefully reddened!) and *growing*—so it seems in the mosses of its own roof, and the huge stones that overshadow it—out of the earth. *That* in Glencreran, more conspicuous, on a knoll among the pastoral meadows, midway between mountain and mountain, so that the grove which shelters it, except when the sun is shining high, is darkened by their meeting shadows, and dark indeed even in the sunshine, for 'tis a low but wide-armed grove of old oak-like pines. A little further down, and Glencreran is very sylvan; but this dwelling is the highest up of all, the first you descend upon, near the foot of that wild hanging staircase between you and Glen-Etive; and, except this old oak-like grove of pines, there is not a tree, and hardly a bush, on bank or brae, pasture or hay-field, though these are kept by many a rill there mingling themselves into one stream, in a perpetual lustre, that seems to be as native to the grass as its light is to the glow-worm. Such are the two Huts—for they are huts and no more—and you may see them still, if you know how to discover the beautiful sights of nature from descriptions treasured in your heart—and if the spirit of change, now nowhere at rest on the earth, not even in
[Pg 396] its most solitary places, have not swept from the scenes they beautified the humble but hereditary dwellings that ought to be allowed, in the fulness of the quiet time, to relapse back into the bosom of nature, through insensible and unperceived decay.

These Huts belonged to brothers—and each had an only child—a son and a daughter—born on the same day—and now blooming on the verge of youth. A year ago, and they were but mere children—but what wondrous growth of frame and spirit does nature at that season of life often present before our eyes! So that we almost see the very change going on between morn and morn, and feel that these objects of our affection are daily brought closer to ourselves, by partaking daily more and more in all our most sacred thoughts, in our cares and in our duties, and in knowledge of the sorrows as well as the joys of our common lot. Thus had these cousins grown up before their parents' eyes, Flora Macdonald—a name hallowed of yore—the fairest, and Ranald Cameron, the boldest of all the living flowers in Glenco and Glencreran. It was now their seventeenth birthday, and never had a winter sun smiled more serenely over a hush of snow. Flora, it had been agreed on, was to pass that day in Glencreran, and Ranald to meet her among the mountains, that he might bring her down the many precipitous passes to his parents' hut. It was the middle of February, and the snow had lain for weeks with all its drifts unchanged, so calm had been the weather, and so continued the frost. At the same hour, known by horologe on the cliff touched by the finger of dawn, the happy creatures left each their own glen, and mile after mile of the smooth surface glided away past their feet, almost as the quiet water glides by the little boat that in favouring breezes walks merrily along the sea. And soon they met at the trysting-place—a bank of birch-trees beneath a cliff that takes its name from the Eagles.

On their meeting seemed not to them the whole of nature suddenly inspired with joy and beauty? Insects unheard by them before, hummed and glittered in the air—from tree-roots, where the snow was thin, little flowers, or herbs flower-like, now for the first time were seen looking out as if alive—the trees themselves seemed budding as if it were already spring—and rare as in that
[Pg 397] rocky region are the birds of song, a faint trill for a moment touched their ears, and the flutter of a wing, telling them that somewhere near there was preparation for a nest. Deep down beneath the snow they listened to the tinkle of rills unreached by the frost—and merry, thought they, was the music of these contented prisoners. Not Summer's self, in its deepest green, so beautiful had ever been to them before, as now the mild white of Winter; and as their eyes were lifted up to heaven, when had they ever seen before a sky of such perfect blue, a sun so gentle in its brightness, or altogether a week-day in any season, so like a Sabbath in its stillness, so like a holyday in its joy! Lovers were they—although as yet they scarcely knew it; for from love only could have come such bliss as now was theirs, a bliss that while it beautified was felt to come from the skies.

Flora sang to Ranald many of her old songs to those wild Gaelic airs that sound like the sighing of

winds among fractured cliffs, or the branches of storm-tossed trees when the subsiding tempest is about to let them rest. Monotonous music! But irresistible over the heart it has once awakened and enthralled, so sincere seems to be the mournfulness it breathes—a mournfulness brooding and feeding on the same note that is at once its natural expression and its sweetest aliment—of which the singer never wearieth in her dream, while her heart all the time is haunted by all that is most piteous, by the faces of the dead in their paleness returning to the shades of life, only that once more they may pour from their fixed eyes those strange showers of unaccountable tears!

How merry were they between those mournful airs! How Flora trembled to see her lover's burning brow and flashing eyes, as he told her tales of great battles fought in foreign lands, far across the sea—tales which he had drunk in with greedy ears from the old heroes scattered all over Lochaber and Badenoch, on the brink of the grave still garrulous of blood!

"The sun sat high in his meridian tower,"

but time had not been with the youthful lovers, and the blessed beings believed that 'twas but a little hour since beneath the Eagle Cliff they had met in the prime of the morn!

The boy starts to his feet—and his keen eye looks along the ready rifle—for his sires had all been
[Pg 398] famous deer-stalkers, and the passion of the chase was hereditary in his blood, Lo! a deer from Dalness, hound-driven or sullenly astray, slowly bearing his antlers up the glen, then stopping for a moment to snuff the air, and then away—away! The rifle-shot rings dully from the scarce echoing snow-cliffs, and the animal leaps aloft, struck by a certain but not sudden death-wound. Oh! for Fingal now to pull him down like a wolf! But labouring and lumbering heavily along, the snow spotted as he bounds with blood, the huge animal at last disappears round some rocks at the head of the glen. "Follow me, Flora!" the boy-hunter cries—and flinging down their plaids, they turn their bright faces to the mountain, and away up the long glen after the stricken deer. Fleet was the mountain-girl—and Ranald, as he ever and anon looked back to wave her on, with pride admired her lightsome motion as she bounded along the snow. Redder and redder grew that snow, and more heavily trampled, as they winded round the rocks. Yonder is the deer staggering up the mountain, not half a mile off—now standing at bay, as if before his swimming eyes came Fingal, the terror of the forest, whose howl was known to all the echoes, and quailed the herd while their antlers were yet afar off. "Rest, Flora! rest! while I fly to him with my rifle—and shoot him through the heart!"

Up—up—up the interminable glen, that kept winding and winding round many a jutting promontory, and many a castellated cliff, the red-deer kept dragging his gore-oozing bulk, sometimes almost within, and then, for some hundreds of yards, just beyond rifle-shot; while the boy, maddened by the chase, pressed forwards, now all alone, nor any more looking behind for Flora, who had entirely disappeared; and thus he was hurried on for miles by the whirlwind of passion—till at last he struck the noble quarry, and down sank the antlers in the snow, while the air was spurned by the convulsive beatings of feet. Then leaped Ranald upon the Red-deer like a beast of prey, and lifted up a look of triumph to the mountain-tops.

Where is Flora? Her lover has forgotten her—and he is alone—nor knows it—he and the Red-deer —an enormous animal—fast stiffening in the frost of death.

Some large flakes of snow are in the air, and they seem to waver and whirl, though an hour ago
[Pg 399] there was not a breath. Faster they fall and faster—the flakes are almost as large as leaves—and overhead whence so suddenly has come that huge yellow cloud? "Flora, where are you? where are you, Flora?" and from the huge hide the boy leaps up, and sees that no Flora is at hand. But yonder is a moving speck far off upon the snow! 'Tis she—'tis she—and again Ranald turns his eyes upon the quarry, and the heart of the hunter burns within him like a new-stirred fire. Shrill as the eagle's cry disturbed in his eyrie, he sends a shout down the glen—and Flora, with cheeks pale and bright by fits, is at last at his side. Panting and speechless she stands—and then dizzily sinks on his breast. Her hair is ruffled by the wind that revives her, and her face all moistened by the snow-flakes, now not falling but driven—for the day has undergone a dismal change, and all over the skies are now lowering savage symptoms of a fast-coming night-storm.

Bare is poor Flora's head, and sorely drenched her hair, that an hour or two ago glittered in the sunshine. Her shivering frame misses now the warmth of the plaid, which almost no cold can penetrate, and which had kept the vital current flowing freely in many a bitter blast. What would the miserable boy give now for the coverings lying far away, which, in his foolish passion, he flung down to chase that fatal deer! "Oh! Flora! if you would not fear to stay here by yourself—under the protection of God, who surely will not forsake you—soon will I go and come from the place where our plaids are lying; and under the shelter of the deer we may be able to outlive the hurricane—you wrapped up in them—and folded—O my dearest sister—in my arms!"—"I will go with you down the glen, Ranald!" and she left his breast—but, weak as a day-old lamb, tottered and sank down on the snow. The cold—intense as if the air were ice—had chilled her very heart, after the heat of that long race; and it was manifest that here she must be for the night—to live or to die. And the night seemed already come, so full was the lift of snow; while the glimmer every moment became gloomier, as if the day were expiring long before its time. Howling at a distance down the glen was heard a sea-born tempest from the Linnhe-Loch, where now they both knew the tide was tumbling in, bringing with it sleet and snow-blasts from afar; and from the opposite
[Pg 400] quarter of the sky an inland tempest was raging to meet it, while every lesser glen had its own uproar, so that on all hands they were environed with death.

"I will go—and, till I return, leave you with God."—"Go, Ranald!" and he went and came—as if he had been endowed with the raven's wings!

Miles away—and miles back had he flown—and an hour had not been with his going and his coming—but what a dreary wretchedness meanwhile had been hers! She feared that she was dying—that the cold snow-storm was killing her—and that she would never more see Ranald, to say to him farewell. Soon as he was gone, all her courage had died. Alone, she feared death, and wept to think how hard it was for one so young thus miserably to die. He came—and her whole being was changed. Folded up in both the plaids, she felt resigned. "Oh! kiss me—kiss me, Ranald—for your love—great as it is—is not as my love. You must never forget me, Ranald—when your poor Flora is dead."

Religion with these two young creatures was as clear as the light of the Sabbath-day—and their belief in heaven just the same as in earth. The will of God they thought of just as they thought of their parents' will—and the same was their loving obedience to its decrees. If she was to die—supported now by the presence of her brother—Flora was utterly resigned; if she were to live, her heart imaged to itself the very forms of her grateful worship. But all at once she closed her eyes—ceased breathing—and, as the tempest howled and rumbled in the gloom that fell around them like blindness, Ranald almost sank down, thinking that she was dead.

"Wretched sinner that I am!—my wicked madness brought her here to die of cold!" And he smote his breast—and tore his hair—and feared to look up, lest the angry eye of God were looking on him through the storm.

All at once, without speaking a word, Ranald lifted Flora in his arms, and walked away up the glen—here almost narrowed into a pass. Distraction gave him supernatural strength, and her weight seemed that of a child. Some walls of what had once been a house, he had suddenly remembered, were but a short way off—whether or not they had any roof, he had forgotten; but
[Pg 401] the thought even of such shelter seemed a thought of salvation. There it was—a snow-drift at the opening that had once been a door—snow up the holes once windows—the wood of the roof had been carried off for fuel, and the snow-flakes were falling in, as if they would soon fill up the inside of the ruin. The snow in front was all trampled as if by sheep; and carrying in his burden under the low lintel, he saw the place was filled with a flock that had foreknown the hurricane, and that all huddled together looked on him as on the shepherd come to see how they were faring in the storm.

And a young shepherd he was, with a lamb apparently dying in his arms. All colour—all motion—all breath seemed to be gone—and yet something convinced his heart that she was yet alive. The ruined hut was roofless, but across an angle of the walls some pine-branches had been flung as a sort of shelter for the sheep or cattle that might repair thither in cruel weather—some pine-branches left by the woodcutters who had felled the few trees that once stood at the very head of the glen. Into that corner the snow-drift had not yet forced its way, and he sat down there with Flora in the cherishing of his embrace, hoping that the warmth of his distracted heart might be felt by her who was as cold as a corpse. The chill air was somewhat softened by the breath of the huddled flock, and the edge of the cutting wind blunted by the stones. It was a place in which it seemed possible that she might revive—miserable as it was with mire-mixed snow—and almost as cold as one supposes the grave. And she did revive—and under the half-open lids the dim blue appeared to be not yet life-deserted. It was yet but the afternoon—night-like though it was—and he thought, as he breathed upon her lips, that a faint red returned, and that they felt the kisses he dropt on them to drive death away.

"Oh! father, go seek for Ranald, for I dreamt to-night he was perishing in the snow!"—"Flora, fear not—God is with us." "Wild swans, they say, are come to Loch-Phoil—let us go, Ranald, and see them—but no rifle—for why kill creatures said to be so beautiful?" Over them where they lay bended down the pine-branch roof, as if it would give way beneath the increasing weight;—but there it still hung—though the drift came over their feet and up to their knees, and seemed
[Pg 402] stealing upwards to be their shroud. "Oh! I am overcome with drowsiness, and fain would be allowed to sleep. Who is disturbing me—and what noise is this in our house?"—"Fear not—fear not, Flora—God is with us." "Mother! am I lying in your arms? My father surely is not in the storm! Oh! I have had a most dreadful dream!" and with such mutterings as these Flora relapsed again into that perilous sleep—which soon becomes that of death.

Night itself came—but Flora and Ranald knew it not—and both lay now motionless in one snow-shroud. Many passions—though earth-born, heavenly all—pity, and grief, and love, and hope, and at last despair—had prostrated the strength they had so long supported; and the brave boy—who had been for some time feeble as a very child after a fever—with a mind confused and wandering, and in its perplexities sore afraid of some nameless ill, had submitted to lay down his head beside his Flora's, and had soon become like her insensible to the night and all its storms!

Bright was the peat-fire in the hut of Flora's parents in Glenco—and they were among the happiest of the humbly happy, blessing this the birthday of their blameless child. They thought of her singing her sweet songs by the fireside of the hut in Glencreran—and tender thoughts of her cousin Ranald were with them in their prayers. No warning came to their ears in the sugh or the howl; for Fear it is that creates its own ghosts, and all its own ghost-like visitings, and they had seen their Flora in the meekness of the morning, setting forth on her way over the quiet mountains, like a fawn to play. Sometimes too Love, who starts at shadows as if they were of the grave, is strangely insensible to realities that might well inspire dismay. So was it now with the dwellers in the hut at the head of Glencreran. Their Ranald had left them in the morning—night

had come, and he and Flora were not there—but the day had been almost like a summer-day, and in their infatuation they never doubted that the happy creatures had changed their minds, and that Flora had returned with him to Glenco. Ranald had laughingly said, that haply he might surprise the people in that glen by bringing back to them Flora on her birthday—and, strange though it afterwards seemed to her to be, that belief prevented one single fear from touching his mother's heart, and she and her husband that night lay down in untroubled sleep.

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And what could have been done for them, had they been told by some good or evil spirit that their children were in the clutches of such a night? As well seek for a single bark in the middle of the misty main! But the inland storm had been seen brewing among the mountains round King's House, and hut had communicated with hut, though far apart in regions where the traveller sees no symptoms of human life. Down through the long cliff-pass of Mealanumy, between Buachaille-Etive and the Black Mount, towards the lone House of Dalness, that lives in everlasting shadows, went a band of shepherds, trampling their way across a hundred frozen streams. Dalness joined its strength—and then away over the drift-bridged chasms toiled that Gathering, with their sheep-dogs scouring the loose snows—in the van, Fingal the Red Reaver, with his head aloft on the look-out for deer, grimly eyeing the Correi where last he tasted blood. All "plaided in their tartan array," these shepherds laughed at the storm—and hark! you hear the bagpipe play—the music the Highlanders love both in war and in peace.

"They think then of the ourie cattle,
And silly sheep;"

and though they ken 'twill be a moonless night—for the snow-storm will sweep her out of heaven—up the mountain and down the glen they go, marking where flock and herd have betaken themselves, and now, at nightfall, unafraid of that blind hollow, they descend into the depth where once stood the old Grove of Pines. Following the dogs, who know their duties in their instinct, the band, without seeing it, are now close to that ruined hut. Why bark the sheep-dogs so—and why howls Fingal, as if some spirit passed athwart the night? He scents the dead body of the boy who so often had shouted him on in the forest, when the antlers went by! Not dead—nor dead she who is on his bosom. Yet life in both is frozen—and will the iced blood in their veins ever again be thawed? Almost pitch-dark is the roofless ruin—and the frightened sheep know not what is the terrible Shape that is howling there. But a man enters, and lifts up one of the bodies, giving it into the arms of them at the doorway—and then lifts up the other; and, by the flash of a rifle, they see that it is Ranald Cameron and Flora Macdonald, seemingly both frozen to death. Some of those reeds that the shepherds burn in their huts are kindled, and in that small light they are assured that such are the corpses. But that noble dog knows that death is not there—and licks the face of Ranald, as if he would restore life to his eyes. Two of the shepherds know well how to fold the dying in their plaids—how gentliest to carry them along; for they had learnt it on the field of victorious battle, when, without stumbling over the dead and wounded, they bore away the shattered body—yet living—of the youthful warrior, who had shown that of such a Clan, he was worthy to be the Chief.

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The storm was with them all the way down the glen—nor could they have heard each other's voices had they spoke—but mutely they shifted the burden from strong hand to hand—thinking of the Hut in Glenco, and of what would be felt there on their arrival with the dying or dead. Blind people walk through what to them is the night of crowded daystreets—unpausing turn round corners—unhesitatingly plunge down steep stairs—wind their way fearlessly through whirlwinds of life—and reach in their serenity, each one unharmed, his own obscure house. For God is with the blind. So is he with all who walk on works of mercy. This saving band had no fear—and therefore there was no danger—on the edge of the pitfall or the cliff. They knew the countenances of the mountains shown momentarily by ghastly gleamings through the fitful night, and the hollow sound of each particular stream beneath the snow at places where in other weather there was a pool or a waterfall. The dip of the hills, in spite of the drifts, familiar to their feet, did not deceive them now; and then, the dogs in their instinct were guides that erred not, and as well as the shepherds knew it themselves did Fingal know that they were anxious to reach Glenco. He led the way, as if he were in moonlight; and often stood still when they were shifting their burden, and whined as if in grief. He knew where the bridges were—stones or logs; and he rounded the marshes where at springs the wild-fowl feed. And thus Instinct, and Reason, and Faith conducted the saving band along—and now they are at Glenco—and at the door of the Hut.

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To life were brought the dead; and there at midnight sat they up like ghosts. Strange seemed they—for a while—to each other's eyes—and at each other they looked as if they had forgotten how dearly once they loved. Then as if in holy fear they gazed on each other's faces, thinking that they had awoke together in heaven. "Flora!" said Ranald—and that sweet word, the first he had been able to speak, reminded him of all that had passed, and he knew that the God in whom they had put their trust had sent them deliverance. Flora, too, knew her parents, who were on their knees—and she strove to rise up and kneel down beside them—but she was powerless as a broken reed—and when she thought to join with them in thanksgiving, her voice was gone. Still as death sat all the people in the hut—and one or two who were fathers were not ashamed to weep.

Who were they—the solitary pair—all alone by themselves save a small image of her on whose breast it lay—whom—seven summers after—we came upon in our wanderings, before their Shieling in Correi-Vollach at the foot of Ben Chrulas, who sees his shadow in a hundred lochs? Who but Ranald and Flora!

Nay, dry up—Daughter of our Age, dry up thy tears! and we shall set a vision before thine eyes to fill them with unmoistened light.

Oft before have those woods and waters—those clouds and mountains—that sun and sky, held thy spirit in Elysium,—thy spirit, that then was disembodied, and living in the beauty and the glory of the elements. 'Tis Windermere—Windermere! Never canst thou have forgotten those more than fortunate—those thrice-blessed Isles! But when last we saw them within the still heaven of thy smiling eyes, summer suns had overloaded them with beauty, and they stooped their flowers and foliage down to the blushing, the burning deep, that glowed in its transparency with other groves as gorgeous as themselves, the whole mingling mass of reality and of shadow forming one creation. But now, lo! Windermere in Winter. All leafless now the groves that girdled her as if shifting rainbows were in love perpetually letting fall their colours on the Queen of Lakes. Gone now are her banks of emerald that carried our calm gazings with them, sloping away back into the cerulean sky. Her mountains, shadowy in sunshine, and seeming restless as seas, where are
[Pg 406] they now?—The cloud-cleaving cliffs that shot up into the blue region where the buzzard sailed? All gone. But mourn not for that loss. Accustom thine eye—and through it thy soul, to that transcendent substitution, and deeply will they be reconciled. Sawest thou ever the bosom of the Lake hushed into profounder rest? No white-winged pinnace glides through the sunshine—no clanking oar is heard leaving or approaching cape, point, or bay—no music of voice, stop, or string, wakens the sleeping echoes. How strangely dim and confused on the water the fantastic frostwork imagery, yet more steadfastly hanging there than ever hung the banks of summer! For all one sheet of ice, now clear as the Glass of Glamoury in which that lord of old beheld his Geraldine—is Windermere, the heaven-loving and the heaven-beloved. Not a wavelet murmurs in all her bays, from the sylvan Brathay to where the southern straits narrow into a river—now chained too the Leven on his sylvan course towards that perilous Estuary afar off raging on its wreck-strewn sands. The frost came after the last fall of snow—and not a single flake ever touched that surface; and now that you no longer miss the green twinkling of the large July leaves, does not imagination love those motionless frozen forests, cold but not dead, serene but not sullen, inspirative in the strangeness of their appareling of wild thoughts about the scenery of foreign climes, far away among the regions of the North, where Nature works her wonders aloof from human eyes, and that wild architect Frost, during the absence of the sun, employs his night of months in building and dissolving his ice-palaces, magnificent beyond the reach of any power set to work at the bidding of earth's crowned and sceptred kings? All at once a hundred houses, high up among the hills, seem on fire. The setting sun has smitten them, and the snow-tracts are illuminated by harmless conflagrations. Their windows are all lighted up by a lurid splendour, in its strong suddenness sublime. But look, look we beseech you, at the sun—the sunset—the sunset region—and all that kindred and corresponding heaven, effulgent where a minute ago lay in its cold glitter the blue bosom of the lake. Who knows the laws of light and the perpetual miracle of
[Pg 407] their operation? God—not thou. The snow-mountains are white no more, but gorgeous in their colouring as the clouds. Lo! Pavey-Ark—magnificent range of cliffs—seeming to come forward, while you gaze!—How it glows with a rosy light, as if a flush of flowers decked the precipice in that delicate splendour! Langdale-Pikes, methinks, are tinged with finest purple, and the thought of violets is with us as we gaze on the tinted bosom of the mountains dearest to the setting sun. But that long broad slip of orange-coloured sky is yellowing with its reflection almost all the rest of our Alps—all but yon stranger—the summit of some mountain belonging to another region—ay—the Great Gabel—silent now as sleep—when last we clomb his cliffs, thundering in the mists of all his cataracts. In his shroud he stands pallid like a ghost. Beyond the reach of the setting sun he lours in his exclusion from the rejoicing light, and imagination personifying his solitary vastness into forsaken life, pities the doom of the forlorn Giant. Ha! just as the eye of day is about to shut, one smile seems sent afar to that lonesome mountain, and a crown of crimson encompasses his forehead.

On which of the two sunsets art thou now gazing? Thou who art to our old loving eyes so like the "mountain nymph, sweet Liberty?" On the sunset in the heaven—or the sunset in the lake? The divine truth is—O Daughter of our Age!—that both sunsets are but visions of our own spirits. Again both are gone from the outward world—and nought remains but a forbidding frown of the cold bleak snow. But imperishable in thy imagination will both sunsets be—and though it will sometimes retire into the recesses of thy memory, and lie there among the unsuspected treasures of forgotten imagery that have been unconsciously accumulating there since first those gentle eyes of thine had perfect vision given to their depths—yet mysteriously brought back from vanishment by some one single silent thought, to which power has been yielded over that bright portion of the Past, will both of them sometimes reappear to thee in solitude—or haply when in the very heart of life. And then surely a few tears will fall for sake of him—then no more seen—by whose side thou stoodest, when that double sunset enlarged thy sense of beauty, and made thee in thy father's eyes the sweetest—best—and brightest poetess—whose whole life is musical
[Pg 408] inspiration—ode, elegy, and hymn, sung not in words but in looks—sigh-breathed or speechlessly distilled in tears flowing from feelings the farthest in this world from grief.

So much, though but little, for the beautiful—with, perhaps, a tinge of the sublime. Are the two emotions different and distinct—think'st thou, O! metaphysical critic of the gruesome countenance—or modifications of one and the same? 'Tis a puzzling question—and we, Sphinx, might wait till doomsday, before you, Œdipus, could solve the enigma. Certainly a Rose is one thing and Mount Ætna is another—an antelope and an elephant—an insect and a man-of-war, both sailing in the sun—a little lucid well in which the fairies bathe, and the Polar Sea in which

Leviathan is "wallowing unwieldy, enormous in his gait"—the jewelled finger of a virgin bride, and grim Saturn with his ring—the upward eye of a kneeling saint, and a comet "that from his horrid hair shakes pestilence and war." But let the rose bloom on the mouldering ruins of the palace of some great king—among the temples of Balbec or Syrian Tadmor—and in its beauty, methinks, 'twill be also sublime. See the antelope bounding across a raging chasm—up among the region of eternal snows on Mont Blanc—and deny it, if you please—but assuredly we think that there is sublimity in the fearless flight of that beautiful creature, to whom nature grudged not wings, but gave instead the power of plumes to her small delicate limbs, unfractured by alighting among the pointed rocks. All alone, by your single solitary self, in some wide, lifeless desert, could you deny sublimity to the unlooked-for hum of the tiniest insect, or to the sudden shiver of the beauty of his gauze-wings? Not you, indeed. Stooping down to quench your thirst in that little lucid well where the fairies bathe, what if you saw the image of the evening star shining in some strange subterranean world? We suspect that you would hold in your breath, and swear devoutly that it was sublime. Dead on the very evening of her marriage day is that virgin bride whose delicacy was so beautiful; and as she lies in her white wedding garments that serve for a shroud, that emblem of eternity and of eternal love, the ring, upon her finger—with its encased
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star shining brightly now that her eyes, once stars, are closed—would, methinks, be sublime to all Christian hearts. In comparison with all these beautiful sublimities, Mount Ætna, the elephant, the man-of-war, Leviathan swimming the ocean-stream, Saturn with his ring, and with his horrid hair the comet—might be all less than nothings. Therefore beauty and sublimity are twin-feelings —one and the same birth—seldom inseparable;—if you still doubt it, become a fire-worshipper, and sing your morning and evening orisons to the rising and the setting sun.

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THE HOLY CHILD.

This house of ours is a prison—this Study of ours a cell. Time has laid his fetters on our feet—fetters fine as the gossamer, but strong as Samson's ribs, silken-soft to wise submission, but to vain impatience galling as cankered wound that keeps ceaselessly eating into the bone. But while our bodily feet are thus bound by an inevitable and inexorable law, our mental wings are free as those of the lark, the dove, or the eagle—and they shall be expanded as of yore, in calm or tempest, now touching with their tips the bosom of this dearly-beloved earth, and now aspiring heavenwards, beyond the realms of mist and cloud, even unto the very core of the still heart of that otherwise unapproachable sky which graciously opens to receive us on our flight, when, disencumbered of the burden of all grovelling thoughts, and strong in spirituality, we exult to soar

"Beyond this visible diurnal sphere,"

nearing and nearing the native region of its own incomprehensible being.

Now touching, we said, with their tips the bosom of this dearly-beloved earth! How sweet that attraction to imagination's wings! How delightful in that lower flight to skim along the green ground, or as now along the soft-bosomed beauty of the virgin snow! We were asleep all night long—sound asleep as children—while the flakes were falling, "and soft as snow on snow" were all the descendings of our untroubled dreams. The moon and all her stars were willing that their lustre should be veiled by that peaceful shower; and now the sun, pleased with the purity of the morning earth, all white as innocence, looks down from heaven with a meek unmelting light, and
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still leaves undissolved the stainless splendour. There is Frost in the air—but he "does his spiriting gently," studding the ground-snow thickly with diamonds, and shaping the tree-snow according to the peculiar and characteristic beauty of the leaves and sprays, on which it has alighted almost as gently as the dews of spring. You know every kind of tree still by its own spirit showing itself through that fairy veil—momentarily disguised from recognition—but admired the more in the sweet surprise with which again your heart salutes its familiar branches, all fancifully ornamented with their snow-foliage, that murmurs not like the green leaves of summer, that like the yellow leaves of autumn strews not the earth with decay, but often melts away into changes so invisible and inaudible, that you wonder to find that it is all vanished, and to see the old tree again standing in its own faint-green glossy bark, with its many million buds, which perhaps fancy suddenly expands into a power of umbrage impenetrable to the sun in Scorpio.

A sudden burst of sunshine! bringing back the pensive spirit from the past to the present, and kindling it, till it dances like light reflected from a burning mirror. A cheerful Sun-scene, though almost destitute of life. An undulating Landscape, hillocky and hilly, but not mountainous, and buried under the weight of a day and night's incessant and continuous snow-fall. The weather has not been windy—and now that the flakes have ceased falling, there is not a cloud to be seen, except some delicate braidings here and there along the calm of the Great Blue Sea of Heaven. Most luminous is the sun, yet you can look straight on his face, almost with unwinking eyes, so mild and mellow is his large light as it overflows the day. All enclosures have disappeared, and you indistinctly ken the greater landmarks, such as a grove, a wood, a hall, a castle, a spire, a village, a town—the faint haze of a far-off and smokeless city. Most intense is the silence; for all the streams are dumb, and the great river lies like a dead serpent in the strath. Not dead—for, lo! yonder one of his folds glitters—and in the glitter you see him moving—while all the rest of his sullen length is palsied by frost, and looks livid and more livid at every distant and more distant winding. What blackens on that tower of snow? Crows roosting innumerous on a huge tree—but

they caw not in their hunger. Neither sheep nor cattle are to be seen or heard—but they are
[Pg 412] cared for;—the folds and the farmyards are all full of life—and the ungathered stragglers are safe in their instincts. There has been a deep fall—but no storm—and the silence, though partly that of suffering, is not that of death. Therefore, to the imagination, unsaddened by the heart, the repose is beautiful. The almost unbroken uniformity of the scene—its simple and grand monotony—lulls all the thoughts and feelings into a calm, over which is breathed the gentle excitation of a novel charm, inspiring many fancies, all of a quiet character. Their range, perhaps, is not very extensive, but they all regard the home-felt and domestic charities of life. And the heart burns as here and there some human dwelling discovers itself by a wreath of smoke up the air, or as the robin-redbreast, a creature that is ever at hand, comes flitting before your path with an almost pert flutter of his feathers, bold from the acquaintanceship he has formed with you in severer weather at the threshold or window of the tenement, which for years may have been the winter sanctuary of the "bird whom man loves best," and who bears a Christian name in every clime he inhabits. Meanwhile the sun waxes brighter and warmer in heaven—some insects are in the air, as if that moment called to life—and the mosses that may yet be visible here and there along the ridge of a wall or on the stem of a tree, in variegated lustre frost-brightened, seem to delight in the snow, and in no other season of the year to be so happy as in winter. Such gentle touches of pleasure animate one's whole being, and connect, by many a fine association, the emotions inspired by the objects of animate and of inanimate nature.

Ponder on the idea—the emotion of purity—and how finely soul-blent is the delight imagination feels in a bright hush of new-fallen snow! Some speck or stain—however slight—there always seems to be on the most perfect whiteness of any other substance—or "dim suffusion veils" it with some faint discolour—witness even the leaf of the lily or the rose. Heaven forbid that we should ever breathe aught but love and delight in the beauty of these consummate flowers! But feels not the heart, even when the midsummer morning sunshine is melting the dews on their fragrant bosoms, that their loveliness is "of the earth earthy"—faintly tinged or streaked, when at the very fairest, with a hue foreboding languishment and decay? Not the less for its sake are
[Pg 413] those soulless flowers dear to us—thus owning kindred with them whose beauty is all soul enshrined for a short while on that perishable face. Do we not still regard the insensate flowers—so emblematical of what, in human life, we do most passionately love and profoundly pity—with a pensive emotion, often deepening into melancholy that sometimes, ere the strong fit subsides, blackens into despair! What pain doubtless was in the heart of the Elegiac Poet of old, when he sighed over the transitory beauty of flowers—

"Conquerimur natura brevis quam gratia Florum!"

But over a perfectly pure expanse of night-fallen snow, when unaffected by the gentle sun, the first fine frost has encrusted it with small sparkling diamonds, the prevalent emotion is Joy. There is a charm in the sudden and total disappearance even of the grassy green. All the "old familiar faces" of nature are for a while out of sight, and out of mind. That white silence shed by heaven over earth carries with it, far and wide, the pure peace of another region—almost another life. No image is there to tell of this restless and noisy world. The cheerfulness of reality kindles up our reverie ere it becomes a dream; and we are glad to feel our whole being complexioned by the passionless repose. If we think at all of human life, it is only of the young, the fair, and the innocent. "Pure as snow," are words then felt to be most holy, as the image of some beautiful and beloved being comes and goes before our eyes—brought from a far distance in this our living world, or from a distance further still in a world beyond the grave—the image of virgin growing up sinlessly to womanhood among her parents' prayers, or of some spiritual creature who expired long ago, and carried with her her native innocence unstained to heaven.

Such Spiritual Creature—too spiritual long to sojourn below the skies—wert Thou—whose rising and whose setting—both most starlike—brightened at once all thy native vale, and at once left it in darkness. Thy name has long slept in our heart—and there let it sleep unbreathed—even as, when we are dreaming our way through some solitary place, without naming it we bless the beauty of some sweet wildflower, pensively smiling to us through the snow.

The Sabbath returns on which, in the little kirk among the hills, we saw thee baptised. Then
[Pg 414] comes a wavering glimmer of five sweet years, that to Thee, in all their varieties, were but as one delightful season, one blessed life—and, finally, that other Sabbath, on which, at thy own dying request—between services thou wert buried.

How mysterious are all thy ways and workings, O gracious Nature! Thou who art but a name given by us to the Being in whom all things are and have life. Ere three years old, she, whose image is now with us, all over the small sylvan world that beheld the evanescent revelation of her pure existence, was called the "Holy Child!" The taint of Sin—inherited from those who disobeyed in Paradise—seemed from her fair clay to have been washed out at the baptismal font, and by her first infantine tears. So pious people almost believed, looking on her so unlike all other children, in the serenity of that habitual smile that clothed the creature's countenance with a wondrous beauty, at an age when on other infants is but faintly seen the dawn of reason, and their eyes look happy just like the thoughtless flowers. So unlike all other children—but unlike only because sooner than they she seemed to have had given to her, even in the communion of the cradle, an intimation of the being and the providence of God. Sooner, surely, than through any other clay that ever enshrouded immortal spirit, dawned the light of religion on the face of the "Holy Child."

Her lisping language was sprinkled with words alien from common childhood's uncertain speech, that murmurs only when indigent nature prompts; and her own parents wondered whence they

came, when first they looked upon her kneeling in an unbidden prayer. As one mild week of vernal sunshine covers the braes with primroses, so shone with fair and fragrant feelings—unfolded, ere they knew, before her parents' eyes—the divine nature of her who for a season was lent to them from the skies. She learned to read out of the Bible—almost without any teaching—they knew not how—just by looking gladly on the words, even as she looked on the pretty daisies on the green—till their meanings stole insensibly into her soul, and the sweet syllables, succeeding each other on the blessed page, were all united by the memories her heart had been treasuring every hour that her father or her mother had read aloud in her hearing from the Book
[Pg 415] of Life. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"—how wept her parents, as these the most affecting of our Saviour's words dropt silver-sweet from her lips, and continued in her upward eyes among the swimming tears!

Be not incredulous of this dawn of reason, wonderful as it may seem to you, so soon becoming morn—almost perfect daylight—with the "Holy Child." Many such miracles are set before us—but we recognise them not, or pass them by with a word or a smile of short surprise. How leaps the baby in its mother's arms, when the mysterious charm of music thrills through its little brain! And how learns it to modulate its feeble voice, unable yet to articulate, to the melodies that bring forth all round its eyes a delighted smile! Who knows what then may be the thoughts and feelings of the infant awakened to the sense of a new world, alive through all its being to sounds that haply glide past our ears unmeaning as the breath of the common air! Thus have mere infants sometimes been seen inspired by music, till, like small genii, they warbled spell-strains of their own, powerful to sadden and subdue our hearts. So, too, have infant eyes been so charmed by the rainbow irradiating the earth, that almost infant hands have been taught, as if by inspiration, the power to paint in finest colours, and to imitate with a wondrous art, the skies so beautiful to the quick-awakened spirit of delight. What knowledge have not some children acquired, and gone down scholars to their small untimely graves! Knowing that such things have been—are—and will be—why art thou incredulous of the divine expansion of soul, so soon understanding the things that are divine—in the "Holy Child?"

Thus grew she in the eye of God, day by day waxing wiser and wiser in the knowledge that tends towards the skies; and, as if some angel visitant were nightly with her in her dreams, awakening every morn with a new dream of thought, that brought with it a gift of more comprehensive speech. Yet merry she was at times with her companions among the woods and braes, though while they all were laughing, she only smiled; and the passing traveller, who might pause for a moment to bless the sweet creatures in their play, could not but single out one face among the many fair, so pensive in its paleness, a face to be remembered, coming from afar, like a mournful
[Pg 416] thought upon the hour of joy.

Sister or brother of her own had she none—and often both her parents—who lived in a hut by itself up among the mossy stumps of the old decayed forest—had to leave her alone—sometimes even all the day long from morning till night. But she no more wearied in her solitariness than does the wren in the wood. All the flowers were her friends—all the birds. The linnet ceased not his song for her, though her footsteps wandered into the green glade among the yellow broom, almost within reach of the spray from which he poured his melody—the quiet eyes of his mate feared her not when her garments almost touched the bush where she brooded on her young. Shyest of the winged sylvans, the cushat clapped not her wings away on the soft approach of such harmless footsteps to the pine that concealed her slender nest. As if blown from heaven, descended round her path the showers of the painted butterflies, to feed, sleep, or die—undisturbed by her—upon the wildflowers—with wings, when motionless, undistinguishable from the blossoms. And well she loved the brown, busy, blameless bees, come thither for the honey-dews from a hundred cots sprinkled all over the parish, and all high overhead sailing away at evening, laden and wearied, to their straw-roofed steps in many a hamlet garden. The leaf of every tree, shrub, and plant, she knew familiarly and lovingly in its own characteristic beauty; and she was loth to shake one dewdrop from the sweetbrier rose. And well she knew that all nature loved in return—that they were dear to each other in their innocence—and that the very sunshine, in motion or in rest, was ready to come at the bidding of her smiles. Skilful those small white hands of hers among the reeds and rushes and osiers—and many a pretty flower-basket grew beneath their touch, her parents wondering on their return home to see the handiwork of one who was never idle in her happiness. Thus early—ere yet but five years old—did she earn her mite for the sustenance of her own beautiful life. The russet garb she wore she herself had won—and thus Poverty, at the door of that hut, became even like a Guardian Angel, with the lineaments of heaven on her brow, and the quietude of heaven beneath her feet.

But these were but her lonely pastimes, or gentle taskwork self-imposed among her pastimes,
[Pg 417] and itself the sweetest of them all, inspired by a sense of duty that still brings with it its own delight, and hallowed by religion, that even in the most adverse lot changes slavery into freedom—till the heart, insensible to the bonds of necessity, sings aloud for joy. The life within the life of the "Holy Child," apart from even such innocent employments as these, and from such recreations as innocent, among the shadows and the sunshine of those sylvan haunts, was passed—let us fear not to say the truth, wondrous as such worship was in one so very young—was passed in the worship of God; and her parents—though sometimes even saddened to see such piety in a small creature like her, and afraid, in their exceeding love, that it betokened an early removal from this world of one too perfectly pure ever to be touched by its sins and sorrows—forbore, in an awful pity, ever to remove the Bible from her knees, as she would sit with it there, not at morning and at evening only, or all the Sabbath long, as soon as they returned from the kirk, but often through all the hours of the longest and sunniest weekdays, when, had she chosen

to do so, there was nothing to hinder her from going up the hill-side, or down to the little village, to play with the other children, always too happy when she appeared—nothing to hinder her but the voice she heard speaking in that Book, and the hallelujahs that, at the turning over of each blessed page, came upon the ear of the "Holy Child" from white-robed saints all kneeling before His throne in heaven.

Her life seemed to be the same in sleep. Often at midnight, by the light of the moon shining in upon her little bed beside theirs, her parents leant over her face, diviner in dreams, and wept as she wept, her lips all the while murmuring, in broken sentences of prayer, the name of Him who died for us all. But plenteous as were her penitential tears—penitential in the holy humbleness of her stainless spirit, over thoughts that had never left a dimming breath on its purity, yet that seemed in those strange visitings to be haunting her as the shadows of sins—soon were they all dried up in the lustre of her returning smiles. Waking, her voice in the kirk was the sweetest among many sweet, as all the young singers, and she the youngest far, sat together by themselves, and within the congregational music of the psalm uplifted a silvery strain that
[Pg 418] sounded like the very spirit of the whole, even like angelic harmony blent with a mortal song. But sleeping, still more sweetly sang the "Holy Child;" and then, too, in some diviner inspiration than ever was granted to it while awake, her soul composed its own hymns, and set the simple scriptural words to its own mysterious music—the tunes she loved best gliding into one another, without once ever marring the melody, with pathetic touches interposed never heard before, and never more to be renewed! For each dream had its own breathing, and many-visioned did then seem to be the sinless creature's sleep.

The love that was borne for her all over the hill-region, and beyond its circling clouds, was almost such as mortal creatures might be thought to feel for some existence that had visibly come from heaven. Yet all who looked on her, saw that she, like themselves, was mortal, and many an eye was wet, the heart wist not why, to hear such wisdom falling from such lips; for dimly did it prognosticate, that as short as bright would be her walk from the cradle to the grave. And thus for the "Holy Child" was their love elevated by awe, and saddened by pity—and as by herself she passed pensively by their dwellings, the same eyes that smiled on her presence, on her disappearance wept.

Not in vain for others—and for herself, oh! what great gain!—for those few years on earth did that pure spirit ponder on the word of God! Other children became pious from their delight in her piety—for she was simple as the simplest among them all, and walked with them hand in hand, nor declined companionship with any one that was good. But all grew good by being with her—and parents had but to whisper her name, and in a moment the passionate sob was hushed—the lowering brow lighted—and the household in peace. Older hearts owned the power of the piety so far surpassing their thoughts; and time-hardened sinners, it is said, when looking and listening to the "Holy Child," knew the error of their ways, and returned to the right path as at a voice from heaven.

Bright was her seventh summer—the brightest, so the aged said, that had ever, in man's memory, shone over Scotland. One long, still, sunny, blue day followed another, and in the rainless
[Pg 419] weather, though the dews kept green the hills, the song of the streams was low. But paler and paler, in sunlight and moonlight, became the sweet face that had been always pale; and the voice that had been always something mournful, breathed lower and sadder still from the too perfect whiteness of her breast. No need—no fear—to tell her that she was about to die. Sweet whispers had sung it to her in her sleep—and waking she knew it in the look of the piteous skies. But she spoke not to her parents of death more than she had often done—and never of her own. Only she seemed to love them with a more exceeding love—and was readier, even sometimes when no one was speaking, with a few drops of tears. Sometimes she disappeared—nor, when sought for, was found in the woods about the hut. And one day that mystery was cleared; for a shepherd saw her sitting by herself on a grassy mound in a nook of the small solitary kirkyard, a long mile off among the hills, so lost in reading the Bible, that shadow or sound of his feet awoke her not; and, ignorant of his presence, she knelt down and prayed—for a while weeping bitterly—but soon comforted by a heavenly calm—that her sins might be forgiven her!

One Sabbath evening, soon after, as she was sitting beside her parents at the door of their hut, looking first for a long while on their faces, and then for a long while on the sky, though it was not yet the stated hour of worship, she suddenly knelt down, and leaning on their knees, with hands clasped more fervently than her wont, she broke forth into tremulous singing of that hymn which from her lips they never heard without unendurable tears:

"The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home;
At last, O Lord, let trouble cease,
And let thy servant die in peace!"

They carried her fainting to her little bed, and uttered not a word to one another till she revived. The shock was sudden, but not unexpected, and they knew now that the hand of death was upon her, although her eyes soon became brighter and brighter, they thought, than they had ever been before. But forehead, cheeks, lips, neck, and breast, were all as white, and, to the quivering
[Pg 420] hands that touched them, almost as cold, as snow. Ineffable was the bliss in those radiant eyes; but the breath of words was frozen, and that hymn was almost her last farewell. Some few words she spake—and named the hour and day she wished to be buried. Her lips could then just faintly return the kiss, and no more—a film came over the now dim blue of her eyes—the father listened

for her breath—and then the mother took his place, and leaned her ear to the unbreathing mouth, long deluding herself with its lifelike smile; but a sudden darkness in the room, and a sudden stillness, most dreadful both, convinced their unbelieving hearts at last, that it was death.

All the parish, it may be said, attended her funeral—for none stayed away from the kirk that Sabbath—though many a voice was unable to join in the Psalm. The little grave was soon filled up—and you hardly knew that the turf had been disturbed beneath which she lay. The afternoon service consisted but of a prayer—for he who ministered had loved her with love unspeakable—and, though an old grey-haired man, all the time he prayed he wept. In the sobbing kirk her parents were sitting, but no one looked at them—and when the congregation rose to go, there they remained sitting—and an hour afterwards, came out again into the open air, and parting with their pastor at the gate, walked away to their hut, overshadowed with the blessing of a thousand prayers.

And did her parents, soon after she was buried, die of broken hearts, or pine away disconsolately to their graves? Think not that they, who were Christians indeed, could be guilty of such ingratitude. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away—blessed be the name of the Lord!" were the first words they had spoke by that bedside; during many, many long years of weal or woe, duly every morning and night, these same blessed words did they utter when on their knees together in prayer—and many a thousand times besides, when they were apart, she in her silent hut, and he on the hill—neither of them unhappy in their solitude, though never again, perhaps, was his countenance so cheerful as of yore—and though often suddenly amidst mirth or sunshine their eyes were seen to overflow. Happy had they been—as we mortal beings ever can be happy—
[Pg 421] during many pleasant years of wedded life before she had been born. And happy were they—on to the verge of old age—long after she had here ceased to be. Their Bible had indeed been an idle Book—the Bible that belonged to "the Holy Child,"—and idle all their kirk-goings with "the Holy Child," through the Sabbath-calm—had those intermediate years not left a power of bliss behind them triumphant over death and the grave.

[Pg 422]

OUR PARISH.

Nature must be bleak and barren indeed to possess no power over the young spirit daily expanding on her breast into new susceptibilities, that ere long are felt to fill life to overflowing with a perpetual succession—an infinite series—of enjoyments. Nowhere is she destitute of that power—not on naked sea-shores—not in central deserts. But our boyhood was environed by the beautiful—its home was among moors and mountains, which people in towns and cities called dreary, but which we knew to be the cheerfullest and most gladsome parish in all braid Scotland—and well it might be, for it was in her very heart. Mountains they seemed to us in those days, though now we believe they are only hills. But such hills!—undulating far and wide away till the highest even on clear days seemed to touch the sky, and in cloudy weather were verily a part of heaven. Many a valley, and many a glen—and many a hollow that was neither valley nor glen—and many a flat, of but a few green acres, which we thought plains—and many a cleft waterless with its birks and breckans, except when the rains came down, and then they all sang a new song in merry chorus—and many a wood, and many a grove, for it takes no great number of trees to make a wood, and four firs by themselves in a lonesome place are a grove—and many a single sycamore, and many a single ash, kenned afar-off above its protected cottage—and many an indescribable spot of scenery at once pastoral and agricultural and sylvan, where, if house there was, you hardly knew it among the rocks;—so was Our Parish, which people in towns and cities called dreary, composed; but the composition itself,—as well might we hope thus to show it to your soul's eye, as by a few extracts however fine, and a few criticisms however exquisite, to give
[Pg 423] you the idea of a perfect poem.

But we have not given you more than a single hint of a great part of our Parish—the Moor. It was then ever so many miles long, and ever so many miles broad, and nobody thought of guessing how many miles round—but some twenty years ago it was absolutely measured to a rood by a landlouper of a land-surveyor—distributed—drained—enclosed—utterly ruined for ever. No, not for ever. Nature laughs to scorn acts of Parliament, and we predict that in a quarter of a century she will resume her management of that moor. We rejoice to hear that she is beginning already to take lots of it into her own hands. Wheat has no business there, and should keep to the carses. In spring, she takes him by the braird till he looks yellow in the face long before his time—in summer, by the cuff of the neck till he lies down on his back and rots in the rain—in autumn, by the ears, and rubs him against the grain till he expires as fushionless as the windle-straes with which he is interlaced—in winter, she shakes him in the stook till he is left but a shadow which pigeons despise. See him in stack at Christmas, and you pity the poor straw. Here and there bits of bear or big, and barley, she permits to flourish—nor is she loth to see the flowers and shaws and apples on the poor man's plant, the life-sustaining potato—which none but political economists hate and all Christians love. She is not so sure about turnips, but as they are a green crop she leaves them to the care of the fly. But where have her gowans gone? There they still are in flocks, which no cultivation can scatter or eradicate—inextinguishable by all the lime that was ever brought unslokened from all the kilns that ever glowed—by all the dung that was ever heaped up fresh and fuming from all the Augean stables in the land. Yet her heart burns within her to behold, even in the midst of what she abhors, the large dew-loved heads of clover whitening or reddening, or with their rival colours amicably intermingled, a new birth glorious in

the place of reedy marish or fen where the catspaws nodded—and them she will retain unto herself when once more she shall rejoice in her Wilderness Restored.

And would we be so barbarous as to seek to impede the progress of improvement, and to render agriculture a dead letter? We are not so barbarous, nor yet so savage. We love civilised life, of
[Pg 424] which we have long been one of the smaller but sincerest ornaments. But agriculture, like education, has its bounds. It is, like it, a science, and woe to the country that encourages all kinds of quacks. Cultivate a moor! educate a boor! First understand the character of Clods and Clodhoppers. To say nothing now of the Urbans and Suburbans—a perilous people—yet of great capabilities; for to discuss that question would lead us into lanes; and as it is a long lane that has never a turning, for the present we keep in the open air, and abstain from wynds. We are no enemies to poor soils, far less to rich ones ignorantly and stupidly called poor, which under proper treatment effuse riches; but to expect to extract from paupers *a return* for the expenditure squandered by miserly greed on their reluctant bottoms, cold and bare, is the insanity of speculation, and such schemers deserve being buried along with their capital in quagmires. Heavens! how they—the quagmires—suck in the dung! You say they don't suck it in—well, then, they spew it out—it evaporates—and what is the worth of weeds? Lime whitens a moss, that is true, but so does snow. Snow melts—what becomes of lime no mortal knows but the powheads—them it poisons, and they give up the ghost. Drains are dug deep nowadays—and we respect Mr Johnstone. So are gold mines. But from gold mines that precious metal—at a great expense, witness its price—is exterred; in drains that precious metal, witness wages, is interred, and then it becomes *squash*. Stirks starve—heifers are hove with windy nothing—with oxen frogs compete in bulk with every prospect of a successful issue, and on such pasturage where would be the virility of the Bulls of Bashan?

If we be in error, we shall be forgiven at least by all lovers of the past, and what to the elderly seems the olden time. Oh, misery for that Moor! Hundreds, thousands, loved it as well as we did; for though it grew no grain, many a glorious crop it bore—shadows that glided like ghosts—the giants stalked—the dwarfs crept; yet sometimes were the dwarfs more formidable than the giants, lying like blackamoors before your very feet, and as you stumbled over them in the dark, throttling as if they sought to strangle you, and then leaving you at your leisure to wipe from your mouth the mire by the light of a straggling star;—sunbeams that wrestled with the shadows in
[Pg 425] the gloom—sometimes clean flung, and then they cowered into the heather, and insinuated themselves into the earth; sometimes victorious, and then how they capered in the lift, ere they shivered away—not always without a hymn of thunder—in behind the clouds, to refresh themselves in their tabernacle in the sky.

Won't you be done with this Moor, you monomaniac? Not for yet a little while—for we see Kitty North all by himself in the heart of it, a boy apparently about the age of twelve, and happy as the day is long, though it is the Longest Day in all the year. Aimless he seems to be, but all alive as a grasshopper, and is leaping like a two-year-old across the hags. Were he to tumble in, what would become of the personage whom Kean's Biographer would call "the future Christopher the First?" But no fear of that—for at no period of his life did he ever overrate his powers—and he knows now his bound to an inch. Cap, bonnet, hat, he has none; and his yellow hair, dancing on his shoulders like a mane, gives him the look of a precocious lion's whelp. Leonine too in his aspect, yet mild withal; and but for a certain fierceness in his gambols, you would not suspect he was a young creature of prey. A fowling-piece is in his left hand, and in his right a rod. And what may he be purposing to shoot? Anything full-fledged that may play whirr or sugh. Good grouse-ground this; but many are yet in the egg, and the rest are but cheepers—little bigger than the small brown moorland bird that goes birling up with its own short epithalamium, and drops down on the rushes still as a stone. Them he harms not on their short flight—but marking them down, twirls his piece like a fugleman, and thinks of the Twelfth. Safer methinks wilt thou be a score or two yards further off, O Whaup! for though thy young are yet callow, Kit is beginning to think they may shift for themselves; and that long bill and that long neck, and those long legs and that long body—the *tout-ensemble* so elegant, so graceful, and so wild—are a strong temptation to the trigger;—click— clack—whizz—phew—fire—smoke and thunder—head-over-heels topsy-turvy goes the poor curlew—and Kit stands over him leaning on his single-barrel, with a stern but somewhat sad aspect, exulting in his skill, yet sorry for the creature whose wild cry will be heard no more.

[Pg 426] 'Tis an oasis in the desert. That green spot is called a quagmire—an ugly name enough—but itself is beautiful; for it diffuses its own light round about it, like a star vivifying its halo. The sward encircling it is firm—and Kit lays him down, heedless of the bird, with eyes fixed on the oozing spring. How fresh the wild cresses! His very eyes are drinking! His thirst is at once excited and satisfied by looking at the lustrous leaves—composed of cooling light without spot or stain. What ails the boy? He covers his face with his hands, and in the silence sighs. A small white hand, with its fingers spread, rises out of the spring, as if it were beckoning to heaven in prayer—and then is sucked slowly in again out of sight with a gurgling groan. The spring so fresh and fair—so beautiful with its cresses and many another water-loving plant beside—is changed into the same horrid quagmire it was that day—a holiday—three years ago—when racing in her joy Amy Lewars blindly ran into it, among her blithe companions, and suddenly perished. Childhood, they say, soon dries its tears, and soon forgets. God be praised for all his goodness! true it is that on the cheek of childhood tears are dried up as if by the sunshine of joy stealing from on high—but, God be praised for all his goodness! false it is that the heart of childhood has not a long memory, for in a moment the mournful past revives within it—as often as the joyful—sadness becomes sorrow, sorrow grief, and grief anguish, as now it is with the solitary boy seated by that ghastly spot in

the middle of the wide moor.

Away he flies, and he is humming a tune. But what's this? A merry-making in the moor? Ay, merry-making; but were you to take part in it, you would find it about the hardest work that ever tried the strength of your spine. 'Tis a party of divot-flaughters. The people in the parish are now digging their peats, and here is a whole household, provident of winter, borrowing fuel from the moss. They are far from coals, and wood is intended by nature for other uses; but fire in peat she dedicated to the hearth, and there it burns all over Scotland, Highland and Lowland, far and near, at many a holy altar. 'Tis the mid-day hour of rest. Some are half asleep, some yet eating, some making a sort of under-voiced, under-hand love. "Mr North! Mr North! Mr North!" is the joyful cry—horny-fists first—downy-fists next—and after heartiest greeting, Master Kitty is installed, enthroned on a knowe, Master of the Ceremonies—and in good time gives them a song.
[Pg 427] Then "galliards cry a hall, a hall," and hark and lo! preluded by six smacks—three foursome reels! "Sic hirdum-dirdum and sic din," on the sward, to a strathspey frae the fiddle o' auld blin' Hugh Lyndsay, the itinerant musicianer, who was noways particular about the number of his strings, and when one, or even two snapped, used to play away at pretty much of the same tune with redoubled energy and variations. He had the true old Niel-Gow yell, and had he played on for ever, folk would have danced on for ever till they had all, one after the other, dropped down dead. What steps!

"Who will try me," cries Kit, "at loup-the-barrows?" "I will," quoth Souple Tam. The barrows are laid—how many side by side we fear to say—for we have become sensitive on our veracity—on a beautiful piece of springy turf, an inclined plane with length sufficient for a run; and while old and young line both sides of the lane near the loup, stript to the sark and the breeks, Souple Tam, as he fondly thinks, shows the way to win, and clears them all like a frog or a roebuck. "Clear the way, clear the way for the callant, Kit's comin!" cries Ebenezer Brackenrigg, the Elder, a douce man now, but a deevil in his youth, and like "a waff o' lichtnin'" past their een, Kit clears the barrows a foot beyond Souple Tam, and at the first fly is declared victor by acclamation. Oh, our unprophetic soul, did the day indeed dawn—many long years after this our earliest great conquest yet traditional in the parish—that ere nightfall witnessed our defeat by—a tailor! The Flying Tailor of Ettrick—the Lying Shepherd thereof—would they had never been born—the one to triumph and the other to record that triumph;—yet let us be just to the powers of our rival—for though all the world knows we were lame when we leapt him, long past our prime, had been wading all day in the Yarrow with some stones-weight in our creel, and allowed him a yard,

"Great must I call him, for he vanquish'd ME."

What a place at night was that Moor! At night! That is a most indeterminate mode of expression, for there are nights of all sorts and sizes, and what kind of a night do we mean? Not a mirk night, for no man ever walked that moor on a mirk night, except one, and he, though blind-fou, was drowned. But a night may be dark without being mirk, with or without stars; and on many such a
[Pg 428] night have we, but not always alone—who was with us you shall never know—threaded our way with no other clue than that of evolving recollections, originally notices, across that wilderness of labyrinths, fearlessly, yet at times with a beating heart. Our companion had her clue too, one in her pocket, of blue worsted, with which she kept in repair all the stockings belonging to the family, and one in her memory, of green ethereal silk, which, finer far than any spider's web, she let out as she tript along the moor, and on her homeward way she felt, by some spiritual touch, the invisible lines, along which she retript as safely as if they had been moonbeams. During such journeyings we never saw the moor, how then can you expect us to describe it?

But oftener we were alone. Earthquakes abroad are dreadful occurrences, and blot out the obituary. But here they are so gentle that the heedless multitude never feel them, and on hearing you tell of them, they incredulously stare. That moor made no show of religion, but was a Quaker. We had but to stand still for five minutes or so, no easy matter then, for we were more restless than a wave, or to lie down with our ear to the ground, and the spirit was sure to move the old Quaker, who forthwith began to preach and pray and sing Psalms. How he moaned at times as if his heart were breaking! At times, as if some old forgotten sorrow were recalled, how he sighed! Then recovering his self-possession, as if to clear his voice, he gave a hem, and then a short nasty cough like a patient in a consumption. Now all was hush, and you might have supposed he had fallen asleep, for in that hush you heard what seemed an intermitting snore. When all at once, whew, whew, whew, as if he were whistling, accompanied with a strange rushing sound as of diving wings. That was in the air—but instantly after you heard something odder still in the bog. And while wondering, and of your wonder finding no end, the ground, which a moment before had felt firm as a road, began to shrink, and sink, and hesitate, and hurry, and crumble, and mumble all around you, and close up to your very feet—the quagmires gurgling as if choked—and a subterranean voice distinctly articulating Oh! Oh! Oh!

We have heard of people who pretend not to believe in ghosts—geologists who know how the world was created; but will they explain that moor? And how happened it that only by nights and dark nights it was so haunted? Beneath a wakeful moon and unwinking stars it was silent as a
[Pg 429] frozen sea. You listened then, and heard but the grass growing, and beautiful grass it was, though it was called coarse, and made the sweetest-scented hay. What crowds of bum-bees' bikes —foggies—did the scythe not reveal as it heaped up the heavy swathes—three hundred stone to the acre—by guess,—for there was neither weighing nor measuring there then-a-days, but all was in the lump—and there the rush-roped stacks stood all the winter through, that they might be near the "eerie outlan' cattle," on places where cart-wheel never circled, nor axle-tree creaked—

nor ever car of antique make trailed its low load along—for the horse would have been laired. We knew not then at all—and now we but imperfectly know—the cause of the Beautiful. Then we believed the Beautiful to be wholly extern; something we had nothing to do with but to look at, and lo! it shone divinely there! Happy creed if false—for in it, with holiest reverence, we blamelessly adored the stars. There they were in millions as we thought—every one brighter than another, when by chance we happened to fix on any individual among them, that we might look through its face into its heart. All above gloriously glittering, all below a blank. Our body here, our spirit there—how mean our birthplace, our death-home how magnificent! "Fear God and keep his commandments," said a small still voice—and we felt that if He gave us strength to obey that law, we should live for ever beyond all those stars.

But were there no Lochs in our parish? Yea. Four. The Little Loch—the White Loch—the Black Loch—and the Brother Loch. Not a tree on the banks of any one of them—yet he had been a blockhead who called them bare. Had there been any need for trees, Nature would have sown them on hills she so dearly loved. Nor sheep nor cattle were ever heard to complain of those pastures. They bleated and they lowed as cheerily as the moorland birdies sang—and how cheerily that was nobody knew who had not often met the morning on the brae, and shaken hands with her the rosy-fingered like two familiar friends. No want of lown places there, in which the creatures could lie with wool or hair unruffled among surrounding storms. For the hills had been dropt from the hollow of His hand who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb"—and even high up, where you might see tempest-stricken stones—some of them like pillars—but placed not
[Pg 430] there by human art—there were cosy bields in wildest weather, and some into which the snow was never known to drift, green all the winter through—perennial nests. Such was the nature of the region where lay our Four Lochs. They were some quarter of a mile—some half mile—and some whole mile—not more—asunder; but there was no great height—and we have a hundred times climbed the highest—from which they could be all seen at once—so cannily were they embosomed, so needed not to be embowered.

The Little Loch was the rushiest and reediest little rascal that ever rustled, and he was on the very edge of the Moor. That he had fish we all persisted in believing, in spite of all the successless angling of all kinds that from time immemorial had assailed his sullen depths;—but what a place for pow-heads! One continued bank of them—while yet they were but eyes in the spawn—encircled it instead of water-lilies; and at "the season of the year," by throwing in a few stones, you awoke a croaking that would have silenced a rookery. In the early part of the century a pike had been seen basking in the shallows, by eye-measurement about ten feet long—but fortunately he had never been hooked, or the consequences would have been fatal. We have seen the Little Loch alive with wild-ducks; but it was almost impossible by position to get a shot at them—and quite impossible, if you did, to get hold of the slain. Fro himself—the best dog that ever dived—was baffled by the multiplicity of impediments and obstructions—and at last refused to take the water—sat down and howled in spiteful rage. Yet Imagination loved the Little Loch, and so did Hope. We have conquered it in sleep both with rod and gun—the weight of bag and basket has wakened us out of dreams of murder that never were realised—yet once, and once only, in it we caught an eel, which we skinned, and wore the shrivel for many a day round our ankle—nor is it a vain superstition—to preserve it from sprains. We are willing the Little Loch should be drained; but you would have to dig a fearsome trench, for it used to have no bottom. A party of us—six—ascertained that fact, by heaving into it a stone which six-and-thirty schoolboys of this degenerate age could not have lifted from its moss-bed—and though we watched for an hour, not a bubble rose to the surface. It used sometimes to boil like a pot on breathless days, for events happening in foreign countries disturbed the spring, and the torments it suffered
[Pg 431] thousands of fathoms below, were manifested above in turbulence that would have drowned a school-boy's skiff.

The White Loch—so called from the silver sand of its shores—had likewise its rushy and reedy bogs; but access to every part of the main body was unimpeded, and you waded into it, gradually deeper and deeper, with such a delightful descent, that up to the arm-pits and then to the chin, you could keep touching the sand with your big-toe, till you floated away off at the nail, out of your depth, without for a little while discovering that it was incumbent on you, for sake of your personal safety, to take to regular swimming—and then how buoyant was the milk-warm water, without a wave but of your own creating, as the ripples went circling away before your breast or your breath! It was absolutely too clear—for without knitting your brows you could not see it on bright airless days—and wondered what had become of it—when all at once, as if it had been that very moment created out of nothing, there it was! endued with some novel beauty—for of all the lochs we ever knew—and to be so simple too—the White Loch had surely the greatest variety of expression,—but all within the cheerful—for sadness was alien altogether from its spirit, and the gentle Mere for ever wore a smile. Swans—but that was but once—our own eyes had seen on it—and were they wild or were they tame swans, certain it is they were great and glorious and lovely creatures, and whiter than any snow. No house was within sight, and they had nothing to fear—nor did they look afraid—sailing in the centre of the loch—nor did we see them fly away—for we lay still on the hill-side till in the twilight we should not have known what they were, and we left them there among the shadows seemingly asleep. In the morning they were gone, and perhaps making love in some foreign land.

The Black Loch was a strange misnomer for one so fair—for black we never saw him, except it might be for an hour or so before thunder. If he really was a loch of colour the original taint had been washed out of him, and he might have shown his face among the purest waters of Europe. But then he was deep; and knowing that, the natives had named him, in no unnatural confusion of

ideas, the Black Loch. We have seen wild-duck eggs five fathoms down so distinctly that we could
[Pg 432] count them—and though that is not a bad dive, we have brought them up, one in our mouth and one in each hand, the tenants of course dead—nor can we now conjecture what sank them there; but ornithologists see unaccountable sights, and they only who are not ornithologists disbelieve Audubon and Wilson. Two features had the Black Loch which gave it to our eyes a pre-eminence in beauty over the other three—a tongue of land that half-divided it, and never on hot days was without some cattle grouped on its very point, and in among the water—and a cliff on which, though it was not very lofty, a pair of falcons had their nest. Yet in misty weather, when its head was hidden, the shrill cry seemed to come from a great height. There were some ruins too—tradition said of some church or chapel—that had been ruins long before the establishment of the Protestant faith. But they were somewhat remote, and likewise somewhat imaginary, for stones are found lying strangely distributed, and those looked to our eyes not like such as builders use, but to have been dropped there most probably from the moon.

But the best beloved, if not the most beautiful, of them all was the Brother Loch. It mattered not what was his disposition or genius, every one of us boys, however different might be our other tastes, preferred it far beyond the rest, and for once that we visited any of them we visited it twenty times, nor ever once left it with disappointed hopes of enjoyment. It was the nearest, and therefore most within our power, so that we could gallop to it on shank's naigie, well on in the afternoon, and enjoy what seemed a long day of delight, swift as flew the hours, before evening prayers. Yet was it remote enough to make us always feel that our race thither was not for every day—and we seldom returned home without an adventure. It was the largest too by far of the Four—and indeed its area would have held the waters of all the rest. Then there was a charm to our heart as well as our imagination in its name—for tradition assigned it on account of three brothers that perished in its waters—and the same name for the same reason belongs to many another loch—and to one pool on almost every river. But above all it was the Loch for angling, and we long kept to perch. What schools! Not that they were of a very large size—though pretty well—but hundreds all nearly the same size gladdened our hearts as they lay, at the close of our sport, in separate heaps on the greensward shore, more beautiful out of all sight than your silver
[Pg 433] or golden fishes in a glass-vase, where one appears to be twenty, and the delusive voracity is all for a single crumb. No bait so killing as cowshairn-mauks, fresh from their native bed, scooped out with the thumb. He must have been a dear friend to whom in a scarcity, by the water-side, when the corks were dipping, we would have given a mauk. No pike. Therefore the trout were allowed to gain their natural size—and that seemed to be about five pounds—adolescents not unfrequent swam two or three—and you seldom or never saw the smaller fry. But few were the days "good for the Brother Loch." Perch rarely failed you, for by perseverance you were sure to fall in with one circumnatatory school or other, and to do murderous work among them with the mauk, from the schoolmaster himself inclusive down to the little booby of the lowest form. Not so with Trout. We have angled ten hours a-day for half a-week (during the vacance), without ever getting a single rise, nor could even that be called bad sport, for we lived in momentary expectation, mingled with fear, of a monster. Better far from sunrise to sunset never to move a fin, than oh! me miserable! to hook a huge hero with shoulders like a hog—play him till he comes floating side up close to the shore, and then to feel the feckless fly leave his lip and begin gamboling in the air, while he wallops away back into his native element, and sinks utterly and for evermore into the dark profound. Life loses at such a moment all that makes life desirable—yet strange! the wretch lives on—and has not the heart to drown himself, as he wrings his hands and curses his lot and the day he was born. But, thank Heaven, that ghastly fit of fancy is gone by, and we imagine one of those dark, scowling, gusty, almost tempestuous days, "prime for the Brother Loch." No glare or glitter on the water, no reflection of fleecy clouds, but a black-blue undulating swell, at times turbulent—with now and then a breaking wave,—that was the weather in which the giants fed, showing their backs like dolphins within a fathom of the shore, and sucking in the red heckle among your very feet. Not an insect in the air, yet then the fly was all the rage. This is a mystery, for you could do nothing with the worm. Oh! that we had then known the science of the spinning minnow! But we were then but an apprentice—who are now Emeritus Grand Master. Yet at this distance of time—half a century and more—it is impious to repine. Gut
[Pg 434] was not always to be got; and on such days a three-haired snood did the business—for they were bold as lions, and rashly rushed on death. The gleam of the yellow-worsted body with star-y-pointed tail maddened them with desire—no dallying with the gay deceiver—they licked him in—they gorged him—and while satiating their passion got involved in inextricable fate. You have seen a single strong horse ploughing up-hill. How he sets his brisket to it—and snooves along—as the furrows fall in beautiful regularity from the gliding share. So snooved along the Monarch of the Mere—or the heir-apparent—or heir-presumptive—or some other branch of the royal family—while our line kept steadily cutting the waves, and our rod enclosing some new segment of the sky.

But many another pastime we pursued upon those pastoral hills, for even angling has its due measure, and unless that be preserved, the passion wastes itself into lassitude, or waxes into disease. "I would not angle alway," thinks the wise boy—"off to some other game we altogether flew." Never were there such hills for hare and hounds. There couched many a pussy—and there Bob Howie's famous Tickler—the Grew of all Grews—first stained his flews in the blood of the Fur. But there is no coursing between April and October—and during the intervening months we used to have many a hunt on foot, without dogs, after the leverets. We all belonged to the High School indeed, and here was its playground. Cricket we had then never heard of; but there was ample room and verge enough for football. Our prime delight, however, was the chase. We were all in perpetual training, and in such wind that there were no bellows to mend after a flight of

miles. We circled the Lochs. Plashing through the marishes we strained winding up the hill-sides, till on the cairn called a beacon that crowned the loftiest summit of the range, we stood and waved defiance to our pursuers scattered wide and far below, for 'twas a Deer Hunt. Then we became cavaliers. We caught the long-maned and long-tailed colts, and mounting bare-backed, with rush helmets and segg sabres charged the nowte till the stirks were scattered, and the lowing lord of herds himself taken captive, as he stood pawing in a nook with his nose to the ground and eyes of fire. That was the riding-school in which we learned to witch the world with noble horsemanship. We thus got confirmed in that fine, easy, unconstrained, natural seat, which
[Pg 435] we carried with us into the saddle when we were required to handle the bridle instead of the mane. 'Tis right to hold on by the knees, but equally so to hold on by the calves of the legs and the heels. The modern system of turning out the toes, and sticking out the legs as if they were cork or timber, is at once dangerous and ridiculous; hence in our cavalry the men got unhorsed in every charge. On pony-back we used to make the soles of our feet smack together below the belly, for quadruped and biped were both unshod, and hoof needed no iron on that stoneless sward. But the biggest fun of all was to "grup the auld mare," and ride her sextuple, the tallest boy sitting on the neck, and the shortest on the rump with his face to the tail, and holding on by that fundamental feature by which the urchin tooled her along as by a tiller. How the silly foal whinnied, as with light-gathered steps he accompanied in circles his populous parent, and seemed almost to doubt her identity, till one by one we slipped off over her hurdies, and let him take a suck! But what comet is yon in the sky—"with fear of change perplexing mallards?" A Flying Dragon. Of many degrees is his tail, with a tuft like that of Taurus terrified by the sudden entrance of the Sun into his sign. Up goes Sandy Donald's rusty and rimless beaver as a messenger to the Celestial. He obeys, and stooping his head, descends with many diverse divings, and buries his beak in the earth. The feather kite quails and is cowed by him of paper, and there is a scampering of cattle on a hundred hills.

The Brother Loch saw annually another sight, when on the Green-Brae was pitched a Tent—a snow-white Pyramid, gathering to itself all the sunshine. There lords and ladies, and knights and squires, celebrated Old May-day, and half the parish flocked to the Festival. The Earl of Eglintoun, and Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, and old Sir John of Polloc, and Pollock of that Ilk, and other heads of illustrious houses, with their wives and daughters, a beautiful show, did not disdain them of low degree, but kept open table in the moor; and would you believe it, high-born youths and maidens ministered at the board to cottage lads and lasses, whose sunburnt faces hardly dared to smile, under awe of that courtesy—yet whenever they looked up there was happiness in their eyes. The young ladies were all arrayed in green; and after the feast, they took bows and arrows in their lily hands, and shot at a target in a style that would have gladdened the
[Pg 436] heart of Maid Marian—nay, of Robin himself;—and one surpassing bright—the Star of Ayr—she held a hawk on her wrist—a tercel gentle—after the fashion of the olden time; and ever as she moved her arm you heard the chiming of silver bells. And her brother—gay and gallant as Sir Tristrem—he blew his tasseled bugle—so sweet, so pure, so wild the music, that when he ceased to breathe, the far-off repeated echoes, faint and dim, you thought died away in heaven like an angel's voice.

Was it not a Paragon of a Parish? But we have not told you one half of its charms. There was a charm in every nook—and Youth was the master of the spell. Small magicians were we in size, but we were great in might. We had but to open our eyes in the morning, and at one look all nature was beautiful. We have said nothing about the Burns. The chief was the Yearn—endearingly called the Humbie, from a farm near the Manse, and belonging to the minister. Its chief source was, we believe, the Brother Loch. But it whimpled with such an infantine voice from the lucid bay, which then knew nor sluice nor dam, that for a while it was scarcely even a rill, and you had to seek for it among the heather. In doing so, ten to one some brooding birdie fluttered off her nest—but not till your next step would have crushed them all—or perhaps—but he had no nest there—a snipe. There it is—betrayed by a line of livelier verdure. Ere long it sparkled within banks of its own and "braes of green bracken," and as you footed along, shoals of minnows, and perhaps a small trout or two, brastled away to the other side of the shallow, and hid themselves in the shadows. 'Tis a pretty rill now—nor any longer mute; and you hear it murmur. It has acquired confidence on its course, and has formed itself into its first pool—a waterfall, three feet high, with its own tiny rocks, and a single birk—no, it is a rowan—too young yet to bear berries—else might a child pluck the highest cluster. Imperceptibly, insensibly, it grows just like life. The Burn is now in his boyhood; and a bold, bright boy he is—dancing and singing—nor heeding which way he goes along the wild, any more than that wee rosy-cheeked, flaxen-headed girl seems to heed, who drops you a curtsy, and on being asked by you, with your hand on her hair, where she is going, answers wi' a soft Scottish accent—ah! how sweet—"Owre the hill to see my
[Pg 437] Mither." Is that a house? No—a fauld. For this is the Washing-Pool. Look around you, and you never saw such perfectly white sheep. They are Cheviots; for the black-faces are on the higher hills to the north of the moor. We see a few rigs of flax—and "lint is in the bell"—the steeping whereof will sadly annoy the bit burnie, but poor people must spin—and as this is not the season, we will think of nothing that can pollute his limpid waters. Symptoms of husbandry! Potato-shaws luxuriating on lazy-beds, and a small field with alternate rigs of oats and barley. Yes, that is a house—"an auld clay bigging,"—in such Robin Burns was born—in such was rocked the cradle of Pollok. We think we hear two separate liquid voices—and we are right—for from the flats beyond Floak, and away towards Kingswells, comes another yet wilder burnie, and they meet in one at the head of what you would probably call a meadow, but which we call a holm. There seems to be more arable land hereabouts than a stranger could have any idea of; but it is a long time since the ploughshare traced those almost obliterated furrows on the hill-side; and such cultivation is

now wisely confined, you observe, to the lower lands. We fear the Yearn—for that is his name now—heretofore he was anonymous—is about to get flat. But we must not grudge him a slumber or a sleep among the saughs, lulled by the murmur of millions of humble-bees—we speak within bounds—on their honied flowerage. We are confusing the seasons, for a few minutes ago we spoke of "lint being in the bell;" but in imagination's dream how sweetly do the seasons all slide into one another! After sleep comes play, and see and hear now how the merry Yearn goes tumbling over rocks, nor will rest in any one linn, but impatient of each beautiful prison in which one would think he might lie a willing thrall, hurries on as if he were racing against time, nor casts a look at the human dwellings now more frequent near his sides. But he will be stopped by-and-by, whether he will or no; for there, if we be not much mistaken, there is a mill. But the wheel is at rest—the sluice on the lade is down—with the lade he has nothing more to do than to fill it; and with undiminished volume he wends round the miller's garden—you see Dusty Jacket is a florist—and now is hidden in a dell; but a dell without any rocks. 'Tis but some hundred yards across from bank to brae—and as you angle along on either side, the sheep and lambs are
[Pg 438] bleating high overhead; for though, the braes are steep, they are all intersected with sheep-walks, and ever and anon among the broom and the brackens are little platforms of close-nibbled greensward, yet not bare—and nowhere else is the pasturage more succulent—nor do the young creatures not care to taste the primroses, though were they to live entirely upon them, they could not keep down the profusion—so thickly studded in places are the constellations—among sprinklings of single stars. Here the hill-blackbird builds—and here you know why Scotland is called the lintie's land. What bird lilts like the lintwhite? The lark alone. But here there are no larks—a little further down and you will hear one ascending or descending over almost every field of grass or of the tender braird. Down the dell before you, flitting from stone to stone, on short flight seeks the water-pyet—seemingly a witless creature with its bonnie white breast—to wile you away from the crevice, even within the waterfall, that holds its young—or with a cock of her tail she dips and disappears. There is grace in the glancing sandpiper—nor, though somewhat fantastical, is the water-wagtail inelegant—either belle or beau—an outlandish bird that makes himself at home wherever he goes, and, vain as he looks, is contented if but one admire him in a solitary place—though it is true that we have seen them in half-dozens on the midden in front of the cottage door. The blue slip of sky overhead has been gradually widening, and the dell is done. Is that snow? A bleachfield. Lasses can bleach their own linen on the green near the pool, "atween twa flowery braes," as Allan has so sweetly sung, in his truly Scottish pastoral "The Gentle Shepherd." But even they could not well do without bleachfields on a larger scale, else dingy would be their smocks and their wedding-sheets. Therefore there is beauty in a bleachfield, and in none more than in Bell's-Meadows. But where is the Burn? They have stolen him out of his bed, and, alas! nothing but stones! Gather up your flies, and away down to yonder grove. There he is like one risen from the dead; and how joyful his resurrection! All the way from this down to the Brigg o' Humbie the angling is admirable, and the burn has become a stream. You wade now through longer grass—sometimes even up to the knees; and half-forgetting pastoral life, you ejaculate "Speed the plough!" Whitewashed houses—but still thatched—look down on you from
[Pg 439] among trees, that shelter them in front; while behind is an encampment of stacks, and on each side a line of offices, so that they are snug in every wind that blows. The Auld Brigg is gone, which is a pity; for though the turn was perilous sharp, time had so coloured it that in a sunny shower we have mistaken it for a rainbow. That's Humbie House, God bless it! and though we cannot here with our bodily sense see the Manse, with our spiritual eye we can see it anywhere. Ay! there is the cock on the Kirk-spire! The wind we see has shifted to the south; and ere we reach the Cart, we shall have to stuff our pockets. The Cart!—ay, the river Cart—not that on which pretty Paisley stands, but the Black Cart, beloved by us chiefly for sake of Cath-Cart Castle, which, when a collegian at Glasgow, we visited every Play-Friday, and deepened the ivy on its walls with our first sombre dreams. The scenery of the Yearn becomes even sylvan now; and though still sweet its murmurs to our ear, they no longer sink into our hearts. So let it mingle with the Cart, and the Cart with the Clyde, and the Clyde widen away in all his majesty, till the river becomes a firth, and the firth the sea;—but we shut our eyes, and relapse into the vision that showed us the solitary region dearest to our imagination and our hearts, and opening them on completion of the charm that works within the spirit when no daylight is there, rejoice to find ourselves again sole-sitting on the Green-Brae above the Brother Loch.

Such is an off-hand picture of Our Parish—pray give us one of yours, that both may gain by comparison. But is ours a true picture? True as Holy Writ—false as any fiction in an Arabian tale. How is this? Perception, memory, imagination, are all moods—states of mind. But mind, as we said before, is one substance, and matter another; and mind never deals with matter without metamorphosing it like a mythologist. Thus truth and falsehood, reality and fiction, become all one and the same; for they are so essentially blended, that we defy you to show what is biblical—what apocryphal—and what pure romance. How we transpose and dislocate while we limn in aerial colours! Where tree never grew we drop it down centuries old—or we tear out the gnarled oak by the roots, and steep what was once his shadow in sunshine—hills sink at a touch, or at a beck mountains rise; yet amidst all those fluctuations the spirit of the place remains the same; for
[Pg 440] in that spirit has imagination all along been working, and boon nature smiles on her son as he imitates her creations—but "hers are heavenly, his an empty dream."

Where lies Our Parish, and what is its name? Seek, and you will find it either in Renfrewshire, or in Utopia, or in the Moon. As for its name, men call it the Mearns. M'Culloch, the great Glasgow painter—and in Scotland he has no superior—will perhaps accompany you to what once was the Moor. All the Four Lochs, we understand, are there still; but the Little Loch transmogrified into an auxiliar appurtenance to some cursed Wark—the Brother Loch much exhausted by daily

drains upon him by we know not what wretch—the White Loch *larched*—and the Black Loch of a ghastly blue, cruelly cultivated all close round the brim. From his moor

"The parting genius is with sighing sent;"

but sometimes, on blear-eyed days, he is seen disconsolately sitting in some yet mossy spot among the ruins of his ancient reign. That painter has studied the aspect of the Old Forlorn, and has shown it more than once on bits of canvass not a foot long; and such pictures will survive after the Ghost of the Genius has bade farewell to the ruined solitudes he had haunted ever since the flood, or been laid beneath the yet unprofaned Green-Brae, above the Brother Loch, whence we devoutly trust he will re-issue, though ages may have to elapse, to see all his quagmires in their primeval glory, and all his hags more hideously beautiful, as they yawn back again into their former selves, frowning over the burial in their bottoms of all the harvests that had dared to ripen above their heads.

Transcriber's Note:

Inconsistent hyphenation was not changed.
Table of Contents: Corrected 336 to 335
Page 127: Corrected word order problem
Page 132: Changed "this to happen her" to "this to happen to her"

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