

## THE MACGREGORS.

A TRAVELLER who approaches Loch Katrine from Stirling or Callendar, passes through the narrow defile of the Trosachs, where Fitz-James's

“ Gallant horse exhausted fell ;”

and will mark the “ narrow and broken plain” where Sir Walter Scott represents the Scottish troops under the Earls of Mar and Moray to have paused ere they entered

“ The dangerous glen.”

Nor will the vivid description of the scene which took place when the archers entered the defile be forgotten. No trace of a foe could at first be seen ; but

“ At once there rose so wild a yell  
Within that dark and narrow dell,  
As all the fiends, from heaven that fell,  
Had peal'd the banner-cry of hell!  
Forth from the pass in tumult driven,  
Like chaff before the wind of heaven,  
The archery appear ;  
For life! for life! their flight they ply—  
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,  
And plaids and bonnets waving high,  
And broadswords flashing in the sky,  
Are maddening in the rear.  
Onwards they drive in dreadful race,  
Pursners and pursued.”

Although this is merely the description of an imaginary fight between the Scottish troops and the men of Clan-Al-

pine or Clan-Gregor, yet it has become so familiar to every reading mind as almost to be considered the account of a real transaction; and we believe few now pass through the Trosachs without thinking of Roderic Dhu and his Macgregors, and those days when their cliffs oft-echoed to “dying moan and dirge’s wail.” The first appearance of the lake at this extremity gives little promise of the wide and varied expanse to which it stretches out as the traveller proceeds. Sir Walter has indeed well described it here as

“A narrow inlet still and deep,  
Affording scarce such breadth of brim,  
As served the wild duck’s brood to swim.”

In advancing onwards, the lake is lost for a few minutes, but it again opens with increasing grandeur and presents new and picturesque views at almost every step as we advance. Helen’s isle, which will immediately arrest attention, was the “islet rock” from which, at the blast of the Knight of Snowden’s bugle, started forth the little skiff which brought Helen Douglas to the “beach of pebbles bright as snow;” and on which also was the rustic retreat where Fitz-James spent the night. It was to the same island that the women and children of the Clan-Alpine or Clan-Gregor are represented to have fled for refuge:—

“Moray pointed with his lance,  
And cried—‘Behold yon isle!—  
See none are left to guard its strand  
But women weak that wring the hand,  
'Tis there of yore the robber-band  
Their booty wont to pile;—  
My purse, with bonnet-pieces store,  
To him will swim a bow-shot o’er  
And loose a shallop from the shore.

Lightly we'll tame the war-wolf then,  
 Lords of his mate, and brood and den!  
 Forth from the ranks a spearman sprung,  
 On earth his casque and corslet rung,  
 He plunged into the wave.

\* \* \* \* \*

He nears the isle—and lo!  
 His hand is on a shallop's bow.  
 I marked Duncraggan's widow'd dame,  
 Behind an oak I saw her stand  
 A naked dirk gleamed in her hand:  
 It darkened; but amid the moan  
 Of waves I heard a dying groan."

In the graphic narrative which we have here quoted from the poem of Sir Walter, we have indeed but the fictions of the poet; yet when we recollect who were the ancient inhabitants of this district, we can feel little doubt that such scenes were formerly not unfrequent during that period,

"When tooming faulds, or sweeping of a glen,  
 Had still been held the deeds of gallant men."

When the Clan Gregor, or as they were called, the Clan-Alpine, held this district, there can be no question that on this island their wives and children often sought shelter from the numerous enemies of their name; and it is said that during Cromwell's usurpation, one of his soldiers who had swam to the island, and was about to seize one of the boats, met his doom from the hand of a woman in the manner described in the poem. But, whatever be the truth of the legends connected with it, "the mighty minstrel" has "waved his visioned wand," and they have now obtained an absolute and permanent existence in the imagination.

The upper part or western extremity of Loch Katrine, or

the part which is first approached by a traveller from Invernaid on Loch Lomond, was eminently the land of the Macgregors,—the central part of their territory,—the district of seclusion and strengths and fastnesses, where they commonly sought refuge from oppression, and to which they usually retired after their unsuccessful conflicts with other clans, or after their predatory incursions into the Lowlands. This tract does not possess the picturesque or romantic interest which so powerfully characterises the scenery toward the eastern end of the lake; yet there is a rude grandeur, a lonely sublimity about it, which at least inspires awe, and fills the mind with pleasing melancholy, though it may fail to realize the images associated with its name in our fancy. When we look upon the utter desolateness which spreads around,—the bluff head-lands which project their weather-beaten fronts into the water,—the noble outline of the lofty mountains,—the bare and rugged rocks with which they are covered,—the deep ravines that form the beds of the innumerable streams which flow down their sides,—the heath-covered muirs that intervene,—and the contrasted stillness and purity of the transparent lake,—we feel that it is altogether highly characteristic Highland scenery. The Macgregors were long the entire masters of this district, and of a wide periphery of glen and mountain and lake and forest on all sides of it; but were from time to time dispossessed by the superior address and craftiness of the neighbouring clans; and they were a sad instance of the fluctuations of prosperity and character, and the violent alternations between comparative good and comparative evil, the sudden and startling mixtures of wrong done and wrong suffered, of crime and victimization, which characterise an unsettled feudal state of society.

In the early part of the year 1602, a large portion of the west of Scotland was tossed into commotion by the renewal of some old quarrels between Colquhoun of Luss, the chief of that surname, and Alexander Macgregor, chief of the Clan-



DUMBARTON CASTLE.

Gregor. Aggressions had formerly been committed on both sides; first by Luss and his party against some of the Macgregors, and then by John Macgregor, the brother of Alexander, against the laird of Luss and his dependants and tenants. To put an end to these dissensions, Alexander Macgregor left Raunoch, accompanied by about 200 of his kinsmen and friends, entered Lennox, and took up his quarters on the confines of Luss's territory, where he expected, by the mediation of his friends, to bring matters to an amicable adjustment. As the laird of Luss was suspicious of Macgregor's real intentions, he assembled all his vassals with the Buchanans and others, to the number of 300 horse and 500 foot, with the design, if the result of the meeting should not turn out to his expectations and wishes, to cut off Macgregor and his party. But Macgregor, anticipating his intention, was upon his guard, and, by his precautions, defeated the design upon him. A conference was held for the purpose of terminating all differences; but the meeting broke up without any adjustment; Macgregor then proceeded homewards.

The laird of Luss, in pursuance of his plan, immediately followed Macgregor with great haste through Glenfruin, about 10 miles west of Dumbarton, in the expectation of coming upon him unawares, and defeating him; but Macgregor, who was on the alert, observed, in due time, the approach of his pursuers, and made his dispositions accordingly. He divided his company into two parts, the largest of which he kept under his own command, and placed the other part under the command of John Macgregor, his brother, whom he dispatched by a circuitous route, for the purpose of attacking Luss's party in the rear, when they should least expect to be assailed. This stratagem succeeded, and the result was, that after a keen contest, Luss's party was completely overthrown, with the loss of 200 men, besides several gentlemen and burghesses of the town of Dumbarton. It is remarkable that of the Macgregors, John, the brother of Alexander, and another

person alone were killed, though some of the party were wounded.

The laird of Luss and his friends sent early notice of their disaster to the King, and they succeeded so effectually by misrepresenting the whole affair to him, and exhibiting to his majesty eleven score bloody shirts belonging to those of their party who were slain, that the King grew exceedingly incensed at the Clan-Gregor, who had no person about the King to plead their cause, proclaimed them rebels, and interdicted all the lieges from harbouring them or having any communication with them. The Earl of Argyle and the Campbells were afterwards sent against the proscribed clan, and hunted them through the country. About 60 of the clan made a brave stand at Bēntoik against a party of 200 chosen men belonging to the Clan-Cameron, Clan-Nab, and Clan-Ronald, under the command of Robert Campbell, son of the laird of Glenorchy, when Duncan Aberigh, one of the chieftains of the Clan-Gregor, and his son Duncan, and seven gentlemen of Campbell's party were killed. But although they made a brave resistance, and killed many of their pursuers, the Macgregors, after many skirmishes and great losses, were at last overcome. Commissions were thereafter sent through the kingdom, for fining those who had harboured any of the clan, and for punishing all persons who had kept up any communication with them; and the fines so levied were given by the King to the Earl of Argyle, who converted the same to his own use as a recompense for his services against the unfortunate Macgregors.

Alexander Macgregor, the chief, after suffering many vicissitudes of fortune, and many privations, at last surrendered himself to the Earl of Argyle, on condition that he should grant him a safe conduct into England to King James, that he might lay before his majesty a true state of the whole affair from the commencement, and crave the royal mercy; and as a security for his return to Scotland, he delivered up to

Argyle thirty of his choicest men, and of the best reputation among the clan as hostages to remain in Argyle in custody, till his return from England. But no sooner had Macgregor arrived in Berwick on his way to London, than he was basely arrested, and brought back by the Earl to Edinburgh, and, by his influence, executed along with the thirty hostages. Argyle hoped, by these means, ultimately to annihilate the whole clan; but in this cruel design he was quite disappointed, for the clan speedily increased, and became almost as powerful as before.

About the year 1708, the well known Rob Roy captured Graham of Killearn, and confined him during three days on an island near the head of Loch Katrine. The Duke of Montrose had, by the forfeiture of a wadset, obtained a right to dispossess Rob Roy of his property of Inversnaid and Craigrostan. In this it does not appear that there was any harshness on the part of his Grace; but Killearn, his chamberlain, had recourse to a mode of expulsion inconsistent with the rights of humanity, and had grossly insulted Macgregor's wife in her husband's absence. Rob Roy, on his return, being informed of what had occurred, withdrew from the scene of the outrage, and vowed revenge. In order to make up for the loss of his property, he regularly seized a portion of his Grace's rent; but on Killearn he took a personal satisfaction, which certainly shows the mildness of his character when we consider the habits and mode of thinking of the Highlanders of his day. The chamberlain was collecting rents at Cappeleroch, in Stirlingshire, when Rob Roy came upon him with an armed force, and demanded his share of the rents. For this he gave the chamberlain a receipt: and afterwards carried the unwilling gentleman to Loch Katrine, where he kept him in durance for three days, and then set him at liberty.

Glengyle, a lonely tract of country among the hills at the upper extremity of Loch-Katrine, belonged to a family of

Macgregors, who, during the time when the name was prohibited, changed theirs to Graham. Rob Roy was of this family. He was the second son of Donald Macgregor, brother to the laird of Glengyle, and a lieutenant-colonel in the King's service,—most probably in one of the independent companies raised for the internal defence of the Highlands. The family of Glengyle were descended from a fifth son of the laird of Macgregor about the year 1430. He was named *Dugald Ciar*, or 'Dugald of the mouse colour.' Dugald had two sons, of whom the youngest, Gregor Dhu, or Black Gregor, was the founder of the family of Glengyle. Rob Roy originally possessed no patrimonial estate. His father lived on Glengyle as a tenant, and latterly was tutor to his nephew, Gregor Macgregor of Glengyle, styled in the language of the Highlands, *Gregor-Gluine-dhu*, or 'the Black knee'd Gregor,' from a black spot on his knee. The lands of Craigrostan and Inversnaid were afterwards acquired by Rob Roy; and we find him sometimes styled Robert Macgregor of Craigrostan, and sometimes Baron of Inversnaid. The name of Macgregor being proscribed, Rob Roy assumed that of Campbell, from respect to the Duke of Argyle.

The character and exploits of Rob Roy are so generally known from popular tradition and from many productions of popular literature, especially from Sir Walter Scott's far-famed romance of "Rob Roy," that they need not be mentioned here; but some powerful lines by Mrs Charles Tinsley, on his last words, are much less known, and well deserve to be transcribed. The last words were "Now it is all over—tell the piper to play, *Ha til mi tulidh*"—(We return no more;) and the following are the lines upon them;—

" ' We return no more! we return no more! "

Said the chief, ere he breathed his last;

For he knew that the reign of the fierce and free,

And the bold in deed, was past;

He knew that the slogan of Border war—  
 All mute as the sleuth hound's breath—  
 Should never awaken the hills again  
 With shouts whose echo was death;—  
 'Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

Did they crowd around him, the brave of old,  
 In the dreams of that solemn hour,  
 All the mighty chiefs of his royal line,  
 In the pride of their early power?—  
 Macalpine, who reigned o'er a conquered race,  
 And those that held rule in Lorn—  
 Did he think of these as he turned to die?  
 And his words—were they words of scorn?  
 'Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

Did he brood o'er the wrong that 'whelmed his sires,  
 Making all their hearthstones bare,  
 Through the ages that saw them held at bay,  
 And hate-hunted everywhere?—  
 Did he call to mind their scattered haunts,  
 In Balquhidder and Glenstrae,  
 And breathe in his spirit's bitterness,  
 One trust ere he passed away?  
 'Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

O why was the gift of the seer of old  
 Withheld in that parting hour?  
 Why stood not the future before him then  
 In the might of its deathless power?  
 Why did it coldly, tamely, still  
 Its truths from the dauntless keep,  
 Leaving the brave, proud heart to sigh—  
 Ere it sank in dreamless sleep—  
 'Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

For they shall not die! for they shall not die!  
 Whilst the hills their fame can keep;  
 Whilst fancy—bold as the boldest still—  
 Can the gulfs of time o'erleap;  
 Whilst the wild, free spirit of old romance  
 Yet haunteth each loch and glen;  
 Whilst Scotland can say, from her heart of hearts,  
 ' Thus speak not my mighty men—  
 ' Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

And mighty they were those chieftains bold,  
 With their germs of noble thought,  
 By the rugged nurture of rugged times  
 To growths of wild grandeur brought;  
 With their generous love of freedom, still  
 Unchanged through the changes round;  
 And, oh, not for them 'mid their native hills,  
 Should those parting words resound—  
 ' Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!'

In their sometimes lawless bravery,  
 They shall yet around us throng,  
 Where the clinging love of their native soil,  
 Was than wrath and death more strong;  
 They were suited well to their own rude times,  
 And ours will not let them go,  
 Till the last of Scotland's sons shall say—  
 'Mid the final wrecks below—  
 ' Ha til, ha til mi tulidh!''

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### THE STRIFES OF MORTLACH.

MORTLACH, a large parish in the Moray district of Banffshire, is famous as the scene of a signal victory achieved by