

CHAP. IV.

ON HIGHLAND GROUND.

Ugadale. — MacNeal's Elopement. — A Point of Honour. — The Captain's Bible. — A teetotal Corsican Brother. — Ailsa Craig. — Glenlussa and its Volunteers. — The Sailor's Cup of Tea. — Island of Davar. — Campbelton Harbour and its Scenery. — We step on Highland Ground. — Old and slow; modern and swift. — Highland Porters. — We take our Ease in our Inn.



LITTLE south of Saddell is Ugadale, which also can boast of its traditions of Robert Bruce; but, as the story is chiefly connected with the mountain of Beinn-an-tuirc, of which I shall have occasion to speak in a future page, I need not now say any more concerning it, than that the estates of Ugadale and Arniele were given to Mackay by King

Robert Bruce, in consideration of past kindnesses, and of Mackay having hospitably entertained the fugitive monarch at Ugadale. But there are some storied tra-

ditions of later date concerning the owner of Ugadale, which are worth the telling. During the last century, the estate had come into the possession of the last of the Mackays of Ugadale, an heiress known by her Gaelic name of Ni'-mhic-Caidh, who married a MacNeal, and had a son, to whom, in due course, the estate passed. He was intimate with the Duke of Argyle, and was a frequent visitor at Inverary. There he met with a daughter of the Earl of Crawford, who fell in love with him, and (perhaps it was leap-year, and she took advantage of the ladies' law,) coolly proposed that he should run away with her. He was not altogether unwilling to do this, but being (as the tradition goes) "a very upright and honourable man," he could not commit the crime of eloping with a young lady, who was his fellow-guest at a friend's house. He therefore replied to Lady Lindsay's proposal, that his principles forbid him running away with her, but that he had no objection to her running away with him! which was as great a distinction without a difference, as that drawn by the young lady who would not give her lover a kiss, but would not object to his taking one. Of course, where there was no objection to the plan, the difficulties were smoothed towards its agreeable development. Lady Lindsay procured a horse, set MacNeal upon it behind her pillion, and then they trotted away from the duke's, and went and got

married. When he was afterwards taxed with the elopement, he defended himself by alleging that, in this case, the grey mare was the better horse; and that it was the lady who had run away with *him*. It proved to be a very happy match, and they lived at Losset, a portion of his property on the western side of the Mull of Cantire. This little local tradition, I dare say, is not to be found in the published records of the Lindsays; nor, probably, is the following little anecdote, which is told of Captain Hector MacNeal, the son of the hero who was run away with by a lady. (The anecdote, by the way, is somewhat of "an old Joe," and is laid at other people's doors than those of the gallant captain.) He was captain of a man-of-war in the service of King George the Third. When he first went to sea, his mother gave him a Bible, begging him to be diligent in its perusal. When he returned, she said, "I trust, Hector, that you have read your Bible?" "Oh, yes, mother," was the reply. "Show it to me," she said; and he brought it to her. She opened it, and found that some bank-notes which she had placed within its leaves had not been disturbed. "Oh, Hector, Hector!" she cried; "you have not opened your Bible since you went away." "I would have done so, if I had known that those notes were in it," was the ingenuous reply; "for sometimes I stood in need of them." When he died, however, he left a

good name behind him, especially for charity to the poor. The estates of Ugadale and Losset still remain in his family, as also does Tirfergus, which is near to Losset, and to which we shall subsequently refer.

By the time that these storied traditions can be told, Ugadale is left behind us, and we are steaming on our course, with many lingering looks at Arran's peaks. It would do us a great service if we could "see ourselves as others see us;" but I very much question if the inhabitants of Arran, a century and a half ago, could have recognised themselves in the following description by Martin. "The inhabitants of this isle are well-proportioned, generally brown, and some of a *black* complexion. . . . Their ordinary asseveration is by Nale, for I did not hear any oath in the island."

Steaming down Kilbrannan Sound, and looking, now to right and now to left, at the magnificent Highland scenery on either hand, our walk is arrested, as we pace the deck, towards the torrid zone of the boilers, by a small, circular iron trap-door suddenly opening at our very feet, and the vacancy of the aperture being as suddenly filled with a man's head. Very fortunately for the nose upon this head, our attention is not so entirely taken up by the mountains of Arran and Cantire, as altogether to divert our notice from our path upon the deck. The man's head rises before

our arrested feet, and his body slowly follows it, with the arms pinned tightly to the sides, like the ghost in "The Corsican Brothers." It is not a fat body, or it could not pass through that narrow trap-door; from his grimy appearance we know him to be the engineer. Streaming with perspiration, unctuous with grease, and panting for a breath of cool air, he takes his seat at the side of the vessel, and plunging a tin pannikin into a bucket of cold water, lifts the refreshing draught to his lips with all the *gusto* of a Malvern hydropathist. Having non-hydropathic ideas as to the danger of thus swallowing a pint of icy water, while in a fizzing state of heat, I offer him my brandy-flask — provided (as a matter of course!) for medicinal purposes only — and ask him to qualify his cold water with a portion of the contents of the flask. He thanks me, but shakes his head, somewhat sorrowfully, to decline my proffer: he has taken the pledge, and he therefore cannot do the same by the brandy. But, as I am about to re-pocket the flask and turn away, he stops me with the suggestion that there is a mate of his in the fiery regions below (nodding towards the boilers), who has not taken the pledge, and would, doubtless, be glad to take the brandy. I accept the suggestion, and he takes the flask, and with it a half-filled pannikin of water, and then descends through the little trap-door, *à la Corsican Brother*; leaving me to ponder on the problem

touching the personal identity of the mate, and whether or no these two Corsican Brothers might not be enacted by one and the self-same performer.

But all this time we are pursuing our course towards Campbelton; and the romantic rocks and serrated peaks of Arran are receding from our view, although we shall not altogether lose sight of them until we are safe within Campbelton harbour. If the exigencies of our position permitted us to indulge in unwonted song, surely the most appropriate air would be "Isle of beauty, fare thee well!" Fare thee well, for a time at least, for here we are pushing out of Kilbrannan Sound, and sighting that remarkable rock called Ailsa Craig,

"Risen from ocean, ocean to defy." *

Macculloch exactly describes our distant view of this lion of the Frith of Clyde. "In the distant horizon it forms an object peculiarly striking from its unexpected magnitude in the blue haze, and from the decided and sudden manner in which it rises from the sea. In this respect it presents a solitary feature in Scotland, rather reminding the spectator of the volcanic islands of the distant Pacific Ocean. The effect is often much increased by the position of the clouds, which so frequently involve its summit, adding inde-

* Wordsworth.

finite and ideal dimensions to its altitude."* Its real height is 1100 feet; ships can approach it within a close range, and, if fortified, the defence of the Frith of Clyde would be secured. We have passed Ardncross, on the Cantire coast, where there is a little bay in which vessels may occasionally anchor, and into which flows a considerable stream. Straduigh Glen is in this locality, and runs from north to south of Glenlussa Glen, a highly romantic spot with a good salmon river. The young men in this glen were considered remarkable for strength and intelligence, and in the early days of George the Third a fine company of volunteers was raised from them, a proceeding which could not be accomplished now, as the glen is almost depopulated.† "About sixty years ago," says a late local writer, "a great many people came on Sabbath to church from this glen, all dressed with home-manufactured clothes, made to suit their shape and size. The females looked beautiful, with their linen caps and silk ribbons round them, far superior in elegance to the mode of dress used by females now-a-days."

In these sequestered Highland glens tea was an unheard-of luxury, long after it had been commonly used among the poor of great towns. At length a sailor, when he came home from sea, brought with him

* Vol. ii. p. 490.

† An excellent volunteer corps has been raised at Campbelton.

a pound of tea, as a present to his mother, who lived in Glenlussa. He went out to visit a neighbour, requesting his mother to have the tea ready made for him on his return. But this conversion of the dried leaves into a palatable article of consumption was as sore a riddle to the old Highland woman, as was the manufacture of the English plum-pudding to the Frenchman, who, being ignorant of the need of the pudding-cloth, served up the Christmas luxury in a tea-pot, and dispensed it in tea-cups to his English guests. But this Glenlussa woman had neither tea-pot nor tea-cup to suggest the method of preparing her pound of tea, so, after much anxious thought, she popped the tea into the pot of water that hung over the fire, and when it was well boiled poured off the water and took the potato "beetle," and pounded the tea as though it had been kale. She then mixed it up with meal, milk, and butter, and served it up in a stodgy mass upon a dish. The sailor was greatly amused, and asked his mother how she liked the tea. The old lady replied that she "did not think much of it, it was not so good as kale."*

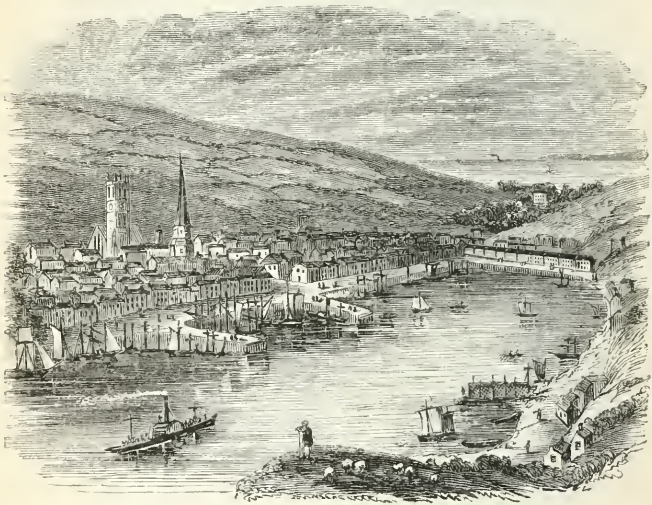
We have passed Glenlussa and other less important spots, and now we leave Arran behind us and steer in

* A tale is told in Sternberg's "Northamptonshire Glossary" (p. 112), of an old lady who boiled a pound of tea with her bacon, in lieu of cabbage, not knowing how to "cook it" otherwise.

for Campbelton harbour. At its very mouth or entrance it is landlocked by the natural breakwater made by the rocky island of Davar, which is an island, however, only at high water, being connected with the land on the south side by a spit of shingle. Davar is about a mile and a half in circumference, and consists of a lofty mass of rock, producing varieties of green and brown porphyry, and covered on its summit with a good grazing ground. The base of the precipitous rock has, on its southern side, been hollowed into caverns by the ceaseless action of the waves. Pennant says that vessels often used to mistake the entrance into the harbour, and steer for the southern, instead of the northern, side of Davar, and find out their error by running aground. But our captain has gone over the ground too often to make this mistake; and, even if it were a dark night instead of a sunny afternoon, there is now a revolving light on the north-east point of the island, to guide the mariner to his destination; so we safely steer a middle course between Davar and Trench Point, and enter the beautiful harbour of Campbelton.

The town was originally called in Gaelic *Ceann Loch*, "the head of the loch," and denotes its situation at the further end of the bay. The harbour widens after we have passed through its narrow neck: it is nearly two miles in length, with a depth of water

varying from five to thirteen fathoms. The largest vessel can enter it at any state of the tide, and approach close to the town. A sweep of lofty hills shuts in the harbour, and the town encircles the further end of the loch in a crescent-like form. It is a town of very respectable dimensions, containing its 7000 inhabitants, with its churches, and its outlying villas bordering the bay, its quays and harbours crowded



CAMPBELTON.

with fishing-boats and vessels in picturesque confusion. As we neared Campbelton, whose white houses and villas were reflected in the blue waters of the quiet bay, the setting sun was sinking over the hills behind

the town, and flooding the landscape with a golden splendour. It was a beautiful scene, and one that would amply repay the toil of a far more troublesome journey than that which we had been called upon to undertake; and its picture will form a *pendant* in my memory to that of Loch Ranza. They are rival beauties, but each deserving a crown of excellence.

In order to fortify my opinion let me here quote Macculloch's authority. "Fertile as is the west coast in harbours, there is not one that excels this; which, besides being spacious enough to contain a large fleet, is perfectly landlocked, easily entered, and has the best possible holding-ground. The high and bold rock of Davar covers it from the sea completely. . . . Campbelton occupies the end of the bay on both sides, and is a town not only of very reputable appearance, but of considerable extent and population. Some extensive piers serve for receiving the smaller class of shipping; and as it is always swarming with fishing-boats and vessels of different kinds, it forms one of the gayest and liveliest scenes imaginable. Detached villas and single houses, scattered about the shore and the sides of the hills, not only add much to the ornamental appearance of the bay, but give an air of taste and opulence to the whole. A more picturesque and beautiful situation for a maritime town could not well be found; and, from different points, it presents some

fine views, uniting all the confusion of town architecture with the wildness of Alpine scenery, the brilliancy of a lake, and the life, and bustle, and variety incidental to a crowded harbour and pier.”* I will not add quotations from less reliable authorities, to weaken the force of this passage. It is sufficient to say that Dr. Macculloch’s opinion is echoed by the few writers who have made mention of Campbelton, and (I should imagine) by all those who have visited the town and bay. Certainly no one who saw the scene, as we first saw it, irradiated with all the glories of a brilliant sunset, could have differed with the learned doctor, and would only have amended his description by touching it up with some of those laudatory adjectives, a very *feu de joie* of which was poured forth by the young ladies on board, as we steamed up the lake-like waters of the beautiful bay, — “how charming! how lovely!! how exquisite!!! how splendid!!!! how very nice!!!!!! how sweetly pretty!!!!!!”

We steam up between the mountains, and past pretty villas, and detached houses, and fishermen’s huts, and rusty-looking nets hung out on high poles, until the houses creep closer to each other, and form themselves into thin lines, and then into a dense crescent-shaped mass, from among which, to the left, darts a weather-cocked spire, while a pinnaced tower, and other signs

* Highlands and Western Isles, vol. ii. pp. 63, 64.

and evidences of a well-to-do-town, make themselves visible above the confused heap of houses. We pass a battery, and the New Quay, and then, plunging in amid a crowd of boats and fishing-vessels, and dashing into reeling ripples the quiet reflections of white houses and painted boats, we swing broadside on alongside the Old Quay. There is a crowd upon the pier, and a nodding of heads, and other telegraphic signals, made by, and to, passengers on board whose arrival has been expected; and there is a mighty bustle, and a throwing out of ropes, and rattling of chains, and gathering together of luggage, and a furious raid upon it by a crowd of semi-savage gentlemen of the hybrid fisherman breed; and we step across the gangway, and, for the first time in our lives, set foot in the Highlands.

It is with no small pleasure that we find ourselves once more on *terra firma*. For, although we could congratulate ourselves on having had so favourable a passage, with no bodily discomforts to mar the pleasures of the day, yet, a voyage of six hours, even amid such romantic scenery as that of the Clyde, and the coast of Arran, will begin to tire poor human nature at the last; and the tourist — especially the lady tourist, unless she be gifted with the masculine powers of “the Unprotected Females” and some other recent female travellers, — will begin to sigh for shore, and the comforts of a room that is not a cabin, and that does not vibrate

to the throbs of a steam-engine. So we hailed the Highlands with a hearty Glad-to-see-you; and set foot on Cantire land with no small joy, and, perhaps, with a small and secret residue of pride that we had shown to ourselves and to our fellow-passengers that we were such capital sailors.

We had need, too, to congratulate ourselves that we lived in these present days when steam has passed into its vigorous youth, and that we had not been called upon to undertake the voyage a quarter of a century ago, when steam was yet but a crawling infant, and when the voyage to Campbelton would have been twelve hours instead of six. Still worse would it have fared with us half a century ago, when the twelve hours would have been twelve days — *if* winds and waves were propitious. But the route was so hazardous, that this momentous little “If” usually interfered to prolong the voyage to an indefinite extent; so that, in some instances, where goods have been ordered from Glasgow, and regularly shipped, and bills at three months drawn from the day the vessel sailed, these bills have become due before the goods have arrived in Campbelton. In those days, people made their wills before they undertook this long and perilous voyage that we have now so comfortably and pleasantly achieved in half a dozen hours. It is impossible that the next generation will be able to point to so marked a contrast effected in so

brief a time, though, since wonderful discoveries are now treading so closely upon each other's heels, that one remarkable invention is nullified in a few months by another still more remarkable invention, which, in its turn, is speedily reduced to comparative uselessness by some cleverer successor,—there is no knowing where this speed of transit will stop; and the next generation may probably be taking their return tickets at Glasgow for a sail down the Clyde, round Arran, to Campbelton to lunch, and back again to Glasgow to dinner, with appetites sharpened by the sea-breeze.

Indeed, something like this was done on the 7th of July, 1860, when the Lord Provost and magistrates of Glasgow, together with their friends, went on their annual inspection of “the Northern Lights,” in the Frith of Clyde. They were on board the Glasgow and Belfast Royal mail steam-ship Giraffe, a magnificent vessel, 280 feet long, with double engines, and all the most recent improvements, built by the Messrs. Thomson of Glasgow, and running her birthday trip on that occasion. The day was still, warm, and beautiful; and the sea as placid as ever lay under summer sun; and the party landed at Campbelton pier, amid the ringing of bells, the inspiring strains of music, and the joyous welcome of the population, who had turned out in great force to do the honours of the town. Then, after a while, they left Campbelton, amid the same demonstra-

tions, and steamed back to Glasgow, at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

We, however, are not on board the Giraffe, neither do we land amid popular demonstrations of joy, save such as ever encounter the tourist from expectant porters, and greedy land-sharks; and, thus, at six o'clock on this sunny summer's afternoon, we stand amid new sights and sounds upon Campbelton quay, while the customary scramble for our luggage is going on. A stalwart, bare-legged woman is the victor, who bodily carries off our bag and baggage to a truck, where she vainly endeavours to persuade us to leave it and speed on our way to our inn. This specimen of the Highlander's beast of burden (for this is but too generally the character of the women) appears to think her honesty impugned when I make answer that our luggage is but another portion of ourselves, and that she might as well attempt to separate us from it, as to detach her husband (who, the work being all over, has now lounged up) from that gill of whiskey, for which he will infallibly ask, when he has trundled up our goods to the inn. So, we form ourselves into a little procession: the husband tugs at the baggage-laden truck; the wife lustily shoves in the rear; and we march up Main Street, and past the Cross, to the corner of Argyle Street, where *the* White Hart receives us out of the evening sunshine, and where Mr. Freeborn soon

sets before us a comfortable tea, wherein the light artillery of plates of biscuits, and glasses of preserves, are mingled, in Scotch fashion, with the heavier metal of cold joints, and chicken, and hot chops.* Refreshed by the meal, with no headache, and but little fatigue, we are glad to wander out in the cool of the evening, and look about us.

* The tourist will find this a comfortable inn, the host and hostess civil and obliging, and their charges moderate. Open cars and other conveyances are kept here, and a couple of days might be very pleasantly passed in driving about to see "the lions."