

CAPTAIN CLARK-KENNEDY,

THE PATRIOTIC POET, SONG-WRITER AND NATURALIST.

INTO the kingdom of the great departed, into the silent land, lately passed from mortal ken one of whom every patriotic Scotchman should be proud—Captain Clark-Kennedy of Knockgray, who died on the 21st of December, 1894, at his London residence, Eccleston Square. He was ever a loyal, and in some respects a distinguished, son of Galloway, and his was the proud and pardonable boast that he came of a family whose fortunes are historically linked with that Province, although it was his misfortune, as he once humorously put it, to have been born on the wrong side of the Border.

According to the Galloway poet, Samuel Wilson, some of his ancestors must have been present at the battle of Spearford:—

“Swiftly Maculloch came,
Maitland and all his train,
Stout Craigengillan and haughty Knockgray,
Kennedy’s bowmen true
Mustered on Lowran’s brow—
Wood-shaded Dee ne’er beheld such array.”

For some years past he resided principally in London, but he always spent the autumn with his family, in his ancestral home in the wilds of Galloway, where, amongst the heath-clad hills and crags around Knockgray, he delighted to follow the grouse and the old blackcocks, a sport he loved so well.

The mansion-house of Knockgray is built in the shooting-lodge style, comprising a gable with jutting window and attached frontage, and stands on an elevated plateau which shelves gradually downwards thro’ a well-wooded park towards the Deuch, which at this point is spanned by a pretty suspension bridge, the only bridge of the kind, we believe, over this river from its rise on the confines of Ayrshire to the estuary of the Dee at Kirkcudbright.*

* The Deuch is a sort of *Heculé triformis*. When it meets the Ken it loses its name, and the Ken again becomes the Dee after the latter flows into Loch Ken.

The older mansion house, or Tower of Knockgray, a regular type of the ghost-haunted mansion, with

"Doors opening into darkness unawares,
Mysterious passages and flights of stairs"—

still exists among its ancestral trees, a little farther up the hill, and is occupied as a farm house. Both dwellings command extensive views of the impressive mountain scenery of the district, the beauty of which is heightened now and again by the ever-changing, shadow-casting clouds and mists, which in this upland region frequently hover or float over the Kells Rhynns, Cairnsmore, and the huge mountain tops of Merrick, Carlin's Cairn, Shalloch, the Millyeas, &c., which tower over and shadow the head waters of Loch Doon. The village of Carsphairn, nestling at the foot of Cairnsmore, is close at hand; and, no doubt, many of its inhabitants will sadly miss the presence of the genial lord of the Manor.

Some passages in Captain Kennedy's own poem, "The Bruce," beautifully describes the landscape as seen from the vicinity of the Mansion House of Knockgray:—

"Look we on scenes their father's saw,
Those distant precipices hoar
Are just as fearsome as of yore,
And quite as steep and gray.
And still the eagles proudly soar—

.
There Cairnsmore still gigantic stands ;
Its cairn, tho' piled by human hands
In ages long bygone,
Looks weird—

.
And yonder seaward flows the Deuch,
That cleaves the purple valley through.
Far past Marscalloch's mountain see
Above the pine-trees round Glenlee,
Crowned with a blue-cloud-wreath,
A pointed summit fair to see,—
The famous "Black Craig o' the Dee"
That guards the stream beneath,
Which dark and sullen swiftly creeps
Where willows wave o'er wat'ry deeps,
Past many a dark'ning lea,
And then with quaint, fantastic sweeps,
O'er mighty rocks unbridled leaps,
It thunders toward the sea."

Alexander William Maxwell Clark-Kennedy, the subject of this sketch, comes of a martial race stretching back to the times of the

Bruce; but unlike most of the barons who had been faithful to Bruce's cause, the Kennedys were not of Norman descent, but of Celtic blood, descendants of the Pictish or Scottish Cinaedh. And every student of Scottish history knows that it was "bearding the lion in his den" to offend any of the Lords of Cassilis when they were in the plenitude of their power. The old rhyme runs:—

"Twixt Wigton and the town o' Ayr,
Portpatrick and the Cruives* o' Cree,
Næ man need think for to hyde there
Unless he ride wi' Kennedy."

The first of the direct ancestors of the poet, who owned Knockgray, was the Rev. Alexander Kennedy, minister of Straiton, who, at the beginning of his ministerial career, was chaplain to his relative the seventh Earl of Cassilis. In 1709 he obtained a mortgage over Knockgray, and soon after entered into full possession of the estate by purchase. His son and grandson succeeded him, and the latter left an only daughter who, in 1781, married John Clark of Nunland, near Dumfries. Their son Alexander succeeded to the estate in 1835, and adopted his mother's name of Kennedy. He was present at the battle of Waterloo, and greatly distinguished himself, while an officer in the 1st Dragoons, by capturing the eagle and colours of a French regiment. He eventually rose to the rank of General, and was made a Companion of the Bath and a Knight of Honour. His son, Colonel John Clark-Kennedy, C.B., the father of the poet, succeeded to Knockgray in 1865. He was Commandant of the Military Train in the Abyssinian war, and finally lost his life for his country in that campaign. In 1867 he was succeeded by his eldest son Alexander (Capt. Clark-Kennedy), who was born at Rochester in 1851.

The author of "The Bruce" was educated principally at Aldershot Camp, where, as a boy of eight years, he used often to be employed by the late Prince Consort as "galloper" on the field-days when Her Majesty visited the camp; and from 1857 to 1860 every officer at Aldershot knew young Kennedy and his game little pony "Rose." After spending four years at a private school, he was sent to Eton, where he developed literary tastes and became editor of the *Eton Review*, which lived for two years. At the age of sixteen he followed this up by writing a treatise on ornithology, "The Birds of Berks and Bucks," which met with great success. In this

* Windings.

literary production he was greatly encouraged by the constant sympathy of Prince Leopold, then also a schoolboy at Eton. The friendship then formed continued uninterrupted till the death of that Prince. Captain Kennedy intended to have dedicated his Poem "Robert the Bruce" to the Duke of Albany—but as he died before it was published—in lieu thereof he prefixed some fine verses *In Memoriam* of the Prince to the volume. After leaving Eton College he joined the Coldstream Guards, and soon became an excellent officer, and very popular with the men. Many still living will remember the pleasant social gatherings at Dublin, Chelsea and the Tower, where Capt. Clark-Kennedy was the life and soul of the evenings. He entered the Guards in March, 1870, as ensign, became lieutenant in 1873, and captain in 1876, retiring in the same year.

His favourite pursuit when not engaged in field-sports or on political platforms, where he was always welcome, was writing for the magazines and newspapers. He was a frequent contributor to the *Ibis*, *Zoologist*, *Land and Water*, *The Field*, and other natural history periodicals. He also contributed to the *Army and Navy Gazette*, and many of his best hunting songs appeared in *Baily's Magazine*. He excelled in rousing and spirited songs, describing his own much-loved pastimes of hunting, fishing, and shooting. Some think that his poetical genius is more apparent in these songs than in the longer and more pretentious poem of "The Bruce." "The Song of the Grouse Shooter" makes the blood dance in a sportsman's veins with eager expectancy:—

"Once more it is August, again I am free !
 Once more to the North I am hieing !
 Again the grey grouse in their beauty I'll see
 As swift o'er the heather they're flying.
 Again, with my favourite weapon in hand,
 On the mountain I'm happily standing !
 Again, at my luckiest pool, on the strand,
 The salmon I'm raising and landing.

"What a size ! what a monster ! I have him again !
 A beauty fresh run from the sea, sir !
 How he gallantly fights !—but at last he is slain !
 Who would not a fisherman be, sir ?
 Once more the best gem of my kennel appears,
 And ranges that ocean of heather !
 While eager as ever in earlier years
 I feel in this glorious weather.

- “ Ah ! look at old Luno, put under the ‘ knowe ’,
 Like statue of marble how steady !
 Come ‘ cannily ’ on—’tis a brood, for a ‘ thou ’ ;
 For blood I am thirsty and ready !
 With a cry of defiance a cock on the right
 Is slain ; and another is flying
 Low over the heather ; a beautiful sight !
 Now dead on the moor he is lying !
- “ How cheery and keen shall I be for the fray,
 When over the heather I’m roaming ;
 How heavy the bag when I’m wending my way
 So merrily home in the gloaming !
 In Scotland wherever we wander or go,
 A halo romantic is o’er us ;
 For Wallace and Bruce, of the time long ago,
 Are, in memory, ever before us !
- “ Those warriors sleep, for their duty is done,
 And *we* stand on the heather *they* loved ;
 And bonny brown grouse are the prey of our gun
 Where Highlanders plundered and roved.
 When over the mountain the western sun
 With golden is tinting the heather,
 We’ll count by the river the spoils of the gun ;
 What sport we’ve been having together !
- “ So luck to your gillie, your dogs and your gun !
 (Ne’er think of your gout or your liver !)
 And plenty of health, and of game, and of fun !
 And lunches galore by the river !
 Long, long may the grouse on the mountain be seen,
 May heather reach up to your knee, sir ;
 And blackcock yet hide ’neath a canopy green ;
 And salmon run up from the sea, sir !
- “ Then cheer we the land of the mountain and glen,
 Our grouse, and our salmon, and lasses !
 No country on earth is more worthy, ye ken ?
 For none bonny Scotland surpasses !
 So prosper, my country, so bracing and free !
 From isles of Argyle to the Forth, sir !
 And luck to your sportsmen of every degree,
 From Berwick and Esk to the North, sir !”

He wrote many electioneering songs. One of them referred to the last election of Sir Mark J. Stewart for Kircudbrightshire, entitled “ Good Luck to Mark.” A stanza or two may be quoted to show how happily he could hit off a thing of this sort :—

“ Our Mark we love in many a home,
 By Deuch and Ken and Dee, sir !
 Come show me better, truer friend,
 Twixt Maxwelltown and Cree, sir !

Gin I'd a hundred thousand votes
 (Oh ! would I were so clever !)
 I'd give them all to honest Mark—
 I would indeed, whatever !”

The Captain took part in many a political gathering, and it was expected at one time that his voice would have been heard at Westminster. He came forward as Conservative candidate for Kircudbrightshire in 1874, but did not go to the poll; and during the agitation against the Home Rule Bill he was a conspicuous figure on many platforms. No one has yet forgotten the great sensation created throughout the country by the singing of his song “Rouse Ye, Ulster” at Lord Salisbury’s great Unionist meeting at Belfast in 1894. The enthusiasm evoked by this song was still further heightened by the gallant Captain appearing upon the platform waving the old Grenadier Guards’ colours, which had seen service at Waterloo. A question was even asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Campbell-Bannerman concerning this characteristic meeting, “whether steps should be taken to suppress the song;” but the only effect this had was to greatly increase its circulation. An attempt was also made to deprive the author of his Commission of the Peace, but without effect.

Captain Clark-Kennedy was a fellow of many of the learned Societies—an F.R.G.S., a Fellow of the Linnean Society, an F.Z.S., a Deputy Lieutenant and a J.P. for Kirkeudbrightshire, Dumfriesshire and Dorsetshire, and a Fellow of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland.

Besides the ornithological work already mentioned and “Robert the Bruce”—a romantic poem after the manner of Scott’s “Marmion,” describing the wanderings, hardships, battles and “hair-breadth ’scapes” of Bruce in the Glenkens and wild Highlands of Galloway—he was the author of “To the Arctic Regions and Back in Six Weeks,” “Sporting Adventures in the Pacific,” and a “Tour in Africa and Palestine,” also a pamphlet “The Great Irish Rebellion of 1888,” related by a landlord in the style of the “Battle of Dorking.”

In 1875, he married the Hon. Lettice Lucy Hewitt (daughter of James, 4th Viscount Lifford, of Meenglass, County Donegal). She, with her five sons and two daughters, is left to mourn his loss.

Only last Autumn, Capt. Clark-Kennedy selected a spot on Knockgray Craig as a burying ground. This slope commands an

extensive prospect of beautiful landscape stretching from the mountains beyond Loch Doon to the valley of the Cairn in Dumfries-shire, with the great saddle-back of Cairnsmore in the foreground, and the plain of "sweet Carsphairn" and several miles of the river Deuch lying in full view. And thus his choice of a sepulchre reminds one of Louis Stevenson lying in lonely grandeur on "Pala's height" in the far Pacific, and also brings to mind another Scottish author and poet, who sings:—

"Here I'd come when weariest !
 Here the breast
 Of the Windburg's tufted over
 Deep with bracken ; here his crest
 Takes the west,
 Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover.
 * * * * *
 "Friend or stranger kind, or lover,
 Ah, fulfil a last behest,
 Let me rest
 Where the wide-winged hawk doth hover."

So not even in death are he and his beloved Galloway parted. Fit resting place for one who had so often traversed, both on horse and foot, through the scenery which can be seen from his tomb, and of which he was so deeply enamoured. How much he was in love with it is evident from his patriotic Galloway song, entitled, "The Exile from Galloway."—

"Then never say, my Galloway !
 That ocean's love can sever :
 Baith nicht and day, tho' far away,
 I lo'e thee an' for ever !
 My heart an' han', my bonny lan',
 Are thine till death divide us ;
 For memory dear is wi' us here
 An' them we lo'e beside us !
 * * * * *
 "Nae brichter leas beyond the seas
 My heart frae thee shall sever ;
 My latest lays shall sing thy praise,
 Here's 'Galloway for ever !'"

Here in the presence of many friends he was laid to rest on the 27th of Dec. last ; and as he lies sleeping, like the hunter of old among the lonely hills, we feel that no sketch of the worthy captain would be complete without some reference to his favourite pastimes of hunting, shooting and fishing. All throughout his

interesting notes to "The Bruce," he mentions again and again having followed the hounds thro' the scenes which he so lovingly and picturesquely describes. On the "glorious Twelfth" Capt. Clark-Kennedy often headed the list in the records of grouse-shooting, and his pack of otter hounds was known on all the rivers of Galloway and Dumfries-shire, while trophies of his fox-hunting prowess were often displayed to the visitors of his own mountain scenery.

Fain would we linger and expatiate on "The Bruce," and many of his spirited songs and poems that keep ringing in our memories, but these would require an article to themselves to do them justice; and therefore we feel we cannot do better than take leave of him in the beautiful farewell verses of the Galloway poet who writes under the well-known *nom de plume* "Venetia"—

" I mourn him not for title or for fame,
 But for the noble gift he held in truce :
 The gift that won the laurel-wreath of fame,
 And linked his name for ever with the Bruce ;
 His muse inspired my heart when I was young,
 I saw the fight on many a rocky scaur,
 As o'er his martial lays I fondly hung,
 And shouted ' Bruce for aye, and Lochinvar.'

" So let me lay a wreath upon his bier,
 A simple garland from the flowers of rhyme,
 And heave a sigh for him no longer here,
 Culled in the vigour of his hardy prime.
 Oh, may a spot be his among the hills,
 In that far land for ever and for aye,
 A flowery dell of heath and sparkling rills,
 Where all is light and love. Farewell, Knockgray !"

J. G. CARTER, F.S.A. (Scot.)