

ENTRANCE TO TARBERT HARBOUR.

# OFF THE CHAIN:

NOTES AND ESSAYS

FROM

THE WEST HIGHLANDS.

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*With Engravings from the Author's Sketches.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following notes were written out at the time of my visit, and express the exact feelings with which the various districts mentioned impressed me ; they ought thus to be more trustworthy than if viewed through a veil of memory, however slight.

Dealing with scenes and subjects somewhat out of the usual track, I hope to have drawn some little information and amusement therefrom, for the benefit of kindred lovers of nature, and at any rate to have succeeded in securing for these parts some of that superabundant attention at present lavished upon the remainder of the

“ Land of brown heath and shaggy wood.”

~~Rockey  
1883  
A.C.~~

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# OFF THE CHAIN.

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## DUNOON.—THE RETURN.

'Tis the same place as of old,  
You have said, so I must believe you ;  
Though the air feels chill and cold,  
With no face alight to receive you.

Every one meets your look  
Like rough-coated kine in the Highlands ;  
You 're received like the voyager Cook,  
When ashore in Society Islands.

'Tis the same place where of old  
We lived, and laugh'd, and loved in !  
I had need to have been told,  
For now we are hustled and shoved in.

*Off the Chain.*

Where the curs do gather and growl,  
And the neighbours point the finger ;  
I'm as out of place as an owl  
In daylight induced to linger.

'Tis the same place as of old,  
When I raced and romp'd in the garden ;  
Did I think, as I careless roll'd,  
That my heart, like my limbs, could harden ?

Or, coming back, I'd view it  
With more of pain than pleasure ?  
As those who wander'd through it  
Come crowding upon my leisure.

They *do* say the heart is strange ;  
I suppose 'tis past my knowing :  
But why this pang at the change ?  
I too with the flood am going.

While lingering on my oars,  
I look back over my shoulder,  
And gaze on those distant shores  
With the eyes of a fond beholder.

Some galleys are hard to pull,  
Mine has slipt along to my singing,

Till the tide approaches the full,  
And matins have long done ringing.

I may reach the further shore,  
I may go down in mid-ocean,  
But behind, no longer before,  
To me is the land of Goshen.

'Tis the same place as of old,  
As much as mummied Pharaoh,  
Is he who did converse hold  
With the wise young Jewish hero.

Or, just as he who paced  
The rock of St Helena,  
Was he who boldly faced  
The cannon's mouth at Jena.

'Tis the same, of course it is,  
Who'd be so rude as doubt it?  
So, Eden was Paradise  
When the pair stood weeping without it.

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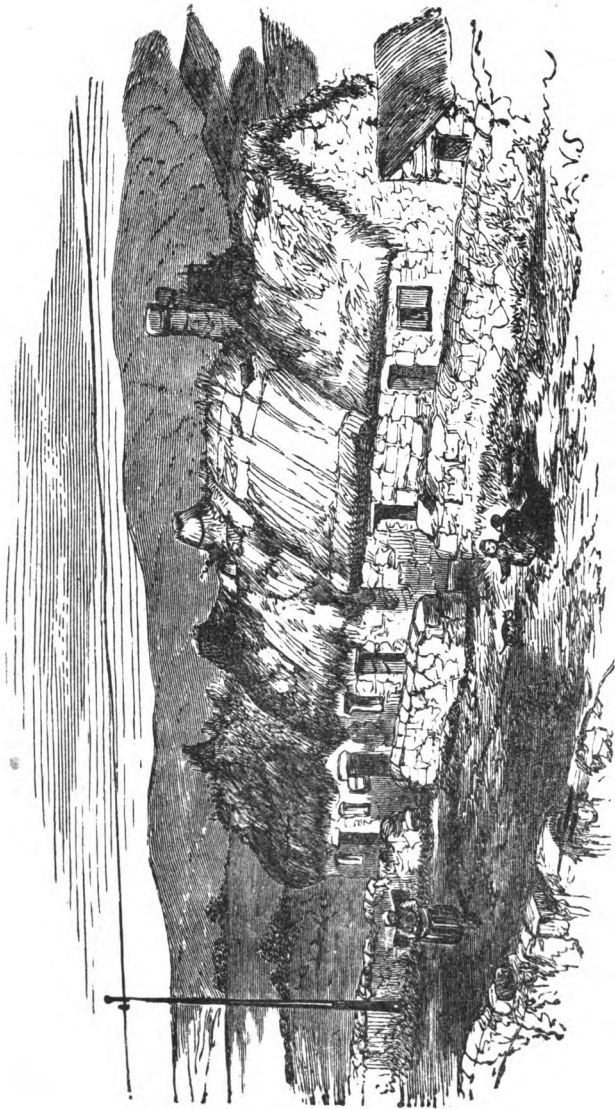
## SLIPPING MY COLLAR.

AFTER lingering unwillingly through weeks of rain at that beautiful watering-place on the Clyde, where I had smiled and suffered "when all the world and love was young" to me; where I had first looked searchingly on the mystery of existence, and built "Chateaux en Espagne" of social and moral regeneration, I sprang exultingly on board a steamer bound for Tarbert, that haven of fresh air, fresh herring, and fishing-boats.

Accordingly, about twelve o'clock one day in the beginning of October, the steamer *Iona* disgorged my luggage on to the pier at Tarbert, from whence I shortly conveyed it, by boat, to the lodgings I had meantime secured. Resolving to live as like the people as possible, a dinner of potatoes and herring was soon disposed of, leaving me at liberty for the evening.

I may here premise that I do not wonder at the population indulging somewhat in the "barefooted Highlandman," as whisky in its simple form is called, for a diet more productive than the above





CIVILIZATION AND BARBARISM.

of a desire for strong drink, I do not believe exists. Consequently, I quite sympathised with my landlord, when he remarked that it was the "life of a body," and asked me to join him in a "morning" the following day. But, knowing that alternate doses of herring and whisky could agree with no rational constitution, I fought shy of both.

It is five o'clock in the evening, and mild as one in May. I have strolled across the isthmus, and am sitting on an ordnance survey mark two or three hundred yards over West Loch Tarbert. Great part of it has been left bare by the retiring tide, and is now sprinkled near the water with screaming and fluttering sea-birds.

The sky is clouded, but the atmosphere is bright and clear, and the shadows of the converging hilly banks of the loch are as distinct as the hills themselves. The stillness is profound, at least all sounds are so distant that it seems so. There is every hue from slate to blue on the shore and water, every shade of green on the land; forming a ground for the brilliant yellow copsewood leaves, mid the bright red of withered ferns, or lighter brown of the autumn heather; while the endless grayish-blue hues of the out-cropping rocks, and the distant dark masses of firs, give weight and shade to the whole.



Near, there is the "fud-fud" of a rabbit, or the hirple of a hare; while in the distance you catch the rush of a flock of sheep, with the sharp bark of the pursuing colley, and the hoarse call of its master; adding sufficient life to a pleasant landscape.

I turn round to see the sharply-defined peak of Glenakill standing out against the sky, in beautiful, shapely outline.

"High Glenakill,  
Which butts the waves that up Loch Tarbert steal,  
Whose muddy waters strive in vain to join  
The white-topp'd billows of sea-blue Loch Fyne."

On its flanks it is "happed" with clustering larches, and lovely oaken and birchen copses are climbing up its face, and merging in myriad shades into the bracken, the heath, and the moss of the summit. A snug, neatly-thatched farm-steading, with a few patches of cultivated ground, and some specimens of black cattle dotting the hill, complete the second picture.

I sit and gaze till the sun goes down, then wander back by the miserable cottages on the side of the road, with civilisation, in the form of a telegraph wire, passing over their roofs, and, unregarded, talking words of wisdom and progress. Longfellow's "Excelsior" may or may not be wrong, but I should

think an upward tendency, even for the sake of the climb, would not be at all out of place here. Even those who have gained a comfortable home might make a still further exertion. A comfortable home is the curse of thousands, binding their heavenward-tending energies in a band of indolence and sloth.

Why do so many cry "Rest and be thankful" at the first spring they come to on the hill of life? Never stay at all until you reach the peak you started for, even although you should miss a few delightful prospects—you can take them on your way down; the view from the summit will be all the more satisfactory from not having been previously tasted. What am I talking of? The only peaks these people ever saw, from the highway of existence, never enticed them to leave the road, from whence they seemed ever misty and unattainable.

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## A TALK ABOUT HERRING.

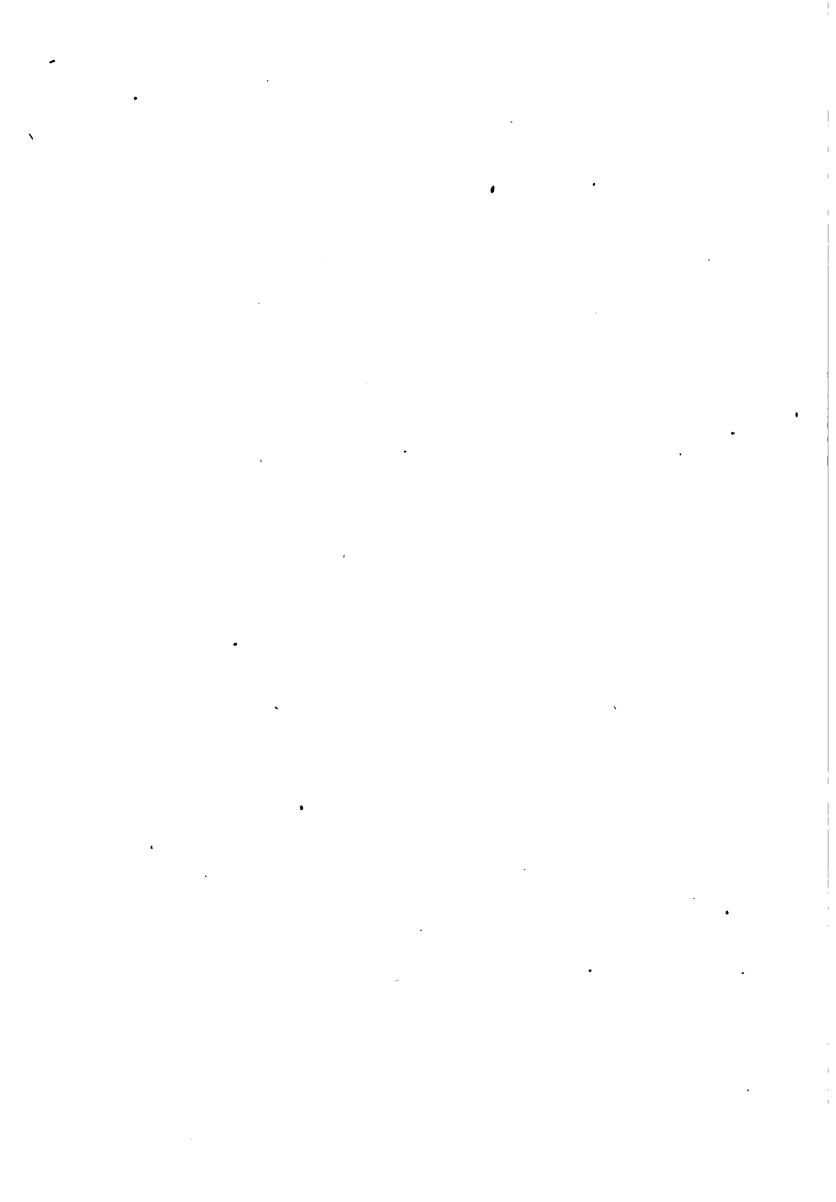
“A FEW years ago the herring fishery employed all Grub Street ; it was the topic in every coffee-house and the burden of every ballad. We were to drag up oceans of gold from the bottom of the sea ; we were to supply all Europe with herrings upon our own terms. At present we hear no more of all this. We have fished up very little gold that I can learn ; nor do we yet furnish the world with herrings, as was expected.”

So wrote Goldsmith, in his “Essay on the Vanity of Popular Fame,” a century ago. Nor, although we have fished up some gold, do we yet furnish the world with herrings ; nor do we find them becoming cheaper as an article of diet, even in this our own land. Let us see what we can tell you about them, for of late years they have again become an important topic.

The common herring (*Clupea harengus*) is a beautiful fish, of an elongated and greatly compressed form, and thin, trenchant belly, we are told. When quite fresh it is the most delicate of all fish, and for that reason is subject to the most rapid



HERRING FLEET AT SEA.



deterioration. Happily this delicacy of constitution makes their struggles short-lived—dying, as they do, immediately after capture. Indeed, the other day one of the trawls broke, from the pressure of fish contained in it, half of them falling into the water. In place of these escaping, as one would have fancied, the women and children of Rothesay, near which this occurred, were employed for several days carrying them away out of the water. To give an idea of the numbers captured, four hundred and fifty thousand fish were sold from this haul, and the estimate of the total in the net before breakage was two thousand maes, or one million fish.

Those of Loch Fyne have long enjoyed the reputation of being the finest and most delicate, a fact doubtless owing to the character of the food there obtained.

The fishing south of Ardnamurchan Point commences on the 1st of June, continuing to the 1st of January. North of that it begins earlier, and they are also allowed to employ the trawl there, which they are not permitted to use on Loch Fyne.

At first the law against trawling was for the whole coast, but the fish not taking in the drift-nets the year after the edict was issued, the fishermen in the north were starving. The sheriff at Portree, in Skye, after having distributed Government aid for

some time, is said to have then told the people to catch the fish as they could, and if brought before him he would take steps in their favour. The following year the enactment was withdrawn for the north of Ardnamurchan on the west, and the whole east coast. The Tarbert men declare that the reason of its continuance for Loch Fyne is in deference to the Duke of Argyll, who was one of the principal originators of the law ; his tenants on the contained Loch Fyne complaining of the trawlers swamping their market ; the fishermen in the Kyles making a similar complaint, backed by the proprietors in that quarter. It would not be more contrary to every principle of free-trade if the Government were to put down the employment of any improvement in machinery by which new firms, starting on small capital, might reduce the value of the productions of established traders.

Speculators in Glasgow had also something to do with the law, as they expected it would send up the price of herring the following year. Having employed utterly false statistics to bring about the desired end, they then despatched numerous vessels to the north, in order to bring down cargoes, bought at a low price, to a high market ; but most had to return without cargoes in consequence of the scarcity of fish there.

The reasons advanced by the opponents of trawling were, that the trawls drew up and destroyed the spawn of the herring; that they broke the shoals of herring, and drove them out to sea again; that the fish were prevented going up Loch Fyne; and that drift-net and trawl-fishing were quite incompatible, as they could not work together in the same waters, the trawls fouling and destroying the drift-nets.

The first two reasons have long been proved to be fallacies; the third would be partially true of extensive fishing of whatever kind. If a plate of peas is being passed down a table, the man at the foot must take his chance, or come up for them. And the last is simply a matter of mutual arrangement. To suppress trawling because it interfered with the drift-nets, or drift-net fishing because it interfered with the trawling, are equally just, or unjust. Trawling can be carried on in water where the drift-nets cannot work, and the drifts can be laid in water where trawls are next to useless—at one time the trawlers taking all the fish, and at another all the takes being by drift owners. Fishermen are not so utterly unreasonable as not to be amenable to rational arrangement among themselves, to prevent the one net fouling the other to their mutual disadvantage, without the necessity



of severe laws and expensive police establishments.

At this present time I know for a certainty that lower Loch Fyne is thoroughly trawled, and yet the contained loch is swarming with fish, which won't enter the drift-nets, but lie among the mud at the bottom. These would be the legitimate prize of the trawlers, but the population is in great distress for want of the food at their door.

It is not only a shameful matter that the influence of one or two men should be sufficiently great to pooh-pooh the reports of several Royal Commissions ; but a great sin that such influence should be the means of ruining the moral character of a great body of the people. Seeing that those appointed by Government have declared the laws against trawling to be a moral, commercial, and scientific mistake, and knowing themselves that they are so, besides being compelled to its exercise by the necessity for a livelihood, the men continue to trawl. Many of them in consequence are fined, and thrown into prison, causing a loss of personal respect, and a feeling of antagonism to all law and law-officers, most prejudicial to the well-being of a community. A gentleman high in the police force said to me : "The people of Tarbert are not thieves ; most of the fishermen

who are brought to Campbelton are also observed to sign their names well, and knowing as I do the good character of the people, it is exceedingly painful to me to have to act against them for trawling, but I must do my duty; I sincerely hope it will be permitted soon."

I have myself witnessed the evil effects of a restriction wherein the protection of the lives and property of the well-disposed of the community—the proper sphere of all law—is lost sight of in the blind deference to a foolish, one-sided notion, backed by position and influence. I have clearly observed a laxity on the subject of law-breaking, in other and more important matters, and resistance to the authorities, wholly arising therefrom.

From what I have seen of the working of the law here, I look upon it as most hurtful to the morality of the population, a ruthless, unmeaning chain upon commercial freedom, and most prejudicial to the welfare of the people, in so far as regards the abundant supply of cheap and wholesome food.

Herring are caught either in drift-nets or circle-nets, the latter being known as seines or trawls. To fit out a smack for drift-net fishing with nets and equipment, costs about three hundred pounds,

consequently such a boat is quite out of the reach of the poorer fishers. The drift-nets are of considerable length, varying according to the size of the smack, some of them having twenty-five barrels of nets of one hundred yards each barrel. One side is kept on the surface by a series of cork floats at regular intervals, with larger buoys at greater distances to mark its position. It is thus retained upright when the smack pays it out, as it goes slowly along with the wind, and then anchors at the other end. It is left lying through the night, and pulled up in the morning, with the fish sticking in the meshes by the gills. As will be seen from this, the only fish taken are those that may go in, it being left to their option to enter or not, and as it sometimes happens that they choose to take a different direction, the nets are often empty when the sea around is very full. Drifts are mostly employed by capitalists.

A trawl-net, on the other hand, is generally shared by the crews of four skiffs, with three to four men in each ; the value of the skiffs varying from fifteen to five and twenty pounds. It is a net of two barrels, or a barrel and a half, in length ; not very deep in the water, as the fish caught in the meshes are merely *en passant*, and of no consideration in a haul.

In the centre of this net is a small bag, and at each end is a stout stick with a long rope attached; each rope being in a different boat, one of which having nearly completed a circle, they gradually approach, drawing in the net, with the fish in a dense mass in the middle. The companion boats now approach and assist at the ceremony of pulling in the net, and lifting the fish into the bottoms of the skiffs with large baskets. It is by far the most expeditious mode of capturing the fish, and although the trawlers pretend that the police cannot distinguish the trawled herring from the drift-net, they have no difficulty in doing so themselves. Several men were imprisoned in Campbelton jail in October for trawling. In their defence they had stated the impossibility of swearing to the trawled fish, adducing the authenticated case where a policeman, on being shown a trawled and drift-taken fish, had fixed upon the wrong one. A few days after their incarceration, their jailer having purchased a couple of hundred beautiful fish, gave them to the prisoners to gut, when they immediately declared them to be trawled, to the amusement of the officials who had heard their defence.

The superintendent of police at Campbelton informed me that he could tell a trawled herring in a moment, either raw or lying prepared on his

plate ; and that, like most other people, he greatly preferred them. The difference is the same as between a drowned man and one choked. The blood is in the tail, and along the centre bone, away from the head ; the colour is leaden ; the gills are unbroken, and there are no mesh marks ; the scales are also all rubbed off, from their struggling together in a heap.

Although expeditious in capturing the fish when found, on the other hand a trawler never makes a cast on chance. If the fish are not heard playing—from the weather being a little rough—or if the nights are moonlight, preventing the phosphorescence betraying them, no fish are brought in by trawlers. The drift-nets at these times may be full.

Let us now follow the boats out to sea ; there has been a fair take, what is to be done with the herring ? Many smacks may be seen in the harbour with flags flying at the mast, these are the buying smacks. The small trawling-skiffs are visited during the night by some of these vessels, and relieved of their burdens. The larger smacks, being mostly drift-net, only draw up their nets in the morning, and have plenty of accommodation for their catch. These either return to the buyers, always to be found at the quay, or tack about

until the passing steamer receives their boxes. You see them hurrying up with all sails set to meet it, crowding round, like his comrades round a school-boy with a sixpence to spend.

The buying boats nearly all belong to Irishmen. Some of them have fish shops in town; but the greater number trade from these boats, selling the boxes to the fishwomen on the quays at Glasgow, or the fishmongers in town. Others again are fishcurers in Greenock.

One night, in the beginning of October, I observed a great commotion among the fishers, all the boats coming back to port shortly after leaving it. These were the craft with trawls on board. The cause of their return was the sudden appearance of the official boat. Every night a slashing four-oared boat goes out with the fleet, the stroke-oarsman having a loaded fowling-piece. They have also flambeaux on board, and their duty, for which they are paid by the trawlers, is to fire their piece when the police go out. They accompany the police boat, pulling alongside and displaying the flambeaux, so as to warn trawlers off the ground.

It is quite a sight to see the boats returning from the fishing before a cracking breeze; one after the other turning gracefully into the little

land-locked basin, and dropping their wings as they pass the point. One morning I strolled over to a little bay, outside the rocks forming the south-east side, to see as to its fitness for a morning bath. As I reached the shore, the rising sun was obscured in mist, and gave a hazy appearance to the neighbouring rocks. Just then the boats were coming in from their night's fishing, with the water almost as calm as glass. The sails set to catch the slightest breath, and the misty rowers standing or sitting at their severe exertion, was strange and weird-like in the extreme. They formed a constant and regular procession, the bow of the one being within a few yards of the stern of that before it; while the rock of the oars in the rowlocks was in admirable keeping with the occasional "flop" of a heron, or the scream of a gull.

The men of the numerous strange fishing-boats in the harbour sleep and live on board, remaining here for the season, and returning to their several homes when it is over. The men of the buying smacks, on the other hand, go all home for the Sunday. Scarcely any boats go out for the Saturday up to twelve, and the few that go out on the Sunday after twelve, find plenty of buyers in the morning at the quay. The *Iona*, the other day, returned about a hundred men belonging to the

buying smacks, home for the Sunday. Fishing is prohibited by law on that day.

Boats come here to the fishing from Campbelton, Arran, Ardrossan, Gigha, Tyree, and all the places round about. Many come actually registered at Leith, Kirkcaldy, and other east country custom-houses, the fishing being over early there. Many of the shops depend on these strangers altogether for existence, as little business is doing in the winter. Indeed they complain that there is little enough at any time for the number of competitors. The publicans make no such complaints however, although their name is legion.

Each boat pays fifteenpence a year for harbour dues, from which the quays have to be repaired, the buoys kept up, and the harbour-master paid; his salary being only twenty-one pounds a year. As each boat pays, a small letter is painted upon it, which letter is changed every year. Vessels of burthen pay by the tonnage.

The Tarbert boats have each a stance of poles for drying their nets, and stranger boats either put up one also, or obtain a loan of one for the time being.

Most of the herring, in ordinary times, are "roiled" at the steamer's side, and sent off at once to Glasgow or Greenock. The process is this :



They are counted by hundreds, and are then spread by women in layers in the boxes, and salt sprinkled over each layer. These are the fresh herring sold in the market, a little salt only being employed to keep them. When the take has been very great, they are cured, or salted in barrels.

The variation in the price of herring, in the same season, is sometimes very great. One week they were selling here at five shillings, and the next were sold outside as low as sixpence per hundred. Two-and-six is the average in the season; perhaps two shillings from the boat was the usual price this year. The most productive years are not always the most pecuniarily successful to the fishermen; but as the families here are in those years supplied with plenty of cheap food, they are most satisfactory to the majority.

The fishing-ground is out opposite the harbour, towards the Kerry shore, the boats rarely proceeding further. Accidents are consequently rare, no boat having been lost from Tarbert for twelve years, and not half a dozen the last twenty years. And yet there are about a hundred belonging to the place, all small open skiffs of three or four and twenty feet keel at most. When there has been no fishing for some time, as at present, and the main body of the fish has gone up the Kyles, or

even up Loch Fyne, then the boats go and make a stay at those places, not returning for weeks if the takes are good. During these trips the crews sleep in the large open skiffs, in which they visit Stornoway in the beginning of the season. They are sailed up when the wind is fair, a sail spread over them, and a fire kept alight in a small open portable grate. On their periodical return to obtain a change of clothes and put themselves to rights, their suits are always singed and spoiled, from drawing in towards the warmth in their sleep. I have seen a fisherman hold one of these grates, flaming, over the boat side for five minutes, to let the breeze blow through it, and raise it to a fiercer heat. He held it by a handle a few inches over the lighted coals, and how his hands retained their hold I cannot imagine.

I have seen the police destroying the herring, condemned as trawled. They knocked the heads off the barrels, and threw the contents from the pier, or rowing out, emptied the boxes into the sea. This they did too at a time when the fish were not taking in the drift-nets, and the poor were in great distress for want of proper food. They say this is to prevent bad feeling and misinterpretation of the acts of the police. Several of the force had at one time carried a few condemned fish home, and

this had called forth an order to destroy all others. Surely the power of distribution to necessitous parties might have been granted to some competent local authority.

One word more about disposing of herring. To eat a herring in a civilised manner requires a knife, silver if possible of course, but a knife by all means. You first run the knife down the back of your fish—the head and tail removed—taking out all the small bones and fins, that would otherwise interfere with your operations. Then skip off the skin from the side lying uppermost, and take off the meat with the fork, outwards from the centre, towards the back and belly, leaving the bones bare. The fish is then turned, and the other side similarly treated, nothing but the skeleton remaining. The sides towards the belly have to be skilfully manipulated, as the bones there become readily detached. To bring the herring in prepared and manipulated like white fish is a dreadful barbarity; a fresh herring brought in whole, and skilfully handled with silver, is indeed a delicacy.

But the above is not the original, or aboriginal, mode of disposing of it. The head and tail being left on, you skim the knife down both sides, taking off the “bulk” of the skin. The fish is then seized in the fingers by the head and tail, and drawn

through the teeth from the head towards the tail, first the back and then the belly. I have seen a stalwart Highlander, who was expert at this mode, clear off a dozen herring in a wonderfully short space of time.

Herring-fry are frequently seen about the coast. I have observed them in the pools on Horse Island, off Ardrossan, about an inch long, and regular chips of the old block. Not only were they exactly similar in appearance, and imitating the gregarious habits of their progenitors, but when caught in the extemporaneous seine drawn from the pocket, they died with the fortunate facility kindly granted to the race.

To see the herring fleet, of many hundred sail, leave the port and spread their barked sails to the breeze, until they dot the sea for many miles, circling and skimming like sea-birds about the fishing-grounds, while the setting sun is gilding the water, and its rays play a last game of hide and seek round the sails, is as pleasing and cheerful a sight as can well be imagined.

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## A SAFT MORNIN'.

“SAFT mornin’!” “Ay, like to be a weet day!” is the greeting and reply. A saft mornin’! Do you appreciate all the discomfort implied by these words? They don’t mean April sun and shower; they don’t give one to understand a tropical deluge, causing the drains to run like mill-streams, and filling the landscape, in spite of the darkness, with life, and sound, and vigorous action.

No! they mean sufficient wet to make the roads “saft,” and damp, and dirty, and disagreeable. They imply fitful showers at irregular intervals, and enough of spiteful Scotch mist between to keep the ground as they leave it. Scotch mist to a drizzle, thence to a “bit shoor,” then to a regular shower, and back again. They imply the essence of misery in so far as unhappiness depends upon meteorological influences.

A saft mornin’! All nature silent and in the dumps! A most unpleasantly morose condition of affairs. We will leave it to itself, like a sulky child, and step inside.

## A WET DAY.

HERE is what it was some time ago. With the exception of being a little duller, it is not much changed :—

Drop, drop, drop !  
Will this really never stop ?  
With a skip and a hop  
    On the window ledge ;  
With a rattle and whop  
    On the glassy edge ;  
Like little flat fish o'er a streamlet's bottom,  
The blobs scuttle off as if you sought 'em :  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop !  
    To fecundate the earth  
    With its beggarly birth  
Of anything but roses.  
    Why don't it run  
    Like a spout, and be done ?  
    Not show the sun  
In homœopathic doses.  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop !

'Mid the ducks in the dub at the door ;  
Where the drake's grand purple top  
Disappears in the dirt once more ;  
So man, for his daily bread,  
Soils his crowning grace of mind,  
By his grosser nature led  
To sputter among his kind.  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop !

On the fluttering fowls in the yard,  
Flung off from the waterproof crop  
Of feathers close and hard.  
So showers at times seen falling,  
Of fertilising thought,  
Runs off the coarse tarpauling  
Of the crowd so vainly sought.  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop !

How the drooping leaves look up !  
Sucking the long-sought sop  
Now toss'd from nature's cup ;  
As a parchèd people's pores  
Imbibe the moistening cloud,  
Spreading slowly down

From mountain crown,  
O'er hillside brown,  
To the valley town ;  
Scarcely knowing whence it comes,  
Yet light'ning their hearts like fife and drums.  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop—drop !

They are running ahead of my rhymes ;  
See there they lavishly lop

The honey-preserves from the limes ;  
See here they playfully pelt

The boy "scooging" under the leaves,  
As he buries his ears in his felt,

And draws his hands into his sleeves.  
Drop, drop, drop !

Drop, drop, drop !

Good gracious ! draw down the blind.  
Let's seek some invisible mop

To dry the mist from the mind.

There are really very few works

Will stand a good diluting :

From a rough-toned treatise on "stirks"

To a spiced definition of "looting."

Come ! see and some sermons light on,

They're nearly as dry as the pastors ;



We'll except the glory of Brighton,  
And a few other reverend masters.  
Drop, drop, drop!

Drop—drop!  
Hurrah! it is nearly over;  
Re-draw the blind to the top,  
Look out on the laughing clover.  
The gay kingcups are drying  
Their carelessly coursing tears;  
A few old ones still crying  
For their lost and lolling ears.  
The redbreast's glistening eye  
Glints from the streaming sward;  
While every buzzing fly  
Has trimmed its little sword—  
For a raid  
Through the glade—  
In the mirror  
Of a drop!

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## RAMBLES BY THE WEST LOCH.

*7th October.*—The lack of a clergyman, for the time being, sent me on a pleasant Sabbath-day's journey to Whitehouse and back, along the shores of the West Loch, and I am more than ever enamoured of its scenery.

They tell me there are more than a dozen artists in Tarbert just now, and I do not wonder at it. I have come upon six or eight, all working at the castle and the bay, and cannot understand how they all hang round a hackneyed subject, when such exquisite scenery is spread out for them on the other side the isthmus. I suppose the variety and richness of the tints so astonish their weak nerves, that they cannot believe them to be natural, and shun them accordingly as a snare and a delusion. The little gems of cottages on the way, and the romantically beautiful hamlet of Whitehouse, should be themselves sufficient to guide the footsteps of a lover of the beautiful along Loch Tarbert's shores.

But in the bay, and the boats, and castle of

East Tarbert, they have a little scene ready for the canvas, and not beyond nostril-reach of the hotel *cuisine*, so they will continue to paint it *ad nauseam*, from every conceivable point of view. Verily the cobwebs of conservatism are around the minds of us all.

The first thing observable, on your arrival at the West from the East Loch, is the difference in the tides. You have perhaps left the east bay at full tide, and after a walk of twenty minutes at most, find the west at low tide, or nearly so. A difference of some hours occurs in their arrival, a peculiarity observed by Pennant on his tour.

Turning to your left on arriving at the West Loch, you pass through the little hamlet of West Tarbert, the road then ascending a stiff hill, and descending again directly. Thence you are accompanied by well-wooded, 'pleasant roadsides nearly the whole way to Whitehouse. This village is situated on a fine stream, and is a straggling little place with two mills. A white house to the right of the road, which may have given the name to the place, is occupied by a farmer well stricken in years, who officiates as factor to Campbell of Stonefield and Barmore.

17th October.—The north side of the West Loch is well deserving of an excursion. After passing

round by the head of it, you traverse a nice road by the side of the water, through copsewood trees. A few cottages are left behind, then you reach a fine stream rushing down a capitally wooded glen to the sea. A number of thatched cottages are by it, and a mill is driven by a race from the stream. Here a two-masted double canoe, belonging to a gentleman in the neighbourhood, lay on the shore ; a safe and rather elegant, if not seamanlike structure.

Beyond this place, which is called Avigeelan, the road winds up by the side of the stream, leaving the coast for a time. You soon find yourself among the hills, at first well-wooded, but shortly becoming moorland. Then passing a ruined clachan, it twines along, leaving a pretty little loch on the right hand, looking like a bit of blue sky dropped on the moorland as it glimmers in the sun. Around it are signs of some cultivation, which, having got an inch on the low ground, seems resolved to rescue an ell from the hills. Living scraps from Rosa Bonheur wander along this road, and peer sagaciously, from under their shaggy brows, on the passers-by.

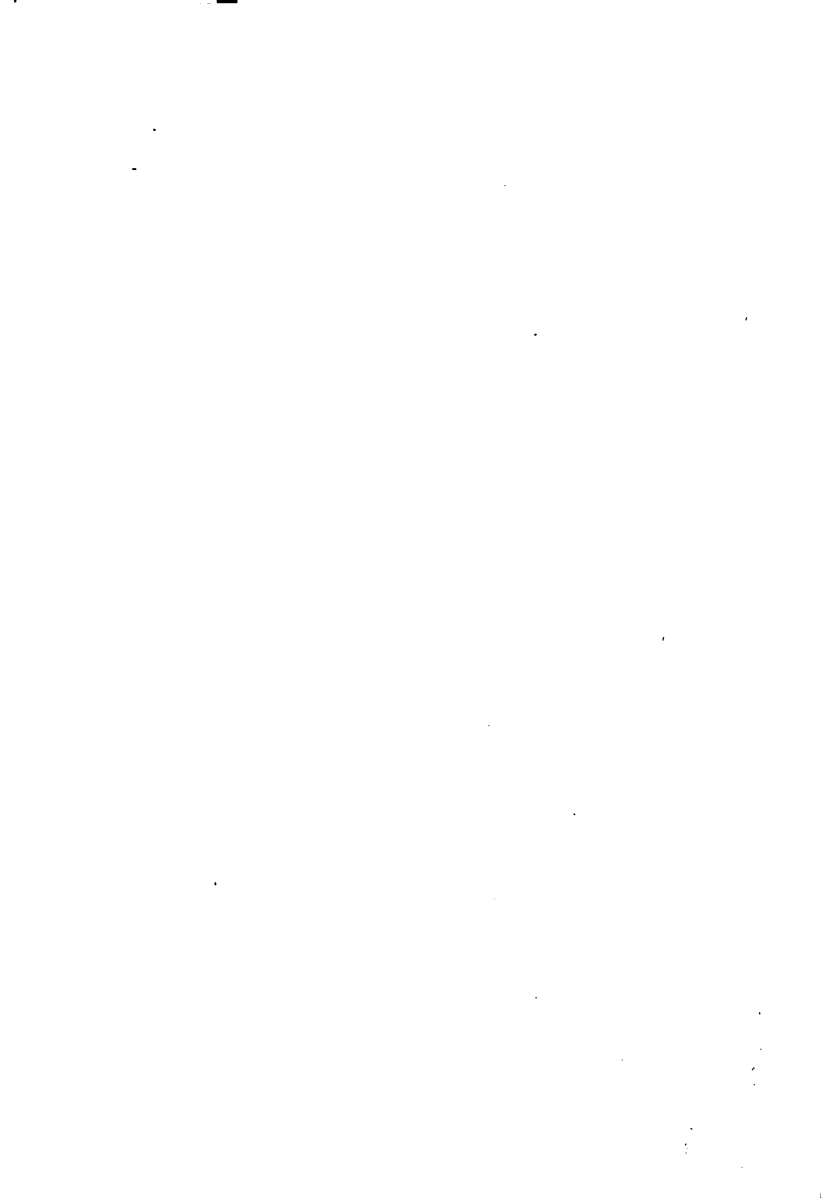
Now again the road winds down to the loch, passing, at the foot of the hill, another fine stream. Then onwards, by several quaint little cottages and

farmhouses, to a new house just built in an old style. On the right are some fine hills, wooded to the top, and the road is now bordered with copses and decked with flourishing bracken.

And lovely copses they are. Here are "wet-shod alder;" hardy dwarf saugh; sturdy, reckless, careless-looking oak; graceful mountain ash; and lively, coquettish-looking birch, half strangled by the loving woodbine, in the excess of its exuberant good-humour. There, again, the bramble, trusting to its profuse hospitality for an entrance into society, thrusts its uncultivated and uncultivable limbs most indiscriminately into every company; overshadowed by the kindly hazel, shading its coy clusters from all, save those who know it and love it well.

Almost rivalling these in stature, and far exceeding them in mass of colour, rise the slim bracken, decked, like the leaves above them, for the "bridegroom whose name is death." And the stealthy, cunning magpies, slipping through the foliage as silently as a cushat dove, seem dressed up as hypocritical mutes on the sad occasion.

In the deeper shade, the rarer ferns are still "full of sap and flourishing;" while beneath the whole, the rich and varied carpet of luxuriant mosses, drawing around themselves the cloak that lately





HEAD OF WEST LOCH TARBERT.

decked the trees, appear like the servants of some great house, holding high jinks in the cast-off garments of the drawing-room.

Now we come to a small cottage by the shore with a yacht anchored off it, almost exactly opposite Whitehouse. This pertains to the occupants of Dunmore Castle, a renovated keep on the right-hand side just beyond, situated at the foot of a hill, with some extent of pasture-land around it.

I was informed that the late owner, General Campbell, was buried, at his desire, on the top of the hill above the house, so that he might view all vessels entering the loch.

The loch here is very interesting, and the other coast very pretty. A cannon is mounted on the shore at this point, which, in combination with two at Whitehouse opposite, are doubtless meant to guard the loch on an emergency from the keel of the "proud invader."

The road now leaves the shore, and as it turns inward, we pass the tasteful and neatly-kept lodge of Dunmore. Across the road from this are three fine cedars, similar to those in Roseneath grounds. Whether the neighbouring district is the "Woods o' Dunmore" of the song, I am unable to say, but if so, there must have been rather more inhabitants about at that time.



After a slight ascent, the way again descends, passing several small dwellings and another little loch on the right hand ; several small hills are on the left, and after wandering along the shore past another clachan, and a few cottages, it turns off to the north. The hills to the right are much bleaker than those formerly passed. A ramble over the low peaks to the left gives some fine prospects, up as well as down the loch, towards Ardpatrik, with the inlets on either side of the promontory.

The road back is quite fresh to the traveller, and from always being up a hill or down a hill or round a corner, is ever new and pleasing. As the top of the loch is approached, a fine view is obtained across to the castle, on the east bay ; the peep up the valley of Glenralluch is always agreeable ; and, to me at least, the path over the isthmus is ever as full of entertainment as any "fresh fields and pastures new." Most of the artists have left us this sharp weather, having migrated to less rigorous climes, like other tender votaries of the sunshine.

Having steamed down the loch in 1864, in the *Isla*, which in the summer leaves once a week for its namesake, I was by no means so taken with it as a close inspection would lead one to expect. Like all scenery which owes its power of conferring

pleasure to the more minute, delicate, and refined beauties of landscape, it must be waited upon and courted to be thoroughly appreciated. By steamer we lose the general effect, without being admitted to familiar intercourse. Like driving past the Houses of Parliament, we are too close for the architecture, and too far off for the fittings. "A few mud hovels among the brushwood, with now and then a decent whitewashed house, and a few cattle, are the principal accessories to the water and the hills,"—so it struck us from the steamer. "An old castle on the right, metamorphosed into a modern mansion-house, and thereby losing any distinctive right to a description, and a few small islets off the entrance," were all the objects of interest resulting from a sail. And yet, on foot, I was never tired of visiting it; perhaps because no memory could grasp the details, no description carry any of it away.

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## WEST LOCH TARBERT.

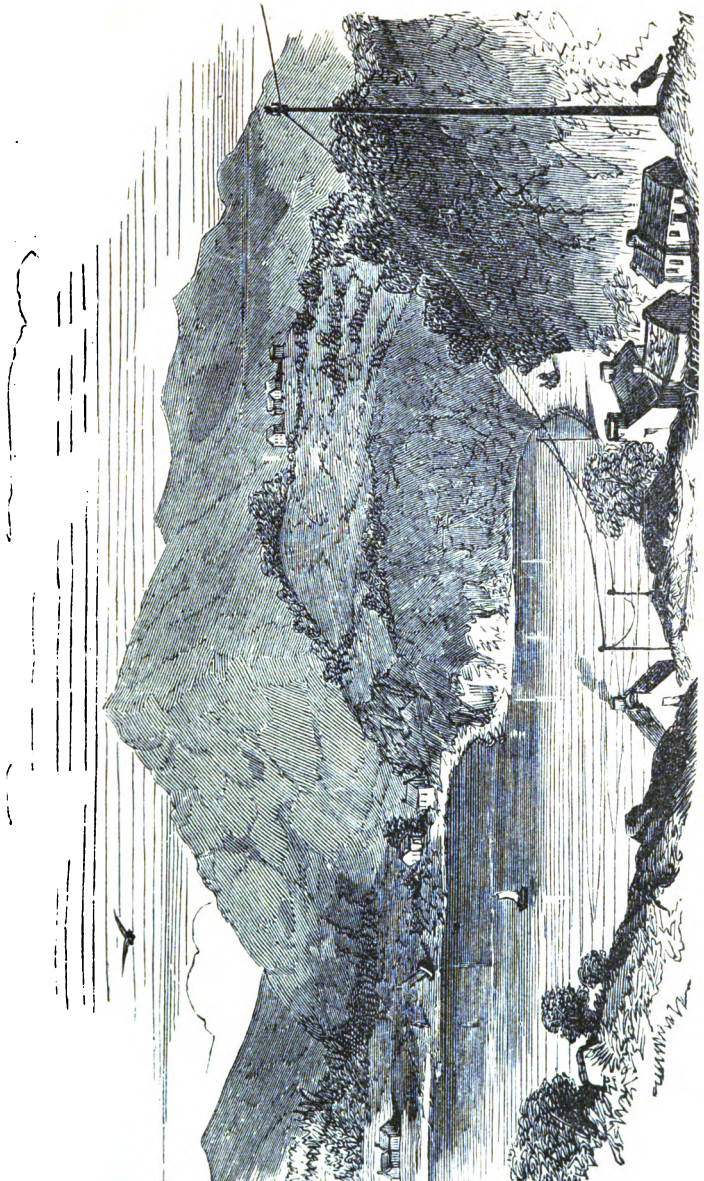
ART dull'd wi' grief? gae seek relief  
Where nae sound heart can harbour 't;  
And stray or ride on ilka side  
O' pleasant West Loch Tarbert.

The wind that shakes the hazel brakes,  
And fans the weary reaper,  
Shall saftly clear frae blinding tear  
The eyelids of the weeper.

Or would you glean—for feelings keen  
Chafed 'gainst the world's shoulder—  
A few bright hours, to train their flowers  
To sleep, or blossom bolder?

The petals move wi' hands o' love,  
And spread them in the raylets,  
That kindly fraize the ferny ways  
By West Loch Tarbert's baylets.

In days o' youth, wi' heart o' truth,  
You'd beauty seek, to harbour 't?  
Or wholesome-aged, life's battle waged?  
Gae ponder by Loch Tarbert!



GLENAKILL AND WEST TARBERT.



## HAIRST TIME.

“GOD made the country, man made the town,” to me. Every sight, every sound of nature or husbandry, has some answering chord of sympathy within me.

They are having their harvest-home here to-day, if such a term can be applied to it. A few rugged acres, reclaimed from the heath and rocks, have yielded a scanty supply of oats, still further deteriorated by months of rain. Having been spread out as long as any “drouth” can be hoped for to dry them, they are now being built into a stack. Let us join the workers.

A number of branches having been crossed as a ground-work, the gudewife carefully “wales” the driest sheaves, as a heart for the stack, while the gudeman, a fresh-looking youngster of eighty, as gamesome as a colt, places them in position. As it ascends, every tier is tied round with a rope formed from those everlasting old herring-nets.

Here are no paraphernalia of carts and horses and pitchforks; no collies ever starting after terrified

hares ; no tumbling children, romping round the lassies in coloured short-gowns and druggert petticoats. Only a fine old man doing the "biggin'," his buxom, clever gudewife, and two willing, but very incompetent, assistants. And yet, "with making believe very much," it was really "hairst."

And merry, too, are we, and good-humoured is the chaff that flies between the Lowland dame and her veteran husband, as she accuses him of Highland blarney, or together they compare the stack, now getting a little off the plumb, to the famous rock of Eig, which is always just coming down ; while he betrays his vocation, as the sheaves are tossed about his ears, by seeking one at a time, which is fair fishing.

Then the sallies ever necessary to drive off the two cows—that take advantage of the absence, round the stack, to make daring raids on the heaviest stooks—bring back other days, when the cows and sheaves were not so few, and our years were not so many. I am afraid it is those other days that make me enjoy this day so much, and perhaps the smell of the cows tells of warm milk and scrambles among the hens' nests over the byre. And here are bonny hens too remember, tripping it after their lord and master, to make the memories more complete. He that putteth his

hand to the plough and looketh back!—but when the plough is behind us, a last long lingering look is surely permissible.

There are numbers of bee-“skeys” in the “kale-yard,” also proving pleasant reminiscences. These bees fill their homes with the famous heather-honey, for no flowers, so to speak of, adorn this land of rock and sea. The gudewife tells me her bees never settle on the red clover either, leaving that to the wild bumbees, contenting themselves with the white, the wee “sheepy maes” of our childhood. How often have I formed one of a number seated by the sides of the various hives, armed with bits of stick a few inches long. With these we crushed the wasps making their entrance or exit by the door, their bodies being immediately bundled over the board by the delighted and energetic little workers; or rendered them a little timely assistance in their deadly struggles with the drones. Or, when “the shades of night are falling,” proceeded to the barn for a few armfuls of straw, and with these and a box of matches have burned out the wasp “bike” in a neighbouring hedge, from whence the daring depredators have come. And how fierce they are, as they issue in the dark, to find their house in flames and the Philistines upon them; woe betide the luckless youngster



into whose tender skin their poisoned stilettoes enter!

Or those same wild bees that love the red clover—"reddies," "whities," and "foggies"—how often have I laid waste your haunts, and filled my bonnet with the plunder!—away down those little holes between the large stones, or straight into the earth, or else among the "fog" or moss, into which you, of the bright yellow fur, love so well to burrow.

What piles of honey-bags, built like sacks in a granary! what bakings of "queen's-bread," made of honey and pollen, have we not ruthlessly dragged forth, while in angry "bums" ye complained of "hamesucken," or melted into tones of despair over desecrated domestic altars.

But I am far away from this on the backs of the bees, and am chasing the poultry through a quaint little farmyard, running them down by sheer speed, that we may lock them up till the grain is stored. I do not mistake the place, there is the well-known tree:—

#### THE OLD SPRUCE TREE.

THOU house tree! thou spruce tree!

I think I see thee now;

Though many a dreary year has pass'd

Since I've swung on a bough.

Like sentry o'er the farmyard,  
All rigid to the top ;  
Thy twigs scarce fritter on the sward,  
Although thy cones may drop.

I've dangled from thy living wands,  
And watch'd the passers-by ;  
I've clamber'd to thy denser stands  
T' elude the stormy eye.

And many a brush you've yielded me,  
Tough, thick, and very strong,  
With which, when robbing of the bee,  
To thrash the grumbling throng.

But sweeter than the bike's rich store,  
Or than the queenies'-bread,  
Was when I gazed the landscape o'er  
From off thy stately head.

. . . . .

Thy cones are all familiar too,  
Though to me seeming sulky ;  
What now you have seem very few,  
And those not half so bulky.

*Off the Chain.*

You 're not so green as you of old ;  
You lack the voices under,—  
Those active frames, you help'd to mould,  
Are scatter'd far asunder.

Some anxiously parade the street,  
Some stride through distant climes ;  
Many—whose shadows make thee sweet—  
Are themes for heavenly rhymes.

Some, houseless, scatter'd far astray ;  
Some dying broken-hearted ;  
And some have calmly slipt away,  
Since last from you I parted.

And still you stand ! and never stoop  
To ask where they are gone :  
But yet their memories make you droop,  
Though you 're too proud to own.

Ah, house tree ! Ah, spruce tree !  
The thoughts thou biddest rise—  
Bright ! sad !—are full of mystery ;  
More tender than they 're wise.

We have four pet lambs here, but they are getting wild, and are giving some trouble to keep in about.

Those restless little blackfaces ! Many a day have I spent tracking them by their footmarks in the soft ground, or their wool on the hedges ; a hint from a stonebreaker here, or a ploughman there. When first bought at some of the great highland markets, and brought within the regions of plains and fences, they really think, I do believe, that erections are meant to be clambered over. And they look so innocent when you come upon them, raising their bonny wee heads, their little jaws working, and their mild eyes seeming totally unconscious of the anxiety and trouble you have been put to. You wild, wandering, woolly, wee Ishmaelites !

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## BRAMBLES.

THE yield of brambles would have been most plentiful this year if they had arrived at maturity ; but, owing to the backward weather in August and September, the great bulk are still unripe, the few warm days in this month of October having blackened the tithe that have ripened. Indeed, although now the middle of the month, many plants show a blow white as the driven snow, or with a faint maiden blush around the centre of the calyx.

It is no joking matter to send lads a message along the road at this season. You see them buried in the hedges at either side, wholly intent upon their beloved blackboids, which nothing but terror will drag them away from. I saw two the other day, who had left a cart with "immediate" luggage standing in the middle of the road, while they were busily engaged in the neighbouring wood ; and two others in the vicinity, who are engaged in herding cattle, are constantly to be seen rushing frantically to drive them out of the grain, being wholly unable,

from the temptation of those same blackberries, to keep them out.

I myself must plead guilty to a want of my usual directness of movement along the country highways at this time, though more from a love of being in the bushes, as of yore, than from any pleasure received from the consumption of the berries. I do love to be in among them, seized and held by them, like a talkative friend seizing you by the button-hole, as he tells some other tale of the days gone by. Just one minute more ! Do stay, old fellow ! And he catches you by the sleeve, or the tail of the coat, and will tell his story.

TO THE BRAMBLE.

CAUSE of many a pleasant ramble !  
Tempting bait of many a scramble !  
Prickly, clinging, swinging bramble,  
    Richly dark and sweet !  
Rudely spurn'd amid the winters,  
When thy dried-up cordage splinters,  
And, forgetting summer tinctures,  
    Trampled 'neath our feet.

Here, I'm poisoning o'er a ledge,  
There, I'm crushing through a hedge,

*Off the Chain.*

Till, thorn-pinn'd, as tight 's a wedge,  
I, hopeless, try to back it.  
Ah! you wicked glittering beads,  
Pawning off your granite seeds,  
Must I quit the unflinching weeds  
With but half a jacket?

Now I'm sucking in thy juices,  
Helping Mary's, Mina's, Lucy's,  
With teeth patient of abuses,  
Tearing, stretching by me ;  
From its form a maukin springing,  
Sets the woods with laughter ringing.  
Ah! those days are not for bringing  
Back to tempt and try me.

Every prick thy guards have given,  
All the sights of summer heaven,  
O'er the field of memory driven,  
Now arise before me.  
Hurrying in endless groups,  
Marshalling in teeming troops ;  
I must fly the glamorous loops  
Thou art flinging o'er me.

## SOUTH TO SKIPNESS.

*9th October.*—Crossing the hill above the pier, just as the *Iona* was coming in, I set out for Skipness over the moors ; being given to understand that it was only five miles by this short cut.

Every one knows that a short cut is generally the longest road, and yet every one is quite ready to be again deluded with the notion. Leaving about twelve o'clock, I had hoped to be back by four, giving ample time, as I imagined, to traverse the distance, and also get a snack at Skipness. Vain hope!

Immediately after leaving Tarbert, a pretty little gravelly beach is passed, where there is nice bathing ground. Striking up the hill from this, past some ruined cottages, I took to the south, up hill and down dale, crossing numberless little glens of the most romantic and picturesque, and consequently most uncrossable description.

At one part of the way, several shepherds were standing on different peaks, whistling and calling to their dogs, then collecting the sheep from the various glens below. It was very interesting to



observe the sagacity with which the flocks were focussed to one point, from a seeming confusion which the orders of the shepherds only made "worse confounded" to a human onlooker.

The glens were decked with pretty feathery birches, and golden-crowned mountain-ash, and were themselves well worthy the walk. On the descent to one of them, an ant hill nearly received my incautious foot, but I managed to change its destination in time.

From Tarbert pier, until I came down on Skipness Bay, I saw no sign of inhabitants. But many ruined villages occupied the little glens, and gave token of former dwellers on the mountain. It took four hours' walking, running, climbing, and leaping, before I reached the neighbourhood of the castle. On my way, I started a beautiful sparrow-hawk just at my feet, on the high moorland, and numberless black game and moorfowl gave promise of capital sport.

One had need of stout limbs to get over the second half of the journey, which is a species of tableland, mostly cut up for peats. The ground takes great pleasure in suddenly catching your unwary foot, and pitching you on your head. With what a giggle of delight too the bogs receive you, as if they considered it a great accomplishment to

have drawn you in. Many parts of the hill put me in mind of the hackneyed lines—

“If you ’d seen these roads before they were made,  
You ’d have lifted your hands and bless’d General Wade ;”

but I felt much more inclined to anathematise the general wade to which the rascally bogs subjected me.

The view seawards, during the whole walk, is very pleasing. That towards the land varies from misty peaks to moorland valleys. From the summits of the hills here, a fine prospect is obtained, which I will describe in the words of the native author of “*Maccalein’s Raid*.” He names the two highest peaks Crovaleese and Croaninan.

“A lofty mount, from West Loch Tarbert side,  
Eastward ascends with lengthen’d, giant stride.  
Along its western bounds a valley glides,  
Which way-worn, weary wights precisely guides  
To Skipness’ coast.

The distant height commands  
A pleasing view of Donald’s rugged lands.  
Thence all appears a ridge of blacken’d moor—  
A long dark stripe on ocean’s burnish’d floor,  
Which, in the cloud-capt Moil, their southern  
rim,  
Faces green Antrim’s coast in distance dim.

Seen from that height, th' Atlantic's belted  
main

Appears to rise, like gently-sloping plain,  
And distant isles, unto the viewer's eyes,  
Seem cloudy banks hung up in azure skies.

Thus, in mid air, the hills of Islay show  
Their dark outline—so Jura's, capt with snow.

But, from that level, lower your searching  
glance,

See West Loch Tarbert from the deep advance,  
Worming an inland path, which nature decks,  
Until its dark-brown glass, below, reflects  
The motley mountain shades and wooded land,  
Which fringe its jutting points on every hand.

Then eastward turn, and Arran's circled shore,  
And jagged cliffs, and gray steep peaks, explore ;  
Huddled in heaps, see mount on mount ascend,  
And threat'ning heaven, with cloudy vapours  
blend.

Lo ! pride of mountains, Gott Bhen, towering  
tall,  
Stands mid his comrades, far o'ertopping all ;  
Whose scallop'd cliffs, with streaks of grayish  
hue,

In bold relief adorn the enchanting view.

Then, if you will, look high o'er prostrate Bute,  
To where the Clyde pursues its charming route—

To Cumbraes twain, to Ayrshire's bluish coast ;  
Or view the Kyles in locking mountains lost.

Then on Lochfyne, as far as jutting Otter,  
Direct a glance, and view the sheeted water,  
Lined on the left by Knapdale's rocky strand,  
And Kerry's coast upon the dexter hand."

From the hills I descended upon the Skipness road at the old castle. Near it there is a modern dwelling-house, situated amid pleasant wooding. I wandered through a little hamlet to the bay or baylet, a pretty gravelly semicircle, into which a stream runs under a small iron bridge. In the mouth of this stream a few fishing boats, all of the larger class, were lying. Opposite them, along the shore, straggled the village. But I in vain attempted to get anything to eat after my fast, it being now some time after four o'clock, so had to continue several miles farther, to a small public-house at the junction of the road to Campbeltown.

The way led up, and then down, a hill, and very pleasant it was. It overlooked the sea, which stretched away to the left towards the coast of Kerry, and southwards to the north of Arran, across the Sound of Kilbrannan. The people solemnly aver, that a child was carried by an eagle from this across to Arran. The islanders secured

it before it could be devoured, the Skipness men having followed it in boats, their cries directing the attention of the natives to it. The female child, they add, is now the mother of a family, and none the worse for the adventure. It would be interesting to authenticate this statement, the flight with an infant across the Sound of Kilbrannan being a greater muscular feat than that of a lion clearing fences with a bullock in its mouth.

Skipness, at the date of my visit, belonged to Mr Frazer, who was sold out by his creditors shortly thereafter. His father was in very bad odour, from refusing to allow the fishermen to remain at this place; and when his corpse was carried ashore at Tarbert, the unseemly spectacle was presented, of the fishermen cheering this evidence of his death. The rental of the estate was only fifteen hundred per annum, but it was put up at the upset price of sixty-three thousand pounds.

The church and hamlet of Claoinaig, where I rested and partook of some refreshments, is delightfully situated above the sea. A stream rushes down a pleasant valley behind it, and a few fishing boats were lying at its embouchure. It is ten miles by road from Tarbert.

Having taken the edge off my appetite, as it

was far too late to think of returning by the hills, I left for home by the road.

The little valley behind Claoinaig, at first nicely wooded and narrow, stretches out as you advance into the open moorish tract, about three miles long, called Glenrisdale, or Glenristle, as it is pronounced. The road twines up the northern side of this, and then descends towards the western coast of Kintyre, still through a very open country, joining the road along Loch Tarbert near the village of Whitehouse.

The cultivated land, comparatively extensive around Skipness, was now in patches few and far between. Most of the grain was housed, but in some few fields they were still shaking out the sheaves, in hopes of having them a little drier.

As I passed along in the dusk, every hundred yards or so was enlivened by the rush of black game overhead; indeed, I have seldom crossed better sporting ground than that gone over in to-day's walk.

As in Islay and elsewhere, sheep is now "the only wear" of the hills of Kintyre, and the Gaelic, that formerly resounded in the glens, has everywhere given way to the still harsher, more inharmonious, screeching of the wild-fowl.

"The glen that was my father's own  
Must be by his forsaken ;

The house that was my father's home  
Is level'd wi' the bracken."

From the village of Whitehouse, the way home was through the dark, and my only companions the water-fowl, quarrelling over their suppers on the shore.

21st *October*.—Down to Skipness by boat the coast appears very agreeable, with many nice sites which ere long will doubtless be occupied by villas. Beautiful glens running down to the sea, where the streams emerge over pleasant baylets. An occasional water-ousel hopping about the stones, and many water-birds skimming over, or ducking into, the sea outside.

At Skipness itself, besides the old castle—which is of large dimensions for Scotland, and remarkably entire — there is an ancient ruined kirk. Both buildings are of a species of mountain limestone, the windows being faced with reds andstone. No lime has been employed in the construction of the kirk, in the graveyard of which many curious old stones may be seen.

Landing at one part of the coast, my companion pointed out a large outcropping piece of pure lead ore. Within a few yards of the sea, it has certainly more chance of paying adventurers than among the hills of Knapdale.

## OUT WITH THE TRAWLERS.

THE sun is setting behind the church, but the bay is minutely visible. I am stretched in the bow of a skiff, which is being rowed quietly out of the harbour, while smack after smack, and boat after boat, in rapid succession before and behind us, pull steadily out ; the former setting their sails for the opposite coast, the latter mostly visiting the adjoining rocks to take in ballast and await their friends.

Our companion boat having now joined us, while from under the shadow of the rocks we have tossed a few heavy stones into the bottom of the boat, together we pull slowly along, still in the shadow of the hills, awaiting the friend of all lawbreakers—darkness.

Piled in the stern of the boat we have now what Government is paying a great sum yearly to prevent the employment of, and which, if found in our possession, would consign us all to Campbelton jail, and the boat to the Government. This dreadful



article is nothing more than an innocent enough looking trawling-net.

I said we were proceeding along the shore ; an alarm of police, or the sudden immediate vicinity of the *Jackal* or its tender, would send the net to the bottom of the sea, at a spot where it could be fished up readily when the danger had passed.

Transferred to the stern of the boat, I lean back with one hand on the sail-rope, and one on the tiller, which I now direct towards the opposite coast of Kerry. The men are standing in a group before me arranging the net for action, and piling the connecting ropes.

The half-moon is rising over the Knapdale hills, leaving them in relief, and shedding a beauty over the water which, however delightful to my admiring eyes, is not at all pleasing to the crew's. By the time we reach the other side, however, the shadow of the Kerry hills, and a few scattered clouds, are more favourable for our designs. The oars have all been out, assisting the lagging wind, suddenly two of them are shipped, the sail is furled, and we row quietly about listening for the herring playing.

A word is exchanged with our consort, and now the master of our boat stands by the mast, with his

back to it and his arms crossed, as he keeps keen watch over the neighbouring water. All ears are at their utmost tension: hark!—again! again! three fish have betrayed their comrades by leaping from the water. A word to the consort, the boats silently approach, one end of a rope is handed to the other boat, and we shoot apart. Two pull steadily, while two others rapidly pay out the net, in a semicircle, from the other boat. Following the net, a long rope attached to it is run out, a similar length extending between the consort and the opposite end of the net. Both boats, now within fifty yards of one another, throw out their anchors and commence to pull in the ropes; having pulled in so far, the anchors are hauled up, the boats approach nearer, and the ropes having been drawn in as far as the net in both boats, one hands its end to the other, and passes round to the bag at the centre of the loop. The two ends of the net are now hauled into the one boat with the prey sticking in the meshes. As the end of the net is approached, the herring are no longer in the meshes, but in a great crowd as thick as in a barrel. The consort now seizes and supports the corners of the net to prevent the fish leaping out, while they are trailed into the bottom of the two boats with great baskets, for they are actually “hotching.”

The net drawn, the watcher resumes his post, and again listens to hear them playing.

The boats being well filled, a smack is observed at anchor in a quiet spot, without the letters that tell of a fishing boat's registry. This is a buying smack. A query and reply, and we are alongside, one on each board. These men are new to this trade evidently. They make a great din, and are at the same time in great perturbation for fear of being taken. Having no properly prepared receptacles for the herring, they are just flung into the bottom of the hold, with a quantity of salt, as they are measured in a barrel holding five hundred.

This smack, if seized, would have been taken possession of by Government, whilst if the fish had been in barrels or boxes, they could only have seized the cases and their contents.

However, the boats are emptied, so much money paid in advance, and all clear for further action. The men again drop to their oars, and another course of watching commences. This time it is more by sight than sound that they are sought for, as, the darkness having for some time been increasing, the "burning" is clearly visible in the water, and this is what now reveals the prey.

Passing along, the watcher by the bow, with the

anchor in his hand, strikes it on the boat periodically, observing if any fish should flash through the water at the sound; or, sitting at the oar, bumps it heavily on the rowlocks, all looking over and keeping watch. We are now among the fleet. Shadowy smacks with their trains of drift nets, the legal or lazy fishermen, as the trawlers call them, or our more daring trawling brethren, all go bumping past intent upon the water. I keep keen watch for some time, but the strain is severe upon eyes wanting sleep, and I gradually find I require to shake myself up from a dozing state, with my head lying over the gunwale. The feeling is something similar to waking on the top of a coach, with the shock as you are about losing your equilibrium. One or two others, with less excuse than myself, are dozing at their oars; but this is Monday, the first of the week—all employers of labour understand what I mean.

A few rapid observations between ourselves and consort, and the net is again made ready and flung, and once more we are nearly knee deep in the most beautiful inhabitant of the waters, scarcely excepting the salmon. A fresh-caught herring is so exquisitely beautiful, that the moment the hands touch it, the delicate grandeur is gone. It cannot prevent itself pleasing the palate,

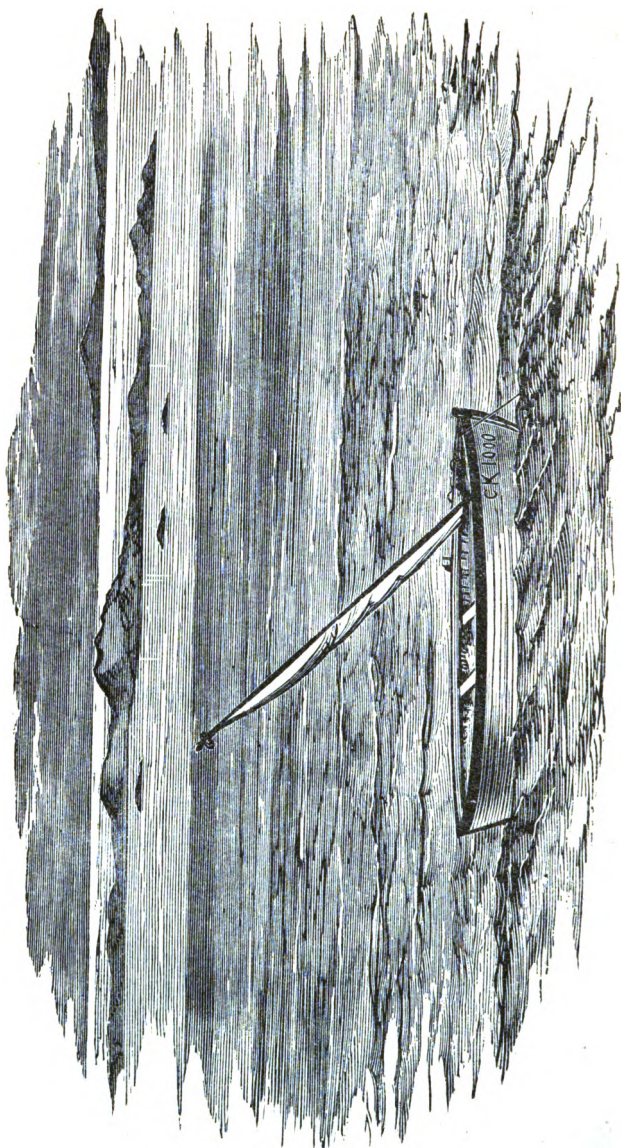
but will not condescend to delight the eye, of the foes of its race.

Another haul and we again meet in with a friendly smack willing to take the risk off our hands. These men are accustomed to the work, the boat is in first-rate order, the boxes all arranged ready for the fish, which are slipped into them from shallow baskets, and salt tossed over each basketful. The loads are soon lodged in a quiet, business-like fashion, while the fish are tantalisingly playing in the waters inshore as day is breaking. So, leaving to the legal trains the short time that can yet be employed in fishing, we set off home amid stories and good humour—for both smacks handed round the glass liberally—reaching our anchorage in the bay without either nets or fish, and consequently free from all danger.

As we entered the harbour the rising sun was tinging the horizon with the most brilliant crimson, and I found the clock to rule near eight as I reached the house, having been absent from about four P.M. of the previous day.

A slight repast and away to bed, where I slept like a top till dinner-hour in the afternoon; then, getting up all astray in my ideas of time, I went about bidding people good-morning, and wondered





ISLAND OF GIGHA, FROM DUNSKAIG. TRAWLING SKIFF.

why tea did not come in with the half-dozen fresh herring that I had helped to capture the night before.

It is a strange life too, that of a fisher lad, in bed during great part of the day, and getting up to wander over the waters in the darkness, with visions of the *Jackal* or the police looming through the gloom. Reckless, merry, and good-humoured, all kindly attention to the stranger they knew nothing of, and delicately apologising for talking Gaelic among themselves when he could not understand it.

Romantic and picturesque indeed are those figures standing by the masts, or rattling the anchors on the bows, while the moon throws their shadows on the "burning" waters across those of the neighbouring shores, or an occasional meteor flashes across the midnight sky. And those groups by the buying smacks, emptying basket after basket over her side, or standing by the fire in the little cabin over their "deoch-an-doruis."

Fare-ye-well, ye hardy, kind-hearted trawlers, I shall never forget your unobtrusive attentions, nor how well you of the glib tongue told the story of your wrongs, which I thought I had known so thoroughly already.



## THE TRAWLERS' SONG.

OH ! who would wield a slavish pen  
'Mid everlasting worry ?

Or who, 'mong sturdy Tarbert men,  
Would delve, or plough, or quarry ?

A trawling skiff, a lively whiff  
Across the blue Loch Fyne,  
And we will trust, for sop and crust,  
To the depths of the driving brine.

Oh ! who would fling a lazy net  
To wait on wayward fishes ?  
When they may off, the while you fret,  
And disregard your wishes.

No knife will rust, no barrel burst,  
For lack of caller herring,  
While trusty trawl can bring a haul,  
Where'er their fins are faring.

'Tis who would lack a wholesome meal  
When herring schools are plenty ?  
We'll fill the widow's humble creel,  
And send the rich a dainty.

A trawling skiff, a lively whiff  
Across the blue Loch Fyne ;  
We 'll drag the bight through burning night,  
That all the world may dine.

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## TARBERT.

You have heard of a whited sepulchre! Such is Tarbert. Facing the beach there is a line of white-washed modern-looking houses, but beyond—inside this cleansed epidermis—the whole town is composed of miserable hovels, apparently thatched about the commencement of the century, but for many a year in the habit of growing much heavier green crops than I saw anywhere in the cultivated grounds of the neighbourhood. The rain has painted the front of these huts a dirty green, with colour drawn from the reeds and grass above, giving them a most filthy appearance. One would think that neither cleanliness nor any other good thing could proceed from such holes, yet the people don't look so dirty as you would expect, and they seem healthy and "weel-faured."

The first thing I observed, on landing at the pier, was half a dozen policemen, and I innocently inquired if that number of men were necessary to keep the little place in order. They replied that often a dozen were required, adding that it was

to keep down the trawling, and not for the usual civil, or uncivil, employment of constabulary.

As you proceed towards the quay, the next thing that is likely to strike you is a crowd of men in sea-rig, some in sou'-westers and fishing-boots, with guernsey frocks and thick blue trousers ; others in blue shirts and heavy waistcoats, stalking or lounging about, while the little bay is crowded with their craft.

Then, perhaps, you come on a lot of women on the shore, squatted round a pile of herring, which they are dosing from large baskets of salt, and tossing into barrels or boxes for the Glasgow market. Everything is fish ; the very little patches of cultivation, recovered at great labour from the rocks and hills, belong to fishermen ; and you often see a man in the fields throwing his sail, with the yard and mast attached, over a stack of corn to preserve it from the weather. When the stacks are thatched and completed too, the universal covering is an old herring-net, bound neatly round them, putting one very much in mind of the heads of little school-girls. The mat on which they rub their boots before entering the aristocratic fishers' houses, is a bundle of herring-net ; the walks are almost paved with scales ; and two to one, in buying tea or sugar, that they not only put

them in scales, but put scales in them, for the same shop here sells everything, from fish to finery.

The harbour, in a close, hot summer, must be very bad. When the cholera visited the place, the smell from the port was dreadful ; and in the harbour-master's cottage, some distance from the town, they had to keep a pot of tar in the middle of the floor, which they stirred periodically with a red-hot poker—preferring this to chloride of lime—the disinfectant then and still in vogue here, although carbolic acid is to be had at the chemist's.

When I passed through the town two years ago, the passengers were landed from the *Iona* in a stout ferry-boat, manned by four weather-beaten oarsmen. Now, however, it calls at the pier, the erection of which, and opening a road thereto, cost Mr Campbell £1600. To cover this he draws £60 from the *Iona* ; £80 were taken this year at the gate, and the North British Railway boat pays about £23. (This boat has now ceased running.) Deducting £20, and the rent of a free house to the pierman, this would pay a fair interest, but with the expenses necessary to keep such a work in repair, the returns will be small.

The houses run along two sides of a land-locked bay, which forms a very secure harbour ; as many as seven hundred fishing-boats have been in it at

one time. The boats belonging to the place are known by the great rake of their masts, which are set well forward, close to the bow, and slope away back towards the stern. This leaves the whole bottom of the boat clear for action or herring, while they can carry a good stretch of sail, without overweighting the front of the craft.

The small boat-building yards are principally employed in repairing the numerous boats belonging to, or visiting, the harbour; but a few vessels of some tonnage are also turned out.

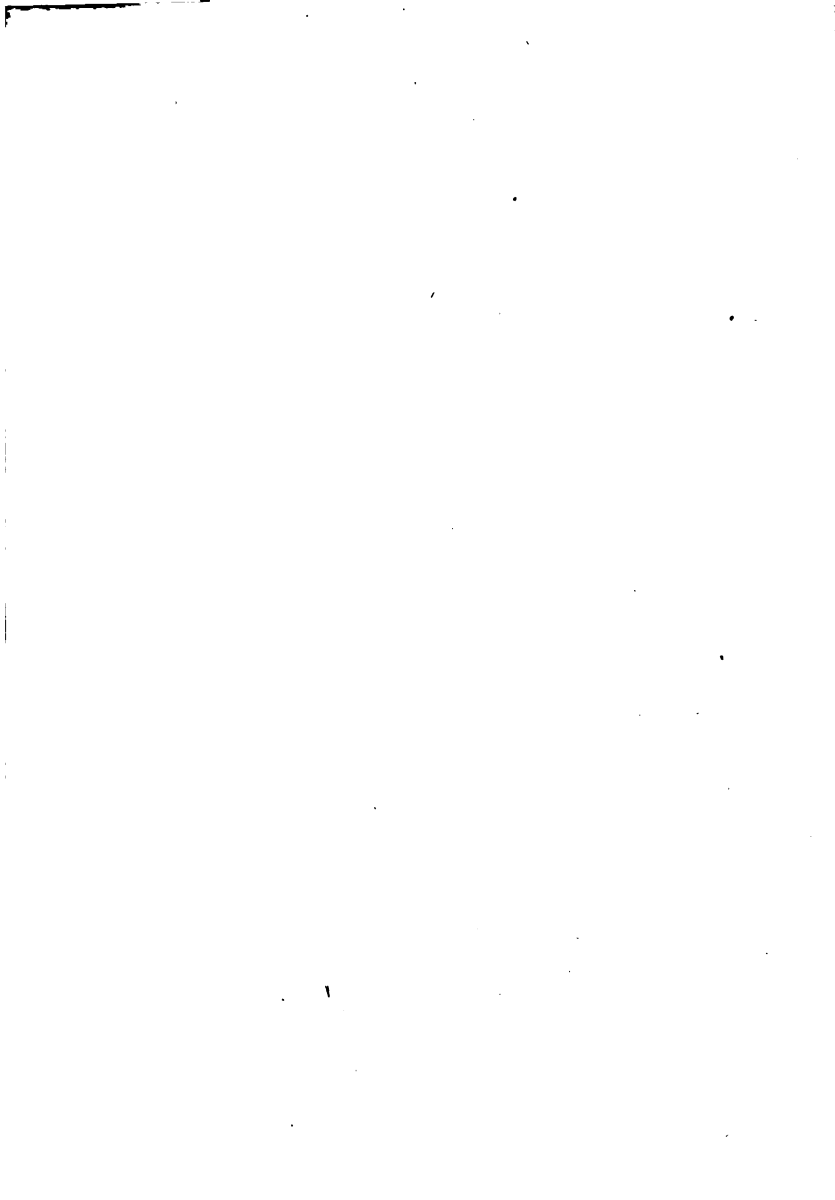
Besides the great staple—fish—wood, sheep, cattle, and potatoes are exported; the boats calling for these at the stone quay in the town paying one halfpenny per ton dues. Two luggage steamers visit the port daily, the one from, the other to Glasgow; and occasionally a supernumerary calls for extra luggage. In the winter, during north winds, I am informed the bay is sometimes frozen over, preventing the entrance of these boats; this I fancy happens but rarely.

The water-supply for the village, besides a few wells, comes principally from a stream and well on the hill, led down by a pipe and distributed among the houses, the people paying the proprietor so much additional on the rent for it. Another stream was covered over by the Tarbert

agent of the Union Bank, and led down to supply the house and Bank buildings, much to the annoyance of the inhabitants, as it was the best water in the place. More than once they tore up the covering, and destroyed some of the pipes, but the agent seems to have prevailed.

Formerly commanding the town and overlooking the bay, is the castle, on an eminence to the south-west. It is an old ruined keep of the Macdonalds, said originally to have been built by King Robert the Bruce, and last tenanted by Alister Macalister, a retainer of the Macdonalds, who figures in the rhythmical tale of "Maccalein's Raid." It consists of a strong, high, square tower with ruined outbuildings, built of durable limestone. In one part there is a large vault visible, half filled with the débris of the ruins, and lighted by a window about the size of the hand. The roof of this vault was coated in parts with a curious stalactite tinged with pink at the ends; and several beautiful cocoons of the purest white, and as soft and tenacious as silk, hung from the midst of it. These were filled with numberless eggs, of the colour and transparency of sugar-candy.

After gazing around on the walls for some signs of former inmates, I could not help wondering what would have been the feelings of a "Sassenach







TARBERT CASTLE.

body," when first deposited in such a delightful retreat. Verily there were few Sir Joshua Jebbs among the chieftains of the past, and rarely could they be blamed for excessive leniency. The walls of the keep are of considerable thickness, and at the time of its power it must have been quite impregnable to anything the natives could bring against it, both from its natural position and great strength.

Tarbert seems to me to be a very pleasant place to retire to from the world of strife, it is so quiet and thoughtful. Although so full of shipping, it has none of the bustle and disturbance of a seaport town. There is life and activity without excitement. As I sat on a rock at the entrance of the harbour, on my first visit, and sketched the old tower, it afforded me great pleasure to see every few seconds one of the smacks trim her sails and glide silently through the rippling waters—no noise, no confusion such as one hears in large vessels engaged in commerce. Your true Highland fisherman is too solemn a man, when sober, to waste his breath in useless noise or talk—like the Scotch terrier, "life is too serious a business to him." When walking along the beach, within a few yards of the principal group of boats, there was nothing to prevent me hearing the crackling of the

innumerable pods of the furze, as they burst in the sun, although all the smacks were preparing to set out for the fishing.

The Union Bank and adjoining shop of Messrs M'Calman is the only really modern-looking building in the village itself. A new house is in process of erection for the Free Church clergyman, and two or three such comfortable, well-built, anti-picturesque-looking dwellings will ruin the character and appearance of the little place. A small cottage upon the hill, owned by the sheep farmer of the neighbouring hills, and lodging the Established Church clergyman, is the only other civilised dwelling-house, with the exception of the pleasant little cottage of the harbour-master, by itself near the shore.

An unlimited number of inns, hotels, and taverns of all descriptions, claim the other inhabitable portion, elbowing the "unlicensed" community into the purlieus of the place.

Besides the school-house at the Established Church, the Free Church party have built another at the back of the town, and a third is situated at Lochend; so that, if desirous, the inhabitants need not lack an ordinary education for their children. But, excepting a library attached to the church, of some five hundred to one thou-

sand volumes, which the present incumbent will not take the trouble of lending out, there is no circulation of literature, and a fisherman who ever reads a book is a phenomenon indeed.

The small farms about have been reclaimed, at great expenditure of labour and money, from the hills. That of the harbour-master extends over about twenty acres, of which six or eight are cultivated, the rest feeding sheep or cows, or lying unemployed. It has been reclaimed by the tenant himself, his lease extending over twenty-three or twenty-four years, now nearly expired.

In a small hamlet on the hill live four families, who lease another farm adjoining, and work it among them, being thus able to employ a horse and cart or two, which singly they could not have done. This place is called Barfad—Longtop—of which the tenants, notwithstanding their miserable dwellings, are well-to-do, respectable fishermen.

Every reader of native history is aware that East Tarbert, in the historical tradition, was the exit port of Magnus of Norway, when he drew his vessel across from the West Loch, thus sailing round Kintyre, and securing it by this ruse to his Kingdom of the Isles.

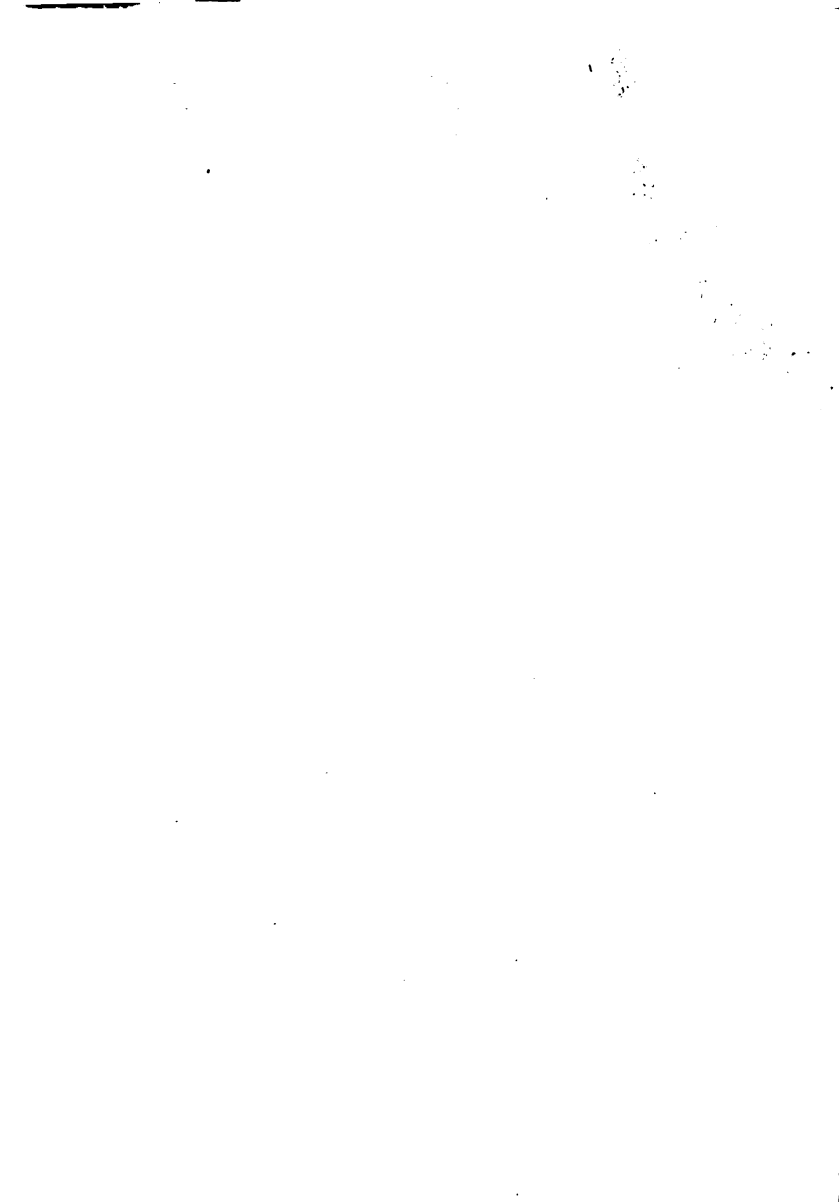
Scott, in his "Lord of the Isles," makes Bruce follow the illustrious Norwegian's example :—

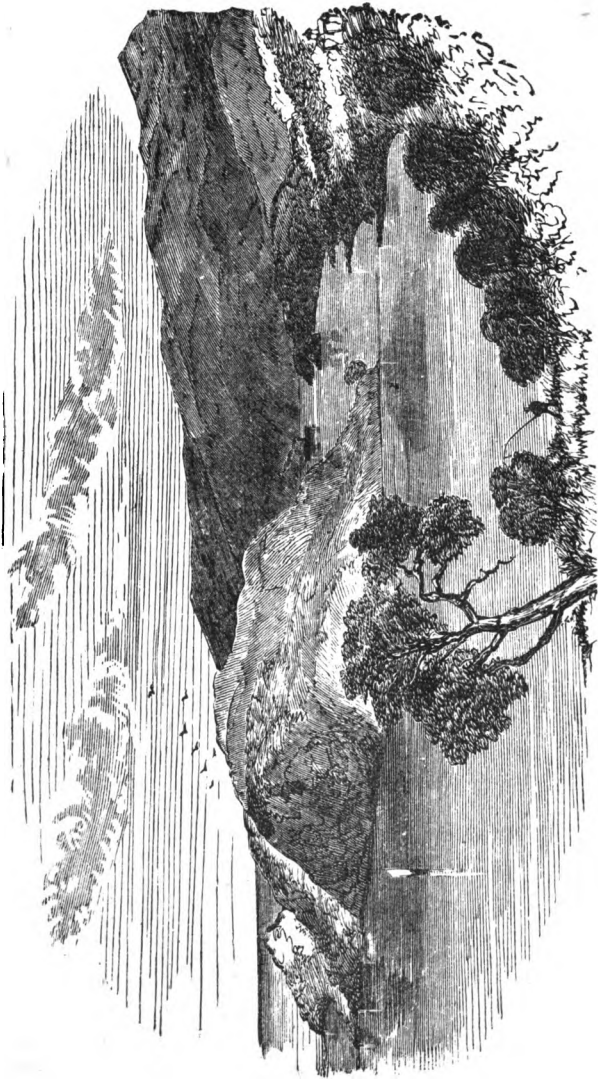
“Up Tarbat’s western lake they bore,  
Then dragg’d their bark the isthmus o’er,  
As far as Kilmaconnel’s shore  
Upon the eastern bay ;  
It was a wondrous sight to see  
Topmast and pennon glitter free,  
High raised above the greenwood tree,  
As on dry land the galley moves  
By cliff and copse and alder groves.”

This narrow neck of land is a sort of glen between two small ranges of hills. The cultivation on either side consists mainly of oats and potatoes, the fields broken up into small particoloured patches, few large and compact enough to make ploughing either agreeable or possible.

From the few obstacles offered to engineering upon this isthmus, at various periods for a century back, it has been proposed to cut a canal between the lochs. But the shallowness of the West Loch will ever be a great obstacle ; and, at any rate, I should think it would require much greater inducements than any that offer at present, before money would be launched in such an enterprise. Once Islay has become “down the water” to the wealthy Glasgow merchants, and the lovely West Loch has been desecrated by commercial locusts, the scheme may be thought of with some prospect of success.

If the Islay proprietors were to feu their lands for country villas, and to unite with the Kintyre





**BARMORE PENINSULA AND STEAMER ENTERING TARBERT.**

and Knapdale lairds, whose properties on the west would be thrown open to commercial enterprise, they might form a company—when companies of all sorts should be eyed less suspiciously than at present—for reclaiming the shallow part of the West Loch, and cutting the canal as proposed.

I hope such a plan is far distant, and that many a visitor, before that, may gaze on the lovely reach of water as it now exists.

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## FROM ARDRISHAIG TO TARBERT.

HAVING gone by the *Iona* to Ardrishaig, past the east coast of Knapdale,—which did not appear anything very enticing from the steamer,—the day being delightfully warm and bright, I sauntered up to Lochgilphead. Neither on the way through Ardrishaig, nor in Lochgilphead, although the streets were profusely illustrated with shops, did I find a single one that dealt, however distantly, in books.

The Knapdale hills decrease considerably in height as you approach the head of Loch Gilp, where the ground is moderately level. Many fine villas have been erected at both towns, especially at Lochgilphead, which is now a fashionable watering-place. The harbour of Ardrishaig is wholly artificial, and shelters a considerable number of herring smacks, in which fish a great trade is seemingly carried on. There is an infusion of Irish blood here, doubtless introduced on account of the canal, and it was very amusing to hear the contemptuous manner in which the fishermen and

navvies chaffed one another with their respective callings.

There is a distillery on the banks of the canal, and the appearance of the place generally is that of a busy, bustling, little place which has risen in the world, and thinks itself quite as good as its more anciently-comfortable neighbours.

Having viewed the neighbourhood of the head of the loch, which is certainly well worthy the good esteem in which it is evidently held by "seafaring" families, I prepared to return by the road to Tarbert.

The day was warm and beautiful, combining the pleasant temperature of early summer with the colouring of autumn, and as the brilliance of the sky was reflected in the calm water, along with the rich hues of the land, the shifting clouds acting like the handle of a kaleidoscope, the sight was magnificent indeed. I lingered long to look upon the scene, and, once upon my way, spun out the miles as far as possible, in order to enjoy it to the full.

The walk from Ardrishaig to Tarbert must be very fine at any time, but this glorious autumn day it was thoroughly enchanting. The road winds along by the side of Loch Fyne all the way, and while the beautiful hill-sides line the right hand,

the grand loch stretches away to the left. The rock and shore scenery here certainly beats anything I have seen anywhere in the west of Scotland, the home of such scenery. The road is liker that by Loch Long than anything else, but is much superior, to my taste.

A couple of miles from Ardrishaig you come to Whitehouse, Colonel Lumley, prettily situated in a little valley widening from the hills, whence a stream runs down through some fine wooding, and enters the sea over a pretty beach, where poles for drying nets showed the prevailing industry. Several neatly-kept cottages were erected near the bridge over the stream, giving an air of homely comfort to the scene which the great "cleckins" of poultry did their best to increase.

As I passed along, numerous pheasants rose from the road, this quarter being seemingly well preserved. The leaves were by this time falling in great numbers, the effect of the slight frost distinctly perceptible for a morning or two back; and the large ants were perambulating the woods in companies, apparently employed upon the débris. They are about three-eighths of an inch long, with two bright glistening belts across the body, and swarm everywhere.

Several of the streams along this road traverse

beautiful glens, one being by the side of the house of Mr M'Pherson, a shepherd, another about half a mile further north ; there are also many others of smaller size. A square castellated white house surrounded by trees, a short way from the road, belongs to a Mr Furlong, an Englishman, who has a small property here. Just beyond, you get a fine view of Barmore Peninsula through a vista in the road, which has a very pleasing appearance.

The water here was all rippled by the shoals of herring passing up the loch, having a very peculiar effect. There is a road up the hill to a shepherd's house on this side of Mr Furlong's. Both house and road were evidently quite new, and the latter very rough, winding up the side of a picturesque glen, a wide view being obtained over Loch Fyne from the top of the hill where the road stops.

The mosses on the trunks of trees and stones in these woods are numerous as they are beautiful, some only to be distinguished from minute ferns by their mode of growth, others resembling the wool on the sheep's back, or nothing but their delicate selves, and forming cosy couches for the numerous timid little conies that start away up the rocks at the slightest footfall.

Here we are passing a little natural greensward ;

let us stop and look at it. It is bordered all round with wavy ferns, some few in their green spring attire, which they seem to think quite warm enough for this pleasant autumn weather ; or perhaps they could not wear it during the wet summer months, and their mothers wish them to scuff it out. Most, however, are arrayed in "plain red or yellow" like the country girl, or a more gaudy combination of the two ; while still others have but added a red sash or a yellow ribbon to their summer costume.

This fringe is broken here and there by the interloping hazel brushwood, or young copsewood trees, overtopped beyond by their better grown brethren, oak, birch, and rowan, with now and then a lady-like, matronly ash, enveloping the youthful community in its graceful skirts.

Higher still rises the lovely hill-side, with its mauve or violet projecting rocks, and the rich red of the withered bracken over the greenish-yellow mossy ground. Up even to the very top, a few baby birches have taken advantage of the sloping hill to slip away from the crush below, waving their little arms and quietly chuckling in the gentle breeze.

The following day I had a plunge in Loch Fyne, the temperature being very mild, but the water so

strong that no exertion was necessary to keep the swimmer afloat. Great numbers of echinodermata of all descriptions adorn the sea-weed at the bottom of the bay, and a sea-urchin—about the size of a large orange—I caught in Loch Fyne, had spiculæ of a beautiful violet colour.

Bullfinches are also more numerous in the neighbouring woods, than I have been in the habit of meeting with in other parts of Scotland. A bird of the thrush tribe, which I found lying dead, without any apparent injury, was fairer on the breast than the common mavis, and had a beautiful light red colour under the wings. I do not know the species at all.

There is a row of rowan trees at the back of the cottage, which is a great attraction for birds of all descriptions. Hither come flocks of fieldfares, that stupid bird ever in a dreadful hurry, rising with a great blundering, sputtering noise when taken by surprise, which they always seem to be. Numbers too of the beautiful little chaffinch, whose delicate livery is, to my taste, superior even to that of the goldfinch ; lots of impudent, self-reliant sparrows ; and chaste wee linties ; and funny, restless tits, as ubiquitous and pugilistic as the Campbells themselves ; and now and then a great hawk with rapid silent flight brings terror, and perhaps annihilation,

to some luckless little one. These few last days have made great havoc among the above trees, the leaves left being now brighter than the few remaining berries. There has been a plentiful harvest for our winter friends this year in the way of hips and haws, rowans and blackberries, and indeed all sorts of the smaller fruits ; so that they may hope to tide through the gloomy season without unusual hardships. So be it ! for I love them all.

In the morning the harbour is alive with sea-birds, without whose assistance I verily believe the bay would soon be silted up with herring débris ; they generally leave when the stir begins in the bay, and go out to sea, unless the weather is rough.

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## NUTTING.

OFF to the nutting with two companions. "Nutting on the 19th of October!" I hear some one exclaim. Yes, indeed! although in my memory it is associated rather with the 19th of August.

The eldest of my comrades is a lad of fourteen or fifteen; Dugald they call him, "black-eyed," large and dark indeed, bright, keen, and beady—quick to see a herring play in the midnight waters are those merry eyes of thine; if the nuts elude thee amid the branches, lucky indeed are they. Large for his age, with hands like a man, for Dugald can pull a stiff oar at a crisis, should the winds be adverse, or a craft be behind that had better be kept there. With a one, two, three hop walk, springing from his exuberant spirits, for Dugald More — "big Dugald" — is big with courage, and large of heart.

The other is a younger brother, Benjamin the beloved, the household pet. Deep in the mystery of Greek roots, Johnny knows not yet what it is "to suffer and be silent" in the bitter night



wind. May he have as stout a heart to meet it when it comes!

Here we are passing the east opening into Glenralluch; right before is the farm-house and steading of Ashen, beautifully situated amid natural wooding, now divided into two by a belt of sunshine that warms into still greater beauty the innumerable shades that look cold and dim beyond it.

We are on the Ardrishaig road, and after traversing it for some distance, diverge into the copsewood after the hazel-trees. Who gets the first nut! What a scramble! All gaping into the slim branches like hungry chickens at a hen-wife, or eager goldfish for the expected crumbs. Little Johnny has the first, and immediately we are scattered among the trees, every man for his own hand. From tree to tree we wander, like Arabs from well to well in the desert, with an occasional nut to keep us up to the search. At length we reach a land of comparative plenty, and are soon all swinging from the ends of boughs, or poised on slim stems of the most ticklish description. An occasional "How are you getting on?" booms through the branches, between the cracking of plunder already secured and daring efforts after further instalments. "Are you getting many,

Dugald?" "Middlin'!" sings Dugald, in return. Dugald always says "Middlin'," though his boat can't hold half the hawl. What cosy, rosy bunches! I can scarcely seize them from excitement. Our pockets are "a-swellin' wisely" under the supply; my eyes are regaining their ancient skill; I can spy a bunch with the youngest now. See! one—two bunches on the tree below; away we go clambering down the shelving bank and wriggling up the twisted stem. Where are they? did they see us coming? Can the embryo hazel-trees really hide themselves, we wonder, as we gaze about us with a vacant stare of astonishment. They are not to be seen, at any rate, so your foot slips on the damp mossy stem, and you find yourself hanging on to a nodding branch between the blue sky and the bright green moss. Why! there they are, rubbing against your very chin; it was all a joke on their part; they would tumble in a day or two, at any rate, and meant to go with you all the time. So you laugh cautiously for fear of breaking the branch, seize the bunches in your teeth, the only clutchers disengaged, and dropping quietly to a more secure position, set out in search of fresh adventures. "How are you getting on, Dugald?" "Mid—I'm gettin' some," this time. "And you, Johnny?" "One or two," says he, laconically, while the teeth

are going like the monkeys' in a menagerie on a school holiday. Those happy hours among the hazels! Would familiarity ever breed contempt? To some, perhaps; to others—well, perhaps.

But is that all? only a scramble after hazels! A scramble after hazels, forsooth! Do you know what that means here? It is to stumble upon an ant hillock every few steps; think of twelve within a couple of hundred yards, varying in size from a large barrow-load to a large waggon-load, all alive with workers this bright autumn day. It is to ramble over a carpet such as nature only lays in her choicest drawing-rooms, and over which droop her most picturesque hangings, between her sweetest and tenderest landscapes. It is to pace a hall hung with the ancestral portraits of the trees of the forest as they are coming of age, and furnished with the gems of the fernery and the rarest devices in lichens, with a boldness and magnificence, yet delicacy and completeness, in the arrangement of the multifarious colours, tints, and tinctures, to analyse which would have driven Chevreuil mad, and to talk about which would put Ruskin in a frenzy.

Lording it over the minor ones, here is a stately royal fern, with a kingly sweep in his green robe such as would well befit a descendant of the prophet. There, under the gnarled roots of an "oldest

inhabitant," lies a posse of many-hued and various species—some, curving green feathers; others, the rich brown of a pheasant, or bright as the plumage of the yellowhammer. Why! here is one that has actually appropriated the bloom now slipping from the bosom of the robin redbreast; and away under the shelter of those overhanging roots and earth, far from the reach of the sunlight, curve a cluster, varying from snow to cream colour.

And those mosses! no Turkey carpets were ever so soft, no Brussels' designs ever so chaste and elegant. Place your rude feet softly over the tender branchlets, true beauty is too rare to be ruthlessly destroyed.

What wonderful heaps are those ant hillocks scattered over the ground! See them, covered with their inhabitants, taking advantage of a blink of sun to hurry through their important operations. With what an energetic, business-like air, a little fellow rushes out from one of the holes that serve as doorways, seizing hold of a great piece of stick and dragging it off with him; and if, in assisting him, you should cause it to fall over the side, *he* never cries over spilt milk, but immediately seizes another piece and makes off with it instead. Peaty earth, bits of branches, seeds, rotten leaves, anything, everything, is carried to the heaps, some of

them, as is evident from the luxuriant growth of vegetation that covers their lower stories, being the accumulation of many years.

But the clouds are lazily revolving in radiated lines from the sun, now upon the horizon ; we must home. As we pass up by the gamekeeper's lodge to inspect his stock of slaughtered poachers, certain young limbs are ready for a rest. Rows of hawks, piets, weasels, and stoats, with a few ravens and hooded crows, and an occasional cat's head, adorn the board of control established by the keeper to restrain the "animal propensities" of the enemies of his game. And we, being no longer able or willing to restrain the animal propensity of hunger, must obey the law of supply and demand.

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## TERPSICHORE IN TARBERT. •

LAST evening, hearing the strains of a fiddle in the kitchen, I stepped in and joined the company there assembled. Let us look around the room!

Sitting on a chair by the box-bed is the gude-man of the house, rather under the middle height, with a humorous twinkle in his bright eye, and a play about his mouth and unwrinkled clean-shaven face that is not to be mistaken. Even the crop of pure white hair over his fair complexion will scarce lead you to believe that that compact, active frame is eighty.

Opposite him, seated upon a large chest, is a sturdy, good-humoured fisherman from Gigha, the son of the miller of the island. He, having secured a three-stringed violin, is pouring forth a varied stream of harmony, selections from a wonderful collection which he carries "in his head." Around Charley, for such is the name of the musician, are congregated the crews of the two Gigha boats in the harbour—hardy, open-hearted fishermen, with shaggy heads of hair falling around manly, weather-

beaten faces. A table and two chairs manage to accommodate the other grown-up members of the company, with the exception of the buxom gude-wife herself, who enjoys the scene from the several points where her household duties happen to lead her. •

One of those present, possessed of a chair, has also secured a tortoise-shell coloured cat of the name of Chirsty, which he is alternately stroking to a pur and tormenting into strenuous exertions to escape, accompanied by vehement "niaoos."

A large barrel, between the head of the bed and the fire, contains a lively young pig, which adds a perpetual chorus to the strains around ; while the two younger members of the family are stretched one on each side of the fender, leaving the centre of the apartment free for the dancers. First, we have a variety of airs on the three strings. During the performance two of the party are absent at the village in search of a first string to complete the instrument ; but at length they return without it, after a most unwarrantable absence, the rapidity of their movements having been seriously impeded by the number of places of public entertainment on the way.

The fiddler now extemporises a fourth string, making three of them the same. A key is then

found wanting, but a piece of hard wood is hunted up, and the handy "gullies," carried by every fisherman, soon carve out a substitute. Everything being now in working order, Charley tunes his instrument without any of that affectation so almost universal among the tuneful community; and to my delight and astonishment, after a few steps by some of the men, the old patriarch himself throws off his boots, and takes the floor in his stocking-soles.

He is going to give us the old Killicallum, or sword-dance, and gets a tall fisherman of a most prepossessing appearance to be his antagonist. A stick and a poker do for extemporised claymores, and the act opens with the "ancient" dancing round his opponent, giving and repelling terrible sabre cuts. No clod-hopping plunges or clumsy movements, but neatly, nimbly, and cleverly does the old one foot it. Many a time and oft must that energetic frame and peculiar humour have been the life of a company.

Round and round they go, until the long one receives his death-blow, and is ordered to die accordingly, which he does stretched out at full length on his back. The "ancient" then goes to each of the company in succession, and after bewailing in piteous terms that he has slaughtered



his antagonist, begs of them to bring him to life again. Upon their replying, No ! he gives them a drubbing, returns to the body, dances round, and attempts to restore it. After a few such attempts, the dead shows some sign of life in a convulsive movement, becoming stronger and stronger. Then another wild dance and another request for assistance, and a leg, upon being lifted up, gradually gets into a wonderful tremor. This goes on, the old one showing signs of exuberant delight, until both legs and arms are stretched in the air, appearing as if under galvanic action. At length, with a wild "hough," the long one, who, when originally spread out, lay with his head under one chair and his feet under another at the opposite side of the room, is drawn to his feet, and the perspiring performers retire to their seats under the acclamations of the delighted audience.

Scotch reels are now the order of the day, being almost the only dance known in this quarter, the country dances requiring more tuition than is to be found among the folk here generally. We attempt to introduce a little variety in the shape of the Highland fling, and afterwards start an Irish jig, the call to which is vociferously and energetically attended to.

But there is no lighter foot on the floor than

that of our old host, who every now and then, with a lively skip to a Gaelic verse, of which the refrain is "aon dram," sends the glass round the company; for those who could not find a fiddle-string had no difficulty in bringing back a bottle of Campbellton. With wonder be it told, however, our sturdy musician tasted not the tempting cup that "*artistes*" from time immemorial have loved so fondly.

After much kicking up of heels, and a few more tunes from Charley, who also threads a reel to his own playing, we have our interlude in a plaintive Gaelic song. The Highland tongue is peculiarly fitted for the expression of deep, sad, or religious feeling; and the sweet, lilting tone of the speaker added to the impression produced by the words. This is followed by a rattling song from Charley, in which a young woman expresses her determination, in by no means the most refined language, to obtain a husband immediately, before the cold weather sets in. A Lowland element in songs is introduced by some others of the company, and they are then ready for a second bout, to relieve their itching soles.

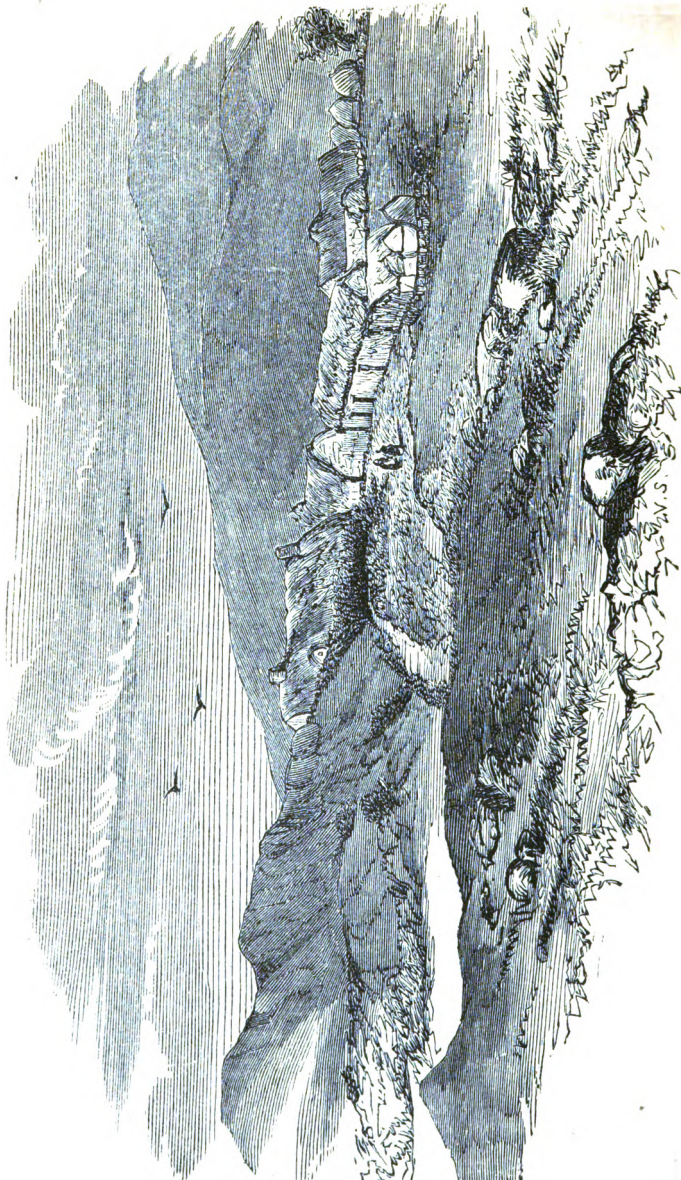
A perpetual Irish jig having at length exhausted the remaining energies of the performers—already pretty well tried with a reel of Tullochgorum—a

“ deoch-an-doruis ” is passed round, eliciting a succession of toasts—such as, “ May mither moose never look out o’ your meal-pock wi’ a tear in her e’e ! ” or the simple, “ Ne’er waur than this ! ”—and the company breaks up with a hearty shake all round, the Gigha men returning to their smacks, others to the neighbouring farm of Barfad, or the village.

This is a foretaste of the winter-nights’ amusements, in which mirth, music, and mountain-dew recompense the hardships, and make free with the produce, of many a night on the waters.

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VILLAGE OF BARFAD.

## THE DEMON OF GENTILITY.

ALAS for the reign of pretty shortgowns and drug-get petticoats!—they are replaced by tawdry finery, hung over wretched hoops. To see the country girls doing their marketing in such a dress is on a par with the sight of a stalwart Highlander, with the head and shoulders of the Farnesian Hercules, trying to look respectable, and only managing to make himself ridiculous, in a dress hat. Fortunately, this latter sight is only to be encountered on a Sunday. But it is not of its effects upon the lower classes, ruinous as it is both to their appearance and their pockets, that I am going to speak ; to the so-called middle, it is as the thirst for strong drink among the working-class—as all-devouring and as destructive.

The middle is a large and rapidly-increasing class, fed and inflated by the energy and ability of that below it. Every year we see more and more of those elegantly-dressed and daintily-gloved young men who turn out to show themselves of an evening. And I like to see them, too, in a sort of

a way—just in the same way as I love to look on a bed of tulips, although I know their nearer acquaintance is not desirable, being only got up for show.

But in another light, the sight is not pleasant to me. I cannot altogether view it apart from the fact that the number of clerks and governesses is also increasing to a most irrational and undesirable extent. The income of this class is by no means a steadfast one. It depends principally upon the state of commerce, which is swayed by every political and meteorological influence. The uncertainty of their income acts in a minor degree like gambling, preventing them looking sufficiently to the future. As a rule they do not save, nor lay up anything for an evil day. Consequently, when the heads of families are hustled out of the world in the modern breathless rush for position, their wives and families must rely solely on themselves, their only preparation for the struggle for subsistence being a life of useless luxury and thoughtless accomplishments.

“ My eldest boy—of sixteen—must enter a bank or counting-house, and my eldest daughter—who has just returned a mincing, vain creature from a boarding-school at Brussels—must seek a situation as governess. The younger girls and myself will

take in sewing or turn dressmakers ; perhaps we can receive a gentleman or two as lodgers," says the widow. Why is this the only thing that any of them can do ?

The lad goes into business with five, ten, and fifteen, or ten, fifteen and twenty pounds, for three years. If he is very fortunate, perhaps he is bound three years for nothing, and is worth a great deal less. All this time he has to dress like a gentleman ; and, in place of being of any assistance to his mother and sisters, is a positive drag and incumbrance, drawing seriously on their hard-won earnings.

The sister who turns governess, if also very fortunate, may gain sufficient to support herself, and perhaps even to transmit a few pounds to the general fund. But they are quite unable to meet any distress that may arise ; they can only live from hand to mouth, and by far too often the mother falls a victim to her pride and distress, and the family are thrown on their friends or the public.

I do not see why this should be. Why should pride and foolishness drive all the educated classes to be clerks or governesses ? Is a man much more honourable and gentlemanly, much more of a true ideal man, who spends his



years over a desk making out invoices of handkerchiefs or grain, sugar or iron, keeping out of sight in a shabby office-coat, than that other who turns up his sleeves, and weighs or measures over the counter, or who employs a healthy frame in an active manly trade? Is it a worthier or a healthier thing for a young woman to pale over fancy sewing, or have her temper and constitution ruined, teaching the rudiments of everything, from Genesis to German, to the impudent children of an insolent mistress, than to occupy the comparatively independent position of housekeeper or cook, or even superior servant? Why should the opportunity or necessity of careful dressing alone be the standard by which to judge of the value of a means of livelihood?

In central Europe every man has to serve three years of his life as a soldier: I would have every young man spend a certain time in learning a useful trade. He would find the work much more conducive to his moral and physical welfare than the licentious life of a camp.

On the other hand, every young woman should learn to cook and conduct the affairs of a household. Not that I would have them go to a great hotel, or fashionable schoolmistress, and look carelessly on while the head cook explained the mys-

teries of a *paté au foi gras* or a *soupe Julien*, going home with the idea they had gained another accomplishment. No. Let them gain the requisite practical information from a good teacher, and then practise at home, by cooking for the family conscientiously and economically, not simply as amateurs. They would find this much more to be relied on for a satisfactory subsistence than the sewing or embroidery pursued into the hours of much-needed sleep.

It is no loss of time to learn to use the hands as well as the head ; they are wonderfully connected, those same hands and head, and the sooner they learn to work together the better. You will make all the better draughtsman that you can handle the saw or the mallet, or guide the chisel on the turning-lathe ; you will make none the worse judge of property or work that you have put together a chain, or moulded a horse-shoe.

Then, is it not something to mix with and learn the feelings and life of the substratum on which society is reared ?—to have a practical insight into the modes of thought that influence the conduct of the great bulk of our fellow-countrymen ?

Now, more than ever, do we find it necessary to have some bond by which to unite the various classes of society, and crush any feeling of anta-

gonism. Besides, every year, to a still greater extent, do we find that "all the markets overflow;" and, in the virgin soils of the earth, even an "angry fancy" will be welcome, when accompanied by able and willing hands.

The advantages of such a training, therefore, are both numerous and obvious:—

*Firstly.* It will greatly assist in forming and strengthening the frame, while it breaks the youth into habits of work, the first great preparation for civilisation.

*Secondly.* Training the hands, and employing our constructive faculties—usually too often left in embryo—thereby increasing our usefulness and completeness.

*Thirdly.* It will conduce to a more thorough appreciation of, and fellow-feeling for, the classes beneath, while it assists in elevating that class by the superior cultivation of those who enter it, however temporarily.

*Fourthly.* It will increase the feeling of manly independence, which, unaccompanied by rude self-assertion, is so necessary to true nobility of character.

*Fifthly.* It will help to break up those foolish divisions into castes, resting on the most arbitrary and often most absurd distinctions, more often and

more easily understood than expressed, yet which interfere so extensively with friendly intercourse.

*Sixthly.* Enabling many to follow a more presently lucrative and less socially exacting means of livelihood than they would otherwise be either able or willing to conform to.

Let us see now what might be done. Part of the eldest son's education has consisted in his learning joinery, or carpentry, or smith-work. He has the head of a scholar on the healthy frame of a workman, with the corresponding energy. He is not going to die of consumption or a broken heart because the head of the house has been called away. At once he gets a good wage, sufficient not only for his own wants—which do not now include broadcloth and jewelry — but also aiding very materially in keeping his mother and sisters. They have sold the bulk of their furniture, and taken a quiet, unpretentious lodging; no longer deeming it necessary to wear royal apparel, they trust their appearance to educated tastes rather than expenditure. They can actually lay by a little money now.

The daughter has obtained a situation as cook or housekeeper; and that not necessitating her dressing like her mistress, she can save something considerable.

So in a year or two the money, that would be useless to a lad in an office, can set up a tradesman in business ; and the mother may shortly see her son occupy a position about as good as, and much more secure than, his father did before him.

So long as labour and a simple, honest trade is despised by the middle class, just so long will the colonies and our large towns be flooded with starving clerks unable to do a hand's-turn, and the country overrun with governesses, largely recruiting another class, much sadder and more terrible to look forward to than housekeepers or cooks.

In connexion with the above subject, as few of the youth of the present day are likely thus to don the linen jacket of the artisan, a workshop might be erected in every large town, in which good workmen would teach the various trades in the evening. Most lads have a natural desire to "make things ;" and such a school would do much to lessen the awkward manipulation and unhandy, unshifty characters of many. A workshop of this description, employed in making the common, useful articles of a household, would also be of vast value to the poor of great cities, to the deserving among whom they could be distributed with discrimination. The leisure hours of the comparatively easy-circumstanced would thus be agree-

ably and profitably employed, not only in gaining useful acquirements, but in assisting the necessitous of the community. We suggest this for the consideration of philanthropists, as a good, practical, and inexpensive mode of aiding the less fortunate.

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## WORKS OF GENIUS.

WET and stormy, and kept within doors. Happily we can commune there with men of genius, and sit at the feet of Gamaliels in an easy-chair.

Genius ! how glibly and fluently we all talk of it. And yet, alas ! like the cuckoo, it is more often heard than seen. More often what is held as such, in ordinary life, is that bull-dog tenacity that holds on to the throat of natural conservatism until it is strangled, leaving free the pathway to the mansion of success.

But still, "through the ages," a few "wood-notes wild" of wondrous beauty, a few words of heartfelt wisdom worthy of the name of genius, have sped through the muscle of the world's mind sparks of nervous, life-giving energy. Let us see what of such we have here—not many.

Perhaps Plato ? No, no ! The outline of my intelligence is too ill-defined for me to indulge in such luxuries, for I too am a dreamer. A man who can sit down and actually *read* Plato or Shakespeare must have the appetite of an ostrich or a

dyspeptic. Either his intellectual digestion is something wonderful, or he has an unnatural craving for a food he cannot make use of. I would as soon think of making my meals daily off Tay salmon; I prefer a little bit to be looked forward to.

Spenser. Have you ever read Spenser? "Have you?" is the miserable evasion I doubtless hear in reply. No! I should think not. I have been in his works, as I have been in the gardens at Kew, but have only a recollection of some wondrous intellectual palm-houses. Of course you were in London at the Great Exhibition. Whenever you speak of anything to any one, they have seen it in London at the Exhibition. Well, Spenser is the great exhibition of poetry. You must not try to run through him in a week or a month, but must take a season-ticket; and by the time it expires you will have some slight idea of the riches you have been amongst, but which never can be known except in a catalogue. It is like the spencer worn by a noble woman, which must have been so called because the treasures within it were past finding out.

Burns and Beranger—both loving and seeking the "beautiful-and-true," as long as it was within their gaze, sung its praises wondrously and well. But, baffled by "the world and the flesh," it eluded



their pursuit, leaving them thenceforward to bewail its loss in tones of thrilling pathos ; or, in burning words, to vent their scorn and hatred of the false it had taught them to detect and despise—the one a volcano of passions and emotions in the centre of a powerful Scottish intelligence, the other lighting up with the torch of harmony the productions of a keen and vigorous French brain.

Then there is Wordsworth, extensive, beautiful, and minutely various as an English plain. Wherever you wander through him, he is well cultivated, with delightful hedge-rows and the sweet murmur of brooks. But the nearest approach to the heroic is in a giant oak, and the mightiest object on the horizon is weakened by the distance and the mist of verbiage through which it is viewed.

Shelley also. You have heard of the bullfinches in Germany, deprived of sight in order that they may sing the more sweetly ! Shelley, too, is a wondrous songster, blinded by daringly seeking to gaze at the Light of the universe, and singing all the more “wildly well” under the terrible infliction.

Many there are who have caught a ray, and flung it back on the reflector of their intellect, proclaiming themselves of the salt of the earth ; but who could fancy the Bard of Avon claiming to be the meteor-light of England, or “the blind old

man of Scio's rocky isle" to be a beacon through the centuries?

How often do we hear that "my son is a genius"! Your son is but a crude idea, completed by a turbid imagination. He might possibly become what he supposes himself to be, but he must first realise what he is. At least teach him to labour steadily for his bread, madam. Genius, to be healthy, must we well fed.

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## GLENRALLUCH.

ON the evening of the 6th October, traversing the usual road to Ardrishaig, I came to where it branched off at right angles to right and left. Following the left-hand road, wrapped in admiration of the beautiful hill-sides between which it wound, to my great delight I suddenly found myself in view of the West Loch, gleaming through the chaste wooding like a sheet of silver.

The hill-sides, all the way to the head of the loch, are really exquisite; the road, pleasing indeed, and from it most decidedly the finest view of the West Loch looking down, is to be had. A stream accompanies the traveller on the left hand all the way to it, near which stands a superannuated mill. Where the valley opens on to the head of the loch there is a considerable tract of cultivated land, on which the stooks were still standing, and where various husbandmen and women were yet employed.

The range of hills—those of Glenakill—on the left hand gradually slopes to the water, and the

road, encircling the head of the water, winds up and then cuts through it, thus forming a natural doorway, dividing the isthmus of Tarbert from the glen we have just been threading. On the right hand, overlooking the loch, stands the farm-house in which Dr Campbell, the old medical adviser of Tarbert, resides. The stillness and beauty of the calm, mild autumn evening would have soothed the most excited brain, and shall ever form a fresh little oasis in my memory.

This was my first stroll through Glenralluch, as I afterwards found this glen to be called ; but its beauty was such as often to direct my wandering footsteps back again.

To see it on a bright day, on the right hand wrapped in an elegant, warm-looking autumn robe of copsewood, while the opposite side is shivering in "clouted gray breeks ;" and then, as you proceed, to see the air of comfort transferred to the cold side, as it drags the covering over its very ears, is delightful. Or again, as the month advances, the day is dull and clouded, without a breath of wind, and the beautiful tinge pervading the bracken and copse-covered slopes resembles carmine dusted over the rich, dark cheek of a Southern beauty ; or rather the pollen shaken from the graceful daffodil over the exquisite petals of the

pansy. You expect the first gust of wind to lift and sweep it into the stream that wanders listlessly yet stealthily in the glen beneath.

On either side are numerous single-coloured beasties, now and again wandering into the middle of the way. Here is one with a tousy little calf beside it, tugging at the teats. She surveys the stranger with a most belligerent expression, while the others come grumbling about him, as if aware of the patties of butter, marked "Glenralluch," that he has devoured, and considering him art and part in depriving them of maternal duties similar to their companion. Wishing they didn't know their own products so well, you deprecate any such notion on their part, and edge cautiously past.

Glenralluch, Glenralluch ! beware of the day  
When merchants shall mete thee, and dole thee  
away ;

And the low of the cattle, that roam o'er thy hills,  
Gives place to the rattle of chariot wheels.

Glenralluch, Glenralluch ! beware of the time  
When thy coppice shall hear the great dinner-bell  
chime ;

And the colour, now seeming to flit o'er thy cheek,  
Be tortured, till utterly banish'd, wi' reek.

Glenralluch, Glenralluch ! beware of the hour  
When the lords of the loom shall have thee in their  
power :

Like a fair country maiden transferr'd to the ha',  
Your beauty shall languish and wither awa'.

Heaven preserve it from such a fate !

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## CLACHAN AND DUNSKEIG.

AFTER reaching Whitehouse, on the way south, the country is very bare on to Clachan, excepting where a few streams are bordered by plantations. Immediately on passing the village the road ascends rapidly towards the hills, overlooking, to the right hand, a prettily-situated place called Gartnagrenach. Many fine views of the West Loch are to be had as you pass along; to me it always seems cheerful and contented-looking, as if it had retired from the world to live on its means and enjoy itself.

The day is what may be called dull, the sky heavy, and the sun, unable to burst through altogether, looks like a child flattening its nose against the window the better to see below. Accordingly, in spite of a good ground breeze, the ducks are lying asleep by the road-side, and the old folks near them drawl out, "A fine day," because it is not raining and there is no hot sun to prevent them vegetating in peace and quietness.

The men you meet with on the way look solemn and heavy, regarding the stranger with a hard, rude

gaze, but breaking into an unexpected pleasant smile as you greet them good-humouredly.

For several miles the road is nearly over the tops of the hills, high above the loch, while on the left it is bordered by a range of fresh-water lochs of small size—Kintyre being famous for these bright little gems, spread over the hills to compensate for their barrenness.

After passing a few huts at various points—one of them ornamented along the gable with magpies and weasels, punished thus for their pride, their pluck, or their poverty of invention—you commence the descent of the hills on the south side. A mile or so beyond the last loch a farm-house is passed on the left, and opposite it a road leads down to the ferry to Ardpatrik. Just over this road a conspicuous hill, with a surveyor's mark on the summit, is the famous Dunskeig, and near this mark is to be found the so-called vitrified fort.

After passing the opening of this ferry-road you turn to the left, and suddenly come in view of the little hamlet of Clachan, hitherto concealed in its charming nook at the opening of a pretty glen. Crossing a stone bridge over the stream, before you is the lodge to the house of Balnakeill, the residence of a Mr M'Millan, situated a few hundred yards up the glen; then passing through the quaint



village, you reach the well-built Ronaghan Inn, erected by Mr Pollock of Ronaghan House, which lies on the coast a mile farther on.

Having lightened myself of my knapsack and ordered dinner, I set off at once in order to examine the fort before the darkness set in. Scarcely was the ferry-road entered when, the clouds breaking, the rain descended, and the floods came in a most resolute and determined manner. The corner of a dry-stone-dyke afforded shelter for a few minutes ; but seeing the elements increasing in virulent antagonism, and no prospect of an immediate cessation of hostilities, I thought it as well to see the fort and get wet as to get wet on the way back without seeing the fort. So, setting off at the double, the summit was soon reached, and some time spent in rambling over the place. During my research, a peculiar appearance among some stones turned out to be a poor little rabbit crouching in a corner ; the more severe examination of which I left to some other enemy, for whom no dinner was waiting at the inn. The severe showers of hail and the hurricane blowing on the top decided me to leave, after a hasty observation ; resolving to return next morning, if possible, and explore it more thoroughly.

While this tempestuous reception accompanied

me to the top, away to the west a belt of brilliant sky was visible on the horizon, directly under the sun, which remained concealed by the rain-cloud. In this belt, clearly and brilliantly defined, lay Gigha, Isla, and Jura—all around being in thick gloom.

After taking in the various points in the landscape, I turned down the hill with a satchel full of stray specimens, besides a goodly collection of rain-water, which would willingly have been left behind. As I descended, the strong wind having blown the mass of cloud clear of the sun, now near the setting, the rays struck on the cloud opposite through a break in the hills, and, having the whole firmament to operate upon, formed the largest and finest rainbow I ever remember to have seen.

Next morning I again prepared to visit the fort ; and a talk the evening before with a gentleman at the inn having brought out the advantage of a pickaxe on the occasion, I attempted to procure one to take along with me. •

First I visited the blacksmith's, to see what implements were about his place. Nothing in the shape of a "pick." Then a consultation between his sable lordship and a few village loungers called up another name ; but, on the smith kindly accom-

panying me to the dwelling, we found that the implement had been left among the peats under the thatch, and could not be procured. The strapper at the inn was next mentioned, but he had no pick. A smart little girl at the inn was now despatched with a roving commission to secure a pick from any quarter: she was accordingly observed running from cottage to cottage, screeching and jabbering in Gaelic, and also addressing every one she met; returning to let me know that this one or that had no pick, and one had gone to work at a neighbouring farm—this was apparently the only other in the place—until at length she came round to the one among the peats, when I knew my case was hopeless.

Ascending the hill, which is within a quarter of an hour to twenty minutes' walk from the inn, I made the following observations:—

First, you come to a ruined circular fort, about eighteen to twenty yards in diameter, built of large stones, without any appearance of lime: only a few feet of wall remains above ground, the ruins of the rest being scattered around. About fifty yards west by south of this, the vitrified fort is to be seen. It is rather oval than circular, and may measure from twenty-eight in breadth to thirty yards in length. I neither wish to advocate nor destroy

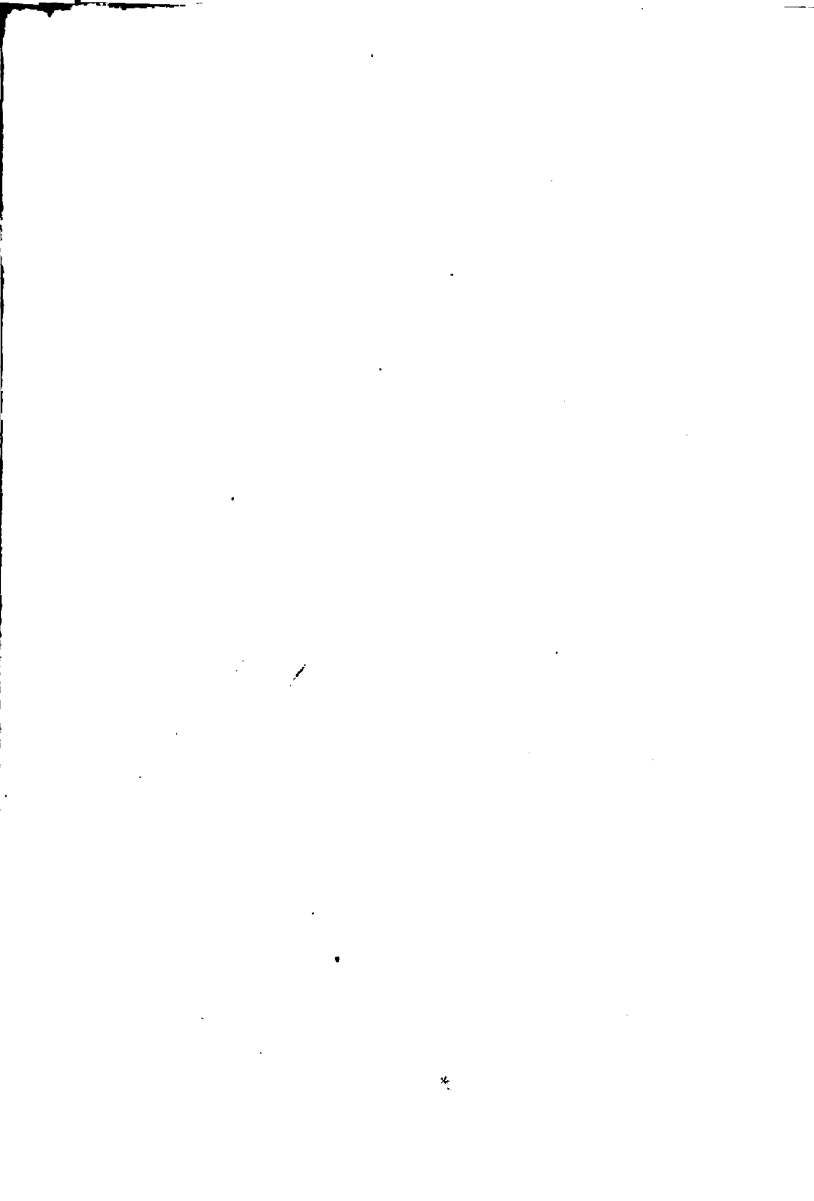
any theory, but merely to describe an appearance ; let us meantime consider it a " fort."

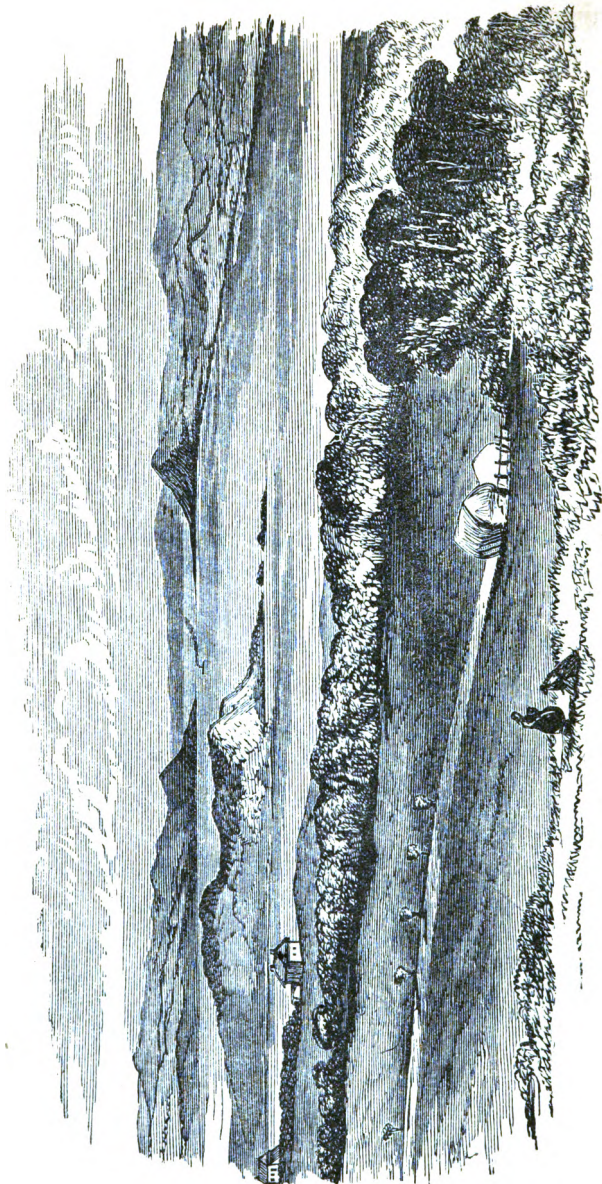
The former walls are merely indicated by the ridge on the ground ; but this ridge is distinctly visible all round, as is also the vitrification, which, however, only appears on the outside of the so-called wall, the inside being quite devoid of any similar appearance. Some parts were run like iron slag, some glazed like rough pottery, while other masses show all kinds of rock in a strange state of fusion. One gentleman mentioned having seen exactly similar effects arise from a strong breeze having been allowed to reach a lime-kiln, when worked by men without proper experience, the fire, fanned to a fury, ran out the lime in a useless mass of a like nature.

The natural rock crops out in the centre of the oval through the turf ; and, excepting in the direction of the adjoining fort, the hill slopes off all round it. If the building was simply destroyed by fire, why is only the outside of the wall affected ? If, on the other hand, it is only the result of a continued employment of the spot for beacon fires, why is the vitrification so regular, and not in the particular directions in which the fire was desired to blaze ? Thirdly, if merely the remains of a material thrown from the walls in their defence,

what can this have been? Would the fusion of shell-sand — employed in old buildings in this quarter—and mountain limestone in a powerful heat cause it? Would a predominance of mica and felspar, visible in some of the stones, produce the glaze?

But we are standing on the *circular* fort, sufficiently old to have fallen to decay, although well built with large stones. What might one who never heard of Sir Roderick Murchison think of the burnt ring near us? We say a ring—not a circle, not an oval. Though all round close to the rock *in situ*, the one end is far higher than the other, and the natural rock crops out in the centre. There is no débris as of prostrate walls around, as we see about this circular fort. There can't have been much more of that fused matter, or this *new* fort would have been built of it, while there are only a few of the more durable and harder pieces about it. It can't have been a building destroyed by fire since the erection of this one, or this would not show even one of the burnt stones. If the lip of a former volcano, it must have been long extinct; and yet the ring, the burnt ring, is visible all round. In fact, if a fort, it must have been built by very "irregular" troops, and yet preserved, and the débris cleared away, in a very regular





DUNSKEIG AND ENTRANCE TO WEST LOCH. FROM GIGHA

manner. If the lips of a volcano, they have been very singularly preserved from pollution ; while its utterance must have been suddenly checked by the mass of rock in the centre choking it off.

When the amusement of burning forts was in vogue, the neighbouring Macdonalds were not behindhand ; and if they could then vitrify them out of existence, they doubtless did so. When fashionable with the mountains of Scotland to play at cup-and-ball with the earth's contents, Kintyre had its share of practice. Doubtless there are many friends to both theories ; like Sir Roger de Coverley, I will merely slip in, "there is much to be said on both sides."

Dunskeig itself is an abutting hill of considerable height guarding the entrance to the West Loch, to which it has a rapid and steep descent ; while the ascent from the Clachan side is gradual, until within a very short distance of the top. The height is very commanding, giving a view of Loch Tarbert from end to end, the whole west coast of Knapdale to the smaller islands to the north ; thence over the whole of Jura, Isla, and Gigha ; and over the latter to Rathlin and the Irish coast in the distance. To the south, the view is limited from the nearer hilly ground shutting out the lowland down the west coast, and across to Campbelton.



Inland, the hills of Kintyre are dominated by Goat Fell, or "Gott Bhen," and the other peaks of Arran, stretching their necks to catch a sight of the Atlantic, the green pasturing grounds of the Leviathan. A short way up the West Loch stands the mansion-house of Ardpatrik, where the loch of the same name commences to run its short course inland from Loch Tarbert. A small yacht lay off the house, which latter gives the name to the ferry opposite.

Returning to the inn with another series of specimens wrapped in my Scotch plaid, I had just time to rush up to the top of the hill behind the inn, down again towards the waterfall, and snatch a hasty dinner before the arrival of the coach to Campbelton.

From this little hill a nice view is obtained of the village itself and the neighbouring country, also inland to the fresh water of Loch Ferran. From this loch the stream flows that leaps in a pretty waterfall down towards the village, behind the schoolmaster's house, the sound of which must ever act as a lullaby to the inhabitants.

The house of Balnakeill was built originally by Mr Morison, a late dean of guild in Glasgow, who improved half the cottages off the face of the earth, planting trees about the house and grounds, when

they were then sold to M'Millan, the present proprietor. The village, although poorish to appearance, is nevertheless very clean, and apparently well looked after.

An erection to the south-west of the village, observable on approaching it, and having the appearance of a manufactory, is a steam-threshing mill, with farm-buildings attached.

Clachan has an Established Church over that at Tarbert, and a substantial manse for the clergyman—the church itself being the usual barn. It has also a schoolhouse, attended in the summer by about thirty boys and thirty to forty girls; and across the stream a neat house for the schoolmaster. One of the scholars, a pretty little black-eyed girl, under the “open sesame” of a handful of sweeties, told me school had just commenced after the holidays, but the “pitataes” were putting in their claims, and the children had to wait until they were “holed.”

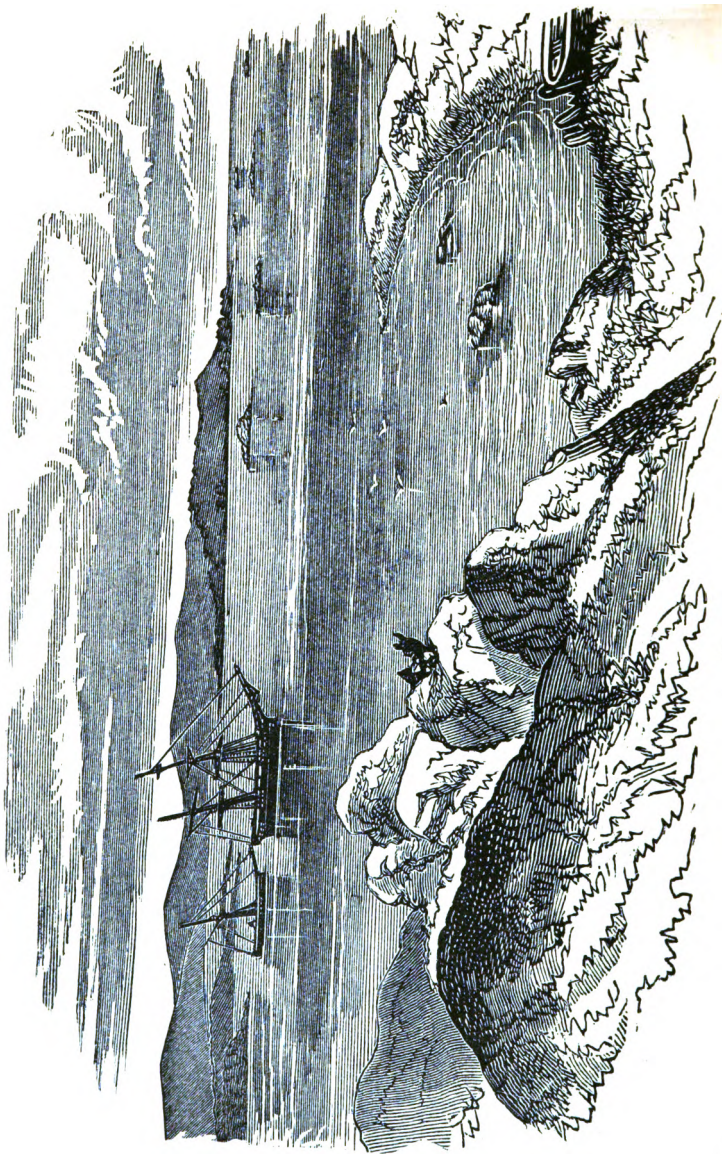
A second church in the village was originally Independent, but is now rented by the Free Church congregation.

As I stepped out after dinner to the coach, now at the door, through the break in the hill caused by the stream from the village entering the sea, Gigha's northern mull lounged dark in the water ;

whilst in the stream to my right that pleasant and homely, but now rare, sight caught my eye—a woman with “kilted coats” tramping clothes in the water. Every dimple in my cheek was hollowed on the instant, and I endured the torture of a crush on the top of the coach with the equanimity and placidity of a saint.

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HARBOUR OF GIGHA.

## DOWN TO GIGHA.

SOUTHWARD from Clachan to Tayinloan the roads are much better, both naturally and artificially, than from Tarbert to Clachan. Three horses did their work with far more difficulty than two do on this part of the road, which is now bordered with rather bare but well-cultivated land.

We are now on the property of Mr Pollock, whose farms are all in admirable order, divided by capially built dikes, and supporting thriving herds of cattle and flocks of sheep; which latter were turned in to feed upon the turnips as we passed along, fully accounting for their good condition. The house of Ronaghan, in which Mr Pollock resides, to the right of the road, is a plain white building at the shore—evidently more comfortable than architectural.

Some miles before reaching Tayinloan we come to the village of Ballure, a little hamlet of thatched

cottages by the side of a fine stream. A school-house by the roadside, several farm-houses, and another little village, and the coach stops at the lodge to the mansion of Largy—Mr Moreton. Oh, ye gods and little fishes ! Largy ! whose lordly Macdonald was in the habit of spending a whole night drinking whisky, with twelve lighted candles on the table before him. Moreton ! Spirit of the Macdonalds ! *Sic transit, et cetera*—here is Tayinloan.

Having met two farmers belonging to Gigha, on the top of the coach, returning from Glasgow, where they had been with cattle, we are soon on our way in the darkness to the ferry-house, which lies directly opposite the castle of Largy. As is usual with out-of-the-way inns and ferries, a farm accompanies this one, being leased along with it. After a very trying conversation between our farmer friends and several seemingly interested individuals,—the upshot of which is, that the ferryman having just returned from Cara, and the night being advanced, they cannot go with us,—we get a small boat from them and start ourselves, the moon having risen, and the night being perfectly calm.

During a long row, we take turn about at the oars, a strong tide driving us towards the south,

and no light being visible to direct us on the Gigha side. At length we reach a little bay south of the regular ferry house, where the original mansion-house of the Macneils is now kept open for the sons of the present proprietor. We soon scramble out, pull the boat high and dry, and set out for the inn, whither the farmers are to accompany me for a deoch-an-doruis, it not being far out of their way. If I had not fallen in with these men, who lease a farm of about three hundred acres not far from the proprietor's house, I should have had some considerable groping about in the dark.

I was agreeably surprised to find the inn, in place of a little public, as I was led to expect, to be a commodious, well-built farmhouse, with good, well-furnished rooms. A bed-room secured, and a cheerful fire in the sitting-room, a comfortable tea was soon before me, with cream such as one seldom sees out of the east country, in which the spoon might stand without fear of losing its equilibrium ; eggs to be depended upon with certainty, and eaten with celerity ; oat-cakes crisp and delicious, with butter to match ; and the tea-pot and hot water singing merrily to the crackling fire : we throw ourselves back in our chair before commencing, with a thankful heart that this night our lines have fallen in pleasant places. The only

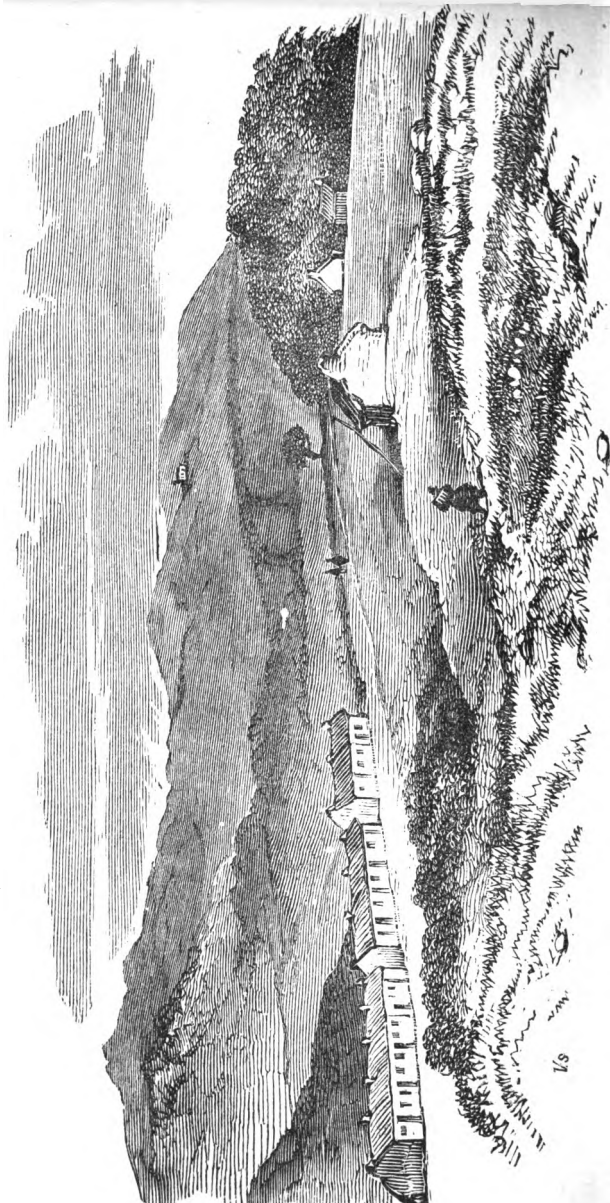


drawback to the meal was an infamous white wheaten-loaf, placed for the undiscerning, and consequently undeserving. We turn from this evidence of dyspeptic feeding with scorn and contempt, and touch the hand-bell on the table.

Morning light ! Let us look about us. Gigha as seen to the north, on the way to Isla, is bleak and unpromising enough, in all conscience. "A pile of stones," "nothing to be seen there," had been the regular replies to my queries concerning it. What was my surprise to find it a delightful little green island, with scarcely a spot where a pony could not be galloped over ; everywhere covered with a rich crop of succulent grass, far too valuable for sheep, of which only one or two flocks of plump specimens are to be seen. Milch kine are the principal live stock, one great export of the island being Dunlop cheese, while the remainder is under oats and root crops. A little barley is raised where there are supplies of wrack for manure, which happens on Pollock's farms to the north.

The potatoes are considered first-rate, not being subject to disease ; the general dryness of the land preventing them becoming readily damp. The principal sorts grown are Kemps and Rocks, and they are sold early in the season as seed for Ireland.





CAPITAL AND FOREST OF GIGHA.

57

This island was lately in possession of the M'Leans of Tainish, and in former times the lairds were known as Thanes of Gigha.

Across the road from the Inn farm is the church. I was told here of a clergyman who had two hundred and fifty pounds a year; but unable longer to officiate, he employed an assistant at fifty pounds a year, although himself a very wealthy man, independently of his farm and stipend. This is a rare case in Scotland.

Down the road to the south is the village—a row of slated cottages, consisting of a blacksmith's forge, two grocers' shops, and a few cottars' dwellings.

Breakfast, besides the product of the farm, comprised several gleshins, as they term the young coal-fish here; the flesh is rather insipid, and so soft as scarcely to stand lifting with the fork. Nicely-baked scones were added to this meal. The morning meal despatched, we passed the village; then along by the side of the plantation—a broad belt of various trees of good growth bordering the road for some distance; at the end of this we turn to the right, leaving the proprietor's house on the left hand, and soon reach the old kirk and burial-ground. On the way, many sea-birds are observed on the fields, mingled with flocks of cushat doves and blue rock-pigeons. The

haws on the hedge up to the old kirk were the finest we have ever seen, being more of the dimensions of cherries than common haws ; consequently birds of all sizes, from a blackbird to an oxeye, were squabbling over the preserves.

The old kirk itself is well worthy a visit. Of the smallest size certainly, but remarkably well built, as may be supposed from its present preservation. Built of large stones, with a few small ones to fill up interstices, and cemented with shell-sand lime—the shells, many of considerable size and quite perfect, still sticking in the walls, looking as fresh as when first placed there. The long narrow gable-window is faced with red sandstone, the pointed arch above it being formed of strongly wedged thin slate stones. From its strong complete gable—from which no stone has fallen in the memory of an old shoemaker born in the neighbourhood, who came over and addressed me—and the gray moss which covers its walls, it looks like a hardy old Highlander still standing upright under the weight of years and infirmities, though “his locks are like the snow.”

Within the roofless old building a few ancient stones are lying, covered with half obliterated carving, and one with armorial bearings. A rude circular font lies under the gable window, where

it has evidently been lately placed. The M'Neils of Colonsay, the late owners, have a comparatively recent burial-place railed off outside, and a few other fresh stones rise among many ancient and wholly obliterated brethren.

Directly above the church, on a little hillock, stands a druidical stone, several times pushed over by the lads of the neighbourhood, but replaced by the orders of the proprietor, who bought the island from M'Neil and Moreton of Largy about three years ago. The amount paid for it has been variously estimated, in my hearing, at from thirty-five to forty-nine thousand ; and at any rate the sum was high—which the purchaser is said to have since regretted—its intrinsic value, of course, not being nearly so great. It is, however, exceedingly healthy ; and both the owner and his lady have gained their health since they came there from Yorkshire, where they still spend the winter.

Leaving the druidical stone, and passing again to the north by a few cottars' huts to a field beyond, a spring is reached, issuing from the rock without any apparent flow, but with a constant supply of pure water. Continuing our walk, we make straight for the highest point in view, about the centre of the island.

The ditches on the way are completely covered

with the broadly lanceolate emerald leaves of a water-plant. The little silky-haired cattle are of the most rotund description, and the well-stocked farm-yards tell of the productiveness of the soil. The stacks in these yards are admirably built, being roped and thatched in a most elegant and workmanlike manner. The wild fruits seem equally productive with the cultivated, large brambles and dwarf moss-rose and sloes being all well supplied with fruit.

On reaching the top of the eminence to which I was bound, a fine view was obtained to the south towards Rathlin and Ireland; north to Lochs Killispoint and Swein, with the opening into west Loch Tarbert; while westward, Jura and Isla are seen from end to end; with, on the east, the neighbouring mainland to the Mull.

Leaving this peak, I continued on towards the north end, passing several curious dwarf plants in my descent; among which the scrambling wild juniper, with no lack of berries, was conspicuous. On the west coast near this point is the miller of Gigha's place, whose sons were in Tarbert at the fishing—one of them having been musician at the late evening's dancing there. They own several smacks, and amuse themselves making fiddles in the winter nights. Several farm-steadings—of

which there are fourteen or fifteen in the island—being left behind, we come down upon the coast at a narrow neck leading into the northern part. Surrounding a small bay to the east are some capital examples of raised sea cliffs; indeed, nearly the whole coast shows signs of comparatively recent elevation. Having diverged to observe these ivy-crowned cliffs, I was returning to the road, when I suddenly came upon a solitary little violet, blooming as cheerfully as if in the garden of Eden. This was at once pounced upon and transferred to my button-hole; but whether it had been severed from some modest little companion, or merely pined for its native meadow, its head gradually drooped upon its breast, its face hidden in its little hands: it refused to be comforted. I hadn't the heart to throw it off; so it hung on my breast for some days, until a ruder blast than usual tore it away.

Another druidical stone by the way, and a curious farm-house is reached, consisting of one long straight building, with a few windows in the centre to show the inhabited portion. Ascending another little peak beyond this—also giving a nice view of the surrounding islands, and being much steeper than any part we have yet seen—below us stretches a tract of grass-land, dotted



with plump black cattle, some of them of goodly dimensions. Down from this we reach a fisherman's hut, with all the evidences of his vocation hanging upon or scattered around it. Desirous of information regarding a stone cross said to be erected beside an old burial-ground, we knock at the door, and wander about the premises seeking inhabitants, but finding none ; so are fain to leave it behind us.

Up the north-west coast the strata lean only a degree or two from the perpendicular, forming strange rugged projections. After scrambling amid these for some distance, we come to several large spars lying on the shore—evidently the yards of some magnificent clipper. Returning a short way, we cross over a beautiful sandy beach to another almost—*island*, so steep as to be clambered up with difficulty. Although to appearance nothing but a pile of stones, it is in reality covered with verdure on every available spot. From its being of the nature of a staircase, however, its only inhabitants were two white goats and a black. After scrambling all over this, the only other life observable upon it was a blue pigeon, and a perfect colony of the great caterpillars of the oakegger moth.

Returning again across the sand, we start for

the inn. This sand composes the isthmus and the bottom of the bays on either side, evidently washed out of a sand-down on the shore, and is mentioned by Pennant as suitable for glass-making. The coast here was lined with wrack of the nature and appearance of "*zostera marina*;" Mr Pollock, who rents the two neighbouring farms, employs it in quantities as manure. All along the west coast the radical trap has forced its way to the surface, creating consternation among the aristocratic superincumbent rocks, that in vain attempt to suppress it.

On the way back, the rain commenced; and shortly after reaching my sitting-room a severe storm of wind and rain arose, preventing the post-boat leaving for the mainland, and confining me to the house for the evening. So, as the hours from five till bedtime had to be got over, I set out on a tour of exploration among the household literature.

Turning aside several of those clap-trap would-be-religious works as obnoxious to a well-regulated mind as "*The Silent Murder or the Blood-stained Bed-post*," among novels, or the sham "*Last Words and Confession*" of some properly served ruffian, among biographies—I came upon Fenimore Cooper's "*Afloat and Ashore*." Re-

turning to the sitting-room with my trophy, I was soon deep in the loves and sorrows of dear Grace, Lucy, and Miles ; and as I sat at tea before a pleasant fire in a nice room, devouring the pages between the cups, I was totally oblivious of the fact that I was on a little island prison, with a storm raging between me and my home.

Next morning, the 27th October, I again attempted to see the south part of the island, having been prevented by the storm the night before. Along the road past the plantation and Mr Scarlett's house—a plain dwelling, composed of a scarlet strip between two candle extinguishers—and onward until I reached the port, where several sloops and a frigate were riding at anchor. The harbour is formed by outlying islets to the south and east, the southern projection of the mainland of Gigha forming the north and west. An old lime-kiln here had "Amo Gigha" splashed all over it, doubtless by some patriotic islander ; and as the letters caught my eye, I looked back at the green fields and miniature plantations, and wondered not.

Several small boats were lying on the shore here ; so walking over to a hut near to see if any proprietors would convey me to Cara—lying opposite at a short distance—I could see no one about.

Stepping up to the door to rap, I found it wide open, and a ragged lad in a bed opposite, with his heels describing wild gyrations in the air, while he roared at the pitch of his voice a Gaelic song. His disappearance was almost simultaneous with my presence. Whereunto he managed to convey himself I know not ; nothing could bring him forth from his concealment. Turning away with a shrug of my shoulders, I next tried a group of men and boys in a field near, working with that lazy swing peculiar to Highland folk, as if they were always ready to hear themselves addressed, so as to get stopping work to reply. The boats were theirs? Yes! Would one of the lads accompany me to Cara? I would pay him well for it. "All body was engaged—they was worken'." But I would give him a few shillings, and he would not be an hour. Another look round the group, not one of them having done a hand's turn for ten minutes,—"They was all worken'." Among several stout boys, none offered his services ; and people who may be half starving in a few days would not take the trouble of making sufficient to keep the family a week. With a look of utter contempt which I thoroughly felt, I left "all worken'," passing up across the island, which to the west is as ragged as the rascals who ran round the rugged rocks.

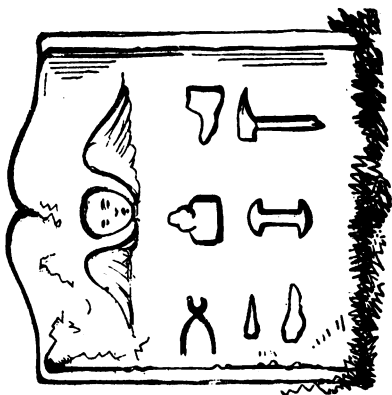
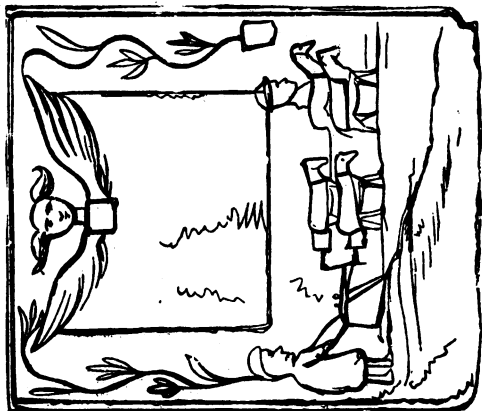
The women I met had all large potato creels on their shoulders, for carrying home "the root" across the fields.

Getting back to a hasty meal, I had just finished it when they brought me the news that a boat from the other side had now come in, by which I might get back. Rushing off to the ferry down from the inn, after settling a most reasonable account, I was soon under way. As the sailing ferry-boat carried me out of the little bay, I bade a pleasant farewell to the little manor where I had spent two very happy days ; a sudden shower of rain, and the swinging of the yard with a tarry sail, preventing my too sentimental or contemplative "last moments."

Shortly after reaching the other side—which cost me one shilling, there being another passenger, and two shillings being fare for the passage—I was rapidly traversing the road to Clachan, where I arrived about five in the evening ; the night, and indeed the afternoon, wet and stormy. The road up is bordered to the right by the old sea-cliff ; between which and the water there is now a well-cultivated tract.

Next morning a smart walk took me back to Tarbert. As an old ruined house on the top of the hill is reached, the whole of West Loch





GRAVESTONES AT SKIPNESS.

Tarbert suddenly bursts upon you ; and a finer view than that from this point is not often to be met with. To all true lovers of scenery I commend it, as well as the little village of Clachan we have left, where a day may be worthily spent visiting Dunskeig and the neighbouring country ; a comfortable evening being insured in the hotel. All the inns about this country, although well-built, good houses, are utterly devoid of proper sanitary arrangements ; a very great drawback to travellers.

Gartnagrenach, with its blue-slatted house and red-tiled or thatched outhouses amid the variegated foliage, is passed by, and we enter Whitehouse after a four-days' absence. The trees that we left behind us so recently clothed and in their right mind are now shivering in rags before the strong north-west wind. Beech nuts and acorns are being blown about our ears, and the leaves—by courtesy—of the swept larches present an appearance as if the rusted contents of a needle factory were scattered along the highway.

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## SEALS AND DOOKERS.

“ALL right! Shove off! Now, James, steady of hand and true of eye, if you don't make a bag, my usual luck is to blame for it.” The ramrod rings as I drive a bullet down my Enfield, and lay it handy for a dozing seal; James's fowling-piece lying ready for a never-dozing dooker.

The oars of the coble are seized, and away we pull out of the harbour down the Skipness coast. Steadily onwards, out and in every little creek, keeping close to the shore, with a sharp eye on the rocks for seals, and another on the water outside for dookers.

None are to be seen! The other day—when unarmed, of course—all sorts of life was rampant on sea and land; now nothing whatever shows itself. I am afraid I am no sportsman. Getting into a steady swing at the oars, my eyes slipped from the rocky or gravelly shore up the banks, and I thought of the time when they would be different, and was even smiling at those villas on which the warm sun was glinting just now, over each of

these glens. I am wondering where the boys bathe ; and turning to the clear water beside me, gaze through it to a fine sandy bottom, dotted all over with colonies of enormous whelks stalking leisurely about. Mollusc mastiffs they are, or rather gray wolves, with an extensive territory over which to patrol. See that star-fish, quite a foot in diameter, swimming rapidly, with all its suckers in a state of restless activity. Those are the fellows that gobble the oysters, and cost such trouble and expense to keep from the English beds. Hush ! A seal at last ! suddenly making its appearance right astern of the boat, but a long way off. "Shoo ! shoo !"—meaning "backwater,"—cautiously!—rapidly ! No use ; he is down again. Pulling rapidly over, and then keeping still, we hope to see his head pop up within range. But after two or three ineffectual attempts, he next shows himself half a mile out to sea ; so, seeing he is so wild, we leave him, and continue skirting the coast. They are very scarce indeed to-day. A long interval, and here is another. Smart rowing brings us within two hundred yards ; and seeing we won't get nearer, click goes the rifle ; the head makes a great splutter, and disappears. We reach the place where last seen, but no sign of it whatever. Both were satisfied it was struck—of course

—although a difficult shot at that distance. But the target has skedaddled.

Round the point into this other bay. There is the “cable rock,” as they call it—a white quartz band like a rope binding the stone. “Look at those little birds, Jamie! of the sandpiper genus, looking so smart and active.” James casts a quick contemptuous glance at the birds indicated; then returns to his watch. *He* is a sportsman.

Another seal suddenly comes up within distance. A hundred and fifty yards at least, but our best chance. The bullet ricochets off its head, splashing the water far away; the seal turns right over on the top of the water, stops a moment, and disappears like its neighbour. By the time we reach the spot there is nothing but the green waves, quite careless of our presence, and as if trying to make us believe they had rolled there unobstructedly all the morning. So, since no seals will lie on the rocks till we get up, and none will lie on the water after we get up, we decide that bullets might be better spent, especially as no more seals show themselves, and turn our attention to dookers.

As a rule, there is little use shooting at a seal in the water. If shot dead, they immediately sink; if only wounded slightly, they immediately make

off, and may not show their heads again for any length of time ; if severely wounded, the chase is generally a protracted one. At the same time, the small surface exposed, and the difficulty of approaching within a rational distance, especially after they observe you are trying to approach them, renders the task of taking them extremely difficult.

So, that we may not return empty-handed, we look after dookers. There is one far out ; we must row hard. After a protracted chase, in which we never know where the fellow is going to come up, we get it within range of the fowling-piece, and immediately what seems a quantity of froth appears on the surface of the sea. On getting up, we perceive this is the little creature's breast, white as snow, and soft as—what it is—down.

It is a most exciting sport going after dookers, and one of the great amusements of the coast. Stalking them is not such an easy matter ; and if only wounded, it is almost impossible to get a hold of them, or again succeed in pulling within range.

There is a glittering line of them flying past, six hundred yards away ; but we will try a shot. One is suddenly seen to leave the flock and tumble into the water ; but in attempting to approach it, after one or two dives, it rises and flies away. Why !

the stupid bird was only terrified ; perhaps the ball passed so close as to stun it a little—that is all.

Another flock ! flying with great speed, and still further off. Crack goes the rifle ; two make a great sputter, one tumbling head over heels into the sea. The same story over again ; this fellow also is merely a hypochondriac. “Well, I never saw the like ; we must keep to your fowling-piece and hard work, James !” So a few more having fallen to the shot-gun, we turn to row home again.

This is no trifling matter, as dookers don't much affect the shore ; and we have been led well out to sea after them. No help for it. No pleasure without pain ; and a tight pull is not against the constitution, if not overdone.

As I step ashore, after eight hours at the galley, with an occasional few minutes' relief, and nothing whatever to console the inner man, I decide upon trying the same again, when I want a jolly day and a jolly appetite.

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## LIFE AND LABOUR IN TARBERT.

THE population is variously estimated at from fifteen to eighteen hundred—the most of them being fishermen, with their wives and families. The men are mostly full-fleshed, and rather soft-faced, and although stout-built and well-proportioned, have not the osseous and muscular development of the northern and eastern Highlanders and fishermen. And yet they profess great contempt for these same northern Highlanders! This is mingled with hatred, as they mostly form the ranks of the police force, the abhorred foes of the trawlers. They call them “lazy louts,” averring they all enter some of her Majesty’s services, and become blackguards, being too indolent to take to honest, steady work.

The life they lead here is certainly a very strange one,—setting off in their skiffs at three or four in the afternoon, and returning at any hour from one o’clock in the morning to next day at mid-day. A hasty meal is then partaken of, and away to bed, getting up in time for next day’s fishing ; or with a

few hours to lounge about and do nothing. Then comes a week or two of moonlight, when the fish don't show in the water, and they don't go out. Those with small farms may "hole" potatoes, or get in the grain, or do some trifling farm-work. Sometimes they go out with the deep-sea lines and fish for cod. Two of them brought in five or six stone of these fish after a few hours' fishing the other day. These are salted for winter use.

Then, another favourite amusement at those times is going after "dookers,"—many fishermen being possessed of fowling-pieces. "Dookers" is the generic name applied here to a good many species of water-fowl that frequent the coast at this time and during the winter. They are exceedingly fat, and so covered with hair, that after plucking they have to be burned like a sheep's-head. The fat is all congregated, however, on the skin, leaving the rest of the bird dark and firm in flesh. They are generally made into broth, which becomes very dark, but is good and palatable, as is also the bird itself. They are certainly rather strong-tasted, but the flavour is gamey, not fishy; and they form a very wholesome and welcome article of diet to the people in the winter. The feet are webbed, with no hind toe; legs set back near the tail, and breast a fine soft white, fashion-

able in the summer for the bonnets of the younger girls at the coast. The gudewife here has put them to still greater utility, by stuffing several feather-beds with their down. Some are evidently alcidæ, from their beaks ; while others have the fine-pointed bills of the terns. I have counted at least half a dozen species in a dozen individuals, shot in the open sea off the port. Indeed, the name dookers is simply birds that “dook” or dive, and is applied to all sea-birds of that nature, that are not sufficiently large or distinguished-looking for a separate appellation.

The drift-net fishermen hang up their nets to dry whenever they return ; and all require to mend them occasionally, as well as to clean their boats.

Excepting when away, as now, in the Kyles, and obliged to sleep in their open skiffs, or when the weather is more severe than usual, forcing them to work for hours at unprogressive oars, the life of the fisherman is by no means hard. They all like it immensely—declare it to be very healthy ; and certainly—considering the amount of spirits consumed among them—they look as if it were so. They give one an idea of being excessively lazy—perhaps they are so. But the prizes made at successful fishings are so very great that they despise those labours ashore, even about their homes,



which can only save or make a few pounds at most. Consequently, caring for nothing but fishing,—having time for nothing else during long periods, they know about nothing else, and talk of nothing else. Most are able to write, few ever read ; and they have shown themselves quite incompetent to form associations for their mutual defence, or to free themselves from unreasonable restrictions.

Hardy is scarcely a word that I should apply to the inhabitants here. They complain of the cold when I am totally unconscious of it ; and the fishermen wear very heavy, warm clothing—some of them as many as three blue shirts ; with any one of which I would almost undertake to face an Arctic winter.

Their nets are of very beautiful workmanship, and are bought in “barrels,” at four or five pounds each. They were very much admired at this year’s exhibitions, both at Boulogne and Arcachon.

The returns for their labour, when they do get out, are very high. Ten, fifteen, and often twenty pounds per week per man is obtained during fair fishing ; and I know lads of fourteen gaining three to five pounds for their week’s share. The sharing is made every Saturday night, when a scene of great dissipation takes place ; and I’m afraid very

little cash reaches the hands of their better-halves, if such a term can be applied when many are as addicted to the bottle as their mates.

If any really hard work is connected with the fishing, it seems to me to be gone through by those same wives. One will have a husband, and perhaps two sons, at the fishing, and in order to divide the chances of success, these are seldom in the same boat. They come home at all hours of the night, and must have a plate of porridge, or some sort of food, awaiting them, as work in the night-air is a wonderful sharpener of appetite. Then they are covered, in all probability, from head to foot with scales; and the obstinacy of these must be heartrending to a washerwoman. Ten to one, they are quite wet; and all this inculcating an amount of washing, cooking, and constant drudgery, such as no labourer's wife has any notion of.

There are two sons from different boats in the house where I lodge. One comes in at one hour; the other some hours after: one rises at twelve, the other perhaps at three. They are always hungry as hawks; never know exactly when they may start, but demanding a substantial dinner before departure, be that when it may. Lads twelve hours at a time in an open boat in the strong sea-

air will not be satisfied with potatoes and herring. They get "scunnered" at the last, as might well be expected, and require a strong diet to keep up the flow of strong blood.

They seem to me never to be all in bed in the house at one time. The non-fishers go to bed early, and are up with the first streak of dawn; and the others come home between my bedtime and the first risers. Altogether one's notions get turned topsy-turvy in a place where night is *not* the time for rest, but for action.

Mr Murray, a former schoolmaster, and originally a fisherman, following the footsteps of his predecessor, went about and pressed the people to send their children to the school. From his thus taking a real interest in the progress of his townfolk, most of the men of a certain standing write well. Many have received a really good education, and some, who are now the greatest blackguards in the place, were good mathematicians and general scholars. On his departure, the village was not so fortunate in its selection. The last master seeing that education did not prevent the men becoming sots, employed the time belonging to his pupils in writing squibs against general evils. One, shown me, against the public-house-keepers, in the style of the Chaldee manuscript, was rather well written,

and it is said was the occasion of his departure.

*Apropos* of their "particular wanity," I was rather amused the other night by a dialogue between a stranger fisherman and one in the house. The inmate was telling of a robbery from one of the fishing-smacks, although the hold had been locked, and the key in the house. The stranger listened sympathisingly to the list of captured articles, until, among others, a "graybeard" was mentioned. "And wi' whisky in't? And they took that too?" he savagely inquired. The reply in the affirmative brought down such a storm of anathemas on the "low, mean blackguards," that I could scarcely refrain from laughing aloud, so characteristic did his indignation seem. To rob! Humph! but to take good liquor—such sacrilege was unpardonable.

The food of the people during the fishing season is generally of the best. Before leaving for their night's work they must have mutton, or some other substantial diet. Only during the recess, as we may call it, and when the season is bad, do they fall back on salt herring and other fish.

After the herring-fishing—which finishes about the end of the year—many go to the white-fishing, with long, deep-sea lines. The principal fishing

grounds are about Isla and Jura. Although the boats have to go all round the Moil to get to these places, they only return to the West Loch for a market for their fish ; whence a walk of a mile takes them to their homes. The fishing is carried on with long lines of strong cord, having three or four hundred hooks on each, with three fathoms of line between each suspended hook. These lines are coiled in shovel-shaped baskets, each hook as it is baited being laid on the shallow edge, while the line is circled in the deeper part. A boat usually carries five of these baskets ; and several boats generally combine, and unite their lines. The cost of a single line, barked and hooked, is about three pounds sterling.

Now this fishing is only carried on in the close season, when no herring are allowed to be taken in Loch Fyne. But the unfortunate fishermen—upon whom the government will insist upon throwing the onus of lawbreaking—are obliged to trawl for herring in order to bait their lines, as each hook is baited with half a herring. They are carried from the East to the West Loch, for the use of the boats.

For the smaller hooks they employ mussels and clams ; for the latter of which they dredge. In setting the line, one end is attached to a cord at right

angles to it, with a sinker at one end and a buoy on the other, to show where it is let down. The boat is then rowed off, letting out the line, which is left till morning, and then pulled up. The boats then return for more bait, and to dispose of their catch, which often fills several boats, as may well be imagined from the formidable array of instruments of destruction.

The principal fish caught are skate, ling, cod, and conger-eels. The last are sold for the English market, at about twenty-five shillings the box of twenty. Skates are often caught so large that they require to be cut in two to get them into a box. One man mentioned having caught a ling with the wing tips of a wild duck sticking out of its mouth ; but upon pulling out the bird the fish looked so lean, that he just dropped it in again, to keep up appearances.

As may be supposed from the dissipated habits of the population, many are very ill off in the winter ; and those who do not go to the western fishings are often hard pressed for a livelihood. Some go out and fish off the harbour for coal-fish and white-fish—for the darkness of the flesh of the former excludes it from the latter category—while others are reduced to working for the proprietor at a shilling per day.

Coal-fish—called here “steienlock”—are caught with deep-sea lines in great numbers, about three feet long; they sell for sixpence apiece. They taste something like ling, rather coarser, but good palatable food. The fishers prefer them dried and smoked. Their young, called “saith” on the west coasts, go in great shoals, and are very numerous all up the Frith of Clyde, being everywhere fished for with rods hanging over the stern of a rowing boat. They swarm in and off the harbour here, but are a tasteless fish, and not much esteemed, their flesh being exceedingly soft. A coarse red or white fly is the usual bait, as they jump at anything.

The universal language of the district is the Gaelic; but most speak and understand the English quite as well. The children of my landlord talk the two languages indiscriminately. But their mother, although married to a Gael for four-and-twenty years—having been here most of that time—knows not a word of Erse. Those inhabitants who know the two languages equally well much prefer attending the Gaelic service. M‘Intosh, who writes a quaint History of Kintyre, avers that they can express themselves in a more solemn manner in the Erse; also, that the language, being more simple and less ambiguous, can bring

the most profound doctrines of Christianity more clearly within the compass of their understandings. This may be the case.

The Gaelic service here commences "from eleven to twelve;" that is, when the bell rings. When going to kirk, I was told that the English service commenced "when the Gaelic came out." Then they told me that it went in at two. At last, when the Gaelic was over, I had to lounge about for half an hour. At the expiry of this time an old woman standing at the entrance into the gallery—which latter forms a sort of second flat to the church, just leaving a small hole for the pulpit to come up—commenced to give a few pulls to the bell. An hour or so more or less seemed of no consequence either to those waiting or those waited upon. All possessed that inappreciation of the value of time so characteristic of uncultivated people, and particularly discernible in the Gael.

I was glad to observe that the bulk of those attending either service were dressed in a very sensible fashion; always excepting the women, who will insist upon making "guys" of themselves here, as elsewhere, by attempting to figure in fashionable attire.

Nearly all the fishermen had gone to the fishing-



grounds at the Kyles, which accounted for the scarcity of suits and caps of beautiful blue cloth, their favourite full-dress. It is certainly much superior to the lugubrious, uncomfortable, tasteless black rig of society.

Why is it that a sermon in a Scotch kirk is almost always preached by a clergyman mayhap of considerable ability, but whose education has consisted in pulling through college ; whose superficial refinement has been gained as a tutor ; while his knowledge of advanced modern thought is as deficient as his acquaintance with active life and character ? At times you may feel in the presence of a man of talent, but rarely indeed do you find yourself listening to a man of cultivation—a truly refined gentleman being a very rare visitant to the feeding-grounds of the Scottish ministry.

Until within a year or two, when the sum of one thousand pounds was raised to erect Tarbert Kirk into a parish one, no marriages were consummated here. Many a humorous story is told of stout damsels being escorted, and assisted, across the hills to South Knapdale Kirk by their husbands-to-be and friends, to have the knot properly tied ; those on the north side of the stream that bounds Kilmaconnel parish visited Loch Killispoint, while those to the south went to Clachan. On the way

across to Killispoint they used to stop at an old wall on the top of one of the hills, where a fine well of water enabled them to modify the Campbelton that kept up the spirits and the sorely-tried arms of the bridegroom; and where luncheon was partaken of, preparatory to a descent to Loch Killispoint. Even yet the banns of marriage have to be published at those places, entailing considerable additional expense in sending a proxy.

A few days ago two marriages came off together; but as it rained incessantly, the usual accompaniments on such occasions in the Highlands were dispensed with. They are the first known to have occurred here without the continued firing of all the guns the friends and neighbours could muster. This was accounted for by some damage having been done to windows at the last, when several of those "delighting to honour" the happy couple were put in limbo.

My attention being directed to the sloppy state of the road to the cottage, I obtained the services of the two elder lads to assist in remedying it somewhat. A pinch to loosen the stones from the rocky neighbourhood, with a hammer to break them up, and a shovel for trenching, were conveyed to the spot, and we set to work. The stone-breaking was set about in good earnest, and the

road considerably bettered. This is by no means so unskilled labour as most people fancy. The knowledge of the best way to break a stone is only to be learned by long practice. An ignorant man will take half a dozen strokes to break a stone in two, when a skilled workman will send it into fragments with one. I have been informed by more than one trustworthy witness that some good stone-breakers will make seven-and-sixpence in a day. Here, they tell me, they are very ill paid by the road-contractor from Whitehouse to this, being only at the rate of one shilling per square yard.

When turning over the stones with the pinch, I found what seemed an adder coiled up under one. Having given it a tap, on the impulse of the moment, I was sorry to discover I had killed a beautiful, innocent, little viviparous lizard about six inches long. Its lovely orange breast, spotted with black, proved it to be a male.

In the summer adders are very common here ; one of the boys killed ten or twelve this last season. A good part of the dry rocky ground lying waste, they are left to the freedom of their own sweet wills, which naturally lead them to increase and multiply.

For some time back the cottagers of the

vicinity have been collecting ferns from the most precipitous places, and thatching their houses with them, in preparation for the winter, which is now upon them.

On the seventeenth of November a part of the harbour was covered with a strong coating of ice, while several sharp showers of hail and snow fell. The distant Ben Cruachan, indeed, is deeply covered with snow, looking quite venerable already. Two wild ducks, driven in by the severe weather, have been playing about in the bay opposite the cottage ; a strange sight, so close to their deadly enemies !

When out in the morning, before the sun's power had made itself felt, the little burns that run over the rocks above the road had sent up a shower of drops over the surrounding grasses. The successive showers having frozen on them, each blade showed as thick as the little finger ; and the whole icy community presented a very pretty, yet fantastic sight.

Another sign of the approach of "gloomy winter" is observable in several men and boys employed in planting young trees for the proprietor. These are engaged in the winter only, when labour is cheap, and the people glad to get any work. The men receive two

shillings, the boys eighteenpence a day, for the work.

The rats have already occupied the stacks put up by us some time since. One killed by the dog this morning was of great size, with teeth about three-quarters of an inch long, and sharp as knives. I have had it transferred to the ants' nest near, to see if they will yet clean the skeleton.

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## THE GREAT EASTERN.

AFTER a successful season, the *Iona* has been taken off this station. By a natural connexion, we are led from our great river steamer to the great ocean steamer—which has likewise been berthed, after an unusually successful season, for it—and to suggest some means for its more profitable management.

The *Great Eastern*, notwithstanding perfection of mechanism and the ablest management, has proved commercially a great failure. Too large to act on trivial occasions, and great ones turning up too rarely, it has wandered about like a Chinese giant, displaying its vast proportions, while “all the world wondered;” or they have watched with interest the occasional strolls of the mighty white elephant that must be fed, and whose masters trembled to destroy it.

A burthen worthy of the great back, that will keep the powerful muscles working steadily and regularly, as well as profitably, to its owners—where and how can such be had?

“Laying ocean cables!” says one. “It has proved itself admirably adapted for this work!” Doubtless it has; but I fear capitalists won’t continue starting telegraph companies for its express behoof. “Carrying troops to India or the Colonies,” says another. Fortunately, Crimean wars and Indian mutinies have not yet become the normal condition of affairs. “In commercial intercourse with our comprehensive-minded transatlantic brethren!” mildly suggests a shareholder, as he thinks of Boston quays and mushroom hotels. But the sentence almost dies on his lips, as “actualities” stare him in the face. There are some dreamy individuals who even talk of keeping it up out of gratitude for its past services, like a superannuated winner of the Derby; and hope of its future utility, like a grand but unworkable invention. But gratitude and hope are not stock that would entice the commercial world to invest; neither is the great ship superannuated nor unworkable.

“What the coming years may yield” in the way of facilities for its employment commercially we cannot calculate upon, whatever we may believe; but this we can take account of,—the necessity for retaining it in commission in the meantime.

My proposal is this. At Liverpool there is a

training-ship for the navy. Could the *Great Eastern* not be turned into a training-college for the nation ?

Our future engineers could there be made acquainted with the principles and working of the most superb engines afloat. With the addition of a museum and library, the high-bred youth of the nation, or those who could pay the necessarily high premium, could study the principles of navigation and astronomy, or other sciences ; also classics, arts, and modern languages, far from all vitiated atmosphere, and still more vitiated company.

The great ship, always in working order, could visit in turn all the great emporiums of the earth, adding to its collected treasures, and contributing immensely to all the sciences, whether true or "falsely so-called." At the same time an additional revenue could be drawn from the numerous visitors, who would seize every opportunity of examining such a mechanical wonder, or viewing the collections by which it would be adorned.

Then indeed we might see men of vast and varied acquirements fitted to travel, and record their valuable experiences by land and sea. The intercourse with great minds, the knowledge of the earth and its inhabitants, the necessity for



keen observation, and the leisure to think over what had been observed, with the great advantages for natural or scientific study ever at hand, would of course draw many to its floating chambers. The energetic and ambitious, the hungry seeker after knowledge, those able and willing to grapple with "the thoughts that shake mankind," would flock thither, leaving to the petted universities the dissolute and the careless.

There, too, might youth be trained to pure literature, in recording their discoveries, or transmitting to the public the offshoots of their intelligence, whilst a printing press prepared others for editorial duties. Indeed, what a glorious body of thinkers and actors do I see crowding the deck of the great ship as she thunders through the waters of the Bay of Bengal; while all stretch eagerly to catch a glimpse of the mighty capital of the East, that they may compare her in imagination with

"The glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome"!

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## ACROSS TO KILLISPONT.

DESIROUS of seeing something more of the interior of Knapdale, which is only skirted by the Ardrishaig and West Loch Tarbert roads, and having waited in vain for something like dry-footing on the hills, I resolved to set out for Loch Killispont as it was.

Fortunately the day was bright and pleasant, and I soon reached the mines above old Ashen, where I had previously been. At the shepherd's house they were smearing the sheep, the wet weather preventing them working out of doors. They had been clearing and repairing the sheep-drains on the hills. One of the shepherds kindly directed me towards Achaoish, by the top of a hill to the north, following the stream that passes the house. Another shepherd, driving a flock to the smearing, passed me on a somewhat extensive valley beyond. Up this valley the traveller proceeds, until at the top he enters another, whence the new Free Church of Achaoish is perceptible.

This is a very bleak country ; and although the tableland is considerable, no plantations whatever are met with. I encountered a third guardian of the sheep ; and exchanged greetings and commiserations on the soaking state of the ground. He complained that it could not be dry this year now, except in severe frost. In reply to my inquiries, he mentioned that the snow was sometimes very considerable on the hills about. A hare I observed on the slope of one of them confirmed his statement, having already assumed great part of its winter garb—nothing but a brown stripe down the back preventing it being entirely white. However great a safety this change of colour may be among the snow, it may prove rather a serious matter coming too soon, as the animal was a most conspicuous object on the brown hillside, while sitting on its haunches watching my movements.

From this moorland valley, or lower tableland, a splendid view is obtained right up Loch Fyne, away beyond Inverary and over the adjoining countries. As we are now on the road by which Achaoish is soonest reached, this valley is a well-known guide to it. It is still traversed by those who go over with the “calls,” or intimations of marriage, that have to be delivered from the pulpit there ; although the victims have no longer to pro-

ceed thither in person to the altar, or halter, as it may be.

After passing the shepherd in this valley, no other individual of any sort was met, until my arrival at Killispoint. Two ravens and a few sheep alone took pity on my solitude.

As we descend upon the west side, several peaks of considerable eminence are seen to the left hand. Then a small loch, with a fine stream, is come upon, the latter dancing with trout. The Southern Hebridean islands are also seen as we go down, and Loch Killispoint itself is pleasant to the sight, but scarcely presenting sufficiently striking scenery to repay an express visit. A curious ravine runs down to the loch on the left. Crossing another stream, and ascending another small hill, the road is reached near the inn, which stands alone at the junction of the roads from Ardrishaig and Loch Swein.

I had been informed, pathetically and parenthetically, by the shepherd in the valley, that no whisky was to be got here, the licence having been withdrawn on account of the proximity of the proprietor's workmen. Knowing that no other beverage is drinkable at a country inn, I did not enter, as the day was far spent, and a long road home before me.

Accordingly, swerving to the right, across a stream rushing over a fine fall—a track leading to it from the inn—I passed an old man trudging home with a creelful of peats, and continued up the road that crosses the centre of Knapdale.

Turning round I look back at the steep, well-wooded, northern side of Killispoint. A small cultivated tract lies at the head of the loch, with a neat church and a few scattered houses. The road to the south, after being joined by that from Loch Swein, is shut out from the loch by a long peculiar bluff, covered on the sides with a growth of young trees.

Feeling that it is a little more civilised-looking than the neighbouring hills, and that the loch is rather a pleasant one on the whole, I turn, and continue along the most thoroughly moorland road, without any attempt to veil its nakedness, that can well be conceived. From within a few hundred yards of the inn, until within a mile of Loch Fyne, it is a simple unadorned Highland road. Some miles along, there is a good-sized fresh-water loch, of which something might be made in civilised lands; but nothing else is observable.

I meet a tumble-down vehicle, with a clerical individual and two dames walking alongside, as it

ascends the hill. But he has as little to say for himself as the country around, and does not even reply to my accustomed greeting.

On the property of Captain Campbell of Inverneil, a short way off the road, appear the lead workings in this direction. But no one is about them ; although a framework is yet erected on the top of the hill, and a few openings on the slope are visible. Judging from the débris thrown out, they have evidently been well tried ; but the absence of any workmen was a corroboration of the information I had received of their suspension.

Cross a bridge, high over a rocky stream, and a mausoleum is seen to the right, on a small rock. Threading nicely-kept plantations, alongside a fine extent of park-land, with well-grown stately trees, we reach the Tarbert road, a few miles from Ard-rishaig, at the residence of Colonel Lumley.

A group of wild-looking tinkers, with a laden horse, are on the road as we enter it, and bid us good-evening pleasantly. The now purple-veined ivy is swinging from the rocks ; some tough, powerful-limbed, green ivy trees, still in flower, but passing into seed, throw a complete canopy out over the roadside. A "dooker" is on the water, a dozen hooded crows on the shore, a hare scampers up the hillside, and the white fuds of a few rabbits

disappear into their burrows. Castletown haven, full of fishing craft, gradually fades in the gloom; the sails of some dozen smacks slink down the farther shore from Otter; the brilliant legacy left by the dying day to the now spendthrift gloaming is rapidly dissipated; and as the red fades into yellow, the yellow into green, the blue contemptuously sweeps the latter imitator away; and the stars come winking and blinking me into Tarbert. Eight hours' steady walking has earned a sound night's rest.

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## AFTER THE SLOES.

“This is little Saturday;  
The morn’s Capernaum;  
We’ll a’ rise on Monday,  
And set the mills agawn.”

THIS is “Capernaum,” the Saturday before Sacrament Sunday in the Scotch church, and consequently a holiday to Johnnie. We’ll have a day after the sloes, and see the woods, and what they can yield, on the tenth of November.

Accompanied by a neat strong basket, woven by his father, Johnnie and myself set out for Achaosh; a place of the same name as that on Loch Killispont, to which we were trudging yesterday.

As we walk along, talking of many things, my little companion points out the numerous wild holly-bushes scattered over the landscape,—some with magnificent crops of red berries, against the dark green leaves. Coming down on the West Loch, he points to the school-house of Lochend, the “uninhabited” house. I have been in the habit of passing this, and denouncing it too in no



measured terms as a disgrace, situated as it is on the marge of the loch, and being quite an eyesore in the view down. The loch is well out. Look at those flocks of widgeon! No mistake about it, among the other numerous sea-birds, great flocks of these birds are paddling over the surface of the water. "I'm sure it's winter fairly," for only in the cold weather do they make their appearance; and a cold wind from the north has been upon us for some days, blighting and shrivelling up the bracken.

Johnnie's hands are making desperate efforts to get through the shallow pockets, away from the cold east wind which has now set in. We hand him a pair of thick kids, in which his hands and wrists are immediately lost. A comfortable grin settles on his bonny face, and with a much firmer voice he tells of the wood where the royal ferns hold their court, on this the west side. Plenty of the harts'-tongue species are about also: so we look at it with a little more respect, and pass into less distinguished territory.

Eskart, a farm-house to the left, now appears above the trees; up the hill beyond which is our destination. As we passed through Tarbert the bell was ringing for service, as is usual on Saturday before communion. The folk hurrying to kirk

look laughingly at us as we step along together. Never mind, my little fellow! Don't colour at the rude people; they don't know any better: we'll soon be among the sloes.

Here is the gate where we turn up. We'd have to borrow a spade to dig out our boots, Australian fashion, if we tried to go up the road. So we jump the fence, and, by a series of agile movements along the broken top of a turf dyke, enter the wood at a comparatively dry quarter.

We are in a young wood, lately sheltering a younger wood, in the shape of a dense underwood, now stretched low beneath us. In vain we try to avoid the numberless bodies that encumber our path, and groan as our feet descend upon the beloved treelets; for still more than the forest trees do I love the brushwood. But we get callous as we proceed, placing our feet as carelessly on a tender stripling of a hazel as on the bunioned toes of an ancient oak.

A hundred Irish men and women, they tell me, were imported to cut this down. There is one of the little switch houses that were woven for their accommodation, "like baskets," as Johnnie says; and very neat little places they are. The women have all left now; the men remaining to cart their victims away.

Another ant hillock! How is this? One we passed before entering the wood was thronged with manly, hard-working little fellows; there is no one even lounging about on this. Are they all out on strike? We look around to see if any are standing about the corner of some neighbouring street; but none appear. A stick thrust into the heap brings out none. We turn it over; it is dry as a sailor coming ashore. Down to the foundation of carefully-laid sticks there is no inhabitant. Could they not live amid the desolation? or have they locked the door and gone to a ball at some neighbouring hillock? Those work-folk! we mutter; they have driven the cleanly, puritanic little colony to some formican America.

Scrambling along over the little trunks and under the branches, ever and anon we pluck some scale-moss of peculiar growth, or elegant cup-moss, like a tray of shapely claret glasses. Now is the time for the minuter, but not less beautiful, growths of the woodlands to hold up their heads. When captain and lieutenants have left the room the middies may receive some share of attention, and indulge their animal spirits without fear of being put aside and overshadowed by Captain Dandelion or First-Lieutenant Mr Buttercup. Be happy! and don't drink too much mountain-dew, my

dears, and thus ruin your delicate little constitutions.

Johnnie is just nine, with a great weakness for catching rabbits ; and the way he rushes among the bracken after the fudding, bobbing little creatures is a sight to see.

Look out for the blackthorn bushes ! A short time ago we could have told them afar off by the little green leaves among the heavier foliage. But now there are only two or three waving from the tips, and chaffing you to come on, like the little flags at the bows of the racing-boats.

There they are at last ! No mistaking them, leaves or no leaves. What rugged, careless, devil-may-care looking fellows ! They know perfectly well they make such famous shillelahs, and are quite ready for any emergency. We commence laughing at the tough, tearing, wiry, who-wants-to-fight look of the little chaps, and rub our hands with delight at thought of the knives we have blunted on their heroic little hides, and the raiment we have rent in wrestling with the *nemo-me-impune-lacessit* little foe.

“ I see a big black fellow ! ” exclaims the young sloe-hunter. Two only do we get to commence with ; and some one mutters “ slow production, ” as he looks at the large bush, with each of its chil-

dren fortified round like the nest of a magpie. On we go, with more or less success. Here one, and there a dozen, falling to our assaults, clearing the bushes as we go along ; for there is no attempt at hiding the ripe sloes. A phalanx of stout pikes, firmly planted, guard the hardy offspring of a hardy race. There is a peculiar Masonic passage of the hand from the centre of the bush to the nether limbs, and a muttered something like "thicker continuations," which has apparently to do with the matter in hand.

"We have cleared those bushes, Johnnie. Where away next?" A few frantic rushes after animated muffs, and a tour of inspection brings us again among the blackthorns. "Oh, do stop, Johnnie! don't touch them. Just let me look at them one moment; I never saw sloes before," I exclaim. We had been plucking a few blackberries, scattered here and there among the bushes; but here were sloes! Sloes, did we say? The glorious summer heaven, at the approach of its cold successor, has distilled in tears, and is dropping from twig to twig of the favoured bushes in ethereal globules: now blue, as when they formed the firmament; now black, with the play of colour of the raven's wing, as if a dark twig shone through the "ichor divine."

But Johnnie can't wait any longer : he is pulling them off ; tugging at the bushes. It is clear they are not dropping ; those brilliant clusters are really sloes. " Oh, man, Johnnie, pull the sloes, but don't touch them," we exclaim idiotically, as we observe the heavenly bloom to slip from our grasp into Cerulean air. Ah ! how long must we still " go on refining " ere aught of heaven can remain with us !

" You are pouching, sir ! Into the basket with them, or we shall have to pay you off." But the rascal slips them into another little basket, much handier to him. Still the basket is filling. Having cleared this lot of bushes, we throw a handful of the yellowish green leaves among them, to relieve the dark ; and very beautiful the contents appear. Those yellowish leaves, sprinkled profusely over the tops of that other sheltered group of bushes, resemble yellow bandanas flung over the heads of crouching negresses, as they squat ungracefully over there.

A rabbit's burrow on the face of a bank, with a fern growing near it, all eaten away. Do rabbits eat ferns ? Not generally, I fancy. But no sheep have got there, and no cattle could get there. John junior comes to look at it ; and as he rises from the inspection, gets such a whack on the

head from a wild blackthorn ; that he must surely have tramped on that fellow's coat. Take care of yourself, sir ; rude strength is apt to be exuberant in its demonstrations.

What a dense bush ! One can scarcely slip a knife between the twigs, much less their fingers. There is a good posse here, however, and we must have them. Our hands are now all scratched with white lines ; here and there a deeper red one telling of deadlier combat. You'd fancy we had been at the " Wars of the Roses," carrying off this evidence of our devotion to both sides.

Jump, splash, scramble ! Never mind ; the ground can't help itself after months of rain to two or three days of sunshine,—“ a halfpenny worth of bread to all that sack.” The consequence is inevitable. Here is a piece of rising ground, above the trees, where the footing will be a little drier. Hullo ! a glorious view of the West Loch, straight out to Gigha, which is lying across its mouth. Out in the loch there is a little island—Pollock's island, Johnnie says—full of wild white rabbits. Behind us, on the hill, those few ruined houses are named Achaoish ; further west a fine stream rushes down through the wood. I hate catalogues of places ; for my part I care not whether the island is Gigha or Negropont. The view is very beautiful,

and will help to make you happy, if you deserve to be made so. Go and see it.

“There is Eskart farm-house a little to the right. Your mother will be anxious if you are much later, my little fellow. You have led me quietly away from my Irish friends, on pretence of finding others ; so we may as well step down to the road now.”

“What a scrambling about nothing ! I can understand a little effort after strawberries, or raspberries, or blaeberrys ; but running after black haws—for they are only the fruit of the blackthorn in place of the whitethorn—I can’t imagine it !”

“Then I have nothing to say to you. If you could not be happy under the branches on those hillsides, even after potato-plums, don’t follow me, or we’ll quarrel ; and then it will be awkward and disagreeable—for you. Then, if you could not take delight in dropping an exquisitely beautiful sloe-berry into your mouth, even although it were *nux vomica*, you have no soul for beauty.”

But a sloe is something more than a large, round, beautiful black haw. If botanically a wild plum, it is gastronomically a Scotch olive, with all the agreeable after-effect, and none of the difficulty in acquiring a taste for it of the Spanish ; agreeably astringent, without being disagreeably bitter.



The stone, nearly as large as that of the cherry, is also pleasant to chew afterwards, in place of an ungentlemanly quid. I have often wondered at that desire for something in the mouth so strong among mankind. Most people are probably unaware that the beech-knot—those knots that grow on the trunk of the beech-tree—are used in many country-places for the same purpose as the areca nut of the East. I have often spent days in the woods climbing the trees for them; but I must allow that their value consists principally in being an exceedingly hard, clean, harmless article, on which to employ the teeth without harm to them, and little effect upon it.

But we are away from the sloes, going down towards the road, which we are not long of reaching. John junior is about to put his pocket-handkerchief over the basket, which, having guarded through the dangers of woodland-scrambling, I have now handed over to him. But I insist on them remaining “the cynosure of neighbouring eyes;” which they accordingly do. The carrier charges a heavy per-centage for the transportation of the basket, however; he acknowledges he has “eaten more than a hundred.” Such desecration, we think. A hundred of those beauties! We scarce dare raise one of them to our lips without a quiver of

that fearful delight with which we would lift from the nest an egg of the golden-crested wren ; with the muttered excuse to our calling conscience,—it is so beautiful !

Casting a last look back at the home of the sloes on Eskart slopes, and forward to our favourite peak of Glenakill, we are soon spreading our treasures beside the dinner-table, having brought back a keen appetite, in exchange for the skin we left among the thorns. But the good dame of the house won't allow indiscriminate assaults upon our captures. "They will make a beautiful pot of jam ; first-rate for sore throats," she says. We doubt it not ; the bushes didn't defend them so doggedly without some reason for it : I shouldn't wonder should the leaves prove valuable as a salve for the wounds inflicted by the thorns. The world is not so bad as it looks ; few characters but can soothe the spirit they have rudely probed.

Well ! We spend a short time carefully preparing them ; and the good mother soon turns out a pan of jam, the odour of which is certainly delightful. Although so astringent, they did not take more sugar than other fruit to turn out sweet. They soon burst their tough jackets, and but for the unnecessary prominence of the stones—which, like

damsons', could well have been dispensed with—would have been unexceptionable.

There is a delicacy of flavour peculiar to wild fruit, as those who have blackened their teeth over bramble or blackberry jelly, sucked the gean or wild cherry, or revelled amid the numberless other treasures of the woodlands, can testify. Do you know the sweetest of all the nut tribe? It is the very smallest; and I have known whole districts totally unconscious of the little delicacy in their vicinity. My pockets have often been filled to bursting with the little three-cornered curiosities dropped from the rough caskets of the beech. What are wine and walnuts' to a pocket-full of beech-nuts, and a delicious draught from a gurgling, glinting, giggling little stream? Lounge back in your chairs as ye sip the cooling claret, and crush the walnuts in your grasp, I'll join you only when the Fates forbid me to breast a hill-side and dip my moustaches in a crystal flood.

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## P E T S.

A LITTLE dog and several cats enjoy the hospitality and receive a share of the overflowing kindness of the mistress of the cottage. Chirsty and Tom and little Chi-chi are the cats. The last is a little child of Chirsty's,—a funny black and white fellow, with wondrous staring eyes and a cautious stealthy walk, as if it meant to say, “Don't interfere with me,—I'm on an important excursion ;” and was trying to act the Bengal tiger at a few months old. Whenever the door of my room is opened in it comes at the gallop—as indeed do they all, for lots of milk finds its way in there—crawls up to my knee, wriggles from under my stroking on to the table, and strides round it, with such a look on its queer wee face, and such a funny resemblance to the greater feline savages, that I seize the little chap in my arms, and nearly hug the life out of it.

And yet I love not cats as I do most other creatures. You feel they are not sincere in their display of affection ; they seem to take the sage

advice, never to shove their love out further than they can easily withdraw it again ; and are justly mistrusted in consequence.

Tom, a fine strong black cat and a famous hunter, has disappeared for a week, and is supposed to have been caught in a trap. I'm afraid your glossy sinewy frame will never again twist from my grasp ; and I don't think your old mother Chirsty will be sorry for you, as you had long broken away from her apron-strings and taken to "stravaging." So she had transferred her affection to little Chi-chi. Poor Tom ! I really did like you for a cat, from the daring way you robbed, jumping upon the table and making off with the butter before one's very face—always prompt, bold, and active, meeting all eyes coolly and defiantly. Ah, Tom ! Dick Turpin of the feline race. Has your last "*niaoo*" risen from some shabby trap, the last heroic shiver sped along your velvet limbs ?

Chirsty is getting old and ill-natured. "All old creatures become ill-natured," says the good woman. Sandy the pig is always grumbling, however often she feeds him now. At any rate, Chirsty's temper has not improved with her years. Toby the little dog knows this too, and is always tormenting the life out of her. She can thrash him easily ; but the little fellow worries and capers about her, and

pulls her tail, whenever that self-complacent, half-dozing repose, that cats are so fond of, comes over her. The ungainly but good-natured little cur mouths and gobbles at her, and I actually believe chaffs and makes faces at her. Then, with that want of continuity so universal among young creatures, it will make a sudden rush at her kitten, and gambol and roll about it. The mother is not to be taken in with that performance now ; she has found out that they are upon famous terms : so her ladyship soon drops off into a cat's sleep.

Some time ago a great noise in the early morning called my attention to the gudewife scolding her husband, who, while cutting grass, had almost severed one of the capering Toby's forelegs with the scythe. It was nearly in two, the bone being severely cut, and the blood rushing in a stream. A bandage was retained upon it for a day, when he tore it off, and lay in a little basket, licking the gaping wound, and occasionally hobbling about the premises. When in the basket, little Chi-chi used to go and lie affectionately down beside him ; and they have ever since been on the most intimate terms. Toby has a particular weakness for leaping upon light trousers ; and as the surrounding half farm-yard is not conducive to the tidiness of his paws I do not cultivate his acquaintance, as

his good humour would otherwise tempt me to do. His wound has healed with astonishing rapidity, the obtruding bone being drawn into place by the tendons ; and he seems none the worse of what I fancied would have lamed him for life.

Sandy the pig is also an "interesting" pet of the gudewife. At breakfast or dinner-time, or indeed whenever he chooses to feel hungry, he makes his appearance with a tremendous uproar, and coolly stretches himself along the doorstep, refusing to budge until his appetite is attended to. He is constantly occupying the narrow path between the cottage and the garden-paling, creating a great disturbance whenever anyone attempts to pass, and squeaking himself into a state of frantic excitement. The mistress seems ever beating up a trough of potatoes and Indian meal for it,—the only use the potatoes have been put to lately, as the wet weather has completely ruined them for the table. Squeak while you may, Sandy ; ramble over the place, and turn over everything with your leathery snout ; take the run of the "kail-yard" while you can get it ; there are strange dialogues in the kitchen about your legs, which it is well you neither hear nor understand.

The birds about are all pets, in so far that no

one dare harm them ; but the cats prevent their nearer and dearer domestication.

Until lately, a tame magpie was famous in the village for its impudence and predatory habits. Invariably on Saturday nights, when the fishermen share, he was by watching for any money that might accidentally drop ; and on one occasion a sovereign was snatched up in an instant and deposited on the top of a neighbouring house. One lad was persuaded foolishly to drop a shilling on the street to test it, and the satisfactory (?) result was its sudden disappearance.

A boy who has never had pets of some sort or other must have a part of his nature undeveloped. Give me a lad who can thrash a bigger boy, and yet be entrusted with the care of the baby ; who can cry heartily over the loss of a pet canary, and yet stand his palmies unflinchingly. It would be almost as easy for me to give a catalogue of the pets I have not kept, as of those I have. A few reminiscences of some may be interesting.

A mavis—thrush is not such a kindly word—became so tame, that I used to set it on a pole in the garden when leaving for school ; whence it hopped about till my return, coming again at once to my whistle. Dickie was a great favourite, was never caged by me, and only lost its reliance upon



me by being confined during my absence—treatment it resolved never to submit to again ; so absented itself without leave on next obtaining freedom. It never forgot the place, however, and often came back for scattered crumbs.

Another particular friend was a jackdaw ; a strange fellow, all as black as the *Mary Ann of Shields*, with the exception of a gray ring around its neck. Its beak, tongue, and eyes were all black ; and it had, upon the whole, a most Satanic appearance. I caught minnows and sticklebacks for him, and nothing seemed to come wrong to him. Whether he was really after their chickens, or whether, like many another beast and body, he merely fell victim to an appearance of evil, I know not ; but three matronly clocking hens set upon and destroyed him. Crows, lamed or winged, I have often made troublesome acquaintances—for the snap of their bills is a caution—and I have also attempted to tame wild ducks ; but they would not even feed, however young, and would have destroyed themselves by starvation. Liberty or death ! And they snapped their bills, and desperately struggled for the former.

Pigeons and white rabbits who has not kept ? Rabbits tame, and rabbits wild, and hares without number, have I kept guard over ; and I would re-

commend to every boy to keep some for a time ; for, of all common pets, they teach general cleanliness and elegance in feeding best. To look at one of the little creatures nibbling away so daintily should be a valuable lesson to any one indeed ; and as every one eats—and nearly every one does so more or less in public—it is of vast consequence to the elegant intercourse of society that they should eat tidily, and, like the rabbits, with discrimination.

A pretty little tortoise-shell-coloured guinea-pig was also a cleanly, tidy, little fellow, notwithstanding its unfortunate misnomer.

A few days ago, when passing West Tarbert hamlet, I observed a hen with a comb like a cock ; a sort of bearded woman of the yard. This brought to my recollection the only other one that I have seen, a large valuable fowl that had been left to the nurse by her brother. When introduced to the yard, chanticleer showed a decided aversion to her ladyship ; and after having been twice saved from his assaults, we found her lying gasping in the ditch, where he had driven her. Being a legacy and a favourite, it was carried to the nursery and tended with the greatest assiduity ; its gasping throat was relieved by the choicest butter, and two sleepless nights were spent watching over her

deathbed. At length she died ; and I well remember the sad procession that followed me as I trudged out to the wood with poor tuckie and a spade, and interred her with damp eyes, and in deep silence. Any one who has watched over the last hours of a favourite animal, and observed the affectionate, intelligent look as the end draws nigh, must have had serious questionings whether or no "his faithful dog shall bear him company" hereafter.

Talking of dogs, did you ever wrestle with a dear old collie ? What fun ! How he worries you when you're down ! How savage he looks ! What a mock ferocity gleams in his eyes as he seizes you by the throat ! Now he allows you to roll him over ! He could be over the hills and far away in a minute ; but he understands it all, and enjoys it amazingly. What sham efforts to get up ! As you put your knees upon him and catch hold of his ears the eyes droop, and he looks so penitent and beaten. Then, with a growl and a jump, he is upon you again ; for he won't let you be master too long at play. You have thrown aside authority, and are on equal terms, and he will show you that he understands it perfectly. Dear old fellow ! I wish I could roll with you yet.

That wonderful black rat, too, that I caught

with such risk and difficulty, and fully believed it to be a "last of the Mohicans,"—a remaining specimen of the aborigines destroyed by the Norwegian brown rats. I did not soon forgive those who let it loose, calling a "horrid brute" what I had guarded as the apple of my eye. Don't tell me it was only a water-rat; I know better, and will continue to consider it "the last of the Abencerages."

One day, when a boy, I observed a squirrel running along the top of a paling in the garden; and with the prompt hunter instinct of an active lad, had soon knocked it over with a stone, and carried it into the house triumphantly by the tail. As it showed signs of life, it was carefully tended for some days, when its first proof of renewed activity was to bite severely the kind female hands that nursed it. A nasty, villanous, festering bite, not soon got over. A cage was obtained, and nuts supplied *ad libitum*; but as the confinement was evidently cruel, it soon obtained the run of the house, being principally kept to my bedroom. Despising the warm nest made up for it in the open cage, it discovered the way into a press, and took possession of the seat of an old pair of trousers hung therein. It was too old when first caught ever to become thoroughly domesticated;

but when sitting reading in the evening alone in the room, it would make its appearance from the ornament sustaining the window-curtains, or some perch, patter watchfully and cautiously into the middle of the floor, and, no movement alarming him, set off at a hand gallop round in a circle. The heavy patter patter of his feet sounded distinctly in the rooms below, and it was evidently taken as a constitutional. If I was very quiet for a length of time, as was often the case, he would slip quietly over, and running up my back, sit on the top of my head. Sometimes it crawled into the breast of my coat, but never encouraged fondling, evidently disliking to be handled.

When wishing to secure him for the night the hunt after him was the event of the evening. Having chased it into the bedroom, four individuals generally met at the (bed) cover, each armed with a large cloth with which to seize him. But to describe the fun is impossible. First, it would pop up the curtain, and peer funnily down at you from the top. A table and chair, always posted for the purpose, enabled one to approach him, when he would reach the opposite end of the room by flying over the picture-frames. Under the bed, behind the chest of drawers, in the most impossible ways would it elude attempts at

capture ; popping over your head or under your feet in a most marvellous manner. Often have I seen four persons after him for a whole hour, in a comparatively small bedroom, before he was captured ; and sometimes he was not taken but capitulated. We always considered that it desired the fun and exercise before retiring to rest. After a good chase, it would coolly slip into its roost in the trousers, having had enough of romping ; we then just closed the door, and left it.

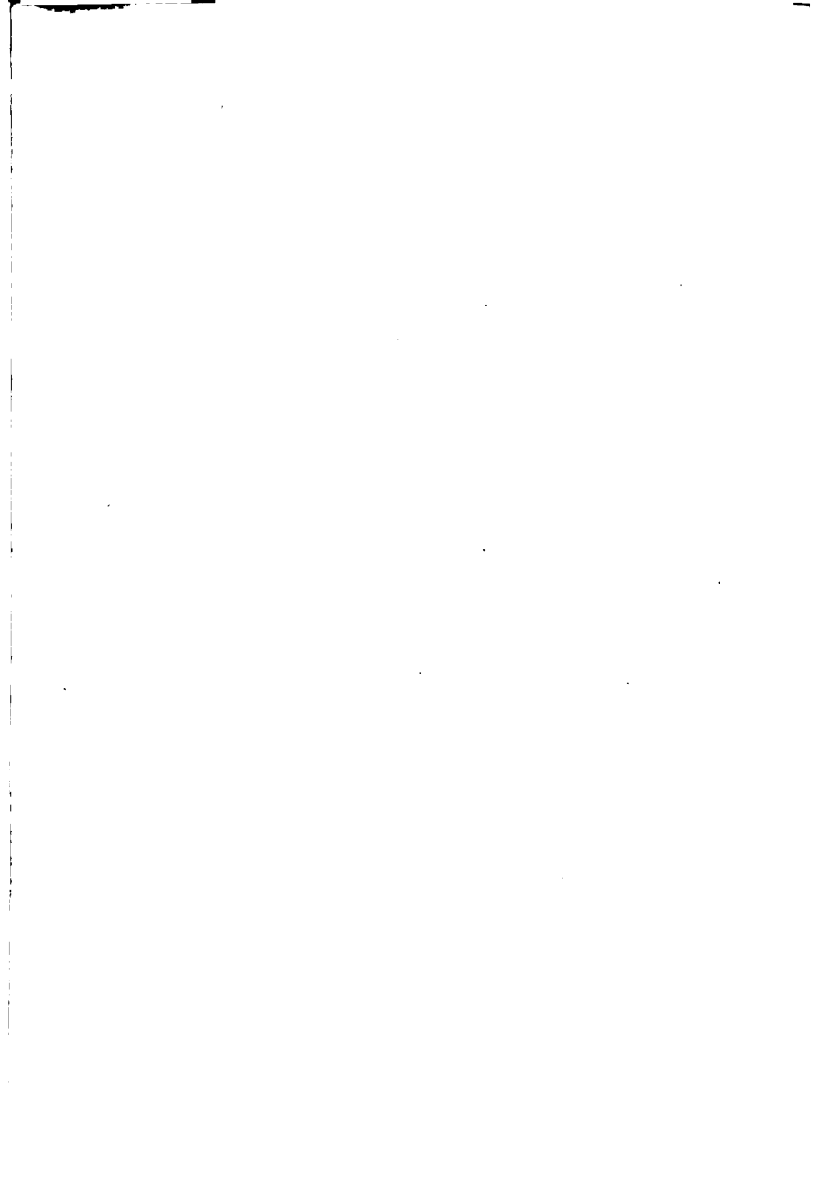
Getting tired of its rampaging through the house, and seeing that it was not thriving away from the fresh air, we let it off after keeping it three months. But although delighted to escape, it often came back about the doors ; and the old trousers, with some food, were laid out in the garden during the autumn for its accomodation. I believe a little coaxing would have brought it back again, to turn the house topsy-turvy with racing and chasing.

Even rabbits must yield to the squirrel for cleanliness and neatness ; while for activity, elegance, and general interest it has no competitors. To lie and watch them as they gambol round the roots of the trees, or scamper up the trunks and along the branches, is one of the greatest delights of the woods.

To run on about my pets would be endless. Fish I have often kept, from "baggy minnows" and sticklebacks to large burn-trout. The latter are very delicate fish, and difficult to keep alive, requiring a constant supply of the purest water. A large trout in a spring well is a great source of cleanliness. They will grow to a good size, and become so tame as to allow themselves to be handled gently when they come for crumbs ; but, of course, they must not be taken from the water. Trout have rather a liking for being tickled with the fingers.

There is no creature, indeed, that will not tame somewhat, and repay the trouble by interesting manners ; and natural history would gain, as well as cruelty to animals be diminished, by more extensive and original observations among the lower creations.

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WEST LOCH TARBERT.

## RAMBLES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

OCTOBER, if dry, as it very often proves, is the month in which to view Scotland in its most characteristic beauty. Out walking on the fifth of the month, I was actually saluting, and being saluted, with "a warm day" for the first time for three months.

Along the road to Ardrishaig, the colours of the birds of the tropics were here transferred to the vegetation. Passing by and through considerable plantations, the birds were singing and the insects humming, as in a day in spring. Then as the road approached the sea, following the hills, the mountain streams rushed down through the wondrous miniature wooding, beneath screeching magpies, and the strange sound of the branches unbuttoning, and throwing off their many brightly-coloured dresses. Looking down towards the sea, on the right, the dog-like head of a seal leaves a ripple behind it, as it slowly paddles out from a gravelly inlet, suddenly disappearing at sight of some finny prey, or startled at an unusual sound.

*October 6th.*—Notwithstanding a splitting headache, I commenced the ascent of the hill above the village, on the Knapdale side, known as the Roebucks' hill. A smart walk of twenty minutes takes you to the summit of the first peak, from which you have a splendid panorama of hills.

Beyond you, towards the north, are stretched the numberless ridges of Knapdale, whilst on the opposite side of Tarbert, those of Kintyre lounge haughtily, as if secure from the hammer and the plough. On the one hand the West Loch sweeps out to the Atlantic; on the other, between the spectator and the hilly farther shore, the vast expanse of Loch Fyne, like a gentle sister, seeks to soften to the view of the stranger the rough features of her rugged brethren.

Sitting on the summit, the fresh mountain air soon cools and relieves the pain in my forehead; and the *Iona* seems half visionary to my soothed and dozing brain, as it dashes through the fleet of fishing-boats, outside in the open loch, coming up alongside the pier with that graceful ease, yet look of restrained power, with which that magnificent river steamer always impresses me.

But there are other little peaks besides that I am upon. Sauntering along over them, gradually the West Loch is lost sight of, and other peeps are

obtained therefor. Not that the change is gradual to me. Sufficient practice is obtained for the eyes in threading the boggy land—inseparable from Scottish hill travelling—until some other prominent stand-point is reached, to prevent too eager observation of distant scenery. To mountaineers the roebuck is small deer, but it is none the less interesting on that account to lovers of the beautiful. On a clear day the Irish coast may be seen, as well as the intermediate islands, and mainland of Scotland.

*October 7th.*—Tarbert is very peaceful and quiet on the Sunday afternoon, and when the water outside is undisturbed and calm, as on this evening, no place can be more silent; while the bell ringing to evening service in the village, when heard at some distance, has a most sedative effect on the mind.

To-night I observed a little fellow driving a few cows home from pasture, over ground a dozen yards of which would have knocked up ordinary cattle, being the side of a hill, with the bare rock everywhere protruding through the heathery turf. To my astonishment, the lad coolly lay down and rolled over the hill after the herd, blurting out guttural observations to the cattle between each revolution. A log of wood might have creaked

dissatisfaction at such a roll, and yet the boy seemed to treat it as part of his usual programme.

*October 14th.*—Out on the rocks that form the eastern side of the harbour, the day clear and bright, heaven's stock of rainbows seemed to have slipt down and shivered into pieces over the opposite coast, so brilliant was the colouring. The houses at Ardrishaig, twelve miles away, were glittering in the light across the isthmus of Barmore peninsula, like the plumage of "dookers" in the sunshine. Towards the south, the Ayrshire coast stood boldly out on the horizon.

A ramble among the numerous little sandy bays that indent this rocky promontory is very interesting. Quantities of small star-fish flung out on the rocks from the herring nets, and innumerable sea-urchins thrown up by the tide, are lying alongside floats and buoys, broken loose from these same nets. Now and then we see a herring-box, leaving scope for the fancy to connect with sudden gales of wind or officials. Ay! and scattered herring, and small heaps of scales hinting mildly of trawlers. Also swarms of rabbits, having eaten the tops off great part of a young plantation, scamper off at your approach, as if conscious of their guilt.

Many interesting objects are about those same rocks. Here is a spot where two men were carried

ashore dead of cholera, and buried by the surviving man and boy of the crew, at the former visit of this epidemic. Notwithstanding the advanced season, the grasshoppers are still jumping and chirping over their resting-place. A nice, quiet spot for sailors to lie, you think too, within sound of the ripple of the waves they so often breasted.

There is a large medusa, a sea-blubber, as the folk call them; one exclaims "a scouter," but it is not one of those horrid influenza-looking creatures with the long-reaching tentaculæ that sting so disagreeably on the bather approaching them. It is a great mass of gelatine and water, a living stomach, such as I have seen after a storm, almost filling Loch Ridun. It was actually difficult to row a boat through them, having been driven up the Kyles of all sizes, from a gelatinous globule to an ancient, great-bearded scouter.

As my companion pointed out the grave of another victim to the cholera, two pairs of ravens, on their way to the north, sent down their dismal croak; certainly a startling accompaniment.

*November 6th.*—It has been blowing half a gale for two days, severe showers of hail uniting with the wind in a daring assault upon the foliage. Leaving for a walk in the afternoon, I could not get along. The change in appearance of the country,

and the numerous new sights thrown open to the wayfarer, checked my progress perpetually. Let us sit down here together.

A dark brown Ayrshire bull of a stream, having evidently thrashed an adversary, goes grumbling, growling, and bullying along, through lines of the shivering supernumerary soldiers of a provincial theatre, carrying off their arms on its back, as they drop them in their terror. On the other side of the bridge, on which we are seated, it runs deep and strong, with the regular pace and regular breathing of a well managed racer. Up the shady side of the bridge the ivy has clambered, and the topmost shoots are lifting their heads over the edge. But they are properly slapped for their "impertinent curiosity," as the parent shoots remark of the unsuccessful investigation and search for information of the young. All unprotected boughs have been cleared. There is a group of strapping Indians stripped for the race, with a few wild locks streaming about them. You expect to see them start away at the first wild whoop of the gale, and wonder at their stay. Near them a lot of old men, with a few straggling hairs dotted over their heads, turn contemptuously from the savages, and hug their last threadbare suit closer about them. Despise none, ye foolish ancients, you

know not how soon you will have to hob-nob on equal terms with these same wild men of the woods. Look at that sprig of rowan that has slipped under yonder giant fir, and commands attention by spreading a dozen brilliant leaves in front of the rich green mantle, as some poetaster spreads his verses in the shade of a mighty name. Now a protected conical beech-tree, like a giant bunch of grapes, with nothing but a bare stalk on the top to lift them by, rivets your admiring gaze, and almost tempts you to stretch forth your hand and pluck; while underneath the neighbouring ashes the green ferns appear, clambering through the split stems, and jinking around them, like chickens about a clocking hen.

The half-naked larches are swinging, stretching, and grasping after their flying spiculæ, and ever settling back with a sougning sigh at their fruitless exertions. The still beautiful and graceful lady ferns are whirling and interlacing in a merry dance among themselves, to the whistling of the wind; catching and sipping the rain negus with a dainty swirl of their pretty heads, and looking so elegant and happy, that, as we rise to join in a ladies' chain, we nearly tumble over the bridge. Ah! the spell is broken! The clouds are tumbling and rushing along the celestial highway, like a drove



of Highland cattle. See there a herd of bonny silver-gray ones has just passed, and is succeeded by a body of wild-looking black : the wind has changed its tune to "devil take the hindmost," and we take the hint.

*Nov. 7th.*—Blowing a whole gale to-day, with occasional severe hail showers ; but we shall attempt to reach the lead mines lately worked on the hills, above Mr Furlong's house. Now look about you ! don't forget that the world is beautiful, let us too "see that it is good."

See how the gray moss hugs those nearly cleared larches. 'Tis with that the shilfa covers her velvety nest, to hide it from prying eyes. You see it is going to hap in the winter, what sheltered it from the sun in time of prosperity, seeming to draw all the closer the more bitterly it blows. From the minuteness of the parts of which the mass is composed, those larches form the most delicate shade among the forest trees. The mosses are clambering, wherever they can find foothold, along the dykes by the way ; and the ferns in the ditches are now, some of them, of a brilliant black.

There is a life school for ashes ! did you ever observe the beautiful clean black and white of their polished skins ? Black and white did I say ? black as the back of the starling is black, white

as the varying wavelet, 'neath a summer sky. See those oak-trees, still doggedly clinging to their marled leaves. They did not get them so very easily, and are not going to let them away at the first rude bullying demand of the gale. You domineering fellow! you will have to close and grapple stoutly for the oak's little hoard.

Just look at this leaf plucked from the sycamore. Why, some neighbouring schoolfellow has splashed a bottle of ink over all those on the tree. Big blackish-brown blotches are over all, relieving the finer tints of yellow and green. The sun on the hoar-frost, or the bitter north wind on the damp, has stopped the circulation suddenly there, poor thing! the leaf is being choked.

Do stop and look at this stream. What a notion of infinity those numberless little stems and branchlets, away up its course, give you; and how they draw together, attempting to impart comfort and warmth to each other, now adversity is upon them in the north wind. They never looked at, much less caressed, each other, till they felt the cold. Just like "other folk," you mutter; out of the strong cometh forth sweetness, when stricken in the dust. But come along! If we stay there much longer we'll never reach the mines.

Oh! those birches, like myriad hands poisoning coppers on the ends of their fingers—all bare but the tips of the branchlets; you chuckle at their skilful manœuvres, and pass to the ash-tree near them, with the great clusters of seedlets hanging thereon. As a bourgeois dame, displaying her wealth on her person, just manages to look dowdy, so you, Mrs Ash, would have hung much more gracefully with a tenth of your riches.

Have you ever seen a gale passing over the tops of the copses with a misty sweep, and diving skilfully into the sea beneath? Nothing is seen above the water for some distance but the black shadow of his huge form, until his gray locks emerge, as he tears, tosses, and sputters towards the opposite coast. Above, between the masses of cumuli, a few old men's crimped shirt-frills are spread across the sky to dry, and the old fellows themselves turn lazily round in their night-shirts to gaze on the hullibaloo below. They are having a long lie to-day after their yesterday's work, for they had a splendid run across country, which startled the cattle we saw then.

Do you see anything there, away up that rocky glen? probably not; and yet that magnificent group of fronds, above the others, is a royal fern; a splendid specimen, its lovely emerald a thing of

beauty to all, and a joy for ever to the collector.

You screeching vagabonds ! all your clatter and noise, Messrs Magpie, as your terrified consciences drive you away, won't blind me to the quiet drop of yonder beauty, skipping off to another tree. Madam Jay, the glimmer of your barred wing is not to be mistaken. Not often, and then only in the thickest woods, does your plumage flutter in the Scottish sunlight ; but there you are undoubtedly.

Here we are at length, at scenery never and yet ever varying. See that shore—

“ Qui no ha vista *aquella*  
No ha vista *maravilla.*”

Let us count the shades—count the stars ! From white through all the grays, and almost all the blues, and all the mingled shades of gray and blue. A girdle of seaweed tastefully arranged from carmine to black, twining along, dividing the stones from the sea-turf, whose brick-dusted territory advances to the green roadside grass, with which a mutual forbearance treaty, or non-intervention understanding, has seemingly been concluded. At the verge of the water runs a line of dark spray-damped boulders, until we come to a ridge of rocks,

where all the before-mentioned shades and colours are lying in a heap, divided by a band of quartz, with the white slipping into rose colour.

Hazel-trees again. Dear me ! quite green yet. Old, well-to-do hazels have always a peculiar appearance, moss lodging on every joint up to the topmost sprig, like parasites on to a large revenue.

At length at the gate where we turn off ! Let us shut our eyes, and rush up the rough road by the side of the glen, or we shall never get up at all. Up by the shepherd's well-built house, with all those—never mind, keep your eyes shut. Following the stream, we reach the spot where some half-dozen veins have been struck, or some half-dozen spots struck for veins. The workings are lying quite open, some filled with water ; but, excepting a few small ochry-earth mounds about, there is nothing to keep any one from tumbling in. At the bottom of that dry hole a hare indeed is stretched lifeless, and has just begun to putrify ; what is there to prevent a human being following suit ?

Of course there is nothing to be seen ; a small plateau on the top of the hills, to which a rough road has been cut. If the ore had been rich, which it never was, it might have paid to have transferred it to some port. But the great distance

from any regular port, and the expense required to form one expressly, with the difficulties in the way of conveyance, will ever operate against the undertaking. Some others have been opened an hour's walk further over the hills, from which I have got some pieces of lead ; but although much money has been sunk, I believe no metal has been sold, although the first company carted some ore to the main road below, and left it there. When a railway is cut from Ardrishaig to Campbelton, and a lode discovered worthy of the name, something may be made of it, but the drawbacks in the meantime are decidedly great.

Another mine was attempted on the property of Campbell of Inverneil, further north, but with like success. The great fortunes accruing from successful mining, prompt similar undertakings of the most visionary description.

We return past some ruined houses, one of which, with the roof still standing, harbours a supply of peats and ferns for the shepherd in the winter. A hailstorm in a dreadful hurry rushed past, probably to a swamping bank, many others having gone before it. Running down by the pretty stream, we step behind a stack at the shepherd's house, to the great indignation of a cock and hens ; the former leading the way to the barn door, not

with the proud strut of Milton's chanticleer, but in a most undignified manner.

As we stand a moment, and look out at the hail dancing frantically along the ground, the shepherd himself appears at the back door near us, and invites us in. Declining with thanks the offer of the fine manly fellow, we stop a minute to talk about the "weather and the crops," as the newspapers put it, while looking down over the fine panorama which his house commands. Envyng him his morning view, we are soon hurrying past the last flags of distress, hung out by the shivering poplars; utterly disregarding the tears of the dog-roses, red with weeping for their leaves. One last glance from the rich purple stems of the near birches to the distant stripped trees, whose branches also show purple on the hillside; and nodding laughingly to our old friends the tits, as they chirp in their gray undress above us, with our soul overflowing with scenes of beauty, and our heart swelling with happiness and thankfulness, we reach our quarters.

*November 11th.*—Communion Sabbath in the wretched schoolhouse. During the "tables," we reach Glenralloch, near Lochend house, as Dr Campbell's farm-house is called, and seeing the highest point of Glenakill right over us, make

straight for the summit. In deference to the day, we are accompanied by an umbrella, a very unusual friend with us here. Consequently the climb up the hillside, of which we have chosen the steepest as the driest part, is more difficult than we should have expected.

The top reached, the height, although trifling, is found to be very commanding. On the opposite side a small loch nestles among the hills, and from it a stream joins that of Glenralloch. To the west, Dunskeig nods to Ardpatrik loch, while to the south and east the usual views of the neighbourhood are retailed, at a reduction upon Crovalesse rates. All this I catch as I revolve slowly, with difficulty sustaining my gravity—that is, my centre of gravity—for the wind is sweeping over the summit, and rushing to the sea like a pointer on the loose, bent on doing something, but it doesn't know what. Seeing me standing there, with a sudden whoop it seizes my head covering. Then, growling and worrying, it hurries with it into the neighbouring hollow, tantalisingly halting there, with the evident intention of again making off at my approach. I am too quick, however, and having secured it triumphantly, stroll over the hill towards the cottage. But my old adversaries, the bogs, seeing me among them something re-



spectably clothed, lie in wait, and by a *coup de main* manage to soak me to the knees.

Glenakill, I love thee still notwithstanding, and consider thee well able to bear either a close inspection, or a distant survey. Perhaps your bogs were only hugging my knees to call my attention to their fallen estate, and to beg me not to kick them when they're down. For you are a comparatively dry, and very pleasant, tidy little hill on the whole.

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## AT THE DOOR.

THIS is Mary. Our ain Mary! the other is Mary by marriage ; but this is “ our ain Mary ! ”

What an amount is contained in that little word “ ain ”—the nursing, the teething, the sickness, the years of childhood, girlhood, young womanhood—by the mother these can never be forgotten. That is Mary by marriage, but this is “ our ain Mary ! ”

A stream comes rushing down the hill behind the cottage, sweeps across the road, and, turning along by the foot of the garden, runs into the little bay. Just at the foot of the garden is the general lavatory, where everything and everybody undergoes their daily or weekly cleansing.

*Sunday forenoon.*—The ground is at present occupied by a group from the smacks in this part of the harbour, going through their Sabbath-day’s scrubbing. Between them and the cottage front the pet calf has the run of the garden, romping over the cabbages and cropping the hedges as it pleases. At the door stands Mary, with her little

one, having fled from the cholera in the village, where already several have fallen victims to its attacks.

“Will I throw ye in the gutter, ye squallin’ wean? Ye never ken what ye want!” says the young mother, totally oblivious of the fact that it is she who is ignorant of its wants. Besides, lungs must grow, and must be exercised. “There never was such a fellow! this is the hardest work I’ve ever had,” mutters poor Mary, as the troubles of maternity open on her startled vision. She is finding that it won’t run like a chicken when freed from the shell, and wishes to goodness it was fifteen. Better as it is; wait a little.

“Look there!” says the kindly grandmother; “see the crow with the one leg blown heads over heels with the wind; this is the first time I have seen it the year, but it has come here every winter for ten or twelve years.”

“The crows you see here about in such numbers come all the way from Mount Stewart woods, in Bute, to feed, going back there to roost,” the uncle tells us. “Stonefield has no rookery, but the long-legged herons breed in great numbers on Barmore peninsula, and he is very particular that the nests are undisturbed,” he adds.

“Stonefield!” I remark, laughing; “it always

amuses me to hear your Highland lairdies called after their bit properties, like Argyll or Buccleuch." When I came here first I asked to whom that property of Barmore belonged. "Stonefield," said a little fellow; and it was with some difficulty I learned this was one of the ubiquitous Campbells, whose original property is so called. Doubtless this is the only way to distinguish proprietors in lands portioned out among Campbells or other such clans.

"Did you see the old woman carrying off the old oar and bits of stick from the shore yesterday? 'That is John's sweetheart,'" as the good-humoured face of her gudeman comes to join us at the door. "She is very deaf, and the two sit down together at the shore and chat, when she always speaks to him as if he was deaf too, and tells all the news as if speaking to a congregation." She was the wife of a farmer, but, having saved some little money, came here at his death, and set her only son up in a shop. He, turning out a blackguard, squandered her money, lost the business, left her in poverty, and is now working in Greenock at the trade of a carpenter, which he had to fall back upon, never sending her a sixpence. "Isn't it hard, when the son you have lavished everything upon turns and treats you that way?" says granny. Very hard, but

very common, and not so very unnatural either. If every wish is gratified, and you lose sight of yourself in his well-being, he comes to lose sight of you too, and look upon any sacrifice made by you as his due, having always been accustomed to expect it. His desires never having been restrained by others, are not likely to be curbed by himself, so he gradually loses his head, like a runaway horse, till he can neither be stayed, nor stop of his own accord.

“She is on the parish now, poor old body, and is one of the old women that attend any patients admitted into the hospital—that small house on the shore opposite the high land of houses.”

“And so they call her your sweetheart, John?” A broad grin comes over the merry face. “That is no my right sweetheart! Did I ever tell you about Miss Betty Modesty?” he asks. “No; tell us about her.”

“Oh! she was my Irish sweetheart—a far finer-looking one than my wife; I wish I had ta'en her,” with a twinkle in his eye. “She went about there dressed in a man's coat, and a straw hat with a black ribbon—in every respect like a man, except the petticoat—and drove a cuddy cart about the country, selling fish and cabbages. I had a sloop then, and she used to come about and work like a

man in unloading or loading the vessel. She was far stronger than most men, and they used to say o' Betty that you might travel under her charge from one end o' the country to the other quite safely, for every one knew her, and was frightened for her.

“Nobody dared say anything against her; but one day as she was driving her cuddy up the street of a seaport town on the east coast of Ireland, a lot of men were lounging at the corner, and commenced laughing at the approaching Betty. Betty made no sign until right upon them, when she took the worst of them a slap on the side of the head that stretched him on the street. ‘I’m afraid I’ve hurt ye; have I struck ye too hard, me poor fellow?’ says Betty, and running up to him, she lifts him, insisting that he shakes hands and goes with her for an eggen o’ whisky.

“Having entered the shop, she first disposes of an eggen herself, and then treats her victim to another. ‘Now pay for them both,’ says the dear damsel, ‘or I’ll gie ye ten times more than ye’ve got.’

“Having been working with me and another master about the vessels, we ask Betty if she’ll give us an eggen on our visiting the neighbouring fair, where she is to be flourishing. This she

promises to do ; so on getting to the fair we seek her out, and, as soon as she sees us, off she goes and gets another woman to keep the stall she has on the moor, and then sets out with us round the fair."

"Look at thae scarves," says grandmother ; "there has been lots flying past since morning, and they are a sign o' wild weather." "What are they?" I ask ; but John insists upon telling his story, and I afterwards learn they are a large sea-bird, very good to eat—all they could tell me. "Well," he continues, "we go in at one end and out at the other of all the booths in the fair, and have an eggen in each, and eat peas, which they sell there in place o' sweeties, and leaving Betty in the evening, we get back to our boats.

"By putting Betty at the lift, she would empty a boat far quicker than a man, and then have a dram of three glass and a half after work. She was a wonderfu' woman — no very bonny," he whispers—"wi' black curly hair, so thick that she couldna comb't, and only cut it short."

"And what has become of this sweet creature?" we ask.

"She got married to a drucken shoemaker, who gaed through a' her money, and then left her; she is now lame, and I don't think she can go wi' the

cart now, but if she met the shoemaker, I'm sure she would kill 'm."

So Betty Modesty, this was her real name, was but a woman after all, and with all her strength was beaten by a "drucken shoemaker." Yes! that is it.

"I wonder how they have been getting on at the Kyles! Now the moon is away, and the wind is quieted, they should be getting fish. Do you know the Michaelmas or October moon is called here the Badger-moon, that during which the badger makes its hay; it is supposed to be the brightest of the year."

"Badgers are nearly cleared out in this country now," we venture to remark.

"Not in this quarter; they are very common here, and are often shot as they come out in the evening by the gamekeepers. Badger-baiting, you see, has never been practised here."

"Sneeze! sneeze! You are aye doin' somethin'; can ye no bide still, bairn?" quo' Mary.

"Ye maun get three cut o' yarn and pass the wean through't," says granny, "and sae keep the fairies frae't."

"By the by, a man came here yesterday seeking you, John, a little red bearded man, a good deal the worse o' drink."



“Oh, I saw him. He was wanting me to get him a berth for his sloop ; it was his neighbour that was found dead on the quay yesterday morning. He had got drunk, lay down to sleep, and never raise again.”

“Ye wad think he might ha’e ta’en warnin’ after such a dreadfu’ example.”

“Oo, no ! The body was examined and carried on board ; he was an auld man, and they thought nothing about it ; they’ve been drunk ever since.”

“It’s enough to bring a judgment upon us !”

“It is really very horrible !”

“What can ye expect frae sic folk ?” say the company.

“They were a’ drunk in town last night, when I went round for the harbour dues ; some were wantin’ to fecht me, and some were goin’ to lick me, and I was glad to get back. I’m no goin’ to stand this work after this year. I’ve to row across the harbour, or walk round more than a mile, to every steamer that comes in. Out in all weathers every day, never gettin’ home to dinner, and me eighty.”

“Well, John, you deserve a rest.”

John has had a good education, writes a good hand, and, like most Highlanders who have learned their English at the schools, he talks comparatively

well ; indeed, when he likes, he talks very well. When a Scotch boy of the humbler classes goes to school he may acquire English, but never will lose his plebeian vocabulary and form of speech. Like as in the sparse cultivation of the neighbourhood, the rude original substratum insists upon cropping out.

“Grandfather!”—Mary is very fond of saying grandfather : a few weeks ago she said “father,” but grandfather calls your attention to her armful, which she “wouldna gie” for Stonefield’s property—when he’s good ; “grandfather ! come in to your dinner.”

John, and “our ain Mary,” disappear into the kitchen.

Dandle your wean, Mary ! get into a great state, and give it whisky toddy whenever it squeaks—a fisher-boy must get seasoned some time ! Sit with it on your knee for hours, and dream, and hope ; we know not what a day may bring forth, much less half a century. Your little one may yet stand before kings, their equal, an honest man ; but send him to school, that he may not on such occasion clamour about “his rights” like a glassblower on a London platform. Teach him that the real “rights” of every man is the liberty to be steady, sober, and thrifty, by which all may be brought

within his reach. Teach him to earn fifteen shillings a week, and, "with brains," he may be Lord Chancellor or Prime Minister of his native land. Dream on! nothing is impossible.

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THE QUEEN OF THE  
HEBRIDES.



## THE QUEEN OF THE HEBRIDES.

WHAT took you to Islay? The number of times that question has been put to me, both in the island itself and at home, is beyond computation. I was neither a sportsman nor an exciseman, what did I in Islay? I will endeavour to answer the question satisfactorily.

Out from amongst the haunts of men, away from the din and bustle of the great iron and granite city. Not in the beaten track of Cockney tourists, where myriads of guide books anticipate any pleasure to be received, and bias the judgment in regard to the beautiful and picturesque. No! Away where my thoughts might be freshened, as well as my frame invigorated, by the breeze and the verdure. Where?

In gazing on the map of Scotland, I observed the island of Islay, the famed resort of the Lords of the Isles, apparently isolated and unvisited. The "Queen of the Hebrides," the land of whisky, green pasture, and black cattle, must

surely be worth a visit. At least, I will not be jostled by lion hunters ; I will escape blue ties, white straw hats, and lavender kids ; I will to Islay. And to Islay I went.

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“AND *VERDANT* ISLAY CALLED HER  
HOST.”

ISLAY, as approached from the east, although showing the highest and about the barest land in the island, nevertheless justifies its titles of the “Green Isle” and “Queen of the Hebrides,” as compared with the northern islands and the coast of Kintyre.

This distinctive character of greenness it owes to the comparative mildness of the climate, and to the continuous showers borne on the wings of the south-west winds which deluge its surface, and rush in a thousand trout streams to the sea. To the geologist it is interesting, especially along the sea-board. Numerous trap dykes run their dark lengths into the water or along the shore, like huge salamanders reposing and cooling themselves after their fiery exertions, the results of which lie picturesquely around.

The island “consists of two ridges having a north-easterly direction, and nearly similar in structure. On the east coast graywacke and clay



slate extend to a line joining Port Ellen and Thurot's Bay; within this is mica slate and quartz rock forming the first ridge; in the central valley, between Port Askaig and Lochindaal, is a limestone formation, succeeded by mica slate and quartz rock forming the second ridge; and the western declivity is again clay slate with gneiss. The quartz rock thus composes the more elevated ridges with a general N.N.E. direction parallel to the great glen. The S.W. district is principally clay slate, but much mixed with the quartz rock, and also with graywacke, in places where it is undoubtedly subordinate to this metamorphic formation."\* The principal formation in the island is consequently the quartz rock, and this is especially visible along the north-east and north-west coasts, where the trap plays the most fantastic tricks with it.

With the exception of Loch Gruinard on the west, and Lochindaal on the south—which have sloping alluvial shores—the entire coast of the island is rocky and steep. Lochindaal is the only harbourage where large vessels may ride with safety. On the east, in the neighbourhood of Macarthur's Head, the hills rise to the height of about 1500 feet, and at the Mull of Oe to about

\* Nicol's "Geology of Scotland."

750. In no case, however, do they reach the height of the Paps of Jura, and excepting where a scaur defaces their sides, or the bitter north-west wind has kept bare the brow of a bluff, the hills have pasturage to their summits.

However green in other respects, Isla cannot be said to be well wooded. The extent of forest land about Ballygrant is considerable, and likely to be increased, as the spot is sheltered and seemingly suitable. Mr Ramsay has also his house in a well-wooded neighbourhood on the east ; whilst Islay House and Bridgend are surrounded by delightful and thriving plantations. Everywhere else nothing but miserable brushwood can be raised, and that only in favourable situations. The violent winds which visit this island in the winter, and render it necessary for the inhabitants to keep down their roofs with stones and beams of wood, as in Switzerland, soon blast any young plantations. The principal covering of the uncultivated land is heath, not the coarse heather of the mainland, but a stunted heath thickly intermixed with coarse grass.

The whole island is very peaty ; from end to end there is plenty of peat ; and from the time you come within several miles of it—if the wind is off the land—until you leave it some miles be-

hind you again, your closest, most inseparable companion, morning, noon, and night, is a strong, but not otherwise disagreeable, smell of peat-reek.

The climate is certainly very mild. At Loch Gruinard they complained to me of the cold when the thermometer stood about 58°. The captain of the *Isla* told me he felt the difference in temperature exceedingly when passing between *Isla* and the mainland in the winter. Last season, for the first time in ten years, he found the snow down to the shore.

Although the inhabitants are mostly Gaels, of late years there has been a considerable influx of lowland farmers. But the universal language is that of the Gael; it is the "open sesame" to their affections and their homes. It is said, however, not to be spoken in its purity by the natives, but to be very much intermixed with alien words; whether the interlopers are of Irish or Danish origin I am unable to say. At the same time, the Danish language has left its impress on the country, as most of the names of the farms, and many of the localities, are Norse,—memorials of the time

“ When Denmark’s Raven soar’d on high  
Triumphant, . . . . .

And the broad shadow of her wing  
Blacken'd each cataract and spring.

Beneath the shade the Northmen came,  
Fix'd on each vale a Runic name,  
Rear'd high their altars' rugged stone,  
And gave the gods the land they won.”

Indeed, very many of their “rugged stones” remain upright at the present day.

All the grown male inhabitants understood English besides the Gaelic, but very few of the women or children could make themselves understood in it, especially in those parts remote from schools. If we are to credit the stories in circulation, the English of even some of the men is not particularly classic. One is told of a cattle-dealer, of considerable position in the island, who had pre-engaged the steamer for his cattle. On the arrival of the boat, another drover, unaware of the compact, persisted in having his animals put on board; upon this Donald lost his temper, and eloquently expressed himself as follows: “I tell ye *I'm* the poat, and the poat's *me*, and d—— the stot'll get aboard but mysel' ;”—a conglomeration of persons and things that would rather stagger a grammarian. This is on a par with the Inverary man who addressed the cartwright of the place with, “Are you a pig this year?” Upon the reply in the negative,

he exclaimed triumphantly, "Oh! *I'm two pigs* this year."

I always found the men sturdy, intelligent, and hospitable, and ready to give their assistance kindly and good-humouredly; but a total disregard for truth, a "plentiful lack" of knowledge regarding everything excepting whisky and potatoes, and the most degrading filth, these are the principal characteristics of the mass of the natives. How have they been caused? how are they to be ameliorated? are the questions that naturally arise.

They are the characteristics of an enslaved people, and the consequences of a state of serfdom. Until lately, the population of the Highlands and islands had been little better than slaves. Ground down by a landed aristocracy who treated them like dogs—for rarely indeed have Scotch or Highland proprietors shown the slightest regard for the feelings or welfare of their tenants—they have gradually increased in poverty and misery. Losing all respect for themselves, they plunged into the oblivion of drunkenness, and without the semblance of education to teach them better things, have gone from bad to worse. Gaining a scanty subsistence, partly from agriculture and partly from the sea, they have lost all regular habits of labour, and the practice of subdividing the land among

their children has increased their difficulty of gaining a livelihood. Thus that look of sadness and hopelessness so generally observable among the lower classes of the Scotch, when not roused by action, settles down upon their faces. It is not always because “they can never get enough o’ fechtin’” that the Scotch look so serious: oftener far is it that they cannot get enough of proper food, and, on the mainland especially, that they cannot get sufficient rest, rest from continuous grinding labour.

Seeing none on earth, they place all their hope on heaven, and possessed of a strange mixture of superstition and religion, through a life of labour, immorality, and devotion, pass weariedly to the grave.

As is to be expected, the people are very immoral. I hold it almost impossible for a pure mind to rest in a filthy body, and calmly to live in the midst of dirt. This impurity of mind and body has been the birth of centuries, and is not to be got rid of in a day. Already illicit distillation, always a great source of depravity, has been done away with in the island; other improvements must be more gradual. The education of the young and the instillation into them of habits of cleanliness, sobriety, and the necessity for steady labour

in life, will also do much. But the root of the evil is not thus to be eradicated. It lies with the proprietors to assist in removing the evils caused by their predecessors during centuries of oppression, by having proper dwellings erected for their small farmers and cottar tenants. But not until the owners of the soil dwell thereon, with their wives and families; not until the women of the island have some higher standard of excellence and cleanliness brought constantly before them; not until the ladies of the lairds visit the cottages of the poor, and exercise the benign influence which ever belongs to a virtuous woman; not until the women are taught by one of their own sex, that a neat wife and a bright clean fireside to welcome him at home are the best inducements to make a man work hard, and cut the public-house on his return; in fact, not until the dirty slatternly habits of the women are thoroughly revolutionised, can any real progress be anticipated. Once, through improvements in their dwellings, cleanliness becomes possible, they will take care to have everything tidy against the visit of "her ladyship" or the clergyman, and be ashamed to be caught with unswept hearth or dirty person. But "Rome was not built in a day," and certainly a considerable period must elapse before the "great unwashed" of Islay will be presentable in society.

And now for the article for which Islay is so famous, or infamous, as the members of the Teetotal Society would have it.

Throughout the island the amount of whisky consumed is only surpassed by that produced. It seemed to me to be the principal support of the visitors, and the natives are said to take it even to their porridge and potatoes. Certainly all the time I was there, I never saw it refused by any one at any period of the day. You are not to deduce from this that the liquor must be both cheap and excellent. It is *not* cheap and it *is* execrable. Nearly all that consumed in the island, I have been informed on good authority, is sent from Glasgow, the good Islay being all despatched *to* Glasgow ; just in the same way as you get the best Tay Salmon in London, the best article always rushing to the best and surest market.

Distillation has not been paying so well latterly, the number of distilleries having decreased of late years on the island. Gladstone may be congratulating himself on the reduction in the consumption of whisky, which he hopes he has achieved by the increase of the duty. But the general opinion is, that if the duty had been reduced in place of raised, the revenue would have gained thereby as well as the distillers, without the consumption



materially increasing. At the same time it would have evited the great increase of smuggling, which has certainly taken place lately under the superior inducements to it, and secured a much superior article to the blue ruin at present sold under the name of spirits. In fact Mr Gladstone's policy seems to have been a failure in this instance, the money having just been withdrawn from the treasury, and paid as a premium on illicit distillation. Wherever a demand exists a supply will be forthcoming to meet it, and if the distillers do not find it profitable to supply the demand, the smugglers will.

Perhaps the ex-chancellor of the exchequer thought, that an extra pressure in the way of price would induce those who hesitated between "strong drink" and light French wines to decide in favour of the latter ; but I am afraid very few do hesitate as yet. Taste cannot be changed at once, and a nation, like a child, must be weaned from its drink, not forcibly obliged to forego it for one to which its palate and constitution have not been accustomed.

The superior character of the Islay whisky is considered to arise from the water, all the distilleries being situated where an abundant and good supply of pure water is to be obtained, as the first consideration.

Each distillery has also a good piece of land attached, upon which to employ their people in the summer, when for three months in the year there is nothing doing. Almost the only pigs in Islay are those bred about them, where they are fed on the refuse ; everywhere else the people seem to retain the Highland aversion to the unclean animal, as any ham or bacon to be got comes from Glasgow, and is poor indeed.

The second famous Islay production is black cattle. These were not nearly so numerous as I anticipated, and I ascertained that of late years they had greatly given way to the rearing of sheep.

The cattle are of the Highland species, large horned and rough coated, but of greater size and more civilised-looking than the hairy little rascals which, with Scotch terriers and collies, are amongst the most intelligent-looking of the animal creation. Their cream and milk are excellent and abundant, and they themselves are fitted to grace the most snowy cloth, and “mix” with the most refined society.

And now I may be allowed a word in regard to the great exodus, and the change which has come over the country since it has passed from the hands of its former barbarically-munificent owners. With the race of the Campbells, “old things have

passed away." Islay House no longer witnesses the state of matters which formerly ruled there. Then two oxen were slain a week, and four sheep per day, to sustain the profuse hospitality of the Lord of Islay, and as for the minor eatables, day after day, in the lordly kitchen, the cry was still, they come! Now, a stranger—a Londoner—owns the home of the Macdonalds, and the descendants of Campbell of Islay have nothing left but the name, and the feudal affection of their former retainers.

Formerly, throughout Islay, the small farm and cottar system was universal, and the continued subdivision of the land, combined with the laziness of the inhabitants, who would not employ themselves steadily in other pursuits, produced the most abject poverty. Thus Pennant: "A set of people worn down with poverty: their habitations scenes of misery made of loose stones; without chimneys, without doors, excepting the faggot opposed to the wind at one or other of the apertures, permitting the smoke to escape through the other, in order to prevent the pains of suffocation. The furniture perfectly corresponds; a pot-hook hangs from the middle of the roof, with a pot pendent over a grateless fire, filled with fare that may rather be called a permission to exist than a

support of vigorous life. The inmates, as may be expected, lean, withered, dusky, and smoke-dried.” This description still applies to many of the poorer dwellings.

They were considerably bettered by the introduction of the potato, and by great improvements in agriculture effected by Mr Campbell. At the same time the surplus population were assisted to emigrate to America and elsewhere.

But the present proprietors did not stop there ; it was not sufficient for them that a vein had been opened and the patient relieved : like Dr Sangrado they continued the bleeding process until they have regularly drained the country of its thews and sinews, and the want of men is already severely felt in several localities. And what have they got in place of the sturdy cultivators ? Why, many parts do not support as many sheep as they formerly did human beings ! The country is not properly suited for sheep, being far too moist, causing foot-rot and other diseases ; and when the present high price of wool abates, as it is bound to do, mayhap the owners of the land will regret having thought so little of the natives, and when too late wish them back again.

There will in all probability be a reaction, at least in favour of cattle. The land in most parts

is much better suited for them. The grass of the hills is too rank for sheep, and I can only account for the scale being turned in their favour of late from the difficulty of supporting the cattle during the winter; also from the "less trouble" always insisted upon by the farmers, the sheep requiring nothing but smearing. Of course the price of wool, and the mania which has overtaken our Highland proprietors for turning their hills into sheep-walks, must also be taken into consideration. But wool must fall with cotton, the price of which has diverted so much of it from its usual channel. Sufficient hay and green crops may then be cultivated or imported to support the cattle during the winter, and the island will return to its first love.

I felt it very depressing and saddening walking over miles and miles of uninhabited country, formerly resounding with the merry laugh or plaintive cry of the children of the Gael. Everywhere vestiges of the departed met the eye in a circle of mouldering moss-clad stones, or a roofless dwelling unwilling to return to mother earth, after having tasted the glory of uprightness. The sweetest pasture is always in and around the crumbling ruins, the situations being observable at a great distance from their tint of fresher emerald. They

seem unable to forget their former dignified position as human abodes, and to wish to keep green the memory of the departed. Or perhaps the spirits of the “rude forefathers of the hamlet” hover o’er the spot, and water it with their tears. “Howsoe’er these things may be,” the fact remains that the country is depopulated.

There always appeared in the walls of these ruined cottages a square aperture pretty well up near the fireplace, which I considered to be the “saut-bucket” found in all Scotch farm-houses. Mr M’Lean of Ballygrant, however, declared them to be the receptacles for the family bibles always possessed by these poor people, and placed there out of harm’s way along with any other literary treasure.

The animal kingdom, especially birds and fishes, is well represented on the island and around the coast. The botany is generally the same as that of the west of Scotland; buckbean, meadow-sweet, and hemlock flourishing in moist situations, and the water-lily adorning the deeper waters. Numerous “ladies’ fingers” open to the sun, and great tracts along the beach are covered with the lovely silver weed.

Of vipers—said to be numerous in the heath—I had not the pleasure of making the acquaintance,

although I had considerable opportunity whilst tramping through the heather, and always kept a sharp look-out. They will likely diminish before the sheep, who bear them no good-will, and destroy them wherever found.

Besides distilling, the industry of Islay is extremely limited. Slate of good colour and quality is worked at Kilchiaran in the south-west, and also to the north of Port Ellen. Portnahaven is a fishing village; but the boats are all small, that they may be readily drawn upon the shore, the coast being exceedingly stormy and the harbourage poor.

The shoals of herring which visit Lochindaal are not at all regular, and their stay is short. Consequently the Portnahaven boats run principally down to the coast of Ireland, in order to ply their trade.

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## TO ISLAY—PORT ELLEN.

ARRIVING at Tarbert by the *Iona*, the traveller to Islay crosses the isthmus by the Campbelton road, as far as the public-house at West Tarbert hamlet, where a branch road leads down the loch to the pier.

At the pier there is only a two-storied dilapidated dwelling-house, occupied by a fisherman. Over a strong sea-wall—erected that coals might be stored for the steamer in its lee—hung a few plash nets for trout-fishing. The inhabitants of the cottages about here are fishermen in the East Loch.

While waiting for the other passengers to arrive, I employed myself watching the embarkation of a flock of sheep, and the trials of skill, strength, or activity of the crew; but what was displayed was very moderate. On leaving, about two o'clock, the boat was obliged to swing carefully round, the water being so shallow, even at this distance from the head. We are soon abreast of Gigha, which from this side looks most unpromising. This is doubtless the point of view from which it derives



the character of a "heap of stones," generally attributed to it.

After a roughish sail of three and a half hours, we enter Port Ellen through an intricate passage, amid numerous small troublesome islets. For some time we had been sailing under the lee of the east coast, passing the residence of Mr Ramsay of Kildalton, and a ruined castle on a rocky island close to the shore. This castle, called Dun Naomhaig, was the last stronghold taken by Campbell from the Macdonalds, having been most stubbornly defended, and only captured by cutting off the supply of water, introduced by pipes from the mainland. Jura having its night-cap on as we were crossing, wet weather was prophesied by several wiseacres, as it is considered something of a weather-glass.

The small harbour of Port Ellen is formed by a point of rock running out into the sea, and terminating in a number of small rocky islets. The end of the principal rock is crowned by a flagstaff rising over two cannons; and as there is a target on a dilapidated pier near the distillery, we may safely conclude that the martial spirit of the age has reached this quiet spot. The town consists of a row of whitewashed, plain, two-story houses, running round the harbour, built so near the water

that the southerly winds of winter coat all the windows with sea-salt, and a street behind the shelter of a rock continued to the open bay.

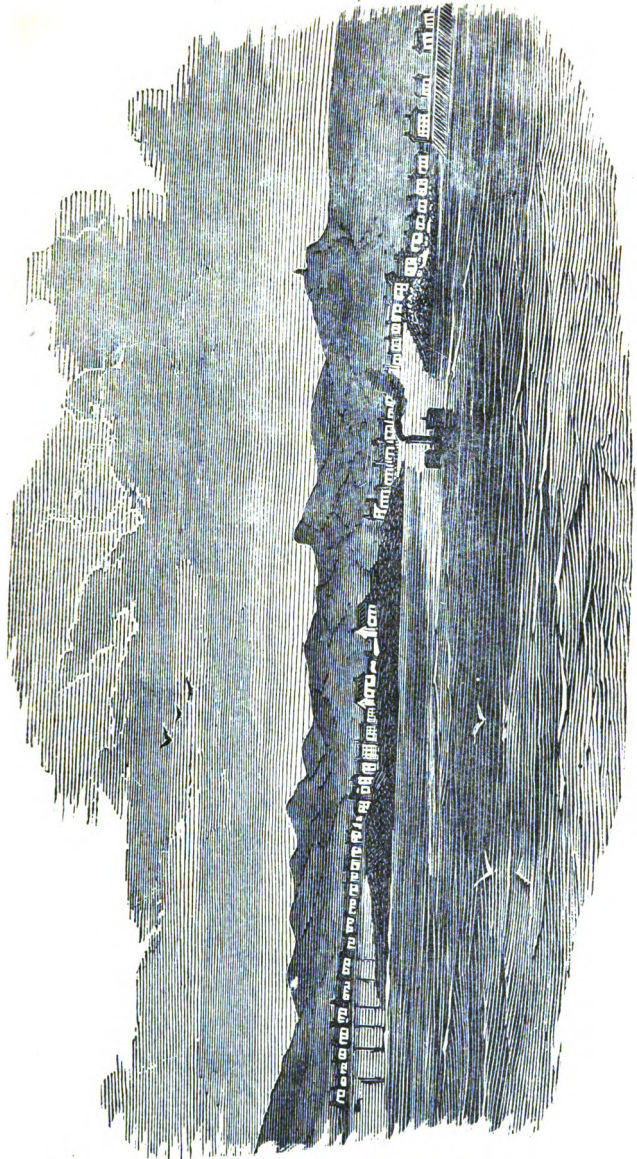
Upon first observing the extent of the town and the small extent of cultivated back country, the "wonder grows" as to what the population are employed upon. Few indeed are fishermen, and the cultivation of the land does not require many. Upon inquiry it appeared that most were employed in the distilleries, but not nearly so many as formerly, and that, on account of the scarcity of employment, a great many families had left a year or two ago for America, leaving numbers of houses unoccupied in town. The houses are all slated from a quarry to the north of the harbour. The slate is of good quality, and abundant. The only shops are a few small grocers, whilst a primitive reading-room, with a few magazines and papers, supplies the intellectual necessities of the inhabitants.

The fact that the town is quite modern accounts for there being no castle or keep near, by which the proprietors in all lands were ever ready to defend the smallest hamlet, in the manner of King Stork. For many miles around it, also, no single "bough was bent"—there being no tree to bear one; and the few ash and other trees brought

up under shelter of the houses could not dominate the walls, and had not sufficient covering for purposes of decency.

The country around is certainly very bare ; but it seems healthy, and not too cold. In strolling about in the neighbourhood, you come upon a great variety of rocks,—quartz rock, limestone, mica slate, chlorite talc, and graywacke, strangely intermingled with the disturbing agent, trap. They are very much impregnated with iron, and doubtless metals would repay research. From the barrenness of the soil, one expects something rich beneath ; just as a very plain young lady is expected to be very clever and virtuous. Mankind has a great dislike to believe in anything being thoroughly worthless ; however stupid a lad may be, the common saying is, “ He must surely be good for *something*.”

Besides oats, there were some good fields of clover, potatoes, and turnips ; the last large and sound, and the potatoes worthy of every commendation. The pasture-land seemed very good, especially around the distillery of Mr Ramsay, where the soil is of a rich but peaty nature. He had a very fine field of barley ripe already for harvest, and the hay crop, which was nearly all stacked, was good and heavy. A month or six



PORT ELLEN, ISLA.



weeks of glorious summer weather, such as they had not experienced before for five or six years, put a Sunday coat over the whole country ; but, like a country clown in a similar predicament, it seemed very uneasy under the infliction, and not at all sure of its own identity. It was not at all prepared for continued sunshine, and the inhabitants of Port Ellen had to carry all their water from a stream beside the distillery, to which they also repaired to wash their clothes. They had not a drop in the whole town ; with water, water everywhere, they had not a drop to drink. No great deprivation for the male portion, at any rate.

The principal birds noticeable among the hills are seabirds, with an occasional curlew or crow ; many white and yellow wagtails ornament the sandy beach.

I was very much pleased, when walking one evening, to come upon a few very picturesque huts in a hollow above the town, and catch sight of a woman tramping blankets in a tub—a sight I have not witnessed for many a day, but which recalled numerous similar scenes on the mainland.

In a field not far from these same huts was an erect stone about twelve feet high, three broad, and one and a-half in thickness, tapering to the top. The tapering had evidently been the work

of the weather, as the laminous nature of the mica slate, of which it was formed, would readily be influenced by sun and shower. At first I thought it might be some druidical erection, and I sought for a sign, but none appeared ; so I left with the conclusion that it might be only “for them to rub themselves on.”

One morning I was awakened at the inn by a creaking noise, the continuance of which prevented me sleeping ; so dressing, and stepping out to learn the cause, I found it proceeded from a churning mill driven by a horse, where they prepared butter to forward to Glasgow, and for the supply of their customers. Morning and evening in the inn, I was regaled by the tinkling of a piano from a neighbouring dwelling. We will be charitable enough to suppose it was once in tune ; at any rate, it was a symptom of advancement, which the absence of a bookseller's shop, or any substitute for one, would certainly not have led us to expect.

My principal articles of sustenance here were chops of the most inordinate dimensions, auguring well of the animals whence they were derived ; whilst the cream was delicious, and certainly not stinted.

## SOUTHWARD TO OE.

*24th August.*—From Port Ellen, skirting the bay to the south in the direction of the lighthouse, we first come to the extensive distillery of Mr Ramsay. This distillery is very extensive, and employs from fifty to sixty men. It is built in two lines; the front one composed of a branch of the City of Glasgow Bank, between two bonded warehouses. Passing this, we come to a plantation of young trees, or rather small trees—as they are evidently advanced in years, if not in stature—which gradually slope up from the sea, increasing in size as they recede from it, until at the road, where it terminates, they reach the height of decent copsewood.

Observing, but not imitating, the leisurely stalk of a heron on the shore at this point, we pushed on to where the plantation stops, and extensive sandbanks commence; evidently the store from whence the shore at Port Ellen is supplied. The surface of the banks was covered with branches of strong grass, sharp-pointed as needles, which



pricked me through my trousers. To the sand-cliffs succeed an old ruined church and graveyard, surrounded by a wall erected in 1852, to preserve the graves from desecration. Several piles of kelp were lying on the shore here, ready for burning.

Behind the lighthouse, which we were now approaching, a solitary individual was employing himself making a few very poor slates. Beyond it the shore becomes high and rocky, and honey-combed with curious holes. One in particular was very singular, traversing the ground like a great rent, a few inches wide at the surface, and increasing with the depth until several yards wide at bottom ; choke-full of all sorts of vegetation. Beside it the white skull and bones of a departed horse lay bleaching in the fierce sun. Here, again, we came upon a splendid beach of fine sand, quite different from that at Port Ellen. It was composed of quartzose particles and powdered shells, and although not nearly so fine-grained, had a much more beautiful appearance in the aggregate. The milk-thistle, with its nice bluish purple flower, and a flowerless rock-plant, grew here in the sand ; also an extraordinary number of large land shells — evidently accounting for the composition of the sand — clung to the

rocks, and scrambled about the shore in all directions.

Near this another cave appeared in the rock, the face of which was covered with overhanging ivy, and the interior filled with beautiful ferns, and the most exquisite moss we ever beheld. Even here, however, a sign of civilisation obtruded itself in the shape of a gun-wad.

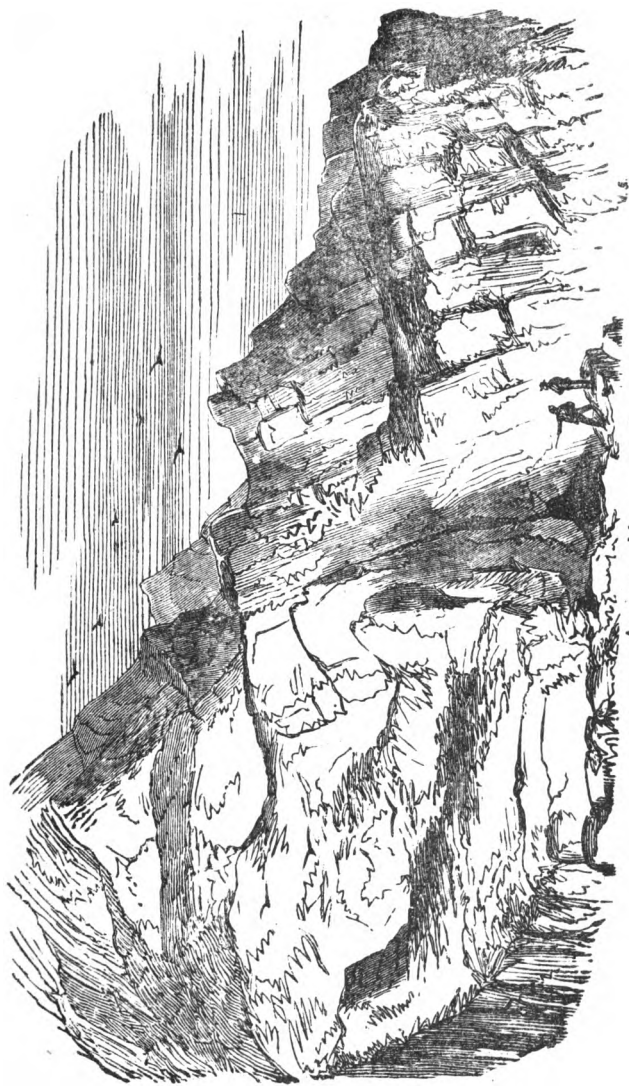
Onwards, by numerous little inlets with precipitous sides, to a lovely little bay with shelving banks, and a little stream falling over the rocks in the centre, meandering through the beautiful yellow sandy beach to the sea. Numerous sea-birds and curlews were squatted over the sand, and their tracks crossed it everywhere.

From that to the Oe any number of these little bays, with precipitous sides, were passed; the way being enlivened by a chat with a man at the bottom of one of them, who, with his wife and two children, were employed burning kelp, which they conveyed to Port Ellen by boat. We also broke the monotony of the walk by an ineffectual chase after a sea otter in one of the inlets, through which a stream rushed; but the animal made off with such extreme agility and immense leaps, that it must have chuckled at the completeness of our discomfiture.

At the Oe, to which you descend with some difficulty, the lad who acted as my guide seemed to do his utmost endeavours to break both my neck and his own. If there was an easy and a difficult way, he invariably chose the latter; twice coming to a stop, unable to proceed—even his dogged, stupid nature acknowledging the impossibility of continuing in the direction we were going.

The Oe itself is an immense semicircle of rocks of great height, enclosing a bay paved with enormous stones and numerous rocks, small only in comparison with the cliffs around. About the summit of the highest rocks a number of blue rock-pigeons circled; while 'beneath, and hardly noticeable, is the cave, which would scarcely have been considered worthy of attention in any other situation. On the face of the cliffs, above the principal cave, there are several minor ones, which I think the more interesting, although neither are of much consequence. On the roof of the lower there is a curious stalactitic accumulation, remarkable for excessive hardness, and its green and pink tinge.

If some marine naturalist were to take up his abode for a little within the semicircle of the rocks, I have no doubt, from what I observed, his labours



AT THE MULL OF OE.



would be amply rewarded. After a bath in a quiet spot, under shelter of some immense rocks, I changed my socks, my boots having been dried by the sun whilst I was in the water. Spending a few minutes at my pencil as the articles of toilet were drying upon the rocks, we returned to the cave. On the way there we had a chase after a fish in a quiet pool, but the rascal would not be persuaded to leave a Goliath of a stone under which he had taken refuge, so we were obliged to leave him alone in his glory. No coaxing could prevail upon my companion to take the water and refresh himself; he evidently considered his *extra-superficial cuticle* as a species of perennial under-clothing.

Shortly after six o'clock we started on our return, scrambling up the face of the principal cliff, the greater part being accomplished on our hands and knees, and even a considerable distance on our stomachs. At one part as I was ascending inch by inch, pushing my plaid before me, and just as I was supporting myself by my knees alone on a ledge about six inches broad, unable to look either to the right hand or to the left, my youthful guide, who was in front climbing like a cony, suddenly announced his inability to proceed farther. As I was suspended between heaven and earth,

and just as unable to retrograde, while at the same time I was within a foot or two of his heels, my heart went off at a pace considerably beyond its usual. However, he at last managed to get over the difficulty; but when I got to the spot, being unable to support my weight on a blade of grass as he must certainly have done, and also being encumbered with my plaid, I was very thankful indeed to find he could lend me a hand from his point of vantage.

A few minutes after this he let fall my sketching stool, which I had tossed to him when in difficulties, and it rolled to the bottom. What was my amusement to see the rascal set off down a comparatively easy path, soon returning and rejoining me at the top, which I had by this time reached. In vain I tried to inculcate into his fiery red-haired skull the fact that the easiest path was the shortest—invariably he chose the most difficult; and even within a mile of Port Ellen seriously damaged my shins, besides the “peril to my craig,” by taking me over a stretch of execrable rocks in the dark. I could not conclude whether his conduct arose from stupidity or mischief, but as he did not look particularly bright, and seemed to suffer as much as I did, I fancy it must have arisen from sheer cranial density. Heartily glad was I when I reached the

inn, after a nine hours' scramble over as heavy ground as I have experienced.

If any one, finding himself at Port Ellen, should wish to visit some interesting ground really worthy a day's excursion, let him take warning, and not go on foot, but hire a boat; an hour's pull will take him to his destination, and save him many a distressing scramble. Or if, the weather being unfavourable for boating, he should desire to go on foot, take no guide—they are a delusion and a snare; and keep to the road to the south, not go stumbling over the precipitous rocks of the shore, which are much more suitable for a sea-otter than a human being. This from one who is no miser of his feet!

All the way various gulls and curlews held undisputed sway over the coast, and, judging from the nature of the outcries raised at our approach, were by no means prepared to extend Highland hospitality to their visitors.

As we returned to the inn, a stream of inhabitants was passing along within a foot of the sea, to and from the neighbourhood of the distillery, for water. A yard or so higher up they would have sunk over the feet every step in the fine sand, but near the rippling wavelets the path was firm and pleasant to the almost universally barefooted female water-carriers.



Now, having returned after such a severe day's toil, you will doubtless suppose the satisfaction of having seen the Oe was quite sufficient recompense. So thought I ; and this delusion I hugged for a week, until my return to Bowmore from the north, when a good-natured friend told me I had been hoaxed. I found there a party of four, who had been away for a whole day in a boat, trying to reach it from that side, but unable to do so from the then severity of the weather. So we must just survey the petted beauty through the eyes of another.

“ ‘Sloch-cul-Tory,’ the sea flows into it by two openings ; one of them a splendid arch of considerable span, the other a narrow deep open cut, (its circumference is about 300 feet, and its depth from 105 to 200.) Directly opposite the arch is another cave of considerable depth, from which the surge is thrown back with such violence that it is carried over the mouth of the basin to a considerable distance. The whole outline of this part of the coast is peculiarly grand.” So that shepherd boy has nearly broken our necks to see one of the “peculiarly grand” parts of the coast. Mal—no ! Benedicite ! may he live to see the error of his ways.

## TO BOWMORE.

ABOUT eleven o'clock of a roasting day I left Port Ellen for Bowmore. After proceeding about a mile, Lochindaal suddenly appeared, stretched like a bright blue ribbon in the distance. From this to Bowmore is about the dullest, dreariest road I ever traversed. A heavy cold, a heavy knapsack, a heavy plaid, a broiling sun, a terribly dusty road, and a heavy uninteresting country, formed a *tout ensemble* not at all likely to leave a pleasant impression on the memory—nor has it.

Plenty of peat-moss—great tracks studded with peat-stacks—a few fields of potatoes and oats, and numerous fine trout streams, in general not observable until you are close upon them, was all that was noticeable in my walk. Twice in that short distance of eleven miles did I stop to rest; tell it not in Gath! mention it not in the streets of Glasgow. Once I called a noonday halt beneath a bridge, where the thermometer showed 90°; and once stretched myself under the shade of a haystack, which gave me some labour clearing my

coat and plaid of the seeds and particles. Both stoppages were by the margins of delicious streams, so that I might cool my eyes by gazing in the water, and watch with eagerness the fishes as they flitted in the pools.

A few miserable cottages at intervals, and a few more sheep and cattle, announce the approach to Bowmore. So, after passing an excited young stirk with but the opening chapter of a tail—and so unable either to fan itself or drive away the flies—I entered Bowmore, as brown and dry as a stacked peat.

At dinner, the salmon—caught in the loch and the river Lagg—were exceedingly salt, evidently designed to make the consumer as “drouthy” as possible. The potatoes, on the other hand, were superb, of great size, and sound to the inmost core. Four young fellows who came into the inn, and indulged in potations of beer, were natives of the place, and students of Glasgow college. Whether they had brought back with them a love of literature as well as of liquor, I could not ascertain from their conversation.

From Bowmore there is communication by omnibus both with Port Ellen and Port Askaig, it being equidistant from either place, namely, eleven miles. The town is considerably more extensive

than Port Ellen, and evidently much more ancient ; like the latter place, however, many of the houses were empty. Gone to America! the universal tale. There are several churches, Free, Baptist, and Established, with distilleries in opposition ; and a large poorhouse was being erected on a hill over the town. On an eminence to the south, there is a small, square watch-tower of the most paltry description,—ten feet square, two feet thick, and sixteen to eighteen feet in height ; and on the shore below it an old cannon without any mark, whether formerly on the tower or not, nobody cared, and nobody knew.

There is a pier here, but seemingly not well frequented. The loch, however, is a fine safe roadstead, eight miles broad at the entrance, and twelve miles deep. The head is at Bridgend, and is very shallow, great tracts being left bare at low water. There are said to be capital oysters in it in great quantities, but owing to the obduracy and aversion to change that characterises the inhabitants, they have never been gathered. The oysters have been there for ages, and the immense clusters are being formed into solid rock, disgusted with having waited so long in vain to be collected.

Ropes made of twisted heath, and supporting

heavy stones or beams of wood, formed a network over the thatched roofs, being evidently necessary from the severe storms that sweep over this low land from the Atlantic. Along the shore to the south the principal rock is clay slate, exceedingly distorted, and lying at every angle but that in which it was originally deposited.

At breakfast, of which I partook along with two young men from St Mungo, an Islay rabbit was introduced. It was most graciously received, and had a very strange gamey flavour, evidently caused by feeding on some peculiar herb; nor was it nearly so dry as those animals usually are. My breakfast companions had been staying a few days shooting gulls and water-hens round the coast, and carried back, as their sole trophies, several splendid lobsters caught in the loch.

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## TO BALLYGRANT.

ON another scorching day I departed for Ballygrant about ten in the forenoon, passing some salmon-nets on the loch, and onwards by a great stretch of sand left by the tide. Harvest had just commenced around Bowmore, and true harvest weather they had. Through the domains of Islay House, the village of Bridgend, the "capital" of the island, is reached ; surrounding it lay the first real wooding I had seen in Islay. Many fine streams were crossed in my farther progress, but nothing worth noting was observable until my arrival at Ballygrant. Having been informed that no house of entertainment but a small public was to be met with, I put up at the first that retailed liquor on the outskirts of the place, when I learned that a regular inn was situated farther along, in the centre of the village. The inn was rather primitive, as suited such an out-of-the-way place. An exciseman was accommodated in the room opposite mine, and some one from the department of Woods and Forests had been staying all

the winter, looking after the neighbouring plantations.

Ballygrant is the Cornwall of Islay, having been the mining district at various periods for centuries ; formerly the work was carried on by trenching ; and there is evidence of the Norwegians having dug to some extent for the lead, copper, and mundic here obtained. But only of late years has it been taken up with spirit, much money having been spent in the erection of workmen's houses, sinking shafts, importing machinery, &c. The lead yields about ten per cent copper, and four to five ounces silver to the ton ; not forty ounces silver, as has been mentioned.

The machinery at the mines, hitherto worked by water, was being supplied with a steam engine, as the want of water had been severely felt of late. At my visit, mechanical means were the only ones employed in extracting the metal, but these were of the first order. They had not gone deeper than sixty yards in the shafts at that time, and although I saw some large masses of pure ore, nothing could be predicted of their success ; no tangible returns had been received for their then outlay.

Here I obtained the extraordinary luxury, in these regions, of a bowl of rice soup for dinner ; rejecting the ham as knowing its relations, I pre-

ferred Islay potatoes and a tumbler of milk. The traveller in such places must consider his meals of the least possible consequence, or carry his provisions along with him.

In the evening, when the sun's heat had moderated somewhat, I took a quiet saunter in the vicinity. The pasture all about is first-rate, and crossing the fields to the south-east, a shady nook near a stream turned out to be the well whence the inhabitants derived their water.

After passing along over some marshy land behind a neat schoolroom, with schoolhouse attached—at present occupied by Mr M'Lean, a man of well-known ability and general literary acquirements—and crossing the stream, poisoned by the refuse from the mines, I seated myself on a grassy knoll, and attempted to take a jotting of the general appearance of the place. But no sooner was I seated than such a swarm of midges, as I hope never to encounter again, surrounded and nearly devoured me. In vain I tried to see my subject; the horizon was a cloud of midges, the middle-distance was composed of midges, the foreground a couple of midges fighting for the corner of my eye. Vainly I sought to place pencil on the paper. Midges, midges, midges! In an agony of despair I rose and fled. While hurrying home,



a young lad, on a visit from Port-Glasgow, told me that insects formed one of the institutions of Ballygrant, so I suppose it has to pay for its shady boughs. Old mining holes may also prove a harbour of refuge for them. Arranging with the above casual acquaintance to visit the neighbouring coast next morning, I reached the inn to find a missionary installed in the room under me, where he holds a meeting every Friday night. Going out and walking about the vicinity for fully an hour and a half, on my return he was still hard at work, and for half an hour longer I was left in the dark in my room—the attendants “sitting under him”—regaled with such a steam of Gaelic from the apartment below, that I was heartily glad when, the “ahems” becoming more and more frequent, he ran himself out.

*27th August.*—After a breakfast, at which two turkey eggs paid me a visit of condolence, I again sauntered forth to look about me, as the youth was not punctual to time. Walking through the wood I started a hare, and having now had frequent opportunities of observing these animals, I can corroborate Pennant's statement that they are very brown; but hesitate as to their being small and bad runners. They seemed to be good average specimens, and to scamper off with great activity;

but having no dog with me, their speed remained untested.

On my return from a trip to the castle of the Macdonalds, I dined rather late on whiting brought from the coast, and then took a turn round towards the east, where there are three lochs within a short distance of one another. One is in the centre, the others, one at each side of a wood ; the distillery belonging to Bulloch, Lade, and Co., of Glasgow, being situated between two of them. They are all full of fine trout ; the exciseman had just returned, as I stepped out, with a lot of beauties from one of them. Passing an old mining hole, the grave of the former company's capital, I returned to the inn, and prepared to leave for Port Askaig. Setting out from Ballygrant at eight in the evening, a walk along a rather pleasant road brought me to an avenue of trees on either side of a winding, descending path, ending at Port Askaig.

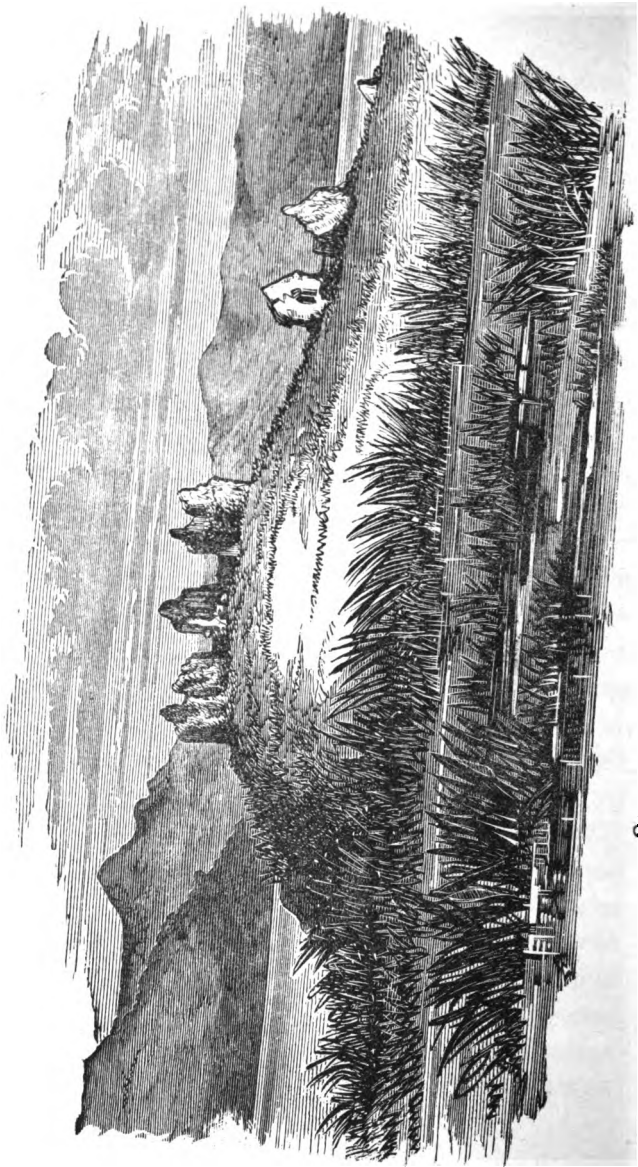
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PORTINEALAN LOCH, AND  
"GUDDLING."

ACROSS the hills with my young Port-Glasgow friend, to visit the castle of the Macdonalds on Loch Portinealan or Finlagan; I found it to be but half an hour's walk from the inn. Passing round the northern end of the loch, over a few of its rippling feeders, I came to the shore nearest to the island on which the castle is situated, but there being no boat on the loch, could not get out to it. The island is not far from the shore, the intervening water being nearly covered with long reeds. To judge from the remains, the castle must have been of considerable extent, and the ruins of a small chapel still exist at the other end of the pocket island.

Passing down by the west side of the loch to the southern end of it, where a few wild ducks were whirling among the flags, growing here to a great height; we then walked down by the side of the stream issuing from it. For a good distance after you leave the loch, the stream, which you





CASTLE OF THE MACDONALDS ON LOCH FINLAGAN.

can stride across, is yet of great depth, and in places covered with the large broad leaves of the water-lily. As the water at first has scarcely any fall, the land at each side has more the appearance of having grown over a part of the loch, leaving a passage for the water, than land through which the water has cut a path. Some time since a young girl fell in and was drowned, in attempting to pluck some of the lilies; they were smiling quite placidly as I passed, as if wickedly spreading themselves for other victims. No! that is not it, they desired to win some other little innocent from the "breakers ahead."

Numerous snipe were started as we followed the stream, and seeing that it abounded with trout, seemingly unconscious of belonging to any one, we picked up a few for dinner.

"GUDDLING."

Let us pause a moment to explain. Given a fair-sized "burn," and an individual on the bank, how are the trout therein to be transferred to his protection? By one of the most delightfully enticing of all sports, say I. Go in and take them like a man,—don't draw them to their destruction by pretending to satisfy their hunger. Angling may be high art, and a spectacled gentleman displaying his

ability by endeavouring skilfully to make a poor little finny creature believe that he is actuated by philanthropic motives in tossing it a fly, may be truly sublime, but to appearance it is certainly as truly ridiculous. But I'm not going to attempt the Herculean labour of denouncing angling, which is really a delightful pastime to a lazy individual, I merely desire to declare the superior merits of guddling, or ginning, as it is sometimes called.

Draw your trousers up over the knees, my lad! —I have known enthusiastic guddlers to whom the word "lad" was a memory—roll up your sleeves to the shoulder, and commencing down the stream guddle up, that the discoloured water may run away from you.

There is a stone with a trout or two, I know! If there is an assistant he pokes it up with a stick—out rushes a terrified fellow, and, after a wild circle, either hurries back, or seeks the shelter of his country-lodge under yonder bank. Cautiously now! you have alarmed him. Lying quietly down with your head and shoulders over the bank, the dripping grass is drawn carefully aside, for the fiftieth time the shirt sleeves are pulled up a little bit further, and both hands skilfully introduced. The hole is too far in however; one hand must do the work. Now is the time for skilful handling;

in, in ; I'm at his tail ! a bad part to catch that, he would slip away in a twinkling. Gently you tickle him with the end of the finger, and get him to slide back a little. Tickle, tickle ! softly now, and you have him ! You have got your hand to his middle or his head ; suddenly the fist is closed in a vice-like gripe, and a burn trout, a spotty, with its wee gaping mouth and staring eye, is thrown upon the bank.

A woman's first child, a lawyer's first brief, an Indian's first scalp, a youth's first watch, a lover's first kiss,—for no simile will come amiss,—what are they all to a boy's first "spotty," dragged gasping by the young savage from its own domain, his face red, and eyes staring from anxious detention of breath—with a thrill of wild excitement, and joy, and exultation, shivering through his frame, and his heart almost bursting with the pride of a conqueror, and the frantic enthusiasm of a hunter !

And then, as you proceed, there are the adventures to give zest to the sport. Perhaps you seize a water-rat by the back, as I have done, and narrowly escape having its teeth meeting in your hand. Or again, a couple, after long and anxious endeavour, drag forth with throbbing hearts a large—frog ! or still more often, a "likely" place yields to the disgusted guddler a slippery, ferocious eel.



And the trout itself; a burn trout, a spotted trout, more beautiful even than the salmon, the king of trouts. You spread your treasures out on a green bank and lie down beside them, turning them over with admiration. Or perhaps you have transferred them to a pan brought for the purpose, changing the water regularly, and gazing into it with unutterable thoughts—the rippling burn beside, the sky above, and nature dancing within and around you; surely, surely, this is happiness!

THE BURN TROUT.

In and out, in and out  
 Speeds the lovely spotted trout ;  
 From slippery stone to reedy bank,  
 O'er beds of algæ, green and dank :  
 Like a flash of light it crosses the stream,  
 And away again like a poet's dream.  
 No blinded sight can follow thee  
 In thy movements sharp, and thy course so free ;  
 Fleet indeed, yet light withal,  
 Must be his foot holds thee in thrall,  
 And gentle as Italian gales  
 Must be the palms that feel thy scales.

You have him now ! No ! he slips away  
 Like morning gliding into day,

And scarce the rippling stream betrays  
The path where vagrant spotty strays ;  
Yield up the chase ! yield up the day !  
'Tis viewless as a water-fay.

Ah ! how oft in a dreamy maze  
Have I lain and watch'd thy sprightly ways,  
When the savage instincts of the race  
To milder, gentler, thoughts gave place.  
I seemed to slip into the pool,  
So deep, so placid, and so cool ;  
I tried to mingle in their games ;  
To tell them mine, and learn their names ;  
But never would they near remain,  
Nor e'er forget their comrades slain ;  
They seem'd to say, with sadden'd eyes,  
" How long is 't till your race be wise ?  
How long until we're left at peace,  
And all our finny troubles cease ?"  
With painful feeling I'd reply,  
" Death is all fishes' legacy !  
Whether it come by man or beast,  
What matter ! you shall form a feast ;  
And, long as this our earth shall roll,  
Sure death must visit fish and fowl."

Spreading our plaids on a quiet spot by the

stream, we partook of that portable luncheon, the inevitable one in the country, biscuits and cheese. Our exciting raids after the fish had supplied us with the "best sauce," and a cup of water from a shady pool, duly tempered with the true Islay beverage, to prevent any bad results from our wetting, completed our repast. This enabled us to reach our several places of shelter from the severe night of rain now setting in.

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## EXCURSIONS FROM PORT ASKAIG.

ON the morning of the 28th August, after breakfasting along with Mr C—— from Oban, and Mr M'Lean of Ballygrant, we took a boat and sailed down the sound to Macarthur's Head lighthouse, so called from an individual of the name having lived in the vicinity of the bold bluff on which it is built. The coast on the way down exhibits situations of great beauty, and, doubtless, when the long-promised canal between East and West Tarbert is constructed, the shores will be studded with villas. Since the time of my visit, I understand Mr Child has built his mansion-house on this part of the coast.

Lovely waterfalls rushing over moss and fern-covered cliffs, and beautiful miniature glens traversed by splendid streams racing to the surf. Here the shore slopes gradually from the sea, covered with heather and ferns, the springing mattresses of many a grouse; there a broad shingly beach is dotted over with great blocks of rocks, flung at the glittering pebbles from the cliffs

beyond. All the way down, at intervals, there are interesting caves in the quartz and trap rock, some of them of very curious formation. In one instance, the cave was divided by a great partition, about two feet broad, all the way to the top ; in another there were various antechambers ; while at a short distance from the shore several curious arches were readily observable from the boats. At one part a great line of trap rocks was laid along the verge of, and partly in, the water ; and from the great breadth and peculiar breakage, gave the idea of the ruins of some gigantic work of architecture.

Several natural objects were pointed out to me, of which the names were tautological combinations of Norse and Gaelic ; among others, a waterfall was known by the name of "Eas-fors," the "waterfall-waterfall."

As we approached the lighthouse the coast became steeper, rising to a considerable height, and showing distinctly the stratification of the quartz rock. At the lighthouse—which is some height over the sea, with the ground around it a carefully-tended oasis in the desert—the most curious cave on this part of the coast is to be seen. There is an entrance and an exit ; and here, in days gone by, one of the hunted Macdonalds is said to have hidden. His skull was formerly to be seen on a

shelf in the cave, and the belief was general that whenever carried away it returned to the old place. However, for many years past it has disappeared, and, whatever it may do, has not yet made its appearance on its old position. Several inhabited, and many deserted, cottages were visible on the coast, and in one we discovered the proprietor, nicely dressed in black, having just returned from church, the walk to and from being *twenty-one* miles. In general the abodes were miserable, full of chickens and peat-reek.

The views from the lighthouse, and various other parts of the coast, are very fine, stretching north and south from the authoritative central peaks of Arran. Plenty of fowling on sea and land, numerous shoals of fish, with every advantage in the way of pleasant situations and delightful views, what more can be desired for a country residence, excepting congenial companionship; and where known beauty is, there shall its lovers be gathered together.

Upon a hill dominating Port Askaig and Ballygrant, and easily seen from the water, is an old ruined fort named Dun Bhorairraig, said to be Danish, and described as of a circular form, formed of excellent masonry without mortar, twelve feet thick, with a gallery all round in the wall, and

the evidences of a subterraneous passage to a sally-port. At the bottom of the sound, close to the island of Jura, lies the small islet of Fruchlin, on which the ruined castle of Claig, where the Macdonalds formerly kept their prisoners, is still to be seen.

Next day, having had the good fortune to obtain a passage in the steamer belonging to the neighbouring distillery, we passed rapidly up the northern coast of the island. The shore of the sound to our left was very pleasing, from the distillery as far as the bay, where it takes a more northerly turn; from this bay to Rumal Point—the point of the rent—the hills are to appearance rugged and barren, although rearing some of the best sheep on the coast. From a short way on this side of the point, until many miles round on the west side, the cliffs bordering the sea are literally honeycombed with caves.

As we passed along, numerous sea-pies, sea-swallows, and gulls were hurrying down the coast, and on a rocky islet off the shore a flock of stolid-looking cormorants were lazily perched. Blue pigeons are said to be very numerous among the caves, but I saw none. One of the caves, called the Great Cove or Uamh-mhor, is of large size: no one has as yet penetrated to the end. Some dis-

tance in there is a stream, and still farther a lake, so I was solemnly, and apparently conscientiously, informed.

Leaving the islands of Oronsay and Colonsay on our right, we cast anchor within view of Nave Island, and went ashore in the boat. As the object of the steamer's presence there was the breaking up and carrying off portions of a large vessel that had gone down here two years before, we left the men at their work, and Mr B——, the owner of the steamer, went off in the boat to fish.

A quantity of provisions having been brought ashore, we first deposited them in a cave high up in the face of the cliff, where a bed had been erected by some fishermen out of portions of the wreck. Having also provided a bag of peats and some coals, a fire was soon blazing, and leaving a lad in the cave to look after the provender, Mr C—— and self set out on a cave-hunting expedition.

Although my companion had seen most of the great sights of that description in the north of Scotland, he acknowledged he had never seen anything to beat what we now witnessed. Not one or two caves, but a brilliant succession of them, suited to all tastes. Here, clambering up a cliff to the mouth of the cave, as we fancied, on approaching,



it gradually developed into a beautiful arch, opening into dreamland. Stately arched doorways to the temple of nature, and mighty columns of pure quartz glistening in the sun, with great ruined dykes of trap running out into the sea, all seeming as if "piled by the hands of giants in godlike days of old." Then turning aside, and entering an archway of Gothic architecture, you discover a perfect fairy scene. A lovely cascade, seventy or eighty feet high, falling into an elegant basin; on each side of the fall, a short way from the ground, are two interesting caves. One of these is filled with tasteful ferns, the other with a luxuriant growth of the hartstongue species, of most unusual dimensions. In this a stalagmitic formation, quite soft and of a reddish-yellow colour, was dotted over with the green fern fronds; while to the right another stream, rushing merrily down, joined the first at the basin, and, arm-and-arm, they danced through the arch by which we entered.

Each view was more wild and beautiful than the preceding, each cave more interesting and fantastic. The whole shore was a network of streams interlacing and crossing from every quarter, all alive with trout, and glancing in the sunbeams.

Returning to the cave we had selected as our

habitation, we found our friend sitting by the fire, and a number of fish, the produce of his own labour and skill, in a pan on the peats, "cheek by jowl" with another of potatoes. The scene to a passing stranger would have been "passing strange." Well up the face of a hill was a dark opening, and looking down you observed a curious bedstead, made from parts of the wreck, and half hidden by great boulders lying between it and the light. Before the bed was an iron hook, suspended over another stone, against which the fire was "bigget," and from which a great volume of peat reek proceeded, and curled to the mouth of the cave. The "dim religious light" of the habitation, *pro tem.*, the figures passing to and fro around the fire like the demons in a pantomime, the extemporised table formed from a piece of the wreck laid on two stones, with other stones for seats, and the grotesque rocky hole descending at an angle of forty-five, was altogether wild and weird.

Nor did we lack the amenities of civilisation in this savage den. Sparkling champagne, and plenty of Islay's own peculiar, circled round the table, and loosened the tongues of the occupants, already glib with the wonders they had seen. Then, leaving the fragments of the feast to be discussed

by the Highland boatmen, we sauntered down the steep path to the beach, and stretching ourselves on the gravel in the sun, relieved our overburthened minds by shying stones at a mark, or lolling on our backs "like gods together, careless of mankind."

Nectar was not awaiting even here ; to soothe the gods' contemporaneous views of men and manners, a tumbler of boiled grog appeared, a much superior beverage to toddy, especially when served out of the pan in which it has been boiled, under such romantic conditions. The water for our culinary preparations was drawn from a charming little spring, gurgling up through the fine gravelly beach as clear as crystal, and delightfully cool from the shelter of the neighbouring rocks.

The men having now finished their labours, and the day being on the wane, we got aboard the little steamer. But when we rounded Rupal Point on our way home, we found the boat could not proceed down the sound until far on in the morning, the tide having been lost, and the water rushing through the sound at a great rate.

The night blowy and wet, the distance considerable, no road as yet having stretched itself out, and the hills unknown to at least two of the

party, we decided to remain on board. I hope none of the parties regretted the decision.

As it was 8 P.M. when we cast anchor, and 5 A.M. when we again got under weigh, a considerable time was at our disposal. Mr B—— set out in a boat “to fish” in spite of the night, but neither of us having a change of raiment, and the length of probable detention unknown to us, we preferred remaining under shelter.

The cabin, having been dismantled shortly before, afforded no accommodation whatever so Mr C——, myself, and a little boy-friend of the owner, set about preparing to pass the night as best we could. I can't say that I passed the night, but somehow or other it must have gone by, although, to our jaundiced minds, with heavy step and slow. My companion, Mr C——, occupied the only disposable bed in the cabin, a mattress spread over an array of empty bottles in one of the berths. Little Johnny curled himself up in another berth, and, notwithstanding its many inconveniences, slept the sleep of the innocent. Poor little Johnny! at certain, or rather uncertain, intervals throughout the night, a pair of boots, followed by Mr C——, might have been observed issuing from his berth, and immediately thereafter, “Poor little Johnny”

was rudely shaken out of his quiet nap by the same individual, assisted by cries that the ship was sinking. When the little fellow crawled out of his berth in a dozing state, he was thereupon assailed in the most dreadful Gaelic, by a demand for "ooch fort," always accompanied by the explanation of "water." And then poor little Johnny had to crawl along the deck, over great pieces of piled logs from the wreck, to the bow of the steamer, and return through the darkness and the rain with the water, which was invariably increased by "something to kill the insects." During his absence, Mr C—— stamped about the little cabin, groaning and muttering, "Poor little Johnny," as he thought of his obliging little victim, between his agonies. Yes! you managed to get through the night between sleeping and eating, and heartrending exclamations of, "This is dreadful!" "Oh dear!" and maledictions against Islay, its whisky, its weather, and its inhabitants. I reached the morning light attempting to sleep on my back on a board, in my damp clothes; this I would have managed but for the continual clamours of my neighbour, starting me from many a hard-won nap; upon which I assisted him, from philanthropic motives of course, in demolishing the bread and whisky. Or, pacing the deck over the

fragments of wreck, I watched the lighthouse glittering on the water, and the strange half spectral forms of the mountains around, standing, ogre-like, sentry through the night.

But the darkest night having an end, morning broke ; and shortly after seven we were landed at the pier of the distillery, where we found the owner had arrived about twelve the night before, in spite of the fishing. We reached Port Askaig in time for my companion to catch the steamer, but just in time to miss his breakfast. As he crammed his carpet bag, he insisted upon my leaving such a rascally land immediately. But making some allowances for a sleepless night, and a gnawing stomach, I smiled and remained.

While at anchor, several boats passed us going down the west side, some proceeding to Loch Gruinard to the sealing, others having lobster traps on board.

Altogether, notwithstanding the unfortunate ending to the day's work, it was one of the most glorious I have ever had the good fortune to spend, and I would heartily advise any tourist who found himself in the neighbourhood to employ a day amongst the caves and wonderful scenery of the north-west coast. The rocks are of pure quartz, and the contortions of the strata

could only have been caused by the most fearful throes of nature. As a general rule, if you have to walk over them, the rocks prefer having their strata in a vertical position, and the quartz being brittle and almost laminous, the surface exposed is as sharp and rough footing as a lot of mussel beds with the edges up. I shall long remember the marvellous scenery of the north-west coast of Islay.

On my return, about eight o'clock, I had to wait, along with numerous passengers and residents at the inn, two hours for breakfast. And here let me remark, that any one visiting Port Askaig at this time required a Red Indian's endurance of hunger. The town, marked in some maps as the largest in Islay, and even in the admiralty charts with above a score of houses, consists, in reality, of an inn and two other houses. The inhabitants, besides the people of the inn, consist of a neighbouring proprietor, and family. Now, as this gentleman monopolises the greater part of the inn, keeping his own servants there, and no one getting anything until he is served, the service of the house is a mere mockery. Surely a gentleman and large proprietor ought not to come year after year and take up the accommodation by right belonging to visitors; by so doing not only causing exceeding great annoyance to the casual and

regular guests, but so disgusting visitors with the island that several left in the state of feeling of the prophet when he shook the dust off his shoes.

I did not get a single meal under one hour after the time ordered, although the waitress, an agreeable, obliging girl, evidently did her best for the accommodation of the guests. Two hours was the usual time required for the supply of the most general wants. After this warning to visitors I may proceed with my observations on the country, trusting this annoying monopoly is no longer in operation.

The neighbouring land seems to consist principally of good pasture. Behind the "town," a fair extent of wood stretches up the hill, through which the steep road winds. The harbour is not at all safe, and the shipping is merely nominal. Directly opposite, on the coast of Jura, there is a good roadstead, where a score of vessels are sometimes anchored at a time. Down the sound, which is half a mile wide at its narrowest part, a very swift current runs. A pioneer of the Government survey, who had just arrived, and had fixed a tide-gauge this morning, informed me that the tide had risen eight feet that day; it had remained long at the full, and retired slowly. The surveyor had to seek quarters at a cottage near, from the state of matters at the inn.



Right over the quay rises an abrupt rocky cliff, on the top of which is situated a ruined ivy-covered watch-tower. The position is delightful, and commands an extensive view. They say Port Askaig ought to have been much farther down the sound ; and certainly, for all the size of the place, a lorry would soon transport it to any part of the coast experience or wisdom might point out as the most advantageous.

Having gone to bed for an hour or two to recruit, I had just time to take a breath of air outside before dinner. Afterwards, the rain descending, and the floods coming in earnest, I was unable to make any other visits, but confined myself to the house, where I had to listen to the astounding scientific declarations of an old Indian officer, whose lucubrations I referred to the fact of his being of the "ignorant military class," which, when he was in his prime, was too great to descend to plebeian study. But he had the advantage of being a gentleman, and of expressing his opinions, however inconsonant with the present advancement of science, in a gentlemanly manner.

Fish are very numerous off the coast ; and a fine array of sea-urchins, caught on the shore, adorned one of the window-sills in the hotel.

## THE "BIG COVE," AND NORTH-WEST.

AFTER waiting some time for the tide to turn up the sound, and for another *lad*—as every man is called here, in place of *boy*, as in Ireland—to join the boatman I had secured, we at length got started at half past eleven of the 31st August, in order, if possible, to reach Nave Island. But the Fates had decreed that such a thing was not to be. On rounding the Rupal Point, we had half an hour's hard pulling to advance quarter of a mile to the Cotton Beach. This is the name of the only landing-place for boats in this quarter; so called from a cotton ship having gone ashore thirty to forty years ago.

Passing a diving herring-catcher, we ran our boat as near the shore as the shallow sandy beach allowed, one of the boatmen carrying myself and his companion ashore. We then started on foot to explore the cave known as the Uamh-Mhor, Uam-Fhearnaig, or Great Cove, one mile from where we landed, having for this purpose brought cord and candles.

We soon reached the cove, situated in a small amphitheatre of rocks, surrounding a fine patch of green grass of about six acres, formerly under cultivation, as may be seen from the "rig and fur." The cave itself was at one time inhabited, when the green formed the farm of the indwellers. At its mouth dykes are built across, leaving only a small entrance, and after proceeding a hundred yards another is encountered, built completely across, to prevent the sheep advancing beyond. In this area the flocks of the neighbouring farmer are clipped and smeared, the entrance having several pens dyked off for the purpose. I was informed by the shepherd that it could hold, up to the dividing dyke, about fourteen hundred sheep. Beyond the inner dyke the cave penetrates about one hundred yards farther, becoming then so narrow that not even a dog could proceed further. Consequently all the wondrous tales thereanent are like such tales in general in the Highlands, springing from a very lively imagination.

Priming the two boatmen, I obtained explicit directions how to proceed onwards by land to the house of Neil M'Coll, the only shepherd hereabout, where I was to use the names of my directors as security for good treatment. The rascals having likewise demanded mine as a *bona fide*

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character, I paid them well, and giving them the rest of the provender that we had provided for the day's trip to Nave Island, continued on my way alone. Being told that M'Coll's was only two miles distant, I was more amused than surprised at having to walk for two hours before I reached it.

The track, if what was seldom discernible can be so called, led along the top of the cliffs which here line the shore. The country all along was perfectly uninhabited, and of the most dreary character, in consequence of the lack of trees, and any other life but a few sheep and cattle. Still the character of the country is thoroughly peculiar. It is a land of stream and cave. As in proceeding along the immediate shore you come upon a cave every few steps; so here at the summits of the cliffs you were continually crossing streams—beautiful, wild, fantastic streams. Some formed fine waterfalls, either in rushing over the cliffs, or farther up among the hills. These cliffs every now and then curved inland, inclosing pretty coves, dotted with the sweetest and most verdant pasturage, and, so far as I could observe, held among them nearly as many sheep as the extensive but less fertile uplands.

The hills were covered with stunted heather, in-

termixed with grass. As I advanced along the tops of the cliffs, such a fresh wind caught me, that I thought not only my plaid, but I myself was to be carried away. Indeed, in crossing over a ticklish path several hundred feet above the sea, which was rushing on the rocks below with great violence, such a blast came full upon me as nearly threw me over. As it was, I tottered on the brink for some seconds, until I mustered strength to make a rush past the dangerous spot, scarcely visible to me from the tears which the unfeeling blast brought to my eyes.

On approaching Loch Gruinard, near which the house of the shepherd was situated, the coast became more shelving, gradually losing its rocky character, and merging into the sloping shores of the loch. Arriving at the shepherd's, and knocking at the door, I was immediately surrounded by a pack of yelling collies, that only desisted from attempting to devour me at the kicks and calls of their master.

Stating my calls upon his consideration, I was regaled with a glass of milk ; and as he was about starting for the hills to bring down a sheep that had just died, I resolved to accompany him to see what the back country was like.

We accordingly trudged inland for a couple of

miles over heath-covered declivities, crossing many streams, the most sheltered being thickly lined with stunted brushwood, the nearest attempt at trees on this side. Reaching the sheep, which was lying on the hill, and beside it the stick of the shepherd's little son, with a rag on the top to keep off the crows, we attempted to remove it bodily by a staff passed between its bound feet. Finding that this system did not work on the heavy ground, the shepherd stopped, cut it up, and disembowelled it on the spot; then cutting off the head he handed it to his little boy to carry, and slung the now lighter carcase on his back. It had died from a swelling of the head, that sometimes attacks them. He generally treats them thus upon the hill, so as to be more portable.

In the winter the sheep feed upon the heather, the grass becoming quite white and losing all its sap. They all agree, however, that the pasturage of the hills is much more suitable for cattle than sheep, the foot-rot which attacks the latter, arising from the damp, being very infectious when it comes.

Throughout the island the sheep are pretty well mixed, Black-faces and English sheep feeding together. One of the finest flocks I saw, sprang from Cheviot sires and black-faced ewes.

Shortly before seven I left M'Coll's, after another glass of milk and a corner of cake, recompensing them by slipping some pieces of silver to the children, a plan always safe to pursue among poor but proud Highland folk, who would fain practise a hospitality they cannot afford. The shepherd himself was kind enough to accompany me part of the road, although it was now raining heavily. His master, Mr Cairns, has between three and four thousand sheep feeding on the hills around.

My path was now across a moor of some extent. A flock of gray or hooded crows was seen, and as it grew dark many more passed me flying low and silently. The rain if possible increasing, and darkness coming upon me, I knocked at the door of the first farmhouse I came to, (after crossing over the moor,) in which a Mr George Clark resided under thatch. He himself was out, but his wife appeared, and fortunately spoke English, which was more than the shepherd's could do.

Having obtained an entrance, I at once made myself at home before a glorious peat fire, and Mr Clark arriving shortly after, I had every attention paid to my comfort that the dwelling could afford; the kindness with which it was paid making up for any deficiency in its character. A great pot of potatoes, plenty of milk, and a few fish—a mixture,

under the circumstances, which I did not stop to criticise—made amends for the want of a dinner ; and the agreeable conversation of Mr Clark, a pleasant little old man, and evidently a character, passed the evening until bed-time.

That we might see to finish our evening repast, a wick was extemporised for the "cruisy," and a little girl stood by us picking it out with a pin as fast as it burned down, which kept her constantly employed. The house—which was roofed with saplings twined over the rafters, covered with turf and then thatched—was much out of repair, the landlords caring little for the convenience of the smaller farmers. Their good table could scarcely stand on the uneven earth floor, and the window was by no means weather proof, but that did not prevent the thatch covering much true kindness and hospitality.

The number of inhabitants I am unable to give. Besides himself, his kindly dame, and a fine-looking daughter grown up, I could see that his quiver was well filled with smaller shafts. Any number of chickens, three or four collies, two or three cats, and a grumpy that ran under my bed and could not be dislodged, helped to keep things lively. And yet I was accommodated with sheets pure and fresh as snow, while the parents, and I know not how



many children, were sleeping in another bed in the same room—the daughter coming in and waking me in the morning as a matter of course, the other occupants having cleared out at cock-crow. Such is a notion of an Islay cottar-farmer's dwelling of the better class.

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## LOCH GRUINARD AND HOME.

A SUBSTANTIAL breakfast over, we chatted for some time on the present state of the country, the number of cottars who had left for America and elsewhere—three thousand they say—and the changing of the country into sheep-walks.

The cake produced at breakfast was of this year's meal, the first in Islay, and, as he told me with just pride, of his own growing. The night had been accompanied by thunder and lightning, and the morning was still exceedingly stormy, but we hoped it would clear somewhat.

The day showing no signs of clearing up, we set out together in the wet. Skirting Loch Gruinard, I observed it to be well cultivated on both sides. On the southern there are several low-country farmers, who pay their rents off the cheese and butter they send to Glasgow. They are said to be doing very well indeed. The end of the loch has been reclaimed for some distance by an embankment. Several fields of barley were ready for the scythe, but "bear" is said not to pay now-a-

days ; although in former times, when quiet stills were numerous, it always paid the rent, the crops being bought growing. The fishing in the loch is not very good, but outside it is more successful.

The weather continuing unfavourable, I was still unable to visit Nave Island ; so, slowly and sadly I turned from the loch—a great haunt of waterfowl in the winter—and took the left-hand road that leads to Bridgend. The road to the right leads to Portnahaven by the west coast. Sheltering under the lee of a peat stack, we found the rain incorrigible, so had to move forward, soon arriving at a small thatched “public,” on the left side of the road, the only house of accommodation on the west side of the island. Thinking to counteract the wet by counter-irritation, we stepped into the public room.

Some time spent, we bethought us of an addition to our company, and sent across for the neighbouring smith, of the name of M‘Taggart, to help to finish the “cratur.” This individual, it turned out, had not yet turned out, having been up the night before, in this same room, with a company of farmers who had been “treating” him. The most distant allusion, however, to the “root of all evil,” soon sent him across in his shirt and trousers. After flattering each other all round in the most

approved style, and having shaken hands at every health, Highland fashion, until I wished the blacksmith had been bred to some other trade we'll say, we parted with mutual expressions of friendship. M'Taggart promised faithfully to shoe my "beast" *gratis* whenever I passed that way and it required it. I have no doubt he will keep his word. The "public" delayed us for upwards of an hour, which passed very rapidly amid topics ranging from sheep and cattle to grates; but the "burden o' the sang" was, "your health," and a hearty shake. We then continued for a mile farther, passing a good many cottages, when my friend and entertainer left me to proceed alone.

Pursuing the road which winds up the hill, I observed the ruins of a fort on an eminence to the left, but did not think them worthy of a visit in the then depressing state of the atmosphere. Across to Lochindaal the country is undulating, and, for some distance to the south, well cultivated. On reaching Lochindaal, there is a small square watch-tower to the left, evidently a neighbour to that over Bowmore.

Here you come in sight of Islay House, nicely situated amid the only extensive wooding in the island. The grounds are said to be well laid out, and the hot-houses and flower-gardens carefully

kept ; but I did not visit them. Passing a branch of the National Bank, and turning to the right, I entered the inn in a thoroughly soaked and forlorn condition. But I soon dried myself at a good peat fire, and fortified myself against my former privations, as Pat would say, with a capital dinner, well and cleanly served.

The evening clearing up somewhat, I proceeded to visit the Danish camp to the east of Bridgend. A few hundred yards south of the inn, a road leads to the left, to which I kept, past many a quaint little dwelling. The country around is well cultivated, and evidently the snuggest part of Islay. As it was rapidly becoming dark I had to put on the steam, and after three-quarters of an hour's hard walking reached a bridge over a stream, and a schoolmaster's house just beyond. The master very kindly pointed out the hill to me, which is northward from the bridge ; so pushing on I soon reached the most interesting remains I have yet met in this country. The camp is wonderfully complete, and forms a green hill readily observable. The camp *par excellence*, as the level summit may be called, is not above thirty yards by twenty, but the whole hill has been cut into terraces, each evidently surrounded by a wall. On one side there were three terraces at regular intervals down, but

towards the north the hillside is higher, and the terraces not so regular, being more of the style of traversing lines. On this north side it slopes down to near the river, from whence must have been drawn their supply of water. It must have exercised an influence over a considerable extent of country, since the plain to the east is large and valuable. Towards the south there is another, but in so poor preservation that I could scarcely discover it, although directed by the schoolmaster. They do not occupy the commanding positions that the Romans invariably selected for their camps.

In crossing the hills homeward, I splashed for a full hour through the moist ground, having lost the road fort-hunting. At last I came, in the dark, on a sign of human neighbourhood in a rude cart-track, which I followed until I reached a farmhouse. Rapping at the door I inquired the shortest road to Bridgend, and found I was considerably to the right of the desired direction. I had gone upon the principle that in wandering one naturally keeps to the left hand, and in endeavouring to avoid this, I had run into the opposite extreme.

The farmer very kindly putting me upon the right road, and accompanying me some distance to show the carriage drive through Islay woods, I bade him good-night, and proceeded onwards in

the dark beneath the shade of the trees. Reaching the bridge over the Port Askaig road, I had some difficulty in descending, as the path is not easily discoverable when you cannot see your hand.

Arrived at the inn, it was not to sleep, but to sit up waiting for the stage, which reaches Bridgend, on the way from Port Askaig to Port Ellen, at two in the morning. It runs to meet the Glasgow steamer, which leaves Port Ellen at twelve, and proceeds *viâ* Port Rush.

A nap and breakfast at the Port Ellen Inn, and stepping on board the steamer *Isla* with my knapsack and my usual luck, which latter I never leave behind me, I got very roughly treated by an Atlantic swell coming in after the recent storm.

At seven next morning we were alongside Glasgow quay, not feeling very fresh, although we had gone to our berths after sighting the moil. Jumping out of the floating *Queen of the Hebrides*, as I drew a long breath, and turned round on the quay, I felt inclined to make the original observation that "there 's no place like home"—when the stomach is out of sorts. Islay certainly is a little different at any time.