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OUR BATH

ARDENMOHR

AMONG THE HILLS.

A RECORD OF SCENERY AND SPORTS IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

By SAMUEL ABBOTT.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, SKETCHED, ETCHED, ETC., BY THE AUTHOR.

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Dedicated

TO

ALEXANDER DUNCAN, Esq.,

OF

KNOSSINGTON GRANGE, LEICESTERSHIRE.

PREFACE.

This record of a sojourn in the Highlands will, it is hoped, have a certain interest to those who have not trod the heather, as well as to those who have.

Regarding the first—although many may be indifferent to field sports, still there are very few who do not appreciate the wild and varied beauties of Highland scenery, and even if caring little about the shooting of grouse or taking of salmon, most people do feel curious to learn wherein lies the charm of pursuits so eagerly sought and so expensively procured. This I have tried to explain and describe simply and without exaggeration.

To sportsmen these pages will recall much of their own pleasant experience, and perhaps excite curiosity and after-inquiry by the details of certain phenomena and events connected with the *ferœ naturæ* of the hills which they may have carelessly

overlooked or missed the chance of observing; and, I think, they can accept the personal incidents recorded as having occurred under my own experience, or, if related secondhand, to have come from those who may be trusted to have intelligently observed and accurately reported.

If my readers should derive only a tithe of the pleasure from perusing this journal that I have had in shaping it, I shall be satisfied—for to me this has been a labour of love by bringing back clearly on my mind many cherished memories.

I believe it to be a common experience that times passed in the country do leave stronger and more vivid prints on the mind than those lived in towns, however much more eventful and important these latter may have been—with myself I find this distinction of recollection to be marked and indubitable, and there are certain days lived in the country, particularly those passed in the Highlands, which will come again and again on my memory with the startling clearness of a vision, when I seem to see every heather-brae and rugged corrie on the hill-side, to look on the broken waters as they rush down the stony glen, almost to feel on my cheek the fresh breeze that waves

the slender birches and to hear once more the familiar voices of friends now scattered or gone.

In conclusion—should the free conversation here and there reported only serve acceptably to vary the mere details of scenery and sport, it will have suited its purpose; and if perchance the reader finds some grave truth, although clothed in motley, so much the better. Be this as it may, no one will think of being captious or hypercritical on the careless converse of a few sportsmen.

S. A.

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necessary supplies and come back with the others: the Major's letters meanwhile reporting how fortunate we were in our lease—the country being thoroughly savage, the natives civilised, and the climate glorious.

ARDENMOHR.

CHAPTER I.

ON TO THE HILLS.

LATE one fine afternoon in July a light-built and quaint-looking carriage was rattling at a good pace along a narrow road in the Highlands. The occupants were Hope Ward, little Fred Peyton, and myself, on our way to the far hills, full of pleasant anticipations of some months' sojourn in the wild west.

I had been at Ardenmohr a week or two before with my friend, Major George Duncan, and who remained there, while I returned south to get the necessary supplies and come back with the others: the Major's letters meanwhile reporting how fortunate we were in our lease—the country being thoroughly savage, the natives civilised, and the climate glorious.

We still were some ten miles from the end of our journey, but felt none of that impatience shown by fussy railway travellers, or more distinctly patent in sea-going "miserables." Our vehicle held manifold comforts in its recesses and curiously contrived pockets, while the worthy who did postillion was Ward's valet and factotum, Dick, who can cook a chop, ride a steeplechase, or carry a love-letter with equal propriety.

There is always to me peculiar enjoyment in driving along these Highland roads, especially in a new country, and the more so on such an evening as this. It had rained heavily early in the day, but had now cleared up, and the great aromatic pines and fields of white clover smelt, oh, how fresh and sweet! At every turn there was a change of scene: here dark wood on either side, with now and then a peep through some open glade; by-and-by wide moor and rolling hills far beyond, then past braes covered with broom and wild flowers; now, by a thatched hamlet at the burn-side, we catch a glimpse of white-haired urchins at play, or a shy Highland maiden filling her pitchers at the stream; then through miles of wood, and we drove down a steep part of the road, crossed a bustling little burn, and came to the river.

Alongside the broken waters we drove for some distance, crossed an obtuse-angled ancient bridge, of the General Wade pattern, and associated in one's mind with lawless Celts and ruthless troopers. Then a sharp turn to the right, and we pulled up at the Fraser's Arms Inn.

The landlord had a letter from Major Duncan, which said he hardly expected us till next day. So we disembarked to have some provision and look about.

John Fraser is a good specimen of the Highland innkeeper (not hotel-keeper, save the mark !). John has a nice grazing-farm at a "canny rent," he says; he owns store of West Highland cattle and black-faced sheep, and moreover has a "sonsie wife and bonnie bairns;" so small thanks to him if he do not grumble, like most of his lowland brethren, but works, fishes, bargains, and jokes, in an easy-going way, pleasant to witness.

The horses were taken round to the stables, and we were greeted by Mrs. Fraser's smiling face.

"Glad to see you again, Mrs. Fraser," I said; "how are the bairns?"

"All weel and stout, thank you, sir. I hope you and the ither gentlemen will have a pleasant stay in the Highlands."

"No doubt of it, Mrs. Fraser. Can you give us something for dinner?"

"Not very much, I fear, sir. You would like it soon, I suppose?"

"Yes, as soon as may be, if not too much trouble."

We now went out for a stroll, and to have a look around. Fred Peyton and Ward, who had never before been farther north than York, were delighted with everything — the wide unfenced moors, the rough river and queer old bridge, and the great towering hills around; but, above all, by the cheery, homely ways of the people.

When we came back to the inn, dinner was neatly laid out, simple, but good—a fresh sea-trout, black-faced mutton, and a dish of fruit with delicious cream. Mrs. Fraser gave us some wine that she had got, seventeen years ago, from her old master, Cairndhu, on her beginning housekeeping, and her training with him accounted for the excellent *ménage* of the clachan.

A little after eight o'clock Dick brought round the carriage; so, bidding good-bye to the worthy family, we journeyed north.

Here our road led along the river for a mile or

two. We then turned through a gap in the hills, and were now in a purely Highland glen, with bare mountains towering on each side; to the left those fine rolling, heathy slopes so pleasant to the eye of the grouse-shooter; while on the right hand the hills are abrupt and rocky, here and there broken by perilous corries, down which the hill-burns, swollen by the late rains, tumbled in innumerable waterfalls. Not a tree to be seen, except a few birches on the banks of the brawling stream that coursed through the glen.

By-and-by the hills were closer and more picturesque, and gradually there came indications of the region being inhabited — a bit of pasture neatly enclosed, or a rustic bridge, and, at last, the flagstaff on a projecting shoulder of the hill; round which we drove, and arrived at Ardenmohr.

The Major was quietly smoking an Indian pipe, and sitting on the door-steps. He rose gladly to receive us, and said he had heard the wheels long before we came up, everything being so still in the glen, and that he was nearly sure it must be our party. "Now what about dinner?" he asked.

We had dined—voted tea—and went into the Lodge.

The Lodge is a good-sized building of no particular order of architecture, all rough granite of a light blue colour, and, with its ample windows and ivy-covered walls, looks cheerful and homelike. There is no pretence to orthodox dining and drawing rooms. A long red-carpeted room, with two tall windows looking across the glen, does duty for the first: and it looks nice and orderly, in spite of its book-cases and sporting paraphernalia on the walls, and the deer and tiger skins on the floor. The drawing-room is smaller, prevailing colours grey and pink, and contains a few articles of "virtue and bigotry," as Mrs. Somebody calls them, and some sensible couches. Here we had tea, and then went out to inspect the kennels and offices. All satisfactory.

After having a stroll down the glen in the "gloamin'" and a quiet pipe, we went early to bed.

CHAPTER II.

EXPLORING THE COUNTRY.

In the morning every one was up betimes, breathing the pure mountain air before the early mist had left the hill-tops.

"Well, Ward, how do you like your quarters?" the Major inquired.

"Charming; better than my late day-dreams, and the bath is worth a voyage to China."

As our bath is unique, I may describe it. The burn close to the Lodge has been enlarged, so as to form a deep wide pool of some eight yards broad by twenty in length, deep enough for a swim; on one side steep and rocky, on the other overgrown with bush and creeping plants, except where the grass steps lead down to the water.

At the end of the pool a small hill-stream has been diverted, so that it falls over the projecting rock in a perpetual shower; the waters being from springs on

the hill, the supply is plentiful, and almost too cool and bracing: a seat in the damp grotto would compose ——'s pulse, even after a bout with the late Premier.

Of the Major's barbarian trophies, about the most respected is a small gong, which now summoned to breakfast. The long dining-room looked even jollier than the night before, the snowy breakfast-table covered with the *et ceteras* of this (to me) most refined and agreeable of meals.

"Will you make tea, Abbot?" the Major said; "coffee is coming presently for those who want it."

Burmah, the Major's Indian servant, brought coffee, some trout, a salmi of plovers, a monster ham, and a small basket of eggs, so we were amply provisioned, and we breakfasted, chatted, and cemented friendship pleasantly; the long open windows looking right on the hills, and the view pleasantly obscured by great clusters of roses and honeysuckle, which fringed the windows and filled the room with their fragrance.

"Now, what is to be the order of the day?" I inquired. "Eh, Major?"

"We have lots of time for sport," he replied; "and I was thinking of a walk over the hills towards the sea-coast, as we had better know the bearings of

the country before the shooting. What say you, Ward?"

"Agreed."

"And you, Frederick Peyton, are you impatient to land a grilse or some sea trout?"

"Not too impatient; besides you said that more rain would improve the fishing. They must wait. I'm for the walk, Major Duncan."

"All right, my boy, except that salmon and sea-trout do not wait much, but are continually on the move till they reach their spawning-grounds; not as in English rivers you have fished, where the trout are local, or nearly so, and large ones known by head mark."

"But the yellow trout here are local too, are they not?"

"To some extent; but Scotch rivers, when flooded, run so strong, that the trout are carried off or run up the smaller streams, so you cannot, as in English rivers, expect a certain monster behind a certain bank; but a little experience will put you up to the peculiarities of the Celtic salars. Then are we for a pipe on the fir brae and tak' the hill?"

This fir brae is a mossy knoll, with one old Scotch fir, and a rude stone seat. As it has a fine view

down the glen, and is quite near the house, it is a favourite place for councils and schemes.

"You do not smoke, Fred?" the Major inquired. "So much the better."

"Not much yet," answered Fred, laughing; "a cheroot or a small cigar; but it may happen, as I see I am single, and cousin Hope is like a factory chimney."

"Right, Fred, but it is for my lungs."

"After which story," said Fred, "I may ask you for a cheroot."

"No, thank you; I promised your mother and sister to look after you, and they will be in this neighbourhood soon, and need not find you an expert, and I may relax at the hill-top if you have breath left to puff."

"Very well, I am complaisant on all things, even to lending you my hook-book."

"What of that, sirrah?"

"Just that when you do overhaul my tackle, I have afterwards great bother to find my most killing flies."

"Quite likely, you so tangle your tackle; but I must own you have some nice flies."

"Alas! I had."

"You defamatory young imp! May the gnats punish your white shanks. Where did you get that kilt?"

"In Glasgow; is it not neat? I got two—a grey and a brown, when Messrs. Ward and Abbott were yawning in bed, or decorating their comely persons."

"Do you know, Fred, you look exactly like the pretty kilted ballet girls meant to represent young Norvals."

"Keep thy compliments, Sir Knight, for a certain sweeter cousin. At all events, the kilt is an improvement on your ginger-brown knickerbocker rig, which makes the darling of the ladies like a big Cochin China cock."

"That's right," said the Major, "keep these tall tyrants in order, and I'll back you always two against two. Shall we start now?"

The keeper had gone on some time before, and we sent Dick with him; for, anticipating the usefulness of that universal genius, we desired he should know the whole bearings of the country, so as to find us at any time or place. As expected, Dick soon knew the whole district nearly as well as the keepers, and we could calculate on his meeting us with letters, &c., in any part of this wild country.

Our walk led for a mile or so along the road, and then we fairly took the hill, striking nearly west over very rough ground. On the first ascent we saw a good many grouse, and Ward, on seeing grouse for the first time, said that they seemed so slow and large in comparison with partridges, that he hoped to give a good account of them soon—wait and see.

A walk of about half an hour brought us to the first high ranges; then there was easy walking over comparatively level moor, with ridges and marshy places here and there, the curlews piping their loud wild whistle overhead as we came near their homes. We here made a detour round a small, black, Tartarean-looking pool, in which, the keeper's boy told us, were curious "hairy" trout, very hard to catch. I conceded the likely difficulty, but promised five shillings for a couple of them. *One*, I thought, might be challenged as a *lusus naturæ*, but *two* must be a settler for Mr. Frank Buckland.

On getting round this dismal pool, we approached the highest range, and girded our loins for the pull up, which was tortuous, steep, and rugged, but not too distressing, and in half an hour more we were standing on the sky-line.

And what a scene; how bright and beautiful! the

cool, fresh air blowing from the wide Atlantic Ocean, which seemingly lay at our feet, and expanding into space till it met the clouds in the far horizon! Westward out to sea are the rugged hills of the Isle of Sky; and far to the right, in hazy distance, the sea-girt lands of Harris and Lewes, all on this July noon as bright and tranquil as the fairy isles of an Italian lake, and looking as if they had never known sunless days nor the wild winter storms of the Atlantic.

Although not on the very highest peaks, which are miles to the south-west, we were equally well placed for extensive range of view, and wandered for a long time among these sterile faces, picking up curious stones and plants, and now and again taking another gaze at the beauties of the Almighty's work.

At one of the rocky ledges we started some ptarmigan; they flew off leisurely, and alighted on a peak a short distance away, seeming not much shyer than house-pigeons, for except by the falcon or hill fox the harmless inhabitants of these lofty regions are rarely disturbed.

"Oh! what pretty birds!" exclaimed Ward. "What are their habits, Major?—you that dabble in

natural history must know. Shall we find many on the grouse beats?"

"No, indeed, Ward. Ptarmigan never descend from the high tops; and even in bitter winter storms when the hardy Highlander shivers by his peat fire, and the starving red deer are invading the very kail yards, these delicate-looking birds seek no shelter but the rocks, and find their food amongst their crannies."

"Is it not strange that they do not starve during winter snows?"

"At first thought it might seem so, but parts are always blown clear of snow by mountain gales: in such places these feathered Esquimaux find their food during the day, and at night they shelter among the rocks or huddle together beneath the snow."

"How odd! when the mountain sheep and chamois seek the lower ranges in mid-winter, that these swift-winged birds who could fly to shelter and cover in a few minutes, yet feel secure in their storm-swept regions. And tell me, Major, do mountain hares also stick to the high grounds?" Ward asked.

"As a rule they do, but not always on the highest ranges, and they frequently come far down. I have

often, both in autumn and winter, shot mountain hares quite close to the cultivated fields, but not off the moors. Yet they are not exalted aristocrats like ptarmigan, who never condescend to places of low degree. *Apropos* of white hares, I heard an odd story from the Earl of M—'s keeper about them, and which was to this effect. A party of sportsmen had gone from Logie Lodge to the hills to shoot white hares, which are numerous there (two or three hundred a day not being unusual on great drives). Well, one of the party was a simple-minded Englishman, totally new to the Highlands, and had been crammed by his friends with tales of "ghosts," "second sight," "will-o'-the-wisp," and sundry matters of Celtic superstition; so, being a proper *gobemouche*, his friends had filled him with fear and wonder. On fixing the places of the guns before the beat, this worthy was placed high up the hill behind a rock, told not to fire till the hares had passed him, and was then left alone. While waiting with anxious mind and many-coloured thoughts, a dense mist crept over the hills, and soon closed round him; beyond a yard or two he could see nothing, while the near objects had a weird and fantastic look that made him

shiver. By-and-by came distant cries, nearer and nearer the shouts of the beaters. On looking anxiously around, he saw suddenly appear several great white spectres gazing at him, and silently more and more stole up the misty hill, and, surrounded by these unearthly-looking things, he could stand it no longer, but, at the risk of his neck, bolted down hill, and, by great chance, safely reached the Lodge before dark; the keepers, on coming to his ambush, found he had left his gun and gloves on the heather."

We chuckled at the Major's story, and afterwards mountain hares were subjects of many a joke; but we had to go away long before they become ghostly white.

On the way homewards the Major pointed out the distant woods of Dunesk. These woods we were to shoot over in October, before the laird went to Nice with his grand-daughter. The Major said we should be charmed with the ancient house and Jacobite relics therein.

The walk home was by a longer but easier route. From one point we saw the great loch, and our river of promise debouching from it to run its broken course to the sea.

ON THE PTARMIGAN RANGE

Arrived home, as Burmah said dinner would be ready in an hour, we betook ourselves to our snug tent-like rooms till then. In an hour we sat down to dinner cool and comfortable.

One and all we are simple enough in matter of eating, although a little fanciful in liquids. There is soup and fish generally; this followed by the never-tired-of Highland mutton; then a wild duck, a leveret, or one of Burmah's wonderful curries, is about the extent of the usual carte. In the house are all sorts of potted and preserved things, which are seldom touched, except sometimes the sweeter sorts, as an excuse for getting Highland cream. At this, our inaugurating dinner, some of Major Duncan's East India sherry was declared perfect.

"What," asked Ward, "do people mean by advertising cheap dinner sherry? The very idea is abomination. Why, where, in the name of Vatel or Ude, should one drink good wine, if not at dinner?"

"Right, O king," said I, "have Seltzer, luncheon or ladies' sherry, if you like; but dinner-wine should stand first in the list; and, after dinner, have what you like, from weak claret to brandy, or for some, who must have it from custom, old port or Madeira. What say you, Major?"

"Agree, to be sure. But had we not better have one bottle of Cliquot after the long walk? Fred, you shall have a glass, as you had only a little beer."

"Not to-day, Major; but I'll drink a little sherry and water when dinner is over, and go out for a stroll by the burn."

"Take Dick with you," said Ward. "When I was last at Beechford with my aunt he harried the river every spare hour, and got lots of chub, roach, and such *canaille*."

"Come, Hope Ward, don't disparage English fish; they are not much to eat, to be sure, but they are 'some pumpkins' to catch, I can tell you; and I know something of trout too."

"Quite correct, Fred," I said. "When fishing the river Welland, in Lincolnshire, I found that out. It is one of these quiet canal-looking streams common in England, but so pretty and pastoral, fringed with sedge and drooping willows, and it literally swarms with these ignoble fish, as Ward terms them. Yet I found it very hard to kill the larger ones; indeed, had trout been as abundant, I should have basketed any quantity."

"Ah," said Fred, "I know that river. A school-

fellow of mine got a jack of six pounds in it. Was that a good one, Major?"

"Yes, Fred, a very good river fish; but I hope you may get something larger in the loch."

After dinner, smoking requisites were introduced, and we settled down for a whiff and a quiet chat, and Fred went off.

"I like that small cousin of yours," said Major Duncan. "He seems a manly and tractable little fellow."

"I am glad you do like him," replied Ward; "indeed, had I not hoped so, I should not have brought him."

"Amusingly cheeky," I remarked, "but a nice boy, and game as a bantam, like all the Peytons, men and women—eh, Hope?"

"Cheeky enough; most Harrow boys are; but Fred has a fine temper, and never sulks."

"He gets on fairly at school, I hear; and, do you know, I often think it might be better if most boys added a year or two to school time, and had then done with scholastic training—eh, Major?"

"Right, Abbott. Yes, I agree with you that, at a good school, enough Latin and Greek should be had for all practical use. Difficulties and niceties

are the speciality of some men, who make their scholarly exactness a saving of trouble to others, and profitable to themselves; but to most men it is worse than lost time, and the game, even if gained, by no means worth the candle. David Hume finished college at sixteen."

"What! Major," exclaimed Ward, "you a rebel against Professor Grundy? Abbott I am *not* surprised at; he was always an eccentric in his notions."

"And still," I said, "here is Major Duncan, elephant-hunter and interpreter, who is an eccentric in practice also, and who never was at college, yet is a decent mathematician and a fair classic; in fact, he was campaigning in India while great whiskered fellows, much his seniors, were only schooling at Oxford and Cambridge."

"I shall post you both when I return."

"Do so, *mon ami*, and tell the dons that I know where you got your varied accomplishments; and certainly it was not at college, as you had your classics at a good country school, your French (such as it is) chiefly at home, in Jersey, and your usual correct views by reading carefully the works of England's worthies, and by keeping such virtuous company as Major Duncan and myself."

"*Et tu, Brute!*—this is dreadful. Pass the brandy, and tell me, is the study of classic authors nothing?"

"Pooh, pooh! Who reads Greek or Latin authors after leaving school or college, except for cram, or some pecuniary end?—a very few."

"You uncharitable Bohemian, how else should one get at the lore of Greek and Roman?"

"Through an English road, as is done by even tolerable scholars, if they confessed the truth."

"What a barbarian!—is he not, Major?"

"I think, Hope," said Major Duncan, "you willingly misunderstand for the fun of the thing. Of course, you must feel that neither Abbott nor I are barbarous enough to deprecate the classics. We are simply agreed that extreme verbal scholarship is for most men extreme folly and waste of mental exercise. And possibly not all mental," he added, laughing. "Many poor creatures are adepts at languages and philology. Mezzofante, *par exemple*, the most perfect linguist in Europe; in all other matters a common-place person. In fact, I question if it were great gain were all true Britons merely able to speak Latin."

Ward groaned, "Oh! that I had Demosthenic power of reply. Shall we have coffee?"

Fred shortly came in with his fishing-basket.

"Eh, boy, have you been fishing?" Ward asked.

"Oh, no, not regularly fishing. Dick got me some worms to catch minnows for trolling; but—by the way, there are none here—but I have some small trout, just the thing; and see, Hope, I got these three big fellows in a pool quite near."

"By Jove, nice trout; we must, you and I, inspect this burn pretty often."

"Is it not capital," said the delighted youngster—"trout close to the lodge, then the big river and the wonderful loch not far away? Won't Jack be vexed he is not here when I write to him."

In the evening we had a quiet saunter about the glen, and got to bed before morning—some time.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST BLOOD AT SALMON-FISHING.

In the morning I was awakened by Ward playing a barcarolle on the cornet; and, on looking out, saw it was raining, and the hill-tops were hidden by mists.

Hope has two objectionable habits—early rising and brass bugling; but I forgive the music, as he really plays well; indeed, he might take a solo at a concert; besides (like many who can go at a thing with credit) he does it but seldom. As for early rising, stiff braes and strong air will soon tone that down.

I think every one is made happier by having some hobby. Major Duncan, who has rubbed about in the world, and faced savage man and beast, is a zealous entomologist, and spends hours in arranging his cases of insects, and is pleasingly occupied when contem-

plating, through his microscope, the whiskers of a gnat. Ward bugles, sketches, and etches; while I scribble notes.

"Who's for tea? Put aside your book, Fred, and be useful," said Ward. "Hulloa, Major! what is this thing like cigar-cases in red sauce?"

"A very fine eel," the Major replied; "and Burmah is divine at eels."

"I never eat them," Ward said, "their look and habits being, at least, peculiar; but up here they should be cleanly, so I may venture. Ah, excellent! If Burmah be preserved to us, we might even live on this for a month."

"An eelementary double condition," said Fred. "Eel speared and cook spared; is that your mathematics, Hope?"

"No: save your quibbles, youngster, and try if you can catch a salmon, rather than hook a wretched pun."

"Never mind him, Freddy," said the Major; "and give me a look at your fly-book. Hem! nothing here for salmon or grilse; but you have some pretty trout flies. Your spinning-tackles, too, are excellent; but I have lots of all kinds. And you, Abbott, are, I suppose, *bien monté?*"

"I should be, with the pet flies of three crack rivers—Tweed, Thurso, and Shannon."

"Ah! let us look at your Thurso lot; they ought to do here. Yes, very good flies; they are, perhaps, a trifle large; but these mallard and gledwings look vicious. Now for the Tweed batch. Good! a business-like set—all sizes and colours. And now for the Tipperaries. What a bright array!—Gould's humming-birds tied on Limerick bends. Yet very effective; and, strange enough, often in clear water, which is against all one's fishing theories."

"Major, do you fish to-day?" I inquired.

"Not much to-day. I mean to coach Fred; we shall go high up the river towards the loch, and you should fish the lower parts."

"That's a good plan; and Ward wants to sketch and, same time, study salmon-craft."

"Good boy, Hope," said Fred. "You take your first course from Abbott, and by-and-by I may finish you off at surds and salmon."

"Hear the wretch! Lucky if some monster pike may bolt him."

When we started for the river our course was first up by the burn, then, crossing the stepping-stones, we walked, by an entirely new line of country, and by

the top of the glen, to the game-watcher's hut; here we divided, the Major and Fred going straight over hill, while Ward and I (under guidance of the keeper) went round to get to the lower waters.

It still rained a little, but Archie, the keeper, said it would soon clear, as the wind was rising. And Archie was right; before long the mists began to rise up-hill, the breeze freshened, and the day cleared up beautifully.

We now came upon the sparkling waters, and heard the rushing sounds so musical to the fisherman's ear. Archie had led us down to a broad, dark pool; deep and rough at the farther side, and which he said "whiles held a gude fish."

I took my rod and at once proceeded to fix up, and when carefully binding the splices with well-waxed twine, Archie looked up approvingly, nodded, and said, "That's wise like, sir."

"What is wise like, Archie?"

"It's your tie rod. When I see a tie rod I'm sure enough its owner can fish, for learners or bad fishers dinna like the trouble of tying splices; or mair likely they're no aware that it is lighter and casts farther than the ither."

This *was* encouragement, as Archie is rather of a

sombre turn, and far from rash or ready in his approval. I may mention that this, my favourite rod, is only seventeen feet long, the butt very light, being of seasoned fir, the middle piece hickory, and the top lancewood, tipped with horn. With this weapon I had pumped the monsters of Tay and Tweed, and consequently thought it sufficient for anything I might meet here. All is ready—to the strong tapered cast.

"Now, Archie," I said, "look at my flies, and see if we can pick a killer."

After deliberately inspecting the contents of the book, Archie remarked, "There's nae want o' tackle, sir; ye have some grand hooks;" and we fixed on a turkey-wing and dark body for a beginning.

Wading at once into the river at the head of the pool, and, having first carefully wetted and stretched my line, I cast across the deepest part and began work.

At every other cast I hoped to see a fish, yet for some time I had not a rise; but near the finish of this pool, just as it begins to narrow at the fall, I rose a very heavy fish. I went back, and in a little fished over him again. No notice. A few yards farther on, and just over the stones at the head of the

broken water, I hooked a nice grilse. "Ye have him this time," shouted Archie from the bank. I got to the shore beside the keeper and Hope, who was in great glee at his first sight of a tussle; but a few minutes finished the business, for, although a lively grilse, it was small, and it was easy work to keep him in the pool and tire him. Archie gaffed him neatly.

"That was a grand fish that rose first," Archie remarked, "and we maun gie him anither trial in the afternoon."

"Very well, Archie; but I hardly think there is much chance to-day; he did not seem keen, and rose too sleepily."

"May be, sir; but he must get anither trial, and if he doesn't take this day, he will next. A fish of that size is likely to keep the big pool for a day or twa."

Leading on to the next good pool there is a long stretch of broken water, with some likely casts. On this part I got another grilse and some sea trout; but as most of this ground is too rough and shallow for lying fish, we passed on quickly to what Archie called the "Fern Hole."

This is one of those perfect pools often seen on the smaller Highland rivers. The water broken with

great rocks at the head of the pool, which is wide and rough for a long way, and deep nearly to the very edge.

Before trying this place we had lunch, with a mossy hillock for a seat, and a large stone for a table; so, resting a little, we refreshed; and while Ward was rapidly sketching the scene, I smoked a pipe, and changed my fly for one with a "gled" wing and an orange body.

"Hope," I said, "you had better fish this pool."

"No, no; I shall wait a little at my lessons, as Fred said. Besides I am enjoying all this mightily, and I wish to see the handling of a big fish."

"Now, then, we shall try," I said, and rose to begin casting this lovely reach of water. Nor had Hope long to wait. At the fourth or fifth cast, a splendid fish dashed at my fly; and, just as I caught a glimpse of his bright side, I struck lightly, and felt I had him.

As often happens with heavy fish, he was stolid at first, but all of a sudden he rushed, like a rocket, up the river, then turned and ran straight through the pool, and down the water. It is useless trying to resist the first burst of a strong salmon—he would smash rod and tackle in a moment—so I

gave line freely, and stumbled over rock and brae after him down the river, till the stream became deeper, and the current easier, before I got anything like pressure to bear on the fish. I now gave line more grudgingly, and found I had him somewhat in hand, when he suddenly ceased running, and sulked; but this was only to change his tactics. Back his old course he sped again; and, as he flew through the rough water, I heard Archie shout out, "Keep your point up, or he'll cut the line on the rocks." But this run was different from the first. I could bring a strain to bear; and, by the time he got into the deep pool again, I felt he was mine, if the tackle held honestly.

Now for the final struggle. Archie was by my side with his handy cleek, and after several vicious bolts, my fish working more easily, I began to shorten line, and he came in "dourly" and steady enough, till Archie was just about to cleek him, when he made one terrific rush up water, taking out nearly all my line. "Lord, sir, be canny!" cried Archie; "he's a grand fish, and we mustna' lose him."

This, however, was his final effort; for, after a little difference of opinion, I got him near the bank,

and, quick as thought, Archie had the cleek through his silver side, and the salmon high and dry on the rocks.

"Eh! but he's a bonnie fish!" said Archie; "no' a better in the river; although the first ye rose might be heavier." As for Ward, he was speechless; and for myself, I confess to being always shaky after finishing off a game salmon. It is long since I lost all tremour in shooting a capercailzie or a deer, but the glorious struggle with a rushing fish still tingles my nerves as it did years ago.

I took the small steel weigher, which I usually carry, and we weighed our fish on the spot—twenty-three pounds exactly. And truly "a bonnie fish," as Archie said; short, thick, and small-headed, and with a skin like burnished silver.

"Now for a dram of cognac." The dram on such occasions is *de rigueur*.

I was glad to have a stretch on the heather for a few minutes.

"What is to be done next, Archie?" I inquired.

"Weel, it's for yoursel' to judge, sir; the first cast below is near half a mile down, and it's about

the time we were to meet the Major and Mr. Frederick: it's no' far from six o'clock."

"So be it;" and we walked up the river-side to meet them.

"Are there any good places above, Archie?" I inquired, "if we should be long in seeing the other party."

"Ou, ay, we have some likely casts atween here and where they leave off, and ye have the muckle fish ye rose before to try."

By the time we got back to the first pool the sky had become dull, and there was a smart breeze blowing; yet although I fished every inch with a fresh hook, and even changed back to the first fly, the big one refused to show, and Archie grumbled at the "sulky brute."

A little further up the river we met our friends —Fred leading the van with glowing face, and shouldering the Major's heavy rod.

"So I see you have had sport," the Major said, as he looked at the weighty bag that Archie and I carried between us.

"Yes, a famous day. How did Fred get on?"

"Come and see," cried Fred; "here Hope, and you," and he dragged us up to where his man was

placing the pannier on the grass, the contents were turned out, a grilse and some nice sea trout.

"What!" said Ward; "you did not kill these yourself?"

"That I did, every one of them, and lost a bigger than any."

"Alas! thereby hangs a tale," chuckled the Major. "It was the first fish that rose, and Fred was flurried, broke the top joint of his rod, and lost him; but he did well with mine after. He will make a brave angler; won't you, Fred?"

"I mean to try hard: and you were very patient with me, Major."

"And I suppose I must say you are a tractable pupil so far."

Our bag being turned out to Fred's infinite amazement; he stared for a while, but the small varmint did not refrain from quietly asking Archie "where he had left the net?"

We now set off home straight across the hill, and arrived about seven o'clock; and half an hour after sat down to table in great content: and having dined, every one settled into the most comfortable lounge he could arrange. Freddy in particular, buried in a great arm-chair, with a great glass of claret beside

him, was a picture for a good man to contemplate.

"You did not fish to-day," the Major said to Ward; "how did you enjoy yourself?"

"Very much. Awfully pleasant and pretty, as some girls would say; but it was really charming, the wild river scenes—the rough banks of heath and rock—the faint blue of the far-off hills—and then that foreground of humanity, waist deep in the broken current, struggling with a salmon."

"How tersely poetical, Hope! I declare you should do it in verse."

"Hardly; but I tried to do some sketches *in memoriam*."

"Let us see them."

"Here they are; but they are merely rough hints for after-work."

"Hints! my dear boy, they are little gems of colour; and, to my idea, such things, dashed off on the spot, have often a lifelike freshness that more finished copies may want."

"That is quite true; and I myself find always certain little effects and touches in these hurried sketches which by no care can I reproduce, even with the aids of perfect leisure and all materials about me."

"Yes: an appearance of fitness unstudied. Observe a very young girl, how pretty the artless grace of all her movements! She becomes a 'young lady,' and gains increased mind and beauty, but she cannot retain the unconscious charm of early girlhood."

"Pretty much the same with the great works of art," I said; "these have cost years of thought and labour, but their chief perfection is a look of singleness and simplicity: a Gothic cathedral or a Greek statue have that grandly simple grace. Even the complicated yet smooth-moving steam-engine looks as if it were the cast of single thought; how different from the flagrant elaboration of a state carriage or a Brighton terrace!"

"Or a Brighton belle compared with a quiet gentlewoman," said Ward.

The Major added, "Or Tennyson's 'Enoch Arden' compared with the exquisite simplicity of 'Auld Robin Gray,' which tells a similar story, with ten times the force and feeling, in a few verses."

"Ho, ho! Major, another heresy. How shall I own, when I get back to civilization, that I was on friendly terms with a man who actually deprecated college life and Tennyson's poems?"

"Say he was a little crazy. Yet in face of such a

reputation I must protest against dishes of flummery, however prettily served."

"Flummery! oh, my loved poet! Is 'In Memoriam' wishy-washy, or the 'Idyls of the King'?"

"The first is not; but a good deal of the idyls may be called balderdash; ditto the laureate's magazine poems."

"Tennyson seems hardly your favourite poet?"

"Certainly not—yet an accomplished man, and a graceful versifier; but he is the fashion, and about the best we have now."

"But, tell me, who has written better poetry—Wordsworth?"

"Neither am I a Wordsworthian enthusiast; he erred as far in affected simplicity as Tennyson does in what Americans call 'high faluten.' Yet Wordsworth has a certain depth of thought and poetical expression that Tennyson, with all his finish, has not quite reached. Of course, like many poets, he wrote namby-pamby of some bulk."

"Yes; about milkmaids, and pedlars, and daisies, and daffodils."

"True; and he might as easily have written about great kings, great swelling hearts, great salt tears, and great nonsense; but, to Wordsworth, a cat

lapping milk under a shed was as poetical as a tiger lapping your blood beneath a palm-tree. And 'what for no'?"

"And of your countryman, Sir Walter Scott, Major?"

"I am at one with the world, and which now thinks Scott's strength was prose, more poetical than his poetry. Yet are the 'Lady of the Lake' and 'Marmion' something beyond these pretty idyls, and will, I think, be read when such fanciful things have passed."

"Then Byron, for whom Sir Walter made way; will he do?"

"Yes; he is *one* of the *very* few. Byron was indeed a *poet*. Poor fellow! he had scant years or peace of mind to develop his full strength; but he showed his *power*, and had he lived to divest himself of his cynical *morgue*, and, in his right mind, have quietly thought out the great problems of life, the world would have been richer. And how few poets have written such lines as these?"

Then the Major took down a copy of "Byron's Poems," and read aloud one of the fine passages from "Childe Harold"—the address to the Sea—

lines rolling grandly like the great waves themselves; while they describe the decay of the kingdoms of the past, and ever freshness of the ocean, finishing with—

> "Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow:
> Such as creation's dawn beheld—thou rollest now."

"Have these verses the true ring of poetry? And what of this?" the Major added, as he picked a gem of a stanza from that bouquet of wickedness, "Don Juan."

Ward confessed that Milton had nothing finer—Tennyson nothing sweeter.

"Pope for my money," I said. "Sentimental critics say he was not poetical, because he never wrote hazy nonsense; and all the donkeys hate him because he scourged them. Yet where do you find more beautiful thoughts than in Pope? or who writes with so delicate a fancy on fanciful things, or such neat, clear, expressive verse on matters of common sense?—but, Fred, it is scarcely common sense to keep you so late. You seem sleepy."

"No wonder. People talking high art all night, when I am dying to hear about fishing."

"Bravo, Fred!" said Ward. "And some night

soon, Major, we shall have a tilt with our hobbies. What about to-morrow? You know it is Sunday."

"Go to church, of course."

"Yes; but it is a good way off," I observed. "We must drive to the Frasers' Arms, and then walk a mile or two. You don't mind that."

"Settled, if the weather permit."

CHAPTER IV.

OUR FIRST SUNDAY.

SUNDAY morning, bright and hot, and every one down in good time. After breakfast the household came, and we had prayers. The Major read impressively part of the beautiful English service, and we went to the "fir brae" while the horses were got ready.

The drive down the glen was exceedingly pleasant. At the inn door we caught John Fraser and his daughters just leaving for church, so walked with them, discoursing of John's flocks and herds, and of our own doings. I rather think Fred told the little demure daughter all about his fishing, although it was Sunday.

John said they expected a "strange minister" (any one except the incumbent is so called by the parishioners) to preach, and he could not vouch for the "discoorse." However, we had an excellent

sermon in that small Highland kirk—earnest, simple, and of moderate length. I was pleased that our English friends escaped hearing one of the elaborate discourses still too common in our Church, and which seem composed with a purpose of raising doubts among the elders, and setting the young to sleep; and, instead of being bored with "fifthly, I shall now proceed to prove," we had a plain Christianlike sermon, to comfort the good, and make bad men ashamed. All thought and said, Amen, with the worthy pastor; and, on walking back, Ward remarked that the clean, homely aspect of the mothers and children, the strong wiry men, and the venerable patriarch in the pulpit, brought to his mind the old covenanting stories.

It was such fine weather, that when we came to the inn, we agreed to walk home.. So the carriage was sent off and we had lunch, and, after some chat with the kindly family, set off for a quiet walk through the glen.

It was pleasant sauntering along in the still Sunday afternoon, a quiet which seemed intensified by the soft piping of the little hill birds and the murmur of the burn.

On arriving at the Lodge, we chose what books

we wanted from the Major's well-selected case, and sought some secluded corner till dinner.

When dining, Ward disapproved of the crimped salmon, which he thought corky; but he lives to be wiser and a prominent hand at the process of *crimping*, when a good fish is caught and a cold spring at hand.

On talking after dinner about different forms of worship, Ward and I were mutually liberal; he saying, that such service as we had to-day was good for any Christian, wise or simple; while I owned that much of the English service might be with benefit engrafted into ours.

"I suppose, Major," I remarked, "that in your travels you attend any church, Greek or Scotch?"

"Freely, except the Roman Catholic."

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed Ward; "you dislike the Papists."

"By no means, Hope; but the system, as opposed to freedom, civil and religious. I regard my Popish and Protestant brethren alike, save Irish priests perhaps; for such men as Fénélon, in past times, and poor fancy-tossed Newman, in our own, must have the reverence of any one not a bigot."

"Well, I confess myself a bigot," Ward said, "and

anathematize the whole concern, lay and clerical, except the Sisters: they are perfect. Still I would demur at wedding a Papist girl, with the beauty of Venus and Ardenmohr for a dowery."

"*Ma foi!* I think I should venture, under such persuasions, and, mayhap, try conversion," I said.

"Yes, and find yourself vainly attempting to make a rigid Protestant out of a simple Papist, be spied in all your doings,—your wife, perhaps, the chief spy; or, if loyal to your hearth, the victim of priestly pumping and family persecution. Shun *cette galère* altogether, my boy: to one like you, double-dealing would be misery."

"Really, Hope," I said, "you must go to Ireland and lecture."

"Not my *métier* at all; nobody likes friendly discussion better, and I detest controversy, even if it did good, which it never does. Time alone makes change where there is fixed principle or prejudice; indeed, if *conscience* led Major Duncan and you to shave your crowns, and shun salmon-fishing, I should hardly dispute your notions."

"So you have found, by experience, that the close communication of Catholic and Protestant does not politically smooth their angles?"

"Nor ever will; it sharpens them. Pity Cromwell did not complete his Irish schemes."

"Then, Ward," said the Major laughingly, "you hardly expect much from the Irish Church doings?"

"Nothing: a single thought might prove that. All other religions are content to *let* alone, and *be* let alone—Jews, Greeks, or Protestants; but the whole policy of Popery is *absolutism* over States and over individuals: the idea of satisfying this grasping spirit of rule with scraps from the Protestant larder is beautifully absurd."

"But what could the Legislature do, with Protestants and Papists alike crying out injustice, and politicians gambling on these alleged wrongs?"

"They might have said: 'Your religion is at enmity with our whole policy, and yet we do not *persecute*, we *ignore*, Popery. Protestants are the wealth, strength, and enterprise of the country: which could do as well, perhaps better, without you."

"But in Ireland Papists are a majority, and dislike Protestant rules."

"Nor do Seven Dials and Clerkenwell like a Protestant police, in these quiet and cleanly districts; but the police are for the decent subjects thereabouts,

and a Protestant Church was for the like reason in Connemara—eh, Major?"

"Q. E. D.! By Jove, Ward, you are a marvel!"

"By the way, Hope," I said, "what of Agnes? Have you heard of her lately? *She* was rigid enough."

"Oh! yes, she is in a convent at Rouen; the poor nuns will hardly find *her* to be a sister of *mercy*."

"Come, come, you two," the Major said; "do be decently charitable even to monks and acrid maids. Protestants are not always guileless."

"I trow not," replied Ward. "Even stupid Protestants may show much cunning, and quite hold their own in the great scramble for place and pence, which is pompously called the battle of life."

"I do declare, Ward, you are a perfect cynic this quiet Sunday evening, and that grave Abbott aiding and abetting you; it is not a pleasant feeling, surely."

"Well," said Ward, "I do allow that thought of trickery or meanness does put my back up, be it policy or Popery: and, my good fellow, you first put the truck on the rails."

"Then I confess also, *confiteor mea culpa;* shall we go to bed?"

CHAPTER V.

A RIDE TO THE GREAT LOCH.

NEXT morning was bright and pleasant. But, by ten o'clock, the air became close and sultry, great heavy clouds rolled slowly gathering from the south and hung about the hills, and the slight breeze died away. We were in for a storm; no doubt of it. However, any weather should do for putting tackle in order; so when breakfast was over, we soon had the large table littered from end to end with casts, flies, thread, and cobbler's wax.

By-and-by it became too dark for operations; a flash of lightning, followed by the rumbling of distant thunder, told what was coming. Nearer and nearer sounded heaven's artillery, and the storm was upon us, bursting overhead with torrents of rain.

"Fred, are you frightened at thunder?" I asked.

"Not the least."

"Then we might open the windows. A Highland thunderstorm is worth looking at."

"Yes, yes," was quickly replied.

And we threw the windows right open to witness a truly grand sight. The torrents of rain—the gloomy, restless-looking clouds—from which the pale forked lightning zigzagged among the mountain-tops, while the thunder crashed overhead, and growled and rumbled away in distant echoes through the clefts and corries of the glen; but the storm passed quickly, and, although it continued to rain for some time, there was now light enough to go on with the tackle operations.

While Ward was overhauling my hook-book, he got hold of an absurd Irish fly, with sea-green body, golden wings, and a tail like a fan. This work of art he handed to me, declaring he should use that one in particular.

"Bah!" I said, "you will only frighten the fish."

"Why, you agreed that these Irish flies often worked wonders."

"Then try it; it can do no good, however much harm."

"You are sententious to-day, Abbott."

"Do then forgive me, like a good fellow, and translate my meaning into parliamentary language."

Ward laughed, and said that, instead of a curt "do no good, and may harm," would it not be more polite to have remarked, "Mr. Ward, the lure which you propose to use cannot, under the circumstances of its unnatural brightness and your inexperience, be productive of beneficial influences; but, on the contrary, may be the cause of disaster and deleterious operation throughout the length and breadth of our sporting river"?

"Ha, ha! What a park of wordy artillery to demolish a fly!"

"Still, ridiculous as it seems, the sort of style is often used in private, and it is absolutely necessary in public speeches, in which people are used to having their parish pumps compared with the pyramids; and rather like it," he sneeringly added.

"Yet the men are not individually donkeys, although they may applaud."

"*À peu de chose près;* but how do you fix these knots so nicely on the casts?"

"Oh! that's the sailor's knot; shall I teach you?"

"Yes, do."

And Ward mastered the sailor's knot, which after-

wards saved him some trouble, and, probably, fish.

By two o'clock the day had cleared up; but it was too late to fish the river, which, besides, would likely be discoloured with the rain; so it was agreed that the Major and I should ride the ponies to the loch, and help the launching of the new boat that was to be sent on to-day. Ward and Fred resolved to fish the burn.

On crossing the hills to the loch we saw a good deal of game, which was satisfactory as this is not one of the best beats. Indeed, we had leased Ardenmohr rather for the fishing and the wide range and wildness of the scenery than as a stocked moor, which it is not; but the sport is always ample, and so strange and varied that for good walkers it is infinitely to be preferred to an ordinary grouse moor, where there is little variety from day to day but the tameness or shyness of the birds.

At the loch we met the game-watcher and another man waiting for the boat, which by-and-by arrived, mounted on old coach wheels, and drawn by two stout horses, John Fraser superintending. The "concern," as John called it, had been twice bogged

on the path across the hill, and they had some trouble to get her clear.

The launching was well managed, and the big boat floated even and lightly. Major Duncan and I had a pull at the oars, and found she went famously through the water. The boat was also supplied with the requisites for putting up a small sail when wanted, as I was anxious to try how a sail would work in trolling: so far so well, and having examined the boathouse and fittings, &c., we went homewards. It began to rain heavily, and we dismounted thoroughly drenched.

Shortly Ward and Fred arrived in like dismal plight, but in great spirits, both having filled their creels with nice burn trout. Fred, who had fished with bait, had the largest-sized trout, but not so many as Ward.

Although early in August, the evening was chilly, and it was pleasant, on coming in to dinner, to gather round a bright fire. Foreigners are beginning to find the beauties of an open fireplace, and though neither so economical nor perhaps so warm as a stove, it is so jolly to look at; but the piles of faggots we burn on cool nights would be ruinous on the Continent.

After dinner, to make doubly safe against a chill, we had a brew of whisky toddy: and Ward, like a sensible fellow, took quite kindly to a reeking tumbler, and might have taken two had his head not warned him that it was not negus; and Freddy, inspired by a small glass, toasted the girls of N—— before he went off to prepare for his next morning's lesson.

When Fred had gone out, I remarked to Ward how like he is to his sisters—they having the same brusque and slightly defiant manner, and yet so sweet-tempered.

"Yes," said Ward, "sweet tempered with pleasant people, and so gentle with the shy or reserved; but they do bristle up sometimes at pomposity or advice-giving."

"Do they!" said the Major. "Then I might have their sympathy. Why, just to-day, I have a letter from a wise friend, who is pleased to advise me on a delicate matter: his maxims are beautiful."

"I detest maxims," said Ward, "bumptious, one-sided dogmas seldom applying in individual cases. Why the deuce won't people let others alone?"

"As the best judges, Hope?"

"Yes, of their own circumstances, and quite unlikely to act on others' views."

"Yet counsel and sympathy are sought by many people far from being fools."

"Ay, sought, and from those they like or trust; but not to be volunteered. A better authority than maxim-mongers says, 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joys.'"

"A stranger, of course; but he does not say a friend."

"Surely not—a friend's counsel Bacon pronounces doubly good; it halves evil and doubles joys. By a stranger I understand one who has not one's confidence. Yet the meaning may lie deeper, and point to those silent griefs and joys which even friendship cannot touch."

"You seem, Hope, to have thought this matter over before."

"Not very philosophically, Major; but there are some lines, not poetry, in my scrap-book, suggested to me by Captain Maury's statements about the perfect stillness of the sea in great depths, and which bear in some degree on the subject. I need scarcely say that they are poetry of a very mild type."

"Ah! verse instead of a drawing of ocean depths: but you could hardly sketch in a diving-bell. Let us look at the inspiration."

Ward laughed, and handed the thing to Major Duncan, who put down his pipe and read aloud—

SÆVAS TRANQUILLAS IN UNDIS.

'Tis false religion, false philosophy
To teach life's ills are nought, life's pleasures toys;
And wisest minds with simple natures vie
In frankly sharing common griefs and joys.
Yet doth the heart retain a hallow'd spot,
A sacred fane, where many feelings lie
With which the stranger intermeddleth not—
A mind's retreat and Christian's sanctuary.
Men of great heart and eke of judgment ripe
Have the broad living ocean as their type,
That open-arm'd receives earth's tribute streams,
Spreading in bounteous rain those tributes won;
Changeful in mood, as childhood's face in dreams,
Frowns with each cloud, or glitters in the sun.
Oft fretful gales dispel the ocean's rest,
Tornadoes fierce its throbbing bosom vex;
Then is upheaved the white and dreaded crest,
The trembling shore all strewn with piteous wrecks.
Yet, far below, in crystal depths profound,
Waves have no force, the shrieking wind no sound.
Deep, where rich spoils of many a foreign land,
Hid ever from man's grasping, slowly rot;
Down, where, till doomsday, rest on silver sands
Unshrouded dead, long shipwreck'd, long forgot,
In gloom more hush'd than dim Carthusian cell.
Such rest, that wind nor wave have never power
To move one fragile weed or tiny shell

Hid in the coral grottoes of the deep—
A home of silence and unbroken sleep.

"Prodigious!" exclaimed the Major on finishing the rhyme; "and sentimental too, Hope; yet very reasonable rhyme and reason: besides, it would be hard to deny a *private* room to your friends who keep open house for public griefs and joys in their sympathies, eh?"

"Even should it, Major, be like the maister's room you spoke of as being common in Scotch country houses, and the *worst*-furnished room in the house," said Ward, laughing.

"Ex-actly, *mon cher;* for, analogous to your mind's private room, the master's retreat is sacred to quiet and fancy, and free from bothering advisers."

"You dry Scotch quiz, you have no pity for delusions."

"I suspect," I remarked, "that delusions fill the pleasantest corners in one's mind, and that Burns only half considered when he wrote—

'Oh wad some power the giftie gie *us*
To see ourselves as others see us.'

Individually, it would be far from a pleasing giftie; but had Robbie written gie THEM, and not gie US,

every one would say, how proper! I don't want my own fancies, mayhap delusions, to be disturbed."

"Nor I," said Ward. "I wish to believe my friends to be friendly; my tastes and whims good taste; and don't seek others' views thereon to disperse all my fancy blossoms. Time may quietly pick them off one by one soon enough."

"Ah! Hope, is this not pleasure *versus* dry wisdom?" said Major Duncan.

"Not entirely; no sane man will deny that in matters of real moment truth is best, however bitter; but Lord Bacon, a safer philosopher than your Burns, says that, 'If you take from men vain opinions, flattering hopes, and the like, it would leave the minds of most of us poor shrunken things.' Nor do I want people to be poking pins through my wind-bags: they float me nicely down the stream."

"So, so, Hope, and you admire the great chancellor? Not a bad sign of your taste."

"Who does not? the finest of philosophical intellects, and the most intensely sensible of men of the world; yet *he* made some sad mulls, moral and mental. Not you, Fred," Ward said, as the youngster came in, and was staring at his cousin being so earnest; "you never make mulls."

Fred merely grinned.

"Alas, Hope, for weak humanity," I said, "that such as King David, Solomon, and Bacon should stand for beacons as well as stars! Consoling to us common people in the ruck, eh?"

"Yes; and too many do console and please themselves with the notion that they are better behaved than their betters, and, perhaps, secretly wiser: the giftie might be useful there."

"It might, if anything can mitigate the envy and sham contempt of narrow minds for those of higher stamp. They pooh-pooh everything: clever men are bores; the pleasant, deceitful; the philosophic, free thinkers; and even sportsmen, to be pitied and prayed for."

"Even so," said the Major, laughing. "Yet must we continue in folly, and give the loch a thorough trial to-morrow; this has been a sort of blank day."

"Oh no, Major," said Fred; "Hope and I had right good sport in the burn."

"To be sure; but I supposed your grilse had made you despise small fry, Fred?"

"No, Major, not at all; I forgot all about it when the trout in the burn were taking so well."

"And quite right, Freddy; never throw over old

friends for newer or bigger fish; besides, there's worse fun than good burn-fishing."

"Won't the fishing be good for some time yet?"

"To be sure, boy; and you will take many a trout, and some salmon, long after the 12th; and, you recollect, you and I go together that day."

"That's famous! I can do nothing with Hope when he is in a bumptious humour, which he is sure to be when he begins to miss grouse."

"Suppose," said Ward, "we have a bet, Frederick, that you make three misses to my one; is that fair? What shall it be?"

"Will you stake your silver sandwich-box against half an hour's extra study on my part for a week?"

"Hem, yes; agreed."

"Do you play whist, Fred?" inquired Major Duncan.

"Only a very little. I about know the moves."

"We might have a rubber. Of course you fellows play! Fred, you will find some packs in that corner drawer. You and I shall be partners against the philosophers."

All the evening we waged tough battle, which ended by Master Fred and the Major winning six shillings sterling from each of us.

On going to bed, Fred stood on the stairs, and called: "I say, Hope."

"Well, imp, what is it?"

"I have got some laudanum for toothache, if you find the whist has made you restless. You may come to my room for it."

Ward made a dash at him, but Fred was holed like a rabbit.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONGST WILD FOWL AND SALMON.

Awake, awake! the morning mist is lifted,
The sun-lit hills shine forth in purple gay;
Hear! each glad bird gives voice as God has gifted;
Arise! fresh morn too early wastes away.

More powerful for early rising than rhyme or reason was a frightful discord perpetrated by Fred on Ward's cornet; and after shying a pillow at the wretch, which, of course, he dodged, I shuffled out to the bath and felt the soft west wind and bright sunshine so pleasant after yesterday's rain: the air was sweet with the smell of the plants, and the honey-like aroma of heather bloom.

"We shall want both boats, Major," said Ward.

"Yes; and you and Fred might take your guns—there will be men to carry all, we go in force—and Archie says there are lots of ducks in the marshes by the loch."

"A good idea; and better have a change of stockings, as we get into the boat: when one continues walking, wet doesn't matter. I am not effeminate, but I funk sitting long when wet since that bronchitis in Ireland. You remember, when carelessness in changing lost me a week's cock-shooting, don't you, Abbott?"

"I think I should: your temper was dreadful."

Everything being now in order, we set off across the moors; and a pretty strong party, viz., we four, besides Archie and his boy, and Dick with the pony.

On coming near the loch we took round the east corner to reach the marshes, Dick and the boy going down to the boathouse to have the tackle put in order.

The place for the wild fowl is a long narrow bay, fringed densely with reeds. The flat moor around is interspersed with bogs, water-plants, and peat-holes, and the whole about as pretty a find for wild fowl as could be desired.

When we came to the duck-grounds, Ward and Fred went quietly ahead with Archie and the dog.

Grace, the retriever, is in her way a curiosity, being a cross between a Newfoundland and a Russian setter, and far from a beauty, having a shaggy coat of dirty brown, short legs, blunt head, and a sidelong evil

eye. It needs no Lavater to tell that Madame Grace is infinitely cute, and very queer in temper; but she is tip-top: I never saw a better dog, and I have seen many of all breeds. No use puzzling or aggravating Grace by shouting "Hark! back!" &c. She knows what to do quite as well as the sportsman, and how to do it a mighty deal better.

Almost directly on getting to the swamps there was a call of "Mark snipe!" as two or three rose from a wet corner. Ward dropped one, and Fred missed; the reports put up a whole lot of ducks from the reeds, and they almost all flew right away from the loch.

"Never mind," Archie said, "it's only the auld birds that are leaving; there's plenty flappers left behind."

We presently came on some teal. Ward killed right and left, and Fred got two at a shot; the others, after a short flight, settled in the reeds. A little farther on, Archie whispered, "I'm thinkin' I see ducks ahint yon bank."

Hope and Fred got stealthily round the pool, and flushed a nice covey of mallards; two were killed, and another, wounded, was caught by the dog; the rest went off to the rushes in the loch. Then, at

some deep trenches and peat-holes, three and a half couple of teal and a snipe were added to the bag; Fred shooting well for a youngster.

We now got round the corner of the reeds, and as Archie was pointing out a swampy place a little way off as being likely for ducks, he suddenly exclaimed, "Lord, there's the falcon!" and sure enough one of these beautiful and now rare birds, the peregrine falcon, was slowly cruising over the swamps; but, on seeing us, she wheeled round with a graceful swing, and flew straight away to the hill."

"I suspect, Archie," I said, "that if there be ducks there, they should sit close enough for a while."

"'Deed, sir, they will; there may be nae getting them out of the reeds."

Certainly the sight of this arch-enemy of the duck-tribe appeared to have had a decided effect. There were seven mire ducks and five teal in that weedy bog; and we got nearly all the ducks and two of the teal, as they would hardly rise, the retriever having more than the guns.

Some snipe, a plover, and two hares were shot on our way to the boathouse. Altogether, a very lively episode in a day's *fishing*.

As our party was so large, both the boats were taken out; the old boat being a sound coble, but not suited for more than four people, while the new craft might have held us all for a sail, although quite easy to manage.

Fred, who was anxious for pike, went off in the small boat for a trial in the weedy bays. And by-and-by the Major, Ward, Archie, and myself embarked in the *Jersey*, as we had just baptized the new boat, and sacrificed a bottle of wine in the ceremony.

Ward and I now took the oars, and pulled right away for the deep parts of the loch, where the hills shelved steep down to the water. We were then to fish for a mile or two round the loch, or to act as found expedient.

On the way out we passed Fred's party, busy with tackle and trout-bait for the pike, and Ward called out,

"I say, Fred."

"Yes, my love," cried Freddy.

"Do you see that island about a mile up? Be there at three for lunch."

"Perhaps; but if not up to time, be comforted; we have bread here, and may be engaged," replied Fred.

"As you choose; but be at the boathouse when we leave at five."

"Yes, yes; shove ahead."

We rowed on quickly, the loch being quite smooth, except here and there a cat's-paw ripple; but there was not much fear of wanting a breeze, as in the great Highland lochs the least wind ripples the surface, while a moderate gale gets up sea-like waves.

It was a lovely scene to-day going up the loch, and observing the various shapes and shades of the hills on either side—the grey rocky faces, green patches, and distant views of the far blue mountains; while the near slopes, now purple with the heather in full bloom, were reflected on the glassy lake, showing every detail of outline and colour in softer hues—double beauty, hill and shadow, as Wordsworth says of his swans.

All round the edge of the loch there is sand or shingle; and, but for the absence of shells and sea-weed and of that peculiar sea-beach smell, one might fancy oneself on the sea-shore; the more so from the screaming of gulls floating on the water, and hovering about the islands.

Archie told us that these birds breed in thousands on a small loch just over the hill, and that the sheep-

farmer there makes a good sum yearly by collecting the eggs and sending them to the towns, where they are sold as plovers' eggs (and, by the way, are quite as good).

We landed at the bay to put a finishing stroke to the tackle and whistle for the wind, while Ward made a sketch. We had not long to wait; the puffs of wind increased, and in half an hour or so the lake was covered with the dull grey ripple suited for fly-fishing; after having chosen some flat stones for the harling-line, we shoved off. Allowing the boat to drift across the bay, Ward and I fished at stem and stern, and for a while only getting some small trout, when Ward called out, "I have a good one at last;" but, on being got into the net, it turned out to be an ugly, lean sea-trout, of some three pounds.

"If this is the sort of fish," said Ward, "we might better be pike-fishing with Flibberty."

"Be thankful," the Major said, "that he is not in the boat to hear you, and to see that pretty fish; but this is no fair specimen, yet we shall likely see some even uglier."

"Do you mean sea-trout?"

"Yes, and salmon also. All the salmon-kind quickly lose both beauty and weight in fresh water;

that trout, a few weeks ago, left the sea quite fair and plump."

Shortly we passed over a small bay into which falls one of the hill burns, and in this corner got some beautiful spotted trout from a half to two pounds; but we wanted salmon, yet had seen no sign of any, although I fished all the deeper parts with a grilse-fly.

By this time the west wind had settled into a steady breeze, and the waves were curling and sparkling in the sun, so we decided for an immediate harling cruise for salmon only.

The light casting-rods were now taken down, and two stout salmon-rods put in order, with powerful reels and strong cast-lines. Ward put on his a lively Irish fly, and I mounted a "dusty miller" (a fly with dark peacock harl and silver twist). We faced the stern of the boat, placed the rods and a clew-line between, baited with a trout on spinning tackle, and moved off, the Major and Archie at the oars.

The boat was now rowed well out from land, and across the deep bays, and for some time blank, when suddenly the stone was jerked from the clew, and out flew the line. The Major at once shipped his oars and took the clew, while we reeled up our lines out

of the way. We thought it was a large trout, but presently showing on the surface, the Major exclaimed—

"By Jove, it is a salmon, and a good one! Go slowly in shore, Archie; this is no work for a landing-net."

When close on shore the Major jumped out with the clew, and Archie followed with the cleek, and after a moderate tussle the fish was gaffed—a good one of eleven pounds, slightly discoloured. Thus came dram number one.

Out went the boat again—all in order.

For a good while we saw nothing but a grilse which rose to Ward's fly, and a sea-trout which he got; but at last, on passing a ledge of rock by very deep water, a large fish was seen to rise some distance farther out, and presently another showed about the same place. It was arranged to go to windward, and drift slowly past, casting all the way. We did so, and I thought we had passed the spot, when I rose and hooked a fine fish.

"You have him," said Archie; "reel up, Mr. Ward."

"Easy to speak," gasped Hope. "I have another; he's strong as a bull, near pulling me into the loch."

"Canny, sir, canny," cried Archie; "gie her line."

By good luck the fish took off in one direction, and the boat had not moved far before both fish were well in hand; but just as I landed, mine broke away. Attention was now given to Ward, who worked his fish well, and soon gave Archie a chance, when he cleeked him. This was a fine new-run salmon of fourteen pounds. Hope was a proud man, and although a temperate, he drained number two in honour of his fish.

"This *is* jolly," he said; "did any of you ever before see *two* fish on at once?"

"I have not in a loch," I replied; "but it is not a very rare thing when harling large rivers like the Tweed or Tay, and when fish are plentiful in autumn. I once witnessed three being hooked. I came on the party just as they landed the second; the last fish got off. This was on Redgorton Water, on the Tay. With kelts* two at once is common enough."

"I thought nobody caught kelts."

"Nobody should; but in early spring it is a great *coup* to kill a clean fish, and kelts being abundant in

* "Kelt," a salmon which has spawned, and not yet returned to sea.

spring season they are always getting hooked. Do you know, Hope, that a fine-sized Tay salmon of thirty or forty pounds is worth four or five pounds sterling; and even a moderate fish brings more money than a sheep, and at that early season it is the perfection of red fish."

"Is this for the novelty of being the earliest of the season?"

"To some extent, possibly; but the flesh is firmer and finer than later in the year, and a new-run twenty-pound spring fish cannot be bettered; and should not be buttered, Fred might say, as it wants nothing but a little of the water in which it is boiled and a pinch of salt."

"Our own fish here are approved by the people we send them to, and I find them capital with Chili vinegar."

"Respectable esculents; but there is always something or other that beats 'Bannagher,' and one of these is a Tay fish in February or March; no turbot, mullet, king herring from Loch Fyne, or Dublin Bay haddock can compare; and these are about the pick of fish."

"I should except mullet, red and grey. I think them indifferent fish; like tench and pike, they

require fancy dressing. Why, Major, your black fellow would do four passable courses out of a sturgeon."

"He might well enough; sturgeon is pork, veal, beef, and fish."

"Verily, by being a contemptible imitation of each—insipid pork, flabby veal, and dry beef; as fish it is nought."

"What of caviare, another of its phases?"

"Simply beastly; ditto olives, ditto toothache and comic songs."

"Go on," I said, "and add, ditto politics, ditto genteel people, stewed veal, creaky shoes, and Papists."

"Too bad, Abbott. One might turn out a queer list of your own whims. Hillo, Archie! shove off the other side—bow oar, man; now we are adrift."

The island where we had fixed to lunch being a long way to leeward, it was resolved to try the moderating sail. This was carefully arranged and reduced, the wind being strong. It was a first trial, but yet worked admirably, and we were enabled to go over a great deal of water, and to regulate pace as we chose.

In this way we secured another salmon of nine

pounds and some good trout. When a fish was hooked the bow oars readily stopped the boat, as it was going at an easy pace, and the helm is lifted to prevent tangling the lines.

I have little doubt this plan of trolling may become general and effective in most large lochs, if well managed. We were greatly pleased with its success. Such a mode, however, is only new in fresh-water fishing, as mackerel and other sea fish are regularly taken in that way. It is, besides, so much more pleasant to meander gently here and there through the rippling waters, than to have the eternal monotonous creaking and fuss of the oars, disturbing both fish and one's nerves.

On getting near the island we observed smoke, and when landed behind the promontory, here found young Hopeful and party seated round a roaring fire made of dried heather and the remains of an old boat which they had discovered and managed to smash up.

In front of the fire a string of trout was suspended, nearly cooked; and Fred graciously invited us to sit down, remarking, that as he was by no means proud we might furnish the tipple.

Dick had selected a mossy bank for the table,

and laid a small cloth thereon, and having toasted a loaf in respectable slices, and put a roasted trout on each, announced luncheon. Invaluable Dick!

But Fred had the merit of the suggestion of this *goûter à la ligne*, as he called it, which was a great success, and Ward and he made such fun that even saturnine Archie yelled with laughter at their reckless mirth.

Lunch over, the Major called, "Now, Fred, show your bag."

This was done. Five pike, one of them very large, and some good trout.

We again embarked, and fished along to the boat-house, but with no great success. Rather a curious thing happened in fishing the last bay; the spinning bait was taken by a large eel, which was secured after having made a sad mess of the tackle.

Eels, although strong and swift swimmers, seldom take a moving bait. I think they have indifferent sight, as I have often seen them sniffing around a bait, which, when close enough to see, was greedily seized; however, that may arise from being so much night-feeders, and they are probably cuter in the sma' hours.

All fish will occasionally deviate from their usual

habits. I once caught a flounder when spinning a minnow in a rapid stream, and at rare times eels have been caught with a fly. Near Pitlochry, in Perthshire, there is a small loch where the pike refuse trout bait, and freely take a large fly. I once fished it, and refused to believe what the keeper said about this, and so tried both trout and minnow, but to no purpose, and I had to resort to large bright flies; and they did well enough. All the pike were small.

When we came to the boathouse the spoil was spread out on the heather, fowl and fish, which made a very sporting show. We now started home, leaving the men to put up the tackle and bring the baggage.

At dinner to-day we had sea-fish—a nice change from trout and salmon.

The Frasers had received a supply from the coast, and John considerately sent us part; *inter alia*, some lobsters, but, alas! no crabs: to my mind the best of shell-fish, barring natives.

Fred was questioned at dinner about his pike war, but the grilse had spoilt him for that sport.

"Pike, indeed!" said Fred contemptuously: "loggish, sneaking brutes; a grilse has more fight in him than a loch full of those cravens."

"Even the big one?" the Major asked; "did he not pull strong?"

"Oh yes, for a few minutes, and even ran out to the deep open water; but he soon lost pluck, and hung about the weeds till Dick gaffed him."

"Like most tyrannical bullies, easily cowed when tackled, Fred."

"Did you find it so with tigers, Major?"

"I had little experience of tigers, Fred, except in shooting from a howdah—a tower on the back of an elephant; but, as a rule, all the cat tribe are shy and nervous, unless wounded or cornered,—then they are dangerous."

I asked the Major about the arena fights of buffalo and tiger, when, it is said, the tiger always funks; and if he had seen any such trial.

"No: but it is hardly fair play," he said; "the bos is among friends, and the other is like a fox in a trap. However, I once saw a panther so baited, and it was nearly the same; but he was too nimble, and did not get pinned."

"Then, Major," said Fred, "you never shot a tiger?"

"I may have from a howdah, as I have been at the death of several; but, certainly, not on foot.

I am not such a perfect rifle shot as to risk my skill with such an active foe. I kept to buffalo and deer, and could always manage to dodge a wounded buffalo; but the tiger's charge is a dead certainty."

"Did you never meet one when shooting on foot?"

"Only once. We were driving for deer in a nullah, and I was half hid behind a tree, when a large tiger passed within forty yards; but, as he never noticed me, I let him go. I might have 'fluked,' but as likely as not have only wounded him, and been killed. Had you, Fred, been in the cat's mouth, I might have risked it."

Fred laughed and said, "I believe my discreet cousin there would have pegged at the brute with snipe-shot."

"And have been killed, or scalped, as Hamilton of ours was, from firing at a leopard with buck-shot."

"Which of the Hamiltons?" Ward asked.

"Clawed Hamilton, of course, you silly Hope," said Fred.

"Ah! an extra task for pertness, Mr. Fred."

"Yes; and afterwards Major Duncan and I will give you your revenge at whist."

This evening we had a good deal of conversation about Indian matters. Major Duncan, who is familiar with the languages, and personally intimate with many Hindoos and Parsees, told us much that was new and interesting; and Ward and I felt how greatly clearer an idea is got of a people by conversing with one who really knows them, than by any book, however well written. One readily gets an answer to any question; while books are often elaborate about the very things which interest us the least. It is only in Oliver and Boyd, or in Maunder, that one finds what is specially wanted, and even they fail sometimes.

By-and-by Fred came back, and there was a whist battle with nearly the same result as before; but this evening Fred bore his honours meekly, as he was too sleepy for mischief.

A pair of owls hoo-hoo'd round the house all night. It is an "eerie" sound; but I like it, as it is associated in my mind with many pleasant memories of the country.

CHAPTER VII.

ALONE ON THE HILLS.—AFTER-DINNER SCIENCE.—ON ARISTOCRATIC DESCENT—AND NOT FROM ADAM—AS PROPOUNDED BY—

The modern sage—
Who, by geology surmising
How much man's wisdom needs revising,
Dethrones at once his lore and pride
With fossil bones, and what beside,
By grubbing far in womb of time,
When monster lizards lived in slime—
With mud Silurian quickly poses
Those who believe the Books of Moses;
Then, by development of races,
From newts a Newton clearly traces;
Proves Eden's garden all a myth,
Unfit for, and not suited with,
Amphibious parents who were nursed
In mud, as other things at first—
And clearly, therefore, like the rest,
Were toads or tadpoles at the best:
But after a few million ages
Their progeny, by lengthen'd stages,
Gain'd limbs and wits more nearly human,
Articulation and ACUMEN,

Progress'd (as shown by retrospection,
And Darwin's process of selection)—
Frog, fish, bat, bear, and chimpanzee,
Gorilla, bush-man, you and me;
Then this grand progress drops the veil
Just when our grandsires drop their tail.
"Is this *my* faith, sweet sages? No, no;
Think I'm an ape? Why, *cui bono?*"

S. Abbott.

I had been telling Major Duncan of some curious stones which I had seen on the hill, and as he expressed a desire for a specimen, I, this morning, rose early, and went off before breakfast to find some pieces of these stones.

Although a bad riser, when I can conquer sluggishness I do enjoy an early stroll. And this morning was perfection—grey and still, yet no mist; and as I joyfully breasted the hill, feeling the cool dry air, and breathing oxygen, ozone, or whatever stimulating gases do most abound on the hills on early morn, I felt a sort of remorse for past inaction, and even made resolves—alas, too fleeting!

The grouse were flying hither and thither, and crowing on the heather knolls; while overhead great flights of garrulous jackdaws were coming from the rocks for their day's thieving and mischief.

Sad miscreants, these dwarf corbies; they pry

everywhere, from the hill-top to the hen-roost, and devour anything, from a chick-pheasant to a dead cat. I remember, some years ago, when the keeper at a Highland shooting-quarter had reared the young of capercailzie grouse, and black game, by setting the eggs under domestic fowls, the little game birds were thriving wonderfully, and it was interesting to watch the shy youngsters running in and out amongst the pine branches spread on the lawn for their shelter; but these pests, the jackdaws, destroyed them all, chiefly by picking out the eyes of the poor things, and the experiment of home-rearing was never there tried again.

I got specimens of the stones, and was back in good time, but, on going in to breakfast, I was worried by the whole fraternity. Ward and Fred asked impressively if it was dyspepsy or headache sent me out so early, and the ungrateful Major said I must be "fey."

"Ha! what is fey?" asked Fred.

"It is a Scotch word, Freddy. Any one who reverses his usual habits is said to be 'fey,' and that he will die soon. A churlish person, for instance, becoming bland—a miser doing a liberal thing—or a noodle saying a witty one."

"Oh dear! poor Mr. Abbott is doomed," sighed Fred; "and so near the twelfth—very annoying, is it not, Major?"

"Well, there is some chance for him, as this is hardly a decided case, and Abbott has possibly been before out early. Give him the benefit of the doubt."

It was settled that this day should be devoted to making up arrears of letters, &c., too long delayed, and perhaps it was as well, the weather being rather bright for fishing. To-morrow was arranged for a visit to some small lochs on the east range of hill, where, Archie said, we should find snipe and probably some teal; and the day following fixed for a salmon *chasse* on the river. So, having dawdled over breakfast, and enjoyed a social pipe under the old fir-tree, I took my writing-case and note-book, and went off to scribble in a favourite hollow on the hill-side.

This place is a pet retreat of mine, and I can hardly tell why, as there are others equally accessible, and where the views are finer. How is it that one takes to particular places and persons irrespective of any definite excellence? Of the men I meet I prefer the company of certain individuals, not necessarily the wisest or best-mannered; but they suit me

somehow; and, like the distaste to Dr. Fell, the reason why I cannot tell. As to places, Puss and Ponto affect certain nooks for shade or sunshine, and most people do so likewise. I wonder if the French cynic means to indicate the *indifférents* when he says that a good digestion and a bad heart are the grand requisites for happiness; for there are people who, provided things about them be comfortable, care little for places or persons.

"*Halte là!*" whispers my mental mentor; "all men are not bundles of whims like yourself."

True, O Mentor; but, *en revanche*, the want of a little fancy and geniality usually indicates the shell of a human mollusc, not a nice sort of person for a friend. I plead for no extremes—in fact, plead for nothing; so permit me, good Mentor, to get any whims that may crop up among the heather.

In an hour or two I had finished my letters, &c., so, placing the whole in a safe corner, I set off to explore the *terra incognita* away to the north-east march of the moors. Many people might find such a walk lonely and tiresome, but to me it is delightful. The day bright and hot, but the air, notwithstanding, pure and bracing, and I passed lightly over miles of springy heather, every now and then coming to

new peeps of rugged corries and lonely little glens, and at last I reached a gap in the hills opening on cultivated fields and fir-woods.

I now found, by looking at my pocket-map of Ardenmohr, that I was near the march, and about five miles from the Lodge, so I turned to the right, and went along the course of a brawling burn till I came to a black wood, part of the indigenous forest that once covered so much of the Scottish moorland. None of the trees were of great size, but many had a look of great antiquity, and, on going through the wood, scarce a living thing was seen or heard, save a few tiny woodpeckers creeping on the great boles of the trees, and a pair of "scraichin" jays flitting about the dense crowns of the pines. All through the wood the underground is mostly open; but in some parts, especially near the end, I found a wilderness of bush, huge bramble, juniper, and dense willows—cover enough for a wild elephant or a covey of rocs.

Apropos of rocs, what has become of those charming children's stories of old times? And what dry waifs of fiddle-faddle and false morality now supersede them! For our poor town boys in these delicate times have no fight and make friends, no

snow forts, no Sindbad the Sailor, no Bluebeard, except now and then in pantomime. Country boys have rough play, and do well enough. Oh, the delight to a boy, when school and snow-ball fights were over for the day, to sit on the hearth-rug by a mother's foot, and read the "Forty Thieves" or "Gulliver's Travels!" After-life has not many pleasures in store to beat these feelings of stirring adventure, combined with the sweet sense of love and home security.

After passing through the black wood, I took along a rough hollow—nice lying for game—rock, fern, and gorse in wild confusion, interspersed with clumps of hazel and birch. Here I saw a good promise of black game, and, at the end of the hollow, I started three roe-deer; they broke out to the open hill, but soon stopped, and took a good look at me; then, changing their minds, they turned to the wood, and sped swiftly back to cover.

When I had gone a little farther I met the game-watcher of this side of the grounds, and went with him to inspect some vermin-stamps. There was nothing in the stamps but a carrion crow and a weasel.

The first is the worst of enemies to game-birds. I

look on the hoodie as more mischievous than the falcon, which hunts so far and wide after game and wild-fowl, as she only knocks down a grouse or a black-cock now and then about any one place; but the "hoodie crow" haunts the same range day after day, and is, besides, peculiarly destructive to the eggs and young of grouse, and she is continually on the outlook. The common rook sometimes pilfers eggs. I saw one take the whole of the eggs in succession from a wild duck's nest on an island, and although I shouted at the outrage from the lake-side.

As for weasels, they are *mauvais sujets;* but they kill rats—a worse vermin than themselves, and might be forgiven if their love of destruction had limits: their motto seems to be kill, kill, every bird in a nest, mother included, when they find one.

A curious circumstance with a weasel was told me lately by a country gentleman and a close observer of nature. He was sitting at the edge of a wood when he noticed a rabbit run from cover into the open field, and as its movements seemed peculiar, he kept quiet and watched; presently a weasel came out on the rabbit's track, and Bunny, on seeing the weasel, lay on the ground and squealed, and the little wretch ran in and seized it by the head, and when

my friend got up the weasel bolted, and he picked up the rabbit near dead. So when he got home he had it at once skinned, and, on carefully examining, found there was only this one wound on the head, which almost confirmed him in the fascinating power of some animals.

Stoats are worse than weasels, but they are luckily not numerous. I remember of a stoat coming some miles on a winter night, and, after swimming across a small pond, it killed five ducks; but being tracked back over the snow, the animal was destroyed.

On the way to the Lodge I saw some well-grown coveys of grouse, and by the time I got my papers from the *cache* it was near five o'clock. I found Major Duncan still writing, and he told me that the others had gone up the burn; so I went after them, and about half a mile up found Ward and Fred getting plenty of small trout, and on the way down the burn they caught several of better size.

To-day I had been trusted with the ordering of dinner, and thought I should go a little out of routine and puzzle them. Fred said that snail broth and curried cat might be expected; but we did very well. There was green-pea soup and trout; then came a single dish carefully covered—no one guessed

what: it was simply a bunch of teal, beautifully roasted under Burmah's special care. For the proper appreciation of wild-fowl, the appetite should not be palled by *pièces de résistance* before. A pie of wild berries from the hill, and a cheese omelette, finished the *carte;* and Fred, who had devoured a couple of the miniature ducks, begged publicly to express his sense of the merits of the caterer, and to drink his health.

After dinner Major Duncan again looked at the stones I had brought in the morning, and as we got on to gossip on geology, he explained by coloured sections the various strata, and touched somewhat on Darwin's theory of natural selection.

"Do you accept that theory, Abbott?" asked Ward.

"Not quite, yet; it is specious, but unproved; even if it did not make against so many of one's religious ideas, or prejudices, as they may be called by these new lights."

"I am pleased you say so," said Hope. "I do not pretend to scientific knowledge in this theory, but I might ask—where are the remains of these graduating animals? We find in abundance those of the lower grade, and all up to the most perfectly organ-

ized, but not the least appearance of any progressive stage, which should be distinctly apparent in the strata of the earth, as the progressive law is declared to go on perpetually."

"Yes, and must be acting now, if ever. Yet, all through the explored regions of the world—especially in Southern America, where life is superabundant—from the smaller reptiles of early ages to the highest classes of animal existence, we find no graduates, but each genus and species sharply defined. True enough, the monsters of the Crystal Palace are extinct; but no one will suppose that they monopolised the faculty of graduating into giraffes and greengrocers; while with the others, existing through all times up to the present, this said development seems about limited to the tadpole, and soon ceases to act."

"Frogs don't come to much," said Ward, laughing. "I have, in Paris, eaten the most highly developed —a sort of cannibalism, possibly; but they were very nice, and had no look of being one's great ancestors."

"Frogs *should* get on," the Major said, "for since Æsop's time they have had a reputation for ambition. But what do you say of the platypus, a sort of Australian water-rat, which seems to develop at both

ends—at one extremity like a mole, and at the other resembling a duck?"

"Ah, yes, Major; but he seems to have settled down, and compromised with the forcing system, as his remains are found in very early strata, and indicate he has made no progress for at least a million of years in bones or beak; and, by the way, I once heard a funny conundrum on this curiosity. Why is he like a tradesman at Christmas?"

"I can't say."

"Because he is a beast with a bill."

"Oh, how jolly good!" cried Fred. "I must book that for school."

"Why, Fred," said Hope, "what can you know about bills, unless it be for hardbake or a cricket-bat?"

"You would wonder: many of our fellows owe good sums for dress and trinkets."

"But you avoid that, Fred, surely?"

"I think so: by no merit, as I get what pocket-money I need, and I am not a great swell."

We had a good laugh at the little man, which he bore like a Spartan; but he is not the sort to injure others for his indulgence: I never met a more unselfish boy.

On looking out before going to bed, there were symptoms of change of weather—gusts of wind and dull sky. The West Highland climate is certainly variable; but even when wet it does not produce the harsh, shivery sensations common on the east coast, and the fine days are just ethereal.

We trusted the morrow, and scattered for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SNIPE LOCHS.—FISH-LORE.

It rained heavily nearly all night, and this morning the sky was still dull and lowering; but on consulting Archie after breakfast, he said we might go to the snipe lochs, as there was a tolerable foot-path most of the way; so it was settled to go, if only for the walk, and to see the place.

Dick and the boy took the pony, guns, &c., and left at once, it being arranged we should meet them at a shealing over the hill. Archie remained to show the way.

When we left, the wind had changed, and by-and-by the day looked better, for gleams of sunshine touched the hills here and there, and before we got far the sun shone out, the heavy clouds rolling away to the east, their dark shadows flying across the bright faces of the mountains; while the light breeze

THE FOX'S CAIRN

shook the rain-drops from the birches like showers of diamonds.

All the climb-up was made pleasant with variety of scene and the lively sight of game and wild birds. On reaching the first tops the view is quite beautiful. Right down at our feet we could see the Lodge, flagstaff, and offices, looking like a child's toys among the hills, and, away to the south, the great loch, and glimpses here and there of the course of the river; while, just beside us, a narrow, rugged corrie runs up high on the rocky face of the steepest hill. Down this corrie the red, swollen waters came foaming and thundering over the rocky shelves, and, a little above where we stood, formed a waterfall of some eighty feet.

High up this corrie Archie pointed out an inaccessible ledge, under which there is usually, every year, a litter of foxes. This spring he shot the dog-fox, and had not since seen the other; but he said "They were so deevilish sly that he wouldna' wonder if there micht be a vermin o' them in the hole." We could, with the glass, see the entrance distinctly; but it would need a staff of Mont Cenis navvies to break up that homestead.

When we got over the sky-line, Archie led on to

the far slope of the hill, and we came to the shealing, and found all waiting.

Here we had some goat's milk. Capital it is, and would be an improvement on London cream. After a short rest we moved again, and soon got to the lochs, which lie in an extensive hollow, surrounded with gloomy-looking hills, steep, stony, and desolate.

Archie now loosed an old pointer, and Ward and Fred went on to work. After watching their sport for a little, Major Duncan and I went off to the heights, to examine this wilderness, and forage for plants.

For an hour or two we explored through bog-holes and rocky crevices, and the Major was enriched with some rare Alpine plants, and bagging a huge specimen of the dragon-fly; but he found the rocks of no particular interest to the geologist, being mostly common gneiss.

We continued the researches for some time, until the fewness of the shots heard from below told us that the snipe-grounds were about beat out, and we rejoined the sportsmen.

Ward told us that all about the swamp they had found lots of snipe, nicely scattered, and that if

Fred and he had shot well they might have bagged twenty or thirty couple: as it was, they had thirteen couple, which I consider very good for this country, and not bad anywhere. They saw no teal, but came on a late covey of mallards, full-grown, but not yet able to fly, which were secured, as they were not likely to be found again.

There must be something peculiarly attractive to snipe in this desolate-looking hollow, as Archie says it is seldom without some, and the birds were in fine feather and condition; but nobody can clear up the mystery of snipe and woodcocks' food, as many places which seem perfect lying and feeding grounds for longbills never hold one; while here there is nothing to remark, except the sheltered gloom of the place, and the vivid greens and reds of the mosses.

On the way to the shealing it was proposed to walk by the hill-tops, and get some blue hares. By this season it is not easy to distinguish the young; and Fred, by no means *exigeant*, fired at every hare he saw; but some leverets were shot.

Being yet early in the afternoon, Archie suggested that we should take a round north by the

hill-tops, and get home by another route. So we left the guns, &c., to be taken back, and started.

The walking soon became rather queer—at one place steep and rocky, and at the next down slippery braes or treacherous bogs; but, on the whole, it was not unpleasant, as at every new peak we had a fresh breeze and change of view; besides, the heather is seldom tall in these high tops, and we could walk freely, and frequently came on parts as smooth as a cricket-field, if not as level.

We were now in the region of the blue hares, and saw a great many, not without resolve on a grand beat for them some day.

There are no ptarmigan on this side; they are found only on our higher ranges of mountain on the west.

When near the north march, I pointed out to Ward the black wood and my line of journey the other day. Still we did not now go so far, but turned down by some green knolls with rocky faces and great stones strewed about, and where we saw lots of rabbits. Archie says he gets his chief supplies from here, and that we might any day get some good shooting with the ferrets.

On coming down on the low moors, we saw a

pair of hen-harriers hunting the ground in a most business-like manner. Archie was intensely disgusted, and declared they were strangers, and not bred on HIS ground; but there they were, and it is no child's work to get at the old birds by trap or gun.

It shows the wonderful instinct of birds, to observe how differently grouse will act on seeing the hen-harrier, from what they do on seeing the peregrine falcon. When the hen-harrier is observed by the grouse, they fly straight off the hill, as this hawk takes her prey on the *ground;* but on seeing the peregrine, who flies like the wind, and strikes the grouse on *wing*, they lie close in the heather, and will scarcely take flight.

A cloth-kite, meant to represent this falcon, is sometimes flown to make birds sit. I have not seen it answer. Possibly it might simulate the hen-harrier more than the peregrine, as it appeared to have an opposite effect. But I have seen a real hawk do good service; for one day when shooting partridges, a great covey rose very wild, and were going clear away, when a large hawk made a dash at them, and they took refuge in a turnip-field; and then sat so close that I and a friend made a

good bag out of that one field. The same thing happened with ducks at the loch the other day.

An easy walk of a mile or so brought us home; and a bath and an hour's rest was a real luxury after the rough hot ramble over so much ground.

When dinner was over, fish and fishing were talked of, to Fred's satisfaction.

Ward and Major Duncan are great sticklers for nicety in shade and colour of flies; at which I demurred, as I have faith only in shape or size, constantly finding that, on the same day, fish go on taking the most dissimilar flies, and in my own practice I seldom find any good in changing my fly, except it be for another, larger or smaller.

Stoddart (who himself was always nice in his choice of flies) mentions a crack Tweed angler who always used white flies, in the belief that fish could not, from the position of the fly between them and the sky, observe colour; and Stoddart allows he killed as well as others who thought differently. Be that as it may, it is almost an axiom with practised fishers, that salmon and sea-trout do like tinsel and glitter in the lures, while yellow trout are better fished with plain flies, and these generally small ones.

I have often got yellow trout with sea-trout flies, but never many at a time.

Casting should be taught to a novice with rod and line without hooks at first; and, if it be done by a good angler, a few trials should bring tolerable freedom at this, the most essential requisite for an angler.

About playing a fish, I advocated firm measures on the whole. The Major agreed, and explained this to Ward by asking him to hold out a book at arm's length. A minute or two sufficed, and his arm dropped. "Now," he said, "give you a second or two of occasional rest, and you could easily keep your arm out for half a day. So with a salmon, give it *no* rest; for if you do so, only for a minute or two, your work is nearly all to do over again: give him no rest, and he is very soon pumped."

"To-morrow," said Ward, "I shall try the steady strain."

"Do; but you may find a strong salmon in the river is different from those in the loch; the run of the fish, the current, or bad footing—any of them may be peculiar; and you must never force or *bully* a fish—just bide your time for persuasive handling."

"Yet, I have heard of salmon taking an angler miles off before he could get him out."

"So it is said, even by skilful anglers; but I never happened to see a fish get many hundred yards off from where it was first hooked, and I have been at the death of scores, some of them heavy fish."

"Did you, Major, ever catch a very large salmon?" Fred asked.

"No, Fred, not more than twenty-eight pounds—that was my largest; but good anglers have told me that their big fish were not always the hardest to secure, as they seldom run well; but still the great strength and weight of a large salmon make a long and tedious struggle a certainty."

I remarked that I had found a twenty-pound salmon and a seven-pound grilse about the sharpest practice; and the Major thought I was near the truth.

"What a pity," said Ward, "that these same salmon, which give such sport, and are so nice fried in slices, do not get more increased! You, Abbott, have studied the matter; what is likely to be done?"

"I can hardly say—plans and theories are numberless; but I think most large clean rivers might be made salmon streams, and in those which now hold fish the quantity be greatly increased."

"What about their increased food? Ah! that is a puzzling point to some; but you have heard that salmon are never caught with any food in their stomach?"

"Yes," the Major remarked; "and the common theory is that they disgorge on being hooked, or surrounded with a net."

"Not my theory, Major. Doubtless they are always empty, and this was confirmed to me by an old fisherman employed for many years in cutting up and pickling salmon, before the ice plan of transit was discovered; but the disgorging theory seems untenable."

"Why?"

"For two reasons—either of which one might think sufficient to disprove it; and reason number one is, that if, in great takes of salmon, sixty or a hundred fish were to disgorge, the bag of the net would be full of evidence."

"Hem! some sense in that; and what is reason number two?"

"That *after* spawning, the kelts, as is well known, eat freely, and do *not* disgorge, as I have seen many kelts opened before the law was so stringent, and these were all more or less crammed with small

trout and other rations; the salmon are then *going down* the river."

"But how, then," asked Ward, "do the fish going up the river keep up their condition?"

"Precisely what they do *not* do: they lose condition daily from entering the rivers, and the farther on they go, the worse they become; while kelts, again, eat freely, and improve in weight and appearance."

"That is interesting; but how is it ascertained?"

"In the most definite way, by the Duke of Athole and other gentlemen interested. They have a custom, when they get hold of kelts, of attaching minute rings to their dead fin; these rings or plates are marked, and note is kept of the day of capture, and weight of the fish on its being returned to the water. On any fish being recaptured with one of these peculiar rings, either before it gets to the sea or after its return from sea quarters, word is sent to the marker, along with the ring and present weight of the fish, and this being compared with the note at the time of its first capture, of course it is easy to compute the change the fish has made in the time."

"Then from all this you would imply that clean salmon after leaving the sea and entering rivers do

not feed: pray what did they want with your flies and Major Duncan's spinning-tackle?"

"To *kill* a moving object: habit and not hunger; just as a hawk or a ferret will do when it takes its fancy, hungry or not."

"Reasonable, but puzzling."

"No doubt; but Nature arranges that as salmon crowding in the shallows, and occupied with spawning, could not get food, it is provided by Nature that *then* they do not NEED food, and are like hybernating animals: their work over, they eat with a vengeance. Clean salmon are ever capricious and uncertain, and while the rivers in autumn teem with fish, you will often not get a rise: had they been like hungry kelts, that would never happen."

"Queer business! Why, salmon culture and manhood suffrage might occupy parliament for a century. I suppose it is late? Ah, yes. No rubber to-night."

On going to the door we saw it was a lovely night, the bright stars and the new moon shining in quiet glory; but we had a day's salmon-fishing before us, and did not remain long out.

CHAPTER IX.

A HIGHLAND SALMON RIVER.—CRUDE POLITICS, ETC.

"This day should do," Ward remarked, as we sat down to breakfast—"nice grey sky; and see, the south-west wind just moves the leaves outside. How do you feel, Fred?"

"Bloodthirsty exceedingly, cousin mine."

"And do you know you are to have Abbott's pet rod, as you have deported yourself decently of late?"

"Oh, that is so kind! Mr. Abbott; I shall see I do not injure it."

"No fear, Fred; unless you fall amongst stones, or lay it down carelessly. When you put it on the ground have it level, for if a rod gets a set twist it is ruined."

"What if I break the top with a fish, as I did with mine?"

"Never mind, boy; give your fish full justice. I have spare tops for both fly and minnow."

"Thank you; and, Major, am I to be with you again?"

"So it seems arranged, and Archie goes with us this time. But no *net*," he laughingly added.

"And where go the philosophers?"

"To fish the lower waters as before, and the pools far down."

"We must beat them: you fish, of course, Major?"

"Yes; we can take turn about, and at some places be both at work."

"That's jolly; now, Mr. Abbott, look to your laurels."

"Little boys should be modest," said Ward.

"Why, that is not the dictum of the ancient classic I read with you, for he says, '*first of all confidence—* last *confidence.*'"

"But not presumption, my pet; and the *surtout audace* is not for chickens."

"By which you mean—hatch first your chickens."

"Preceesely, as Archie would say."

We left soon after breakfast, and crossed the moors in high spirits as the day looked so promising. On the way we found some patches of lovely white

heather, and Ward, who is fanciful, bid Archie mark the place carefully, as it would be so neat to pack some grouse in red, and ptarmigan in white heather.

"Especially for E——'s box," said Fred.

"Do you know Mrs. Dod's recipe for cooking goslings, Frederick?"

"No. What is it?"

"I wish I did know, for your sake."

At the top of the hill we divided, Major Duncan, Fred, and Archie going up by the river bend, while we went down to the water to get along the banks to the lower pools.

Again, the glorious salmon stream with its rich heather banks, past which the bright waters come dancing and leaping over their stony beds, now pausing to surge slowly round some sullen pool, then breaking away over the shallows in sparkling bubbles and rolls of silver fleece; here pushing and fretting through a narrow gorge rocky and fern clad, then, in placid breadth, slipping past green braes fringed with juniper and drooping birch. Truly a Highland river is one of the fairest and sprightliest of Nature's beauties!

After walking for some distance down the banks we came to the first pool to be fished, Archie's

boy acting as guide, as, from being much with the keepers, he knows every good cast on the river.

This pool is long, and the current rapid; and being only deep in the middle, Ward had to wade in to cast it. Although it took some time to go over this stretch, I was hardly disappointed that he only got a small grilse here, and rose some trout.

The next place is so like the great black pool above, that I looked for something serious, and Ward did very soon get a rise. As advised, he waited some time before casting over his fish again. This turn the salmon rose bravely, and Ward shouted—

"I have him, Abbott. Must I come on shore?"

"No; but come into shallower water, for fear he may run down, that you may follow."

The fish kept the pool, although he fought hard for nearly half an hour, when I managed to gaff him, yet not so deftly as Archie would have done. A nice bright salmon, close on twelve pounds.

Ward now wanted me to take the lower part of the pool; but I asked him to go on, and upon this same reach of water he rose two large fish, and killed another salmon a pound heavier than his first, but rather coarse-headed and not very bright in colour,

yet a strong and active fish, which tested his skill and tackle thoroughly.

"This is real sport," said Ward, still flushed with the exciting game; "now for some brandy-and-water."

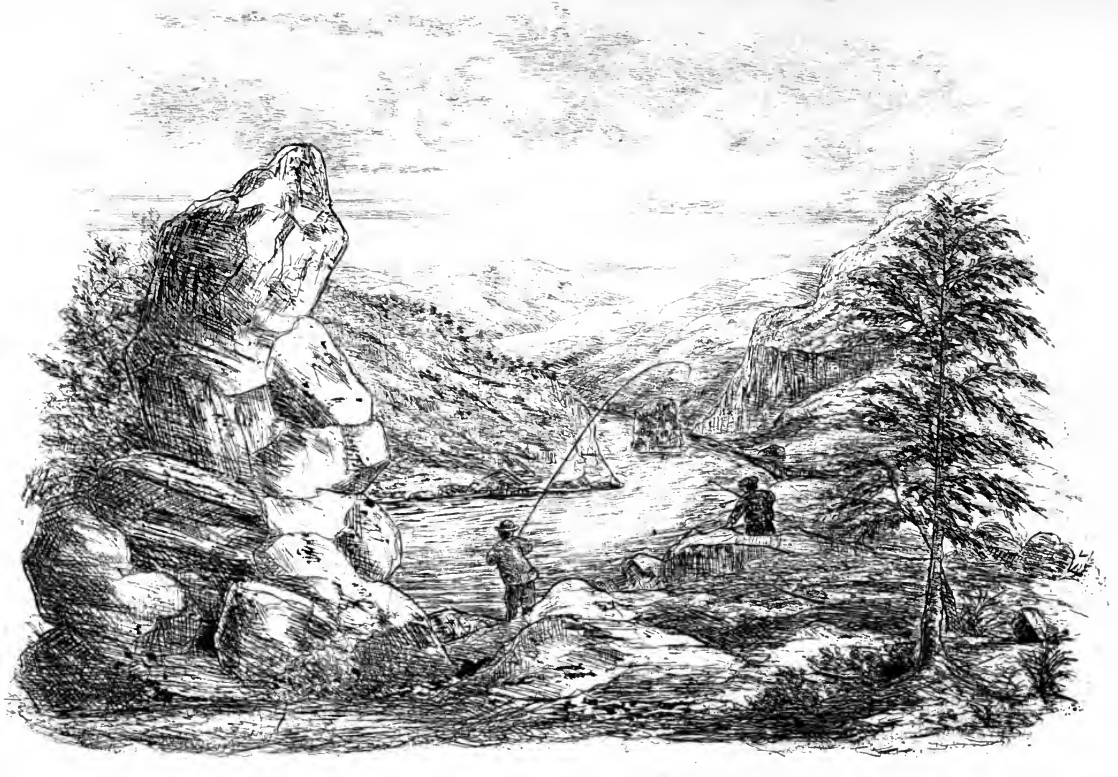
I may mention that rivers of short course, and having a loch for a reservoir, are seldom discoloured, especially when there are no important tributaries; so, in fishing, we could always get pure and nice water.

Next pool, the place looked rather shallow, and we did not fish it, but went on to the "Heron Stane Pool."

The rock, from which this cast takes its name, is a huge mass of isolated stone on the river bank, and jutting into the water; and on scrambling up to the top of it we had a fine view up and down the river. A little below it, and just above the pool, a good-sized hill burn falls in.

This pool seemed full of sea-trout, and I got seven, all of them fresh run, but did not see a "fish,"* although it looks a fine hold for salmon. We now rested a while, and then went up the river to try the old places.

* When a Scotch angler speaks of *a fish*, he indicates a *salmon;* even a grilse is not honoured with the title of a *fish*.



THE HERON STANE

On the way up an otter was seen in the shallows, where it might have easily been shot; and we came on a colony of teal at a reedy swamp by the banks.

All the next pools were taken in succession by Ward and myself, and we had good sport. Ward killed a grilse and some trout, and I got a grilse and bungled and lost a salmon in a very stupid way. The fish took my fly just over a rapid, and rushed at once to the strong deeps at the farther side. On wading the shallow part to get better scope at him, I had my line grasped close to the rod, when he made another bolt, and, of course, snapped the strong line like a thread.

On coming now to the black pool of leviathan fame, I resolved to try fairly for the big one; so I waded in at the very top and fished it, inch by inch, to the bottom, yet without a rise. The boy said it was strange; and as it was nearly the best pool in the river, he thought the otter had lately been through it.

Otter or not, I determined on another trial with a fresh fly. So I put on a large rough hook, with turkey wing and grey body, banded with silver, and again went over the pool, casting as far across as I could manage. On and on, yet not a move, till just

where the large fish had before risen. A whirl and a wave by my fly and I had him. For three-quarters of an hour I played this fish, and although I had chosen my stoutest tackle for the contingency, he doggedly refused to come to terms, and worked always to the far side of the river where the stream is strong and deep, but luckily he did not rush down the shallows. At last I got him directed to the easy water, where Archie (who with the others had joined us) waded in and cleeked him. This salmon was only twenty-four and a half pounds, very little heavier than the one I had last day, and rather dark coloured from being some time in the river, but still a fine handsome fish. Archie and the Major agreed with me in thinking that, from its colour, and keeping so firmly to the pool, it must be the one before seen and supposed to be so large.

The other party had had a pleasant day's sport. The Major caught two grilse, and Fred got, strange enough, the only salmon. They had merely killed three trout, although we had seen so many.

Sea-trout do not go far up large, strong, running rivers. In the Tay, for instance, they are scarce a few miles above tide way. Grilse go farther, but few travel beyond Dunkeld. While the strong, vigorous

salmon rush straight through the rapids and rocky falls right up to Loch Tay, where, in early spring, they tingle the fingers and heighten the pulse of many a keen angler amidst the wild and beautiful mountain scenes of Breadalbane.

After an hour's rest, the marching order was "home."

"What a pleasant, exciting day this has been!" said Ward after dinner, as he leant back in his chair and sent forth great puffs of tobacco-smoke. "The loch has its charms, but the river is the more sporting game."

"No doubt," the Major replied; "every pool brings change of scene and tactics, and fish are so strong and active in rapid currents."

"Why is there no poaching here?" Ward inquired. "Archie says there has not been a case for a year."

"Distance," I replied; "we are away from towns and villages; and I am glad we have no prosecutions, as I have a sort of tenderness for poaching when not professional, and do not feel vindictive at a sly cast for a salmon, or a boy catching a rabbit, or even a cotter trapping a hare in his cabbage-garden."

"Whom then should you prosecute?"

"All professional poachers and their resetters, firmly; but not any one about my neighbourhood, unless the habit were becoming chronic."

"You go with the spirit of the times, gentle Abbott; by-and-by no one will be troubled but the police for *interfering* with the sweet liberty of the subject to pin hares and talk treason."

"It looks a little like it; but John Bull is fond of extremes. At one time old women were burnt as witches, and now a certain class of old women get the pick of choice berths at times."

Ward laughed and said, "What of those times when poor devils were weekly hanged in batches for petty crimes, compared with the present, when the most pestilent scoundrels get what is called penal servitude, *i.e.* well-aired rooms, baths, exercise-grounds, and criticized food?"

"Yes; and when they are brought into condition by care and feeding, hoax the chaplain and inspectors, and get out for fresh eccentricities; while certain good people are now clamoring to give cut-throats and murderers a *life* interest in places mightily better kept than the poor houses."

"What is treason, by the way?" Ward asked; "is it any sort of poaching, Abbott?"

"I really can't say. It used to indicate acts dangerous to the State; but since mobs of scoundrels give seditious lectures in the very pleasure-grounds of Johnny's capital, at which papers applaud and statesmen weep, it might be hard to define."

"Humph!" growled the Major; "nice toleration, instead of bundling them home at the point of the bayonet."

"Na, na! Major," I said, "they are J. Stuart Mill's misguided pets. You, as a scientific man, would respect THEM; that excuse is enough."

"Yes, enough to have had him commanded to cease his moonshine about *conditioned* and *unconditioned*, and write something of the ill-conditioned, or a stump among the Sheffield saw-grinders—something practical."

"Hear the dreadful Tory!" said Ward; "but politics being *défendu* on the moors, you are both fined ten shillings."

"We spoke of men, and not measures, *mon cher*," I said.

"Pretty strong measures, Mr. Mill's disciples might think; but I endorse them freely, *illos metaphysicos nunquam legi* since the time I muddled my poor brains between the extremes of Locke and Berkeley,

seeking nothing out of nothing, and to nothing of a purpose."

"And you, a distinguished collegian! Why, our anti-classical vandalism is nothing to this!"

"Ah! no. You and Major Duncan were didactic and general in remark; I merely mentioned my private feelings."

"No sophistry, Hope; you yourself are fined for that."

"Which makes thirty shillings for the church plate, very well; but, as your feet are wet, better go through the bog. Now what class, Abbott, would you wish to rule this country?"

"No single class, we have had all in turn—kingly, priestly, noble, and political, and the innings is now coming to ignorance and impecu—how much, eh?"

"Impecuniosity, I suppose you mean."

"Too Johnsonian for after dinner; say poverty and presumption, and it needs small wit to foresee the end."

"A manufacture of guillotines in Birmingham, and a British revolution."

"Hardly, but sharp reaction; not that we could not turn out as ugly *sans culottes* as France; but

France had intellect and industry forcing the movement, although few wished it to go so far."

"And would English discontent culminate more moderately, do you think?"

"English grievances are not *very* awful, Hope Ward, and a little clamour about red tape and rabbits can hardly bring on a general massacre of the innocents."

"So you do not fear that monstrous bugbear called the working-man?"

"Not the least; thousands of them are the noblest humanities of us all, and, with much to bear and little to hope for, are manly and modest. Still, that does not make them fit to *rule* in a complicated government like this; indeed, most of them own it, and only seek to be properly represented and cared for—not to guide others better educated and more experienced than themselves."

"And how, after all, can the ship of State be neatly managed?"

"Perhaps somewhat by considering every interest in the ship—say land and wealth, owners, commerce, cargo, workmen, crew."

"And Samuel Abbott skipper?"

"Too much luck for the owners."

"Gracious! what a privation for Parliament to lose all this!" the Major said; "and the sportsmanlike manner in which Ward snap-shoots at every question, while Abbott quietly aims ahead at passing events!"

"But we have *bagged* little," said Ward, laughing; "and, *apropos* of your simile, do you shoot in front, or direct, at game?"

"When I think what I'm about, I do allow for long shots; but as often forget and miss."

"Then you think it proper to aim well forward?"

"Undoubtedly: all *perfect* shots do so at times. Yet many really fair shots fire direct at far and near birds."

"I suppose there are but few perfect shots, quick yet calculating?"

"Such as Mr. St. John or Captain Ross, you mean."

"Were they so good?"

"Wonderful, I am told; a glance at a woodcock, or a rabbit in thickest cover, or a right and left at rock-pigeons going overhead—nothing escaped them."

"Might not one's interest be spoilt by such perfection?"

"I dare say a pheasant-drive or a Norfolk turnip-

field might seem dull work with their skill; but in wild shooting, where every shot is a triumph, it must be nice to make fine practice."

"Yes, when one thinks of it; just like a poet polishing off a gem of a stanza, or Millais putting in a perfect touch of colour."

"Or Hope Ward breathing a velvet note through his trumpet."

"Cornet, you savage. Trumpets are the rude noisy things you soldiers use: as well try to shave with your sabre as attempt a delicacy on the trumpet."

"Yet I have seen a beard neatly taken off with the sabre."

"And the head along with it, perhaps."

"The Ghoorkas are dons at that work. See, that is a Ghoorka sword next the matchlock there; take it down, and feel it."

"Heavy, but efficient, no doubt; Fred would call this a rum shaver."

"Yet with that sword a crack swordsman will nearly behead a bullock at a stroke."

"Hear these beastly owls hooting; I wish somebody would behead them, they make such a row at night."

"What! behead the bird sacred to Minerva?"

"Viciously, if I had a chance; besides, Minerva was one of your strong-minded women with no nerves; she petted those sleep-destroyers, the cock and the owl."

CHAPTER X.

DULL AND UNEVENTFUL.—HOPE WARD DEPRECATES ADVICE-GIVING, AND IS ENCOURAGED THEREIN.

A MISERABLY wet morning; that was plain even before rising. And on getting up and looking through the bleared window, I saw it was likely to be a Highland rainy day of the most persistent type.

The low leaden clouds were charged with moisture, and the dense rain was driven in gusts of south-west wind, while the mists hung heavily down to the very base of the hills.

On going down to breakfast, I was pleased to find a bright wood fire crackling on the hearth; this, with the drowned look of the shrubs outside, and the twittering of birds in the eaves, gave quite an autumnal feeling to this summer morning. No one but Fred seemed to mind much, as we had plenty of

resources indoors, and Fred, forcing his spirits with hope of still more sea-trout, hailed me with—

"Have an egg or a cutlet, Mr. Abbott? Do not people declare that fish won't take before rain?"

"Yes; but yesterday was an exception."

"I should say so: yesterday fish far from diffident, and this day is far from dry."

"Be quiet, little boy, and hand me the toast; we can talk after breakfast."

"Now, Fred," I said, on finishing my third cup, "what do you want to know about fishing?"

"Oh, just why some coming rains prevent fish rising, and others do not."

"Who can say why barometer, wind, and sky, all fail to indicate certainty, one can only go by common observation. So be content with general rules, Fred; they do well enough. Any day with high, clear water and few white clouds should do for salmon, and dull warm days for trout, and that ten out of a dozen times."

"You find pike are very capricious, do you not? Sometimes they refuse everything?"

"Yes; and at others are just as determined to feed, as I once saw."

"Oh, tell me about it.

"Well, it was last year, when, being rowed across a loch, I hooked a trout of half a pound or so, and when winding him in I felt my line stopped as if it had caught a stone, and on looking to see what was up I saw a huge pike had my trout by the middle, just as a terrier would grip a rat, and I nearly had the landing-net over the bold fish; but on being touched he let go and darted off."

"Why did you not gaff him?"

"I had no cleek. I was only trout-fishing."

"Could we not have a regular day for yellow trout, some time?"

"Yes, Fred, we shall. There is a small loch near the north march with fine trout, the keeper says; but they are very shy. We must see, however, what careful fishing can do. Now for work; what are you to be about?"

"Tasks for Hope, and two letters."

The day passed quickly with various occupations, and a visit to the kennels.

We did not care to have too many dogs, and considered our lot might do, viz., two couple of pointers and a brace of setters—all good—and besides we had the amiable Grace and her puppy in training, and five or six varmint-terriers.

By-and-by the half-drowned post-boy came with the letters—all satisfactory—except one, which Ward pitched on the sofa with an angry growl.

"Hillo! Hope, no bad news, I trust," said the Major; "anything wrong?"

"Wrong enough and to spare," Ward replied. "Here is Anthony C——, barrister-at-law, my half-uncle and self-appointed guardian, fearing I am losing time in Scotland."

"Ah, dear! another advice-grievance; but no great harm in that."

"No; but some cheekiness, and much conceit. The idea of C——, who is no great things, after his long life of self-seeking presuming to speak of a sojourn here as lost time!"

I noticed the Major looking humorously at Ward's angry face, so I listened for some fun.

"Tell him gently, Hope," the Major said, "that we do not lose time."

"I trow not; but how mighty vexatious are these platitudes about saving minutes and halfpence, as if one's very breathing-intervals should be utilised in glancing at Plato or polishing one's razors!"

"Still, many wise people so speak of stolen minutes."

"Oh dear, yes—peculiar men in peculiar circumstances. Franklin, for instance, who had to force both means and time in his early drudgery, and he did well and wisely for himself and the world; but why should I follow poor Peter's maxims?"

"Why not, Hope?"

"Because I have ample time and means for study, if I use them aright, without being brought to book for a Highland vacation."

"Yes, surely; but many quiet people might think your very wrath proves Anthony sagacious."

"Then many quiet people would be very wrong. I try to improve in my own way as I get along: I might ponder on advice from some men, but not from a muff."

"Still, 'improve the shining hour' is a sound platitude even from a muff."

"Hem! Why, just the other day, Major, I was riled at the autobiography of a petty Solon of this stamp. The man had been staying at a nice country house, where *even he* allowed the company to be composed of educated, agreeable people; but it seemed they did not suit him; probably they did not bleat over others' shortcomings, and laud one another; at all events, he drivels somewhat in this way—'*Alas!*

for several misspent days, aimless rambles, field sports, and light conversation!' "

"Good, prejudiced man."

"Nonsense, Major. I know well enough there are prejudices to be respected; but in an honest household, amongst decent people, he might have found exercise for his exceptional wisdom. He was not obliged to join frivolities, miss birds, or revoke at whist."

"Possibly he missed his wiser friends."

"You are quizzing; but the farce is, this stickler for lost time among pleasant people in a lovely country was a poor creature, incapable of enlightening his washerwoman; and, plainly, by his autobiographical showing, liked to be cock of a coterie, and was far from blind to his own petty interests and comforts."

"Eheu! Hope. It is as well you keep such notions from Mrs. Grundy."

"Ah, yes; but *Ardenmohr is a free country*, Major: one does not need proof here, nor, by the same token, to *weigh* one's words much."

"Nor to feel particularly uneasy if Uncle Anthony thinks you should be in England at work, and I somewhere cutting throats."

"Shall I write and tell him my ideas, and also of your veneration for prigs?"

"To what end, *mon brave?* You would only confirm him that he is a step nearer Solomon, and that, besides losing time, you keep strange company. Rather tell him," said the Major demurely, "that on walking the moors, we extract the square root of each take of fish, and never pass a stream without calculating the cubic feet of water passing per minute."

"I shall write discreetly, Major; trust me."

"And is *my* advice good for naught?" I inquired.

"Not for much, Samuel Abbott; one might defer to you in the matter of a black hackle or a bird's egg, but in men and manners I'm a host, and the Major improves."

"And I am flattered; but I say, Hope, was not Uncle Anthony the worthy who caned you for making a kite of his manuscripts?"

"The identical gentleman."

"Then, Major, take his opinions *cum grano:* he bears malice."

"Not for the thrashing—I deserved it; yet the cane might have been lighter. Anthony is simply a very vexatious and pompous individual."

"Is he a Papist, Hope?" the Major asked.

"Come, you are too hard on me. To the rescue, Abbott—'Desdichado to the rescue!' Ah, what a book that 'Ivanhoe' is! an education itself, Major."

"Yes, in romance."

"Of course it is not a treasury of learning, like the books of Fuller, Burton, or Montaigne."

"Rare old authors, Hope; your reading has been peculiar but good, I have noticed. Who directed you in your choice?"

"Odd enough, it was a venerable lady, and a very dear friend; I shall tell you about her some day. But it seems to have cleared up: anybody for a stroll?"

We went for a walk up the glen; and although still damp and close, the mists were dispersing, and the birds flitting about. On the steep side of the valley the swollen rivulets were brawling down their stony beds to join the burn, which was now a little river in noise and importance. A pair of ravens were cruising along its swollen banks in search of any drowned sheep or hare, and a long-legged heron was watching trout in the shallows, and was coveted for his salmon hackles.

The aspect of affairs changes quickly in the Highlands, for when we returned in an hour or two it was

quite fine weather, and the waters much fallen in. We found Fred busy fishing near the Lodge; but the burn being too large, he had few trout.

Although there was little walking to-day, the red trout and Highland lamb at dinner were found to be excellent, and Ward said he felt quite amiable after having written a two-edged letter to Uncle Anthony, dined, and filled his pipe. Moreover, he had to-day mastered some mathematical problem, which had been puzzling him for a week.

There was this evening a gorgeous sunset, and afterwards we remained out till bed-time. I lay awake for some time listening to the owls and the hushing sound of the burn.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNDAY.—GOLDEN EAGLE.—SCOTCH KIRK.—HIGHLAND PEASANTRY.

A LOVELY morning, as might have been expected from last evening's sunset.

I can hardly tell why, but to me Sunday in the country is, perhaps, the pleasantest day of the week. In towns on that day, I confess to having too often a feeling of *ennui* and restraint; but in the country I have nothing of this: one's brighter and better thoughts seem to expand, and all nature to wear a fresh and new-born aspect, at once more cheerful and more tranquil than on other days; so fair and quiet that oftentimes one can hardly believe that all in so bounteous and beautiful a world is doomed to decay.

As we sat at breakfast, Archie came in to say that there was an eagle on the hill not far off, and he

thought that Mr. Ward would like to see it. We were up at once, and followed the keeper to a shoulder of the hill near the stone seat, and peeped cautiously over the brae. He was still there, perched on a rock about 400 yards off, and with Archie's glass we could see him distinctly. A magnificent golden eagle, and sitting as still as a stone figure, except by an occasional turn of his head to look around.

"Is it not fine?" whispered Ward. "I would not have lost this sight for anything; let us get as near as we can, and start him." But the great bird was watchful, and the instant we showed above the brae, he launched into the air, rising higher and higher in wide circles, and we gazed till he was lost to view by passing over the nearest hills.

"Oh! what a pity it is Sunday," exclaimed Fred; "Archie might have shot the eagle."

"Shoot him! you young miscreant," said Ward; "shoot you rather. Why one who would kill that noble bird would not scruple to drain the loch, and turn the Lodge into a soap-work."

"You would not find the sheep-farmers so enthusiastic," I said. "Half a lamb daily, and perhaps a brace of grouse after, is expensive keep."

"Is he so bad, Archie?" asked Hope.

"Not maybe to grouse, Mr. Ward. But a pair of eagles in lambing-time do a heap o' mischief; and if no that ill to grouse, as they see him far off, yet when he does rush a covey he maks wild wark among them."

"Still, I would suffer some loss to see these grand birds about the mountains."

We now went back, finished breakfast, and set off for a long walk to church, having ordered Dick to have the carriage at the Frasers' Arms at four o'clock.

There was a good sermon from the parish minister, although not equal to that of last Sunday, and, the day being so fine, the church was well filled with a nice comfortable-looking congregation, here and there showing what art critics call "effective bits of colour" in the shape of tartan shawls and grannies' scarlet cloaks. Nor was fashion quite neglected by the farmers comely daughters.

We had lunch at the inn, and John Fraser agreed to come over to us early on the great 12th, and see the sport; Fred promised Mrs. Fraser the *best* brace of grouse of his own shooting, and the good matron was much pleased, as she seems fond of the boy, and makes of him overmuch.

In driving home, every nook and cranny on the hills was scanned and commented on with interest, as the shooting was so close at hand.

When home, books were taken to read on the hill-side, and I gave Fred a copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress" which I had picked up in the library, and he was at once fixed with its strange attractiveness, especially to the young, and every now and then had some question or comment on the story.

To-day there was roast kid at dinner—a dish of venerable antiquity, which none but the Major had before seen. This being a regular Eastern *plat*, Burmah knew well what he had; and roast kid was at once *recognised* by the government of Ardenmohr.

On going out after dinner, we found the old housekeeper sitting on a bench in the open air, and her daughter reading to her.

Janet Cameron, our housekeeper, is a nice, honest, cheery body, very jealous, and not a little despotic. She keeps her daughter and Dick in excellent order, and even scolds *us*. The only person who escapes Janet's reprehension is Burmah, as his silent ways and great black eyes seem to have awed her. She thinks him "uncanny." Poor

Burmah! Dick has more mischief in him than a hundred of "they glowerin' black craters," as Janet calls them. But, luckily, Janet does not think so, and Burmah is permitted to pursue the quiet mysteries of his *cuisine* unmolested.

In the gloamin we had coffee outside, as it was warm; and Ward having remarked how nice he found the Highland people, and how ready they always were to oblige without the least appearance of cringing or doing a favour—

"Yes," said Major Duncan, "I always find the Highlanders the same. The truth is, all the Celtic races are quick and self-possessed; one seldom comes across a loutish Frenchman or Highlander. The Queen takes much to the Highland people."

"Indeed she does; and it is pleasant to read in her journal of her kindly and humorous dealings with the very humblest."

"Yes, Hope; and her Majesty (God bless her!) has sense and heart to prefer the real pleasure apparent in their services to that mere deference which high station always commands; besides, the natural tact and loyalty of the Celt make familiarity pleasant and safe."

"Quite true; but there is no taint of tyrant or

bigot in the Queen of England, who worships so modestly in the village kirk."

"Bravo, Hope! you are not such a Radical after all."

"I a Radical! bless the man. I! game-preserver, Church of England pillar, and most loyal subject! —a bit of a grumbler, it may be, but that is an English habit. Yet, Major, I do not go in with the eternal tinkering spirit of some in Parliament, —their calling for statistics of pen-wipers and sneezes from Irish snuff."

"Hyperbole—yet virtuous thy instincts, my boy. Still, you must take a definite side by-and-by: individual crotchets don't work."

"But would it not be nice if individual feelings were enough?"

"A Christian world, you would say?"

"Yes, if distinguished from a theological. Nothing seems plainer than one's duties; but men vary infinitely as to what is orthodox."

"Do you hold no merit in faith, you heterodoxical trout-slayer?"

"Not quite as some do: for in mere belief conditions are hardly equal; some are soft and credulous, and others as hard and logical."

"Then whence the virtue of faith?"

"May I think much from its cause, Major, when it comes from belief in a God's goodness and a sense of our weakness; and, finding in the pure and simple doctrines of Christianity everything to meet our wants, we gratefully hold them as of God—Holy Writ as his gift; and when so believed, it then alters our natures for the better."

"A theology of induction, Hope; yet not a vicious one: but it is plain you won't be a bishop."

"I suspect not. Suppose we have a turn in the glen, before going to bed."

I enjoyed particularly this quiet stroll; and in the calm conversation there came out now and then glimpses of those finer traits so pleasing to find in one's friends, and which, even amongst friends, are not always worn on the sleeve. Afterwards, when in bed, I thought of a sentence of Bacon, in his essay on the Unity of Religion, where he says, "That a man of judgment shall sometimes hear ignorant men differ, yet know well enough they mean one thing; and shall not God, who knows the heart, discern that frail men in some of their contradictions intend the same thing, and accept of both?" and I mused on this, and of still higher authority to the same purpose, till I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

RABBIT-FERRETING, ETC.

This morning bright and warm; but Major Duncan and I had arranged to stay at home and put our accounts and correspondence into shape, as we might not have such a good opportunity after the shooting season fairly opened. Ward and Fred left immediately after breakfast, for a special day at the sea-trout.

One gets through a great deal of work in four or five hours, so that by three o'clock affairs were in a satisfactory condition. The Major is a perfect dragon for order and expedition: doubtless he had enjoyed practice, as adjutant and interpreter; and, although easily muddled when disturbed, I, with such quiet as to-day, get on moderately at the three R's, and now felt the sort of satisfaction one has in performing even humble labours.

After lunch, when just on the way to join the anglers, Archie came to the Lodge, and it was agreed that instead of going to the river we should have a turn at the rabbits; so leaving Archie to get his dinner and bring the ferrets, we went off to the hill and waited till he joined us with the ferrets and retriever.

It is very pretty practice this same ferreting; and there is a certain excitement in slipping up to the burrows, dropping the ferret, and with ready gun waiting the issue.

Odd enough, rabbits do not always bolt when their homes are invaded by their enemy, and, when they do so, often dawdle out as if for an airing, instead of the headlong rush one might expect; but they put on steam directly they see the sportsman.

The first burrows were drawn nearly blank; but on getting round to the sheltered side of the hill we found plenty, and they bolted well: eight couple were killed in a short time—some clipping shots made, and some shameful mulls.

It is very strange how "dour" at times rabbits are to leave their burrows; you can hear them rumbling below, as the ferret pursues them through the tunnels, yet, with open doors for escape, they will

often allow the ferret to commit what Scotch law calls "hame-sucken."

On the high rocks there were few rabbits; but the holes being shallow they bolted at once, and it needed quick shooting to get them, as they were out of sight in a twinkling.

At one of the burrows here we had an incident in the sport. Archie had put a ferret into a hole just under a shelf of rock, but she came out quickly, and evidently in great excitement, with her hair fussed up like an angry terrier's; put in again, the same was repeated.

"There's a polecat or something in the hole," said Archie, "and there's nae use trying to howk him oot of hard rock."

"Put in another ferret," I said; "two should bolt a fox."

On this Archie took a large dog-ferret from the bag and put him to the hole, the other one following.

All was quiet for a second or two, when out rushed two common cats with tails like bottle-brushes: one I shot, and Grace pinned the other before Ward had time to fire.

"What think you of this, Archie?" I said.

"'Deed, sir, I scarcely ken what to think. There's no' a house nearer than three miles, and I'm sure they're no our cats."

"Very true; but house cats wander far at times, and will lay up in such a good kitchen when they find it."

"Deevil doot them; and had they been left, there would have been a braw toll oot of the warren. But wha would have supposed ferrets would bolt them, Mr. Abbott?"

"Oh! I have seen it before; and on one occasion I saw a large she-ferret kill a cat in a hutch directly when put in. It was a boy's cruelty; but I remember well that the cat seemed stupified with fear."

"It's weel to ken that, for I'm whiles troubled to get at house cats that tak' to hunting, and in places whar it's no' safe to lay down traps or poison."

"Are there any wild cats about here?"

"Not now: they used to be; but being bad to game, and no hard to trap, they get killed oot."

On the way home we saw a single hen-harrier, and asked Archie if he had killed the other. He said no. We got home about seven, and the anglers did not arrive till we had sat down to dinner.

"Any sport?" the Major inquired.

"Yes, yes;" and Fred was proceeding eagerly with details.

"All right, my boy; but you two be off and change: we shall have it all at dinner."

They were not long appearing, and the tumblers of ice-cold water which Ward gulped seemed odd, after being all day beside a whole river.

"So, Hope, you had sport: what did you do?" I asked.

"Well, first we took the lower pools for sea-trout. The river has fallen in considerably; but there was a smart breeze. I crossed at the Heron-stane, and Fred fished this side."

"What did you get in that pool?"

"Only three sea-trout: farther down I had two more and a small salmon, and Fred landed two grilse and a trout for his share. On the upper pools we hardly saw anything."

"Not bad, on the whole. Any event of note in your travels?"

"Why, yes; flushed a young lady in the heather."

"Ho! ho! an event to a grass bachelor: tell us about it."

"Ask Fred; he was first spear."

"A base pig-sticking allusion; but how was it, Fred?"

"Oh! just this: Hope was fishing opposite me, and I was going down to another place, when I came plump on a girl sketching; and such a pretty girl! Of course I doffed my cap, and we exchanged courtesies."

"And what said ye to the bonnie bairn, my boy Freddy?"

"Informed her that it was a fine day, and that the long-legged biped opposite belonged to me," said Fred, laughing; "and she told me that her brother and a friend were fishing a little way down the river; so I joined them, and by-and-by Hope forded, and did the civil."

"Who were your friends, Ward?" inquired the Major.

"Part of the household of Birkdrum, or some such name: one, a Mr. Coles, a capital angler; and t'other, Morton, a youngster about Fred's age."

"And Miss a—— a——?"

"Morton also, sister to the boy. Fred and she quickly got friendly in consuming cakes and honey."

"No doubt; and Hope Ward touched up her sketches?"

"Not quite. I only admired them and her. She draws nicely, and has dainty feet, albeit cased in hobnailed shoes; but where's Birkdrum?"

"Quite ten miles away luckily, Hope. And did you ask them to call?"

"Yes; and if Mrs. Peyton be here when they come to fish the loch, it is possible mademoiselle may come with them."

"Is she so pretty as Fred says?"

"Yes; a slight-made girl, with frank manner, blue eyes, and a fresh bright look when she smiles."

"Ah, I see, Hope: none of that classical shoulder and cut features dear to novelists; but

'Not too good
For human nature's daily food,'

eh?"

After dinner the Major said to Ward (who was putting some tackle in order) that "it would be nice if we could get for an hour or two to a theatre and see a good play."

"So it would, Major, if one might have a choice tragedy in human language, for once in a way."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that play verbiage seems so unnatural often, if one feels captious."

"Not Shakspeare surely?"

"Yes, Shakspeare and others; false exceedingly, though beautiful exceedingly," said Ward jokingly.

"In what way?"

Here Ward turned round to Fred, saying fiercely, "Vile, treacherous youth, hast thou purloined my fly?"

"Which fly, Hope?" inquired Fred.

"My loveliest Irish prince, graced with fair Argus plumes; its shapely waist banded with silver cord, all deftly fashioned by a beauty's hand."

"Oh I see, one of the lot Emmy tied. I never touched them."

"Ah, Frederick Peyton, do I hear aright thy rude denial? I've lost my treasured charm, and thou, thy truth."

"Was it a good one, Hope?"

"Good! This is brave mockery, young sir; good is a mean term for such a priceless lure. With it I've drawn the rushing monsters from the deep; with it yet would have had more. Now, now for ever lost by the dark treachery of a heartless boy; that boy my kinsman: and, Major, that sort of easy rubbish is said to be natural, forsooth; why, if one spoke so in actual life, the nearest doctor for lunatics would be sent for."

"But, my good Ward, dramatic language is not for flies and trifles, but to express deep feeling or passion."

"Oh, bother feeling and passion. If a man deeply injured you, would you make him a florid speech on your withering sorrow and his vile depravity? No, verily; you should simply cut or shoot him, as circumstances required."

"It is rather late to discuss the drama, Hope; but I thought you liked it?"

"So I do. I delight to witness the plays of Molière, Sheridan, and such; but Corneille, Shakspeare, or Racine I had *rather* read than see played."

"How do you read with pleasure what you think unnatural?"

"Because I quietly taste both the charm of their clear natural insight and their beauties of ARTIFICIAL style."

"What about the present stage, thou creature of whims?"

"The Green Bushes and Arrah somethings? Well, I don't know much about them; but the scenery is really pretty in some I have seen."

"You would, perhaps, prefer Congreve, Wycherly, or such improprieties? You have read them?"

"To my shame, yea. Are they not mighty lively and witty? and can't be pruned, more's the pity."

"Hem! yes. Still, the loss of a few depraved plays is not much; besides, the curious may read them, Hope."

Galore of whist this evening. Ward and I rather turned the tables on the other two.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAKE OF THE FAIRIES, LOCH-NA-SEACHIN.

Some days were now passed much as before; and, with the exception of two large salmon caught in trolling the loch, nothing happened worth particular mention.

The 11th of August must needs be a day of anticipation and preparation; and, on coming down in the morning, I found the others busy unpacking boxes, containing a small waterproof tent, cartridges, vermin stamps, &c.; and after breakfast, guns, &c., were carefully inspected, ammunition laid out, and a visit made to the kennels.

All arrangements were left to Major Duncan and Archie, and consequently settled with the promptness to be expected between the decisive soldier and taciturn keeper. Still, one way or other, time was taken up until luncheon; after which, Ward and I arranged

for a long walk. The Major remained at home, as he had an O.H.M.S. to answer, and he asked Fred if he would go with us, or stay and fish the burn; and Fred stayed in preference to what he considered purposeless exercise.

"Won't you come, Fred?" said Ward.

"Flattered by your kindness," replied Fred. "Nature has favoured you with long legs, and me with a wise head: let each improve his gifts."

Hope and I set off by nearly the same line as our first walk; but, on getting high up hill, we turned north for a mile or so, and then scrambled up to the sky-line, enjoyed the grand sea view, continued northwards down towards the lower hills, and came suddenly upon the small loch which Archie said held such fine trout.

Once close to the water we regretted having no fishing-tackle, as there was a fine curl on the loch, which was deep to the edge in some parts.

This fair lake is as great a contrast as possible from the dismal pools in the snipe hollow; and, with its margin of sedge, white sand, and mossy stones, is as charming a little alpine aquarium as one could fancy; and while sitting on a tuft of heather, looking at the tiny wavelets curling on its blue

surface, Ward went on sketching, and, as he said, *thinking* it only natural if a fair water-nymph should rise to the surface, and in liquid Gaelic invite him to a bath.

By the side of this gem in the wilderness we rested some time, and Ward sketched the fair outlines; but he said that his art failed in giving the metallic hues of green and purple.

"I remember, Hope, of Mr. M—— speaking to me about that very same matter of vivid colour."

"Ah! what did he say? He is real authority."

"Well, it came about in this way. I was with him while he painted the rugged walls and quaint window of an old castle for one of his figure-pieces, and made remark on the bright colours he was deliberately touching in, to picture what appeared, to a common observer like myself, to be simply a grey old wall; but he distinctly showed me in the wall itself all these varieties of tint and shade."

"Just the man to note them; and what did he say about vivid colour?"

"That it was an error to decry bright colour in painting from its mere brightness, as vulgar and gaudy effects came from false taste and incongruous handling; that the real difficulty was to colour UP

to nature. I well remember he illustrated this by picking a bit of moss from the wall, and, laying it on his palette, he said, 'Now you see on the palette the finest colours that art can produce, yet are they paled beside this bit of yellow moss.'"

"How just! Even I, a novice, feel it. See these rushes: I have got the greens and shades pretty well, but would need a mixture of sunshine and blue sky on my brush to paint the golden green of that sedgy fringe."

"Try turquoise and gold dust."

"I fear this must do. Where next?"

"Do you see the wood through that gap in the hill? That's our march: suppose we go on?"

"I'm game; *en avant!*"

Directly on moving we started grouse, and again and again flushed fresh coveys. It seemed as even game appreciated this pleasant spot, and we resolved to see more of the "Loch-na-Seachin" (or Fairy Lake).

We had still some rough walking over this rock-strewn heath, which looked as if it had been the scene of a stone bicker with Titans, and huge stones were lying about enough for all the Druids and an Atlantic breakwater to boot.

At the march we met one of the game-watchers,

named Peter Doig, a powerful bandy-legged carle, who looked as if he could tackle a poacher; he himself was a noted poacher in former days, but now eschewed wicked ways. Archie says Peter is a perfect treasury of sensation stories, which he characterized as "awfu' riggs wi' keepers, warlocks, and women, and sic like cattle." We shall see if we can get at some of his tales.

Peter directed us to the easiest line home, and pointed to certain woods and semi-cultivated places where, he said, we should find black game and a few roedeer. Home almost in a bee-line over hill and bog, we arrived at the Lodge shortly after six, well pleased and not a little tired.

Major Duncan and Fred had been home some time with good baskets of burn trout, although the burn was small; but with carefully keeping out of sight one can usually get trout, however small and clear the water may be.

On the day before the 12th, there seemed to be a sort of tacit understanding that light claret was the safe thing.

It was arranged that we should make our first beat around the loch. There was no particular wish to make a boastful bag the first day, or indeed

any day, but to test in succession the capabilities of every range.

"Yours is a good plan, Abbott," the Major said, "to work the outlying beats first, so long as they afford tolerable sport; meanwhile it is driving the birds inwards."

"Well, I think so; and with plenty birds near home, and little disturbed on these rough grounds, one can always get some—although I think the wildness of birds to be more a matter of season than of shooting."

After dinner every one was presently engaged with a fresh packet of books and papers until nearly dark; and I observed the Major chuckling over some pungency in the *Saturday Review*, and Ward in the thick of a novel.

"What is your book, Ward?" I inquired.

"'Monte Christo,' and strange enough I have never read it. How cleverly these French writers do shape their plots!" he remarked.

"Well, what I like in French authors of the best sort is their neat dialogue. I don't mind plots much; and there is a personality or feeling of acquaintance with the persons and places of some writers which is to me a great charm."

"Do books so impress you?"

"Yes. Some of Sir Walter's scenes, and some of his persons, are more real on my mind than many actual realities."

"Ah! he is exceptional," said Ward; "and I could sketch his scenes from memory."

"I can quite fancy you might, but there are many besides Scott have this gift; others, again, seem to want it completely. James, who has written nice tales of chivalrous men and devoted women, wants this faculty, as his characters leave no prints on the memory. So with Bulwer Lytton and other good writers; and even Thackeray, deemed so realistic,—saving in his immortal Becky, and some few more, such as Mr. Pendennis and Colonel Newcombe."

"Then you must enjoy the elaborate characterizing of George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë?"

"Surely not, as realities: to me they are the least real of all; people one never met, nor should care to meet."

"How?"

"Because they are so confoundedly sensitive and self-absorbed. I confess my bad taste in not liking

these books; yet I should wish to have met poor Charlotte Brontë."

"And you do not admire such fine-drawn characters—Adam Bede, &c., or Jane Eyre? Eccentric a bit!"

"It may be so," I said; "yet these people seem to me like anatomical transparencies which show blood, brain, and nerve: clever and instructive, no doubt; but neither living beings, nor sweet to contemplate."

"So you would make recluses of the sensitive and self-absorbed?"

"*Certainly*, yes—hermit, saints, or sinners; anything, anywhere, out of the world. I *detest* animals with feelers."

Here the Major (who, I thought, was asleep) laughed heartily.

"What's the row, Major?" inquired Ward.

"Abbott's term, 'animals with feelers.' I know several; nasty people to meet."

"Then, Major, you agree so far?"

"So far as I heard; but I must have been dozing."

"Time for everybody to doze, I suspect. Whew! past one o'clock."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWELFTH OF AUGUST.

Coming events will cast shindies as well as shadows before, and such a shindy there was this morning—dogs barking, Fred shouting with glee, and Ward sounding the reveille on his cornet; besides, some malignants had been sawing, shoving about, and nailing game-boxes under my window, hours before I rose.

Fred and Hope were first down to breakfast—pretty much what one might expect, grouse-shooting being to them a fresh and coming event; while the Major and I *had been*, as was replied by the muff when offered a mount (supposed for the first time) with the Quorn, "he *had* been, and *had* come to grief;" and although our trials were the reverse of disappointing, still the has been does temper enthusiasm in many things, grouse-shooting inclusive.

Another and a more cogent reason: Major Duncan and I are salmon-fishers, and all who follow this sport of sports know what a craze it becomes. The salmon, the fox, and the red deer are the sportsman's three Graces; and, compared with their pursuit, other sports seem mere pastimes, not passions. How few men would rise soon after midnight, and stumble over moss and muir in the dark morning for a bag of game, a round of golf, or the choicest quartette at whist! Yet many would cheerfully do that, and more, for the mere *chance* of a salmon, a stag, or a good run with hounds; and even Ward and Fred might have considered twice had grouse-shooting required them to pack up rods and leave the glories of loch and river. It was, therefore, scarcely meant to throw over the fishing, much as we were pleased at a lively change of sport.

Breakfast was just begun, when John Fraser rode past the window on a stout hill pony. This shaggy quadruped, named Punch, is to remain as an extra shooting-pony.

Fred brought in the gudeman for a second breakfast and a stirrup-cup.

Some extra baggage being mounted on Punch,

OUR KEEPERS

we left at once, as all other requisites had gone on before with the men and our own pony.

The morning dull, but with a slight breeze from north-west—almost a sure promise of a dry day; and we all left in high spirits, the Major unusually bright, as he actually made a vile pun—about the only one I ever heard him try. He was quizzing Fred on his fussy impatience, and said, "Never hurry, my boy: 'hurry' rhymes with 'flurry'—a bad thing in a sportsman."

"Ah," said Fred, "but I am only at my alpha yet, Major."

"Yes," whispered the Major; "but you will be at 'beta and game-ah' presently;" and he laughed gleefully at the wonderful classical joke. Arrived at the boathouse, we found men, dogs, and all ready, and opened the campaign at once.

Major Duncan and Fred, with Archie and John Fraser, went off to range the moors on the north side of the loch, and Ward and I kept on the south.

We had with us Donald Cameron (Archie's sub), and a shepherd boy with Punch. I liked the arrangement, as Donald lives on this part of the moors, and is, besides, capital with dogs. We had the two setters, Monk and Melrose (so called from

being pupped near the Abbey). I like setters when *really good;* their range and dash, if combined with steadiness, is a pretty sight. Ward does not mind dogs' qualities much, if he gets shooting.

Mel was first loosed, and we moved on towards the higher range. Soon after starting, Ward shot a hare; and almost at the same moment a single grouse flew past, which I killed. For some time after we saw little game; but on coming higher up Mel began to draw on birds, and we soon found this proved a nice covey of grouse. Ward missed and killed; I got a brace. We again found, and each had another bird.

When just over the crest of the hill, Mel made a dead set among some rushes; I expected ground game, but up rose a fine old blackcock within twenty yards: it was a great temptation, but he was spared till the 20th. Donald said it must be a wanderer, as black game do not frequent this part of the grounds. It was a pity to let him go, Donald thought, as we might never have another chance.

We had now, for some time, little shooting for much walking, as the hill faces here are rough and rocky, with tall heather on some parts and bare

ground on others, where the heath has been burnt to the stumps. On these rough braes we found a good many rabbits, and killed five couple; but it proved blank almost for grouse, although good generally, later on in the season; and here we only got three birds.

Farther on, the ground looked better; but the heather was still too rank, and we only found old birds, and managed three brace. Here Ward made very good work, and twice wiped my eye, which I only half liked, as I have a fancy for wild shots; indeed, he killed here five of the six birds. On and on to still higher ground; but it was now plain that to make a bag we must seek the lower moors, so we turned down by a "slantindicular" route.

On the way downwards, it was curious to see how Mel manœuvred the ground so as to catch the scent. She displayed her tactics by making long casts to the right and left, then tacking towards us and working the ground beautifully. In this way she found birds several times before we got down to the low moors; but being old birds, they did not sit as we came right in sight of them. When near the flat, Dick's sharp eye

caught sight of a bird moving in a clump of heather to the left; a cheep of Donald's whistle brought Mel to the place, when she set dead. This was a fine covey of eleven birds, at which good work was made; a brace and a half at the first rise, and, by following up the birds, we again found, and each killed right and left.

We had now come to the low grounds, and for some hours enjoyed capital sport, adding to the bag several snipe, a plover, two hares, and six and a half brace of grouse.

While shooting, the others had been heard for some time, as shot after shot echoed among the hills, and on turning a shoulder at the head of the loch we met them almost in the face.

"Neatly met," said Major Duncan; "have you had lunch?"

"Not yet."

"That's good. We are going on to a spring Archie knows of, and shall refresh there. What sport? we have about twenty brace."

"Then you beat us in grouse, I think; but we have a nice mixed bag."

"Well, Fred, did you kill anything?" Ward asked.

"Oh, dear, yes," the Major said; "Fred helped the bag wonderfully, and he walks well, I can tell you."

Arrived at the spring, the first duty was to have a glass of the clear sparkling water and lay out the game for inspection.

	Grouse.	Hare.	Rabbits	Teal.	Snipe.	Plover.
Our bag was . . .	35	3	10		5	1
The others had . . .	41	1	2	4	1	
Total . . .	76	4	12	4	6	1

103 head of game.

We now sat on a heather mound (on which Dick had laid out lunch), and we partook moderately and thankfully, as becometh muscular Christians. A few minutes in the icy spring cooled some light wine and spruce beer, which was the ostensible tipple. Major Duncan and I, being Scotch, may have taken a leetle speerits. I suspect we did to countenance John Fraser.

"Now, Major," I said, as we settled for a whiff, "what is to be done next? We should have nearly the grouse wanted: I believe about forty brace was arranged for?"

"Forty-four, I think; but our friends will not mind having a brace or two more. Your college box, Ward, may, I suppose, be any size?"

"Yes, the college dons can dispose of all."

"No doubt; then suppose Fred and you do the shooting on the way home by the loch. We did not hunt near the water on our side. Abbott and I shall criticize."

"Just the thing," I said. "It is a pity we should disturb the moor between the Lodge and the loch; leave that for a shot or two as we walk over to fish occasionally."

"Correct, 'Sapientissimus;' then that's settled."

Ward and Fred now went to the front, and both setters were loosed, as we wished to see them hunt together; and, truly, their behaviour did Archie credit. A fine sight it is when a couple of dogs quarter the ground well, and back each other with ready intelligence.

The first intimation of game was by Mel stopping suddenly in mid career. She had seen Monk set birds in a hollow to the right. On going up, a covey of six rose. Ward missed and killed; and Fred made a right and left—the third time he had done so to-day.

"Bravo, Freddy!" shouted the Major; "Hope must now give you the sandwich-box."

"I suppose I must," said Ward; "for as likely as not he may fluke again."

"Come now, Hope, be magnanimous: he dropped his birds quick and neatly."

By the time we had beat to the end of the loch they had got, since lunch, four and a half brace of grouse, three plovers, and a teal duck, which was thought sufficient; but, just as we were giving over, both dogs set at different parts of some rushy ground. Mel had found a single bird, which Ward shot; and Monk had set a covey of eight birds, and, by following up, five of these were killed.

It was now well on in the afternoon, and we walked home leisurely. Dick and the boy had gone away after lunch with the game, &c.

Some hours after arriving, the gong, I suspect, boomed on unwilling drowsiness; but, soon freshened up, we all were down just as Dick entered with a huge tureen of soup, which he put on the table with proud complacency.

"Shades of Cambacérès and Fontenelle!" exclaimed Ward, "what is it? What a bouquet!"

"Did you ever hear of Meg Merrilies's soup, Hope?" said the Major.

"No, never."

"Then be grateful for a new pleasure, and go on."

"Wonderful!" said Ward, after a trial; "most wonderful!—a combined aroma of grouse, truffles, flowers, and mountain-breeze. What can it be, Major?"

"Simply the broken game, grouse, hare, and wild-fowl, too much smashed to be kept; their juices extracted in Meg's cauldron, and artistically developed into this fragrant soup. Do *you* like it, Fred?"

"Yes; and like Oliver Twist, I must ask for more."

"Sensible boy!"

Following this potent soup, came fried trout, haricot, and the first grouse of the season, flanked with Burgundy and sparkling Hock, and we had dined. Burmah never overloads a table: to be sure, besides having natural genius, he has had civilised training.

After dinner we had coffee outside, and cigars in the gloamin.

"So, Hope, you enjoyed grouse-shooting?" I remarked.

"Yes, every way. The climbing these rough slopes, the wild scenery, and pure air would be charming, even without the fine sport; and I can

tell you an old cock grouse is not the easiest shot in the world."

"I knew you would soon find that out; but 'wait awee' till the birds get a month older, and you will find grouse-shooting tight work, as you must then shoot well, and walk well too, for six or seven brace; but such noble-looking birds when in full feather! Besides, in wide ranging you get a pretty mixed bag, now and then capped with a roedeer or some old black-cock."

"Oh! I should like to kill a roe," Fred said.

"Perhaps you may, Fred. They are scarce here, but Major Duncan says they are numerous at Dunesk, and if you have luck, you may get two or three; but it is not like grouse-shooting, for often one of the guns has all the chances, and the others get nothing."

"I hope to be the lucky one. Where do we go to-morrow, Major?"

"Not settled yet. Probably down the glen, along the flats by the burn, and then the black moss, and round this side of Corrigan hill,—that should do,—eh, Abbott?"

"Just the plan. Two guns may be enough: no

use spreading much till we have the great beats on the north side."

It was now becoming dark and rather chilly, and we went in and had desultory reading and opinions on Prussia till bedtime.

CHAPTER XV.

GROUSE AGAIN.—A FRESH BEAT.

We left later to-day, as merely the black moss and the base of Corrigan had to be gone over, the upper part of the hill and the sloping range to the north being cut out for the next day; and it was about twelve o'clock before we reached the moss.

Only two guns were carried; Ward and Fred doing the shooting, Major Duncan and I looking on.

On the level by the burn some coveys were found, and five and a half brace killed before we entered the black moss, besides a mallard and three hares shot by the burn side.

When we came on the black moss, there could be no doubt that here was a most likely range. The moor extends for about a mile to the base of Corrigan, the rising ground on both sides thickly

clothed with heather, the moor being interspersed with swamp, peat hags, and those shaggy knolls which are usually choice bits for old cocks.

Here the sport was capital, as the birds sat well both on the flat and hill sides. Neither Ward nor Fred shot well at first; but they improved, and, before finishing at the foot of Corrigan, they had increased the bag by twenty-seven brace of grouse, five rabbits, a hare, and three snipe. We had then a stiff climb to get to the spring, where we lunched; but it was quite worth the exertion.

Under a rock, which shades its pure water from the sun, the "muckle spring" bubbles up in a circular basin of some five feet in diameter by three in depth, the water so beautifully clear that you can see the smallest pebble at the bottom, and the supply so ample that it overflows in a tiny stream and splutters over the stones in wee dwarfish waterfalls, while all around the spring the mosess are brighter and the heather more intensely purple than elsewhere. The water of the "muckle spring" may neither be colder nor sweeter than in springs in other places, but it looks so much more jolly—like a magnum of champagne compared with a wretched pint.

"Ha! this is nice," said Major Duncan. "Anybody

for lunch? and, first, what do you make out the bag to be, Archie?"

"Seventy-six head, Major."

"So do I. Now take that basket of provision for yourselves. No no, not that one; that's the grouse pie, man. And, Archie!"

"Yes, Major."

"Don't give the men too much whiskey: that spring looks treacherous."

"It's what, Major? They say it's the finest spring in the West Heelands."

"Just what I mean, Archie: it may make the whiskey go down too freely."

"Precisely, sir,—nae fear;" and Archie smiled grimly, and vanished with his comforts behind the rock.

"Have grouse pie, Abbott?"

"Yes, thank you, Major."

"And you, Hope?"

"Much obliged, not yet; I must first have some pickled trout."

"And drink the spring dry. What will you take, Fred?"

"Grouse, gruyère, spring water, and a cheroot, Major."

After lunch there was an adjournment to the long heather over the rock, for a smoke in Turkish "sofatude."

The view from this spot is wild and desolate enough, looking on one side across the rugged face of Corrigan and on the other down the glen; but yet it has a peculiar charm of its own, and one feels a sense of its tranquil beauty in dreamily gazing on the varied shapes of the hills, with their changing lights and shadows, as the summer clouds float past the mountain tops, while silence broods over all, save when now and then is heard the voice of some wild bird, or when the light wind brings faintly on the ear the soft sound of distant waters.

After an hour of this indolent delight, the Major and I took the guns to beat homewards along the rough stony sides of the hill, and we had some pretty shooting at single birds, and got seven brace of grouse (five of the birds old cocks), besides some ground game.

At dinner we felt as if we had had only a few miles' walk, and we enjoyed a fresh parcel of papers and magazines; and Fred went away to the stables to have a gossip with the keepers.

Next day Major Duncan and I beat over the

higher parts of Corrigan and neighbouring heights. The birds were a little wild, but we got nine brace and fifteen blue hares. The mountain hare is not in perfect condition until later in the season: they are not so good for soup as the brown hare, unless it be clear soup, for which they are nearly as good as grouse.

On coming into the dining-room a bright wood fire made things look cheerful.

"Alas! no Meg Merrilies soup," said Fred; "when shall we have it again, Mr. Abbott?"

"Likely enough when we hunt the north side. I look for great sport there; still the fewer smashed the better,—it is bad shooting."

"Ah, but sometimes the shot will go like a cartridge into a bird."

"And sometimes small boys will fire at ten yards' distance. Bless us, what a night!" I remarked, as the heavy rain dashed against the windows. "We may soon have a word to say to the salmon."

"Verily," said the Major, "my fingers itch to have a bout with a thirty-pounder."

"A twenty will do; besides, Hope can't breakfast in peace without his kippered salmon."

"Nonsense; you Scotch suppose every Englishman

to be either 'gourmand' or 'gourmet.' Now kipper is goot, and whiskey is goot, but you two can exist without."

"Goot *riposte*, Hope. You had him there; and, *apropos*, do you like fencing?"

"Yes; famous exercise. I am somewhat clumsy with the foils, but better at singlestick, as I had my teaching from a serious master—one Burt of the Guards, who welted me into caution and hard hitting."

"Culture and sweetness," drawled Fred, "we have plenty at school;—it puts one on squarer terms with the big bullies; and don't they funk it sometimes!"

"Likely enough," said Ward; "these Neros and Napoleons often show badly under reverses, boys or kings,—eh, Major?"

"Quite true; and, on the other hand, I have seen some stout soldiers in the field mild enough spirits at other times."

"I can believe it. Many noted heroes were distinguished equally for gentle deportment: Bayard, without fear or reproach; Lord Falkland, that sweet and chivalrous soul; and your own Douglas, Major, 'Tender and True.'"

"Ah yes, Hope; such men leaven selfish humanity. And you have them even at school, Fred; what you call bricks, who stand up for a friend and divide freely their cakes and tips."

"I see," said Fred. "Hunter and Phillips are the sort Major Duncan means,—eh, Hope?"

"Why Phillips once thrashed you badly, Fred."

"To be sure, but in fair fight; and he didn't bully me afterwards."

"What are your notions of fisty-cuffs, Major?" I asked.

"Antiquated, of course; and had I a son I should rather see him come in with a black eye than a scented handkerchief."

"What a Goth to approve of rude fighting, boys!"

"No; neither coarse nor quarrelsome. But there is a deal of cant now about boys' dignity; besides, the Greek and Roman fellows they read about were always fighting, and neither Cæsar nor Scipio wanted dignity."

"Oh, ho!" said Ward; "*you* bringing in those tiresome classics."

"Come, Hope, don't affect to have misunderstood me; I am only anti-finical, not anti-classical. One

may perfectly relish and understand Spenser or Gibbon, yet not be able to parse a line of either."

"O you incorrigible! Come outside, and have a look at the sky."

The wind had fallen, but it still rained; and we turned in without having arranged anything for next day.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DAY AT LOCH-NA-SEACHIN.—LADIES ARRIVE AT THE LODGE.

"SALMON-fishing for me," said Ward decisively, as we stood in front of the Lodge in the morning.

"And for me," said Major Duncan, scanning the flying clouds. "Are you for loch or river, Abbott?"

"Either," I replied: "the weather is good for both. What say you, Fred? We go together, it seems."

"Yes, so you promised; but might we not go to the Loch of the Fairies?" said Fred half timidly.

"Surely; I'll go with pleasure: I want another look at Loch-na-Seachin. You had better take your gun, and kill some grouse on the way; but let us in to breakfast, as it is a long walk."

Leaving word for the boy to bring the fishing-tackle, &c., on Punch, we set off straight across

the hill, then diverged to the peat road, and kept by the path as we did not wish to disturb the fresh grouse beats; but Fred easily got five brace as we walked to the loch.

As expected, Fred was charmed, and said he had sometimes dreamt of such a spot; but, like a boy, he was looking less at scenery than for Punch, and presently descried that sedate quadruped on the sky-line; and we went to the head of the loch, and waited for the tackle.

Having unpacked the pony, and put up the rods, we proceeded to test the Loch-na-Seachin; but it soon became apparent that she was a "shy-loch," as, after an hour's patient fishing, we had only one trout, although that was a beauty in shape and colour, and about two pounds weight. It seemed useless to go on fishing in the meantime, so we went to the rushy end of the loch to look for wild-fowl, and with Fred's light gun I got three teal and some snipe.

All the morning the weather had been capricious, alternate sunshine and cold blustering showers, which the herd-boy called "scuds;" but towards afternoon the sky became very black in the north. We returned to the head of the loch, and had

scarcely sheltered below a huge projecting ledge of rock when the storm came on with a vengeance, and continued so persistingly that it was resolved to face it and go home, should it not soon improve. At last, however, a change seemed impending; the wind calmed, and the rain fell more heavily in a straight-down thunder shower bubbling the whole surface of the loch. By-and-by bits of blue sky showed here and there, and a light westerly wind dispersing the clouds; the sun came forth, and the hills were once more glorified with sunshine, while every bush and heather-sprig seemed dropping diamonds.

The trout were freely rising here and there on the loch, as if to make up for their previous apathy; and I told Fred that now was his time, if we wanted to save being quizzed by Hope.

So we set earnestly to fishing, and enjoyed one of those exceptional times which will occur even on the "shyest" of lochs; for, on finishing, we had thirteen trout—golden beauties, most of them over a pound, and two of nearly three pounds; and we set off to the Lodge well satisfied.

From the hill-top we looked back at the fair loch, now glassy and glowing under the setting

sun; and Fred remarked how lucky, after all, was the rough weather, as, without it, the trout might have laughed at our beards—or baskets at all events, he added, on seeing me smile.

We got to the Lodge rather late, for the others had been home some time, and they had killed four salmon, a grilse, and some sea-trout.

On meeting at dinner, Ward inquired gaily, "I say, Fred, who, think you, comes here to-morrow?"

"Don't know; unless it be your sketching friends, the Mortons."

"Hardly. Only your mother, and Annie, and Miss Clive, and your mother's *bonne*, and all sorts of bonnets and band-boxes."

"Oh! Hope, that's capital! How jolly! and won't we take them to the Fairy Loch? But will not Janet be bored, Major?" added Fred.

"Far from it, my boy,—she is quite pleased and amiable; and she says it will be like old times when her lady kept Ardenmohr full of company; and Hope was just now telling her that his friends were easy-going people, and could rough it in harder quarters."

"I should rather think so, and in worse com-

pany," drawled the little man, while he twisted an imaginary moustache.

This evening and the following day were passed in preparations for expected guests; and it was nearly six in the afternoon before the carriage drew up at the Lodge, and daylight of civilisation beamed on our bachelors' camp in the advent of Mrs. Peyton and two charming girls, a French maid, a poodle, and a world of boxes. Greetings and introductions being speedily accomplished, the travellers were carried off by Janet Cameron to the ladies' gallery.

We had made the old-fashioned dining-room as neat as possible: the polished arms glittering on the walls were intermixed with flowers and fern; and Ward had placed for each of the girls a bouquet of white heath centred with a blush rose. The evening being warm, the windows were thrown open, and the ladies sat down to dinner in full view of glen and mountain.

This, our first attempt, got on famously—everyone pleased and cheerful. Dick waited with the power of half-a-dozen servants; while Burmah flitted about in snowy turban and gorgeous scarf, gravely dispensing cunning compounds of wine and ice.

"This is quite nice and *piquant*,— eh, Miss Clive?" said Mrs. Peyton. "Why, hardly an hour since, when coming through that wild glen, Annie was just speculating if you might not be troubled in receiving ladies, and, lo! here is a castle with all sorts of graceful appliances."

"All at your command, Mrs. Peyton; but we can give you merely the fruits indigenous to the soil," the Major remarked.

"A land of Goshen," said Miss Peyton; "and tell me, Hope, you who know the country, do these odd-shaped bottles grow on trees here? Your dogs, of course, find truffles, as in France."

All this was said quite gravely, and created some mirth.

"I begin to suspect you young men," Mrs. Peyton remarked. "You write us such pitiful letters about your hardships when living *en garçon* or in Highland quarters; and when (as Hope would say) you are unearthed, some such heart-breaking scene as this is the result."

"Don't be uncharitable, mother dear," Annie said; "but look closely to find the sad truth. Perhaps no library or cigar-shop within fifty miles, not to mention the awful possibility of the house

not containing one pack of cards. Cause enough," she added quietly, "for grave consideration before you blame."

"Yours is true charity, Miss Peyton," remarked the Major, while he tried in vain to look solemn.

"And, Annie," said Hope, "let it soothe your gentle spirit to know we *have* cards, and you shall have your rubber at whist; but here *is* luxury," he said, as Dick placed three antique china bowls on the table, "and specially culled for Miss Clive and you."

"Pray explain, Hope."

"Easy enough: the first bowl contains cream unapproachable, even in Devonshire; another, wild fruit; the third is ice."

"A simple affair of fruit and milk, Hope," Annie said, with a droll peep under her long eyelashes.

"Just so, sweet cousin; as beauty is a simple affair of creamy complexion and eyes dark as—*as* wild berries."

"Hem! and what of ice," she said, with a meaning look.

Hope coloured slightly, from some cause or other, as he remarked that neither beauty nor berry should be much iced.

"And what do you say to all this, Miss Clive?" Annie inquired.

"Oh! I can hardly judge," she replied demurely; "I never use ice."

When the ladies left the table, Hope said he thought Charley Clive could use ice in very cooling knobs, if it suited her.

On going to the drawing-room we found a sleepy party after their long journey, too sleepy for whist; and they retired early.

Next morning the weather was beautiful; and it was quite a novel pleasure to hear the sweet gay voices of the girls about the Lodge. Let me try to describe our guests.

First in honour, Mrs. Peyton, stout, comely, and *débonnaire*, as beseemeth a British matron; had, nevertheless, a certain haughty presence, which was entirely belied by her real, simple, kindly nature; for, grave and sensible as she was, no one could better enjoy pleasantry, and her quick appreciation and ready sympathy soon taught us to confide with her in any quiz or droll event as freely as we should have done in sorrow or difficulty.

Neither Major Duncan nor I had before seen Miss Peyton; and, certainly, it would be hard to

imagine a more lovely young woman. Tall, rather slight in figure, and graceful as a young roe; her refined features and large lustrous grey eyes harmonizing with a dark complexion, brown almost as a Spanish girl's, yet exquisitely delicate; moreover, she had fine dark hair, perfect mouth and teeth, and a look of sweetness and intelligence that took the heart at once. But, to my taste, perhaps her greatest charm was her voice, rich and musical in every accent; and, when particularly amused, she had an odd way of looking at you with her great bright eyes, and shrugging her pretty shoulders, which was positive infection: grave as I am, I could never resist her; for, notwithstanding a queenly presence, like a *demoiselle* in an ancient picture, Annie Peyton was a thorough, joyous, frank, innocent girl.

Her friend, Charlotte (or, as intimates styled her, Charley Clive), by all was declared to be an unmistakably nice girl. Hardly so tall as Miss Peyton, and somewhat fuller in figure, she had a pleasing expression, a wealth of golden chestnut hair clubbed behind her pretty ears, high features, blue eyes, a dainty mouth, and a dimple. As might be expected, she was reserved at first; yea, almost what is called

in Scotland "douce," but soon proved a treasure of quiet humour, that *rare* feminine quality; for, in spite of much twaddle about women being visionary and romantic, they are more often shockingly matter-of-fact, and thereby lose a little charity and a good deal of amusement. Be that as it may, Miss Clive was humorous and, consequently, good-natured; and having been well educated, and seen something of the world, she was excellent company and great fun.

CHAPTER XVII.

A JOURNEY TO THE GREAT LOCH.—MAJOR DUNCAN IS CHAMPION FOR THE ABILITIES OF WOMEN AS AGAINST SCOFFERS.

This morning at breakfast Ward asked Mrs. Peyton what she proposed to do, as the weather was fine.

"Anything you desire," she replied; "pray, what should it be, Major Duncan?"

"I have been thinking of an arrangement which may suit you," Mrs. Peyton; "which is, that I drive you round to the great loch in the pony-phaeton for the view; and that the young ladies and the rest might go there now and picnic on the island. Would that do?"

"Excellent! I have no doubt; but this may sacrifice your shooting."

"Hardly a sacrifice," he replied, gravely bowing like a courtier of Louis Quatorze. "So, that's settled."

"Now, pray, young people, don't hurry," said Fred (as the girls started up to get ready); "the tackle and things must be sent on first to the loch."

"Annie," inquired Ward, "can Miss Clive go on foot?"

"Ask her."

"Pray, Miss Clive," he said, "can you walk well, as you can get a quiet pony, and the loch is some distance away?"

"Is the climbing very bad? for I had some practice in Savoy last year; but the heather may be too much."

"Ha! Alpine climber! Miss Clive; then anything here, even the ptarmigan range, will be mere sauntering to you; and Annie is a don at walking, so you will both see Ardenmohr properly."

Every one now prepared to go out; and the young ladies presently came equipped in plain looped-up dresses and stout shoes, with the heels in the proper place.

"Get me a stick, Fred, please," Annie said; "and an alpenstock, or something, for Miss Clive."

"Thank you," Charley remarked, "a switch will do; I like to walk free, when practicable."

And we started. Our gay party, fairly out on the

moors, went away in high spirits; still, I felt doubtful if the rugged hollows and "stey braes" might not soon temper the gaiety of these merry girls: but no, they both continued walking fast and easily, and the first hill was crossed without rest; over the wide moors the pace was kept up, and the last steep climb unflinchingly faced.

I was amused at observing the distinct styles of progression of these light-footed maidens. Annie Peyton going over the ground with a firm, light-infantry step; while Miss Clive glided over heath and stones in an undulating sort of manner, very different, still quite as effective; and when, at last, we stood on the crest of the mountain overlooking the loch, neither of them showed signs of the sharp exercise except in slightly heightened colour.

"Bravo! well done! young ladies," said Ward, as they now gladly enough rested on the soft moss on the peak of the hill commanding an eagle's view of the scene. "Bravo! And how like ye the look of this Highland world?" But they were too breathless, or too much absorbed, to reply.

Below lay the great loch, spread out in sheen and shadow, surrounded by hills of every varied shape and colour; the bright greens and purple of

the near slopes broken here and there by the silvery grey and dark clefts of the rocky steeps, while the far-off pale blue mountains blended with the sky. Great clouds sailed overhead, their passing shadows casting momentary gloom on hill and loch, the next minute to be flooded in the light of the sun.

"How beautiful!" at last Annie Peyton said; "is it not grand, Charley?"

"Perfect," said Miss Clive; "but so still and desolate."

"No, not desolate; I could pass the long day here alone happily,—that is, if I were happy at the time," she added, with a smile.

"And you, Miss Clive, would you find it very lonely on this hill-top?" I inquired.

"I can hardly say, Mr. Abbott: all places seem so nice when there is (what Annie makes provision for) sunshine in one's own mind; but it would be trying to sit here alone in a pet. No sympathy from nature for that,—eh, Annie? Just a minute since that bay opposite was as black as ink; silver now: a vexatious lesson for sulk, if sulk cared for anything but itself. But enough of moralising: are these sheep?"

"Where," Ward inquired.

"On the far slope at the end of the loch."

"You have a hunter's eye, Miss Clive; but no wonder,—all in the blood, natural selection, evolution, and that kind of thing. Your father was a rare sportsman, and had, I hear, the quickest eye for spying a deer."

We now proceeded downwards to the loch by a roundabout sort of route, and in half an hour or so came to the boat-house and embarked. A long and strong pull against the wind tried our muscles before we could reach the island, and with some difficulty the ladies were there landed high and dry amongst the rocks. Leaving them with Fred to explore the country, Ward and I rowed away to a bay about a mile off to catch trout for lunch; and, on returning with the spoil, we had quite a jolly luncheon party; and thereafter a ramble over the island, pebble-gathering, mooning, and moralising, in the easy freedom which is wont where friends are unfastidious and companionable.

Early in the afternoon we left the island, and, as the wind was in our favour, we put up sail and made a spanking run downwards through the rough water which now rolled in white-crested waves,

more than might please the timid or squeamish; but the spirited girls enjoyed it all, the occasional dash of spray over the boat seeming only to add to their mirth.

On coming to the anchorage we thought it best to move without delay, as the afternoon was becoming chilly, so we again crossed hill and valley; but by taking it leisurely, and avoiding short cuts and steep climbing, at last safely housed our charges, not greatly fatigued, still glad enough to be well rested. Mrs. Peyton and the Major had seen our speck of a sail far away on the loch, but so far that they did not wait.

At dinner Annie said "she felt as if she had earned rest and comfort, which made matters pleasant and satisfactory;" and Miss Clive drolly recounted her voyages and travels (as she called the day's doings) to Mrs. Peyton; and to see these delicate-looking beauties in the evening, in gauzy dress and tiny-buckled slippers, one could hardly realise they were the hardy pedestrians of the morning.

"Now, mother dear," Miss Peyton said, "what might Madame De V——, or the prim Misses H——, have to remark about our rough rambles to-day, if we told them?"

"Most probably, that you were robust and unfeminine young persons."

"Aye, aye, quite so; and, as likely as not, improvise reflective hints of flirting and philandering on a desert island. I fear we ought to have stayed in the house;" and Annie laughed merrily. "What thinks Miss Clive, eh?"

"Miss Clive is of the same penitent opinion. We should have knitted in quiet at an upper window of the Lodge all day, and studied nature delicately. You are of that opinion, are you not, Major Duncan?"

"Certainly. I disapprove," he said, "of all but quiet domesticity;—bad form, as Fred would say, these journeyings over rocks and in open boats, and dangerous besides."

"Oh! this is capital!" exclaimed Mrs. Peyton, "excellent!—your grave restriction of young women to their proper sphere."

"Of course, Mrs. Peyton; and I should restrict your learned women also. What right had Lady Jane Grey, Madame De Staël, or Mrs. Somerville to have more knowledge than most men; and, worse still, not to be ashamed of it?"

Mrs. Peyton looked curiously amused at Major

Duncan's quaint manner of showing the question of feminine ability.

"And yet a deeper abyss," he said impressively: "there are your heroines, maids of Orleans and Charlotte Cordays, braver even than men. True enough, there was a kind of excuse for Miss Corday, for, in all boasting and blustering France, there was not ONE man with soul enough to sacrifice himself in the abolishing of a Robespierre or a Marat. They just talked and plotted; a young girl dared and did it. Shockingly forward in her, was it not?"

At this we all laughed freely, and Annie exclaimed, "Oh! Major Duncan, what a champion you would be for women's rights and wrongs; but you do *not* really relish what is called a strong-minded woman, do you?"

"No, no, no; better a lackadaisical Dolly that bungles her seam and shrieks at seeing a beetle. But the real absurdity of the thing is, it is mostly the noodle and pragmatical kind of being that, forsooth, maunders about the weaker natures of women; these creatures ignoring the fact that so many women do write, work, and converse on a par with the best; while the censorious prigs can

often do neither, to say nothing of their inability to ride well to hounds, or deftly land a salmon as women will often do,—is it not so, Mrs. Peyton?"

"Oh, dear! you become too flattering; besides, we never EXCEL men in anything."

"Often, and in many things, Mrs. Peyton. Why, you remember this morning admiring the wild picturesque look of the Highland cattle on the hill-side: who has painted them best? Not an English *man* nor a Scotch *man*, but a French woman; and Rosa Bonheur, even Landseer acknowledged, had no equal in this. I might adduce plenty other cases in many phases of life."

"There is one accepted truism, Aunty," said Ward, "that no lady can play whist. Suppose you and I challenge the Major and Annie?"

"Oh, yes; and help to remove his over-high estimate of us women."

So whist it was, and still the Major held to his theories, declaring that Miss Peyton played like a regular clubbist; but I fear his judgment was far from unbiassed, as we may see by-and-by.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WARD GRUMBLES AT OUR INACTION, AND HARD WORK IS RESUMED.

SEVERAL long summer days were now passed in wandering by hill and loch, or in drives about the country; but, chiefly, it was the river-side we sought for enjoyment, as it seemed a never-ceasing delight to fish and sketch on its wild and beautiful banks, the more so as each one tried to be pleasant and useful for the others. But, meanwhile, the grouse were being sadly neglected, and the salmon-fishing was not prosecuted with the pertinacious zeal which this noble sport demands. True enough, we always got fish of some sort, and Mesdames Peyton and Clive were becoming keen anglers; indeed, Miss Clive had hooked, and very nearly landed, a grilse—an event drolly sketched by Ward, in pronounced colour and caricature, to that young lady's

intense horror and to Mrs. Peyton's infinite amusement. But this rose-water sort of thing could not go on, at least so thought one of the party.

"Really, this will never do!" exclaimed Ward, as one fine scenting morning we smoked the morning pipe on the fir brae—"never do at all. Some thirty brace of grouse in the best part of a week; the north beats not even touched, and the birds daily becoming wilder."

"What of that, thou forlorn Hope," Major Duncan laughingly said; "there is wide time to kill half the grouse in the country, if you keep cool and haud straicht, as Archie advises; besides, we can't leave our friends quite alone."

"Nonsense, Major. My aunt, and girls too, for that matter, would be miserable, if they suspected that the shooting was going to pigs and whistles on their account; they would go off at once, I can assure you."

"Well, well, I suppose you must temporise; and pray manage it with your gentle diplomacy."

"Oh, you need not laugh, Abbott," said Ward, on seeing me smile; "I can arrange it all easily, and with perfect fair play to them, too. Why, look at their resources—pony-phaeton, kilted Jehu, lovely

scenery, burn-fishing, inartistic sketching, and the last batch of magazines,—endless resources."

"A strong case for the client, Hope," the Major said; "and, besides, it is possible we may not be so requisite as we fancy. Say Wednesday for the great beat; but see you carry it off nicely."

"Ha! military decision at last," said Hope; and on meeting the ladies he did do his mission with a quiet tact for which I had hardly given him credit. Still, he did somewhat risk compromising us by promising blackcock feathers for the maidens' hats; this was rash, for it is not at all child's play to put salt on the tails of the full-grown *Tetrao tetrix*, the old cocks of this family being swift of wing, and as wary as red deer.

On the morning arranged we drove off, and by an early hour dismounted at an old shealing on the hill-side above Loch-na-Seachin; and, having stabled the horses in a shed and provided for their comfort, we walked down to the side of the loch, and found men and dogs all ready.

The weather aspects were not promising—a dull gloomy sky and not a breath of wind; but, looking over the ranges of rugged brae, bog, and moor around us, there seemed little doubt of seeing

plenty of game, as the ground was hitherto untouched; so we at once buckled-to for work, and started.

Major Duncan and Ward went round by the south end of the loch to try for teal, and then to beat over the black moss; while Fred and I proceeded to hunt the slopes to the north, and we saw nothing more of the other party for four or five hours, when we met, as agreed upon, on the hill close to the black game country.

We soon found grouse: they were somewhat wild, and the scent indifferent, still, the sport was excellent; and, when we met our friends, Fred and I counted for eighteen brace of grouse, five golden plovers, and a hare; while they had twenty-three and a-half brace of grouse, three hares, a teal, and (great luck) two curlews. We rested a quarter of an hour on a rising ground facing the ranges for black game, looking on a wide expanse of choice cover. In the hollow a brawling burn runs down the glen, the foaming water glinting here and there between the birch and alders fringing its banks, beyond which, the hills on right and left slope gradually up to the top; in some parts open moor, and in others varied with birch, juniper,

great stones, and patches of gorse; while higher up spread the larch woods, and beyond that, we could see the dark edge of the pine forest that extends far away on the other side of the hill.

After a short survey of this new land we went down hill, and crossed the burn as we best could, and were presently on the open moor beyond. The dogs found some coveys here, and still higher up hill, where the juniper and fern afforded closer cover, we hit off covey after covey, and had a great deal of shooting; but, after all, the pursuit of black game, when young and half-feathered, is but tame sport, as they sit so close that they must almost be kicked up, while the old cocks are seldom at home in these domestic parties, but are away somewhere on their own selfish intents and purposes; still, two or three venerables were circumvented higher up in the birch wood; but, on the whole, even with plenty of shooting, the bagging of young black game was pronounced to be unsatisfactory, and we turned back for the grouse moors. It is very different later in the season, when they are in full feather, and strong and rapid in flight; then it is real excitement to have a pack of these fine birds driven overhead, and to single out and

bring down the glossy old blackcocks with a thud on the heather. This is sport for princes.

On coming down to the burn, a lave of hands and face in its sparkling water was refreshing after the close heat of the covers; and here we lunched, smoked a pipe, and arranged how the moor was to be taken on the way back. There was by this time a fresh cool breeze, and the general voice was for no loitering, so we again divided and went on.

All afternoon the sport was excellent; still, no one was sorry when we at last came to the shealing, felt travel was over, and no walking home to be done. The horses harnessed, the bulk of the game was put into the carriage to lighten Punch's hampers, in consideration of his feelings, he having done a long day's work without a grumble, or even hinting at a strike, which is saying a good deal for his sense in these times. No one had to-day seen any capercailzie or roe deer, but this is hardly to be wondered at, the outskirts of the covers merely having been gone through; besides, it is necessary to beat the woods systematically for the larger kinds of game, and this later on, after the fern and undergrowths have somewhat died down.

On arriving at the Lodge, although past six o'clock, everybody was out. By-and-by Mrs. Peyton came in and said she had enjoyed so much a long quiet stroll up the glen; but it was near seven before the girls returned from burn-fishing, pictures of health and youthful beauty; although (as Miss Peyton mirthfully related) her boots were soaked, and all day she had been severely exercised with gadflies, and Miss Clive likewise, to say nothing of having left half her skirt on a thorn-bush; but when by-and-by those young ladies came down to dinner, their appearance would have satisfied any exigencies of town criticism. Nor did Mrs. Peyton object to such independent ramblings. So far from it, she observed that being herself country bred, and used to much walking and riding, she attributed her after health greatly to this, and always had pitied girls who were kept too close to the chimney; and more so, when they showed a languid indifference to wholesome exercise: the same langour was to be looked for in their work and studies she feared.

The blackcock were exhibited in the evening, the feathers being yet far from perfect. We promised they should have regal cockades by-and-by.

When nearly dusk we went out to the open air, as the evening was still and warm.

Although naturally of retired habits, and quite happy and content on the hillside alone, still I fully appreciate the amenities of social life. True enough, there are certain unpleasant phases, such as public speechifying, private prosing, and occasional balaam and bumptuousness; so one must learn to tolerate some things as a necessary consequence of mixing freely in the world and sharing its many pleasures; and is it not pleasant to meet sociably with the travelled and accomplished, or to listen to the home truths of hard practical ability? How pleasant is a "twa-handed crack" with a man of sense and good feeling, how charming the society of unaffected women of the world, and how very nice a mild flirtation with one at a time!

And so is THIS very pleasant, I thought as I now reclined on the soft turf on this fair summer's gloamin, while dreamily consuming an unexceptionable Cabana, and now and again joining in the cheerful conversation, or listening to the gentle laughter of the girls, my mind occasionally wandering far away, even to the polished Greek and luxurious Roman, whose social customs deprived them of

such easy, yet reverential freedom as we now enjoyed; or, again, thinking of how little in common have the literary displays or Watteau-like garden scenes of the Continent with our freer intercourse.

"Pooh!" says some sensible youth; "what a palaver is this, about having a cigar out of doors with the girls; can't see what it is all about." Well, don't you try, young Solomon—it is not given to every one to see a problem or solve a joke (do not reverse the terms); and believe me, my young friend, that if snipe shooting be a special faculty, so is logical acumen, and so, also, is the mental chemistry required in distilling the ethereal spirit of the gloamin.

Mrs. Peyton was comfortably placed in an arm-chair, with a large shawl over her head and shoulders, the others grouped around reclining on plaids, &c., spread on the turf.

As usual in these outdoor parties, there was much merriment; but gradually, as the light decreased, quietness succeeded; at last, silence in all but the rippling sound of the brook.

"Dear me! how contemplative we are becoming," remarked Miss Clive, after a pause of silence;

"this awful stillness seems to depress your spirits, good people."

"Repress, not depress," said Hope; "I am under that sort of dreamy ecstasy that opium eaters are said to seek, when mere thinking is a bore, let alone speaking; it may be Abbott's Roman punch and my second pipe, eh, Miss Clive? surely not silence alone."

"I hope only the last—'*Usci la notte è sotto l' ali meno il silentio*,' says Tasso; suppose you take a nap and dream out the poem."

"Why, I seem to dream now," he said; "and how is it that times in our lives leave the odd impression of being shadows, while others, not of a bit greater moment, are so emphatically real?"

"Ha, Mr. Philosopher," said the Major, "you are not going to give the ladies a dose of metaphysics, are you? But you are right enough; and, more curious still, there are individuals now and then seen, whose whole lives seem not to belong to this stern world, but who come and go like spirits. I was just now thinking of two such visionary beings."

"Oh, do tell us about them," said Mrs. Peyton.

"I was only thinking of my brother's wife and

child, Mrs. Peyton; a sad but quite a simple story," he replied.

"Forgive my asking you; I have unintentionally pained you, I fear?"

"No, no, no; it was years ago; I often think of it, and shall tell you about them, if you care to hear it."

"Yes, very much, if you will be so kind."

And so Major Duncan related:—

"My brother Robert had died when I was abroad; and four years after his death, when home on leave at my mother's place in Lanarkshire, she told me one morning that my brother's widow and child were on their way from England to visit us, and I was glad, as I had not yet seen them.

"How well I remember that time. They arrived late, and scarcely showed; but next morning, on going down to breakfast, there they were in the room before me, the quaintest little widow and child in the world. The mother very fair, with deep blue eyes and silky brown hair braided below her widow's cap; but such a slight girlish figure —a flower in mourning. And her wee mite of a daughter just as striking a picture, robed in some Indian gauzy thing of a buff colour, with strange

devices of green and blue all over the dress; still the image of her mother—a miniature of a miniature.

"Well, these fairy-like creatures got presently domesticated with us all; but the curious devotion of that mother and child to each other was at once their peculiar distinction. Not that either was self-willed or uncompanionable, far from it, and both were to my mother's side at a whisper, and they would go anywhere or do anything in the cheeriest, bird-like way; but it was when alone together they seemed happiest. And what rambles they had over the moors and through the woods, only to come back late, tired, and sleepy like children, as children they both were; although my poor little sister-in-law was religious, pure principled, and had the usual lady-like accomplishments, still she was a baby.

To the time I left for India, in a week or so, it was always the same; and you may think how grieved I was not many months afterwards, to get a letter telling me that little Lucy had died suddenly after their return home. I much feared her mother would not survive it, but she did; and, as I heard, soon became composed and often even

cheerful, and spoke freely of her daughter to my mother and those she liked. 'How I wish Lucy had seen this!' or 'How I wish she were here!' she would often remark on seeing anything fair in art or nature. It was, however, plain that her whole hopes and thoughts were in the future; yet she lived for two years more.

"Although apparently in good enough health, a slight cold had confined her to bed, and it was clearly seen that she was dying. Yet her spirits seemed to rise as she became weaker, as she faded away; and just before she died she lifted her head from the pillow, and distinctly said, in her pure, sweet voice, 'Coming, darling, coming!' and fell asleep like a child."

"How very sad," Mrs. Peyton said, as the Major gave her an arm to go into the house. "Yes, your fairy relatives do not seem to have been made for this rough world. I shall not easily forget this, your dreamlike story among the Highland hills.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROMEO AND JULIET: WITH JULIET ABSENT.

A FEW more days of climbing the hills up among the ptarmigan, visits to Loch Na Seachin, and other pleasant places, and our friends' time was up; they had to leave on the Saturday morning, but as they were to be in the neighbourhood of Dunesk in October, this promised to mitigate the deprivation sure to be felt on their departure.

I had observed Major Duncan to be occasionally dull and *distrait* lately; not very pronounced, certainly, in one of his calm temperament, but still there *was* something, and I fancied it might have to do with the approaching dissolution; which sagacious surmise was soon confirmed in this wise.

On the afternoon of the Thursday before they left, the Major and I being alone in the library writing letters, I was speaking of the departure,

and remarked that Hope would by-and-by meet his beloved after so long an absence.

"A week or two is not a very trying separation," the Major said quietly.

"A week or two? Why, bless the man, more than a year!"

"What did you say, Abbott?" and, starting to his feet, he grasped my shoulder like a vice.

"I just meant to say, that Hope's second cousin, Emily Peyton, has returned from Germany, and is to join Mrs. Peyton soon; they are in a sort engaged, Mrs. Peyton tells me."

While I explained this, Major Duncan was looking at me with such a strange, anxious expression, then he said, almost in a whisper—

"And it is——is not Annie?"

"Certainly not, never was."

On my saying so, he leant his head on his hand for a while, seemingly in deep thought; at last he looked up in my face and with an odd smile he said, "What a fool I have shown myself! You will forget all this, Abbott?"

"Well—a—yes; until you remind me. And nothing could be better."

"How better?"

"Nothing better than that two persons admirably suited for each other should find this out; both seem to me to have made the discovery."

When I said this there was a palpable blush on the Major's bronzed cheek, and his eye sparkled, but he merely quietly remarked, in his usual manner, "She is so young, Abbott, and I thought her destined for Hope."

"Young! to be sure she is; and in not a few things you are the youngest-minded of us all, spite of your gravity; nor is thirty-three a very patriarchal age."

"That is a disputed point, my good friend," he observed.

"Then make the lady umpire, oversman, or something of the kind," I said, laughing, as we rose to leave the room; but he only shook his head and said, "Time may show, Abbott."

Such was all of Romeo and Juliet seen on the surface until our friends departed, which they did on the Saturday morning, much to our regret, and somewhat to the detriment of fish and fowl on loch and moor, now left without any defence to what (by Mr. Greg, and the philosophy of the new school) is termed "our savage instincts;"

in fact, that very afternoon, when they left, we took to the hills in pursuit of mountain hares as a tonic for peace of mind, nor did we return until dark to a bachelor's dinner.

Of course, anything like depression could merely be temporary with a few light-hearted sportsmen; but, to a certain extent, it was inevitable on the sudden and complete separation of friends so very agreeable, and for whom we one and all had real regard and affection. Major Duncan seemed least hipped of any; but the evening before they left he had a long stroll up the glen with Mrs. Peyton—had he broken ground about Annie, and not been discouraged?—quite possible.

Sport and sociable enjoyment had now gone on without a hitch to near the end of September, by which time most of the resources of Ardenmohr (excepting the more remote covers) had been thoroughly tested.

Salmon fishing was still carried on, but by the middle of September fish begin to lose condition in the river, and are sensibly depreciated in the loch, although much more plentiful. Notwithstanding this drawback, the shooting was often let alone that we might have a cruise on the loch or a cast on the

river; and every now and again a salmon would be caught newly run from the sea, and as fair and shapely as a summer fish.

Grouse for some time had been *packed* (that is, having broken up their family coveys, they associate together in large crowds, or packs, of from fifty to one hundred or more), and when so congregated they become wild and wary, and are only to be got at by stalking them cautiously from behind rocks or knolls, or by an unseen approach along some ditch or gulley, and by having them driven past where the sportsmen are concealed. Yet there is always a sprinkling of birds that do not pack, especially old cock grouse.

We could always get some shots on the rough rocky braes near the lodge, or amongst the "heights and hows" of Corrigan, and the dry shaggy clumps at the black moss; thus, by walking singly, and coming warily round corners, and over abrupt risings on the moors, we had given the packs many a surprise, and considerably circumvented and thinned out the astute old cocks. All of us liked this sort of wild shooting, when moderately successful, quite as much, if not more, than the easier work of the early season; besides, when the weather becomes

cool, brisk exercise in the fresh mountain air is a positive luxury.

Major Duncan and I missed the working of the dogs, for by this time we merely required a retriever to pick up a wounded hare, or find a bird that had fallen in cover or amongst rank heather.

In all kinds of wild shooting, Ward (an untiring walker, and almost too quick a shot) positively revelled; and he would be off and away for the long day on these solitary stalks, with some provisions in his pocket and a game-bag on his shoulder. And on such occasions would come home late, sometimes not until dark, with three or four brace of grouse, looking as proud as if they were red deer; in the evening he would detail each ruse and surprise with infinite zest.

Driving grouse we did not quite approve of, even could we have got together a sufficient number of drivers to do it thoroughly, which might have been difficult in so sparsely populated a district. Still, sometimes, on sighting a pack well placed for being driven overhead, the temptation was too much, and once or twice raking volleys were sent with great effect into these crowds of grouse; but on discussing this matter one evening, and speculating on the many

birds that might be wounded, it was *nem. con.* agreed that it should be discontinued.

With black game any manner of ruse is excusable, as they are nearly unapproachable when full-grown—except by silent and artful going in cover—or, in the open, by having them driven; besides, the packs of black game are neither so large, nor do they fly so close together, as grouse, thus there is less chance of damaging outsiders. Moreover, when started they usually go swiftly past, three or four together, affording famous sport to a good quick shot, who can sight and drop the old cocks out of each passing flight; but, oh dear! this is a sport especially disastrous to muffs. How pitiful they do look as they stand with the smoke scarcely arisen from their harmless guns, and the great blackcock skimming on to the woods! How an enthusiastic novice CAN sleep, after having that day missed six consecutive groups of black game, is only to be accounted for by fatigue. An evil conscience should be mild to his self-reproach. Yet there are seared or stolid individuals who refuse to feel humbled in such circumstances—men who will sleep soundly, and hold up their heads next day at breakfast.

Several excursions had been made to the north and

north-west marches for the purpose of shooting black game, and my notes record two special red-letter days, Friday and Saturday, at the close of September, when a nice variety of game and excellent sport was the result.

Having arranged to look for partridges on the small farms at the north march, and to range the outlying covers for black game, we, after an early breakfast, drove quietly by the hill road to a farm-house some five miles from the lodge. Here we found Archie, who had ridden over with the pony and taken the pointers, and presently arrived Peter Doig and other men from about the place; so, taking the hampers out and putting them on the pony, we set off through the woods towards the north march. In passing by these woods we killed some hares, and Fred shot a jay, its blue and black feathers being useful in dressing certain kinds of flies. We saw two roes, but did not get a chance at them.

Found the farm folks engaged at cheesemaking, and stayed a while to have a look at the cattle and get a drink of whey, then moved on to find the partridges.

Although well on in the morning, we saw some black game and grouse still feeding on the stubbles

upon the higher fields near the moor, but in unapproachable situations. Several coveys of partridges were flushed and driven into the turnip fields or among the broom and fern, and in a few hours we had fourteen brace and some hares and rabbits. The hill partridge is smaller than the birds of the better cultivated lowlands, but equally plump and swift of wing, so we had a good morning's sport.

The next move was on to the gorse covers and birch wood, where we saw a good head of black game, and secured six and a-half brace—four of them old cocks—besides hares and rabbits.

After luncheon we sought the open moor to try for some grouse, and shot in line along the braes and rough boggy grounds. The birds were mostly packed, but we managed to secure five grouse, eight golden plovers, and a few snipe, before arriving at the farm.

By the time we got the horses harnessed it was late, and before coming to the lodge by the ticklish hill-road it was dark; but we had enjoyed a fine day's sport, and made a pretty bag of various sorts of game.

No late sitting to-night; besides, next day's walking would likely be even harder.

On Saturday, spite of a certain degree of stiffness in the joints, we left earlier, and had come to the farm in good time, quite freshened up with the bracing mountain air.

Nearly the same routine as yesterday had been fixed on; but, after having discussed the partridge grounds, we went on to the hitherto untried woods at the extreme north-east of our march. Here the dense cover was so closed with fern, bush, and thorns that rather stiff work was anticipated—and so it proved.

The whole of the terriers were brought out to-day to lend their help in ransacking this almost impracticable wilderness of thorns. So, being duly and uselessly admonished, they were let in at the end of the cover. Zealously did they perform their work; but the riot they made was, to speak moderately, lively and demonstrative, and this continually until the whole of this rugged cover was worked out; as in too many cases of superlative fuss, the wool was nothing to the noise, yet there was a fair amount of shooting and a great deal of fun.

These peppery wretches of terriers quite reverse the manners of the more docile spaniel; for, when once their blood is up, they are deaf to command and

heedless of whip or strong language, but WILL go recklessly at everything, from a hedgehog to a highland stirk. Yet, in such a rugged and thorny waste, they are invaluable, and, with their keen sight and scent, and perfect indifference to orders or to the most obdurate thickets of bramble, I hardly think they left a living thing behind them in the cover. Here a dilatory partridge would flurry from a bush, leaving its tail in a terrier's mouth; then in the next clump of bushes a rushing and barking, and a bolting of rabbits, now and again varied with the death squeak of some victim of indecision; or a long-legged hare would go off with the varmint pack at her heels, only to come back baffled and panting to regain their wind, and again brush through the thorns for more blood.

Having finished out these covers, Peter Doig took us along the burn for a mile or so, and then over a rising ground that looked on a small glen sprinkled with birch-trees, with a thick undergrowth of bush, fern, and rank heather; he said that "there was whiles a roe or twa in the wood," and that they would beat it up slowly: so, having taken us round and placed us at different corners by the end and edges of the wood, he went away back to have it beat up.

It was so long before any symptoms of game appeared, that I thought Archie and Peter had improved the occasion to smoke a pipe and rest a while; but by-and-by the black game showed they were disturbed, and a good many were now passing overhead or by the skirts of the wood. I had several shots, and killed two, and I heard the others fire occasionally. Hares and rabbits were now scudding along, and as the beaters came nearer there was a loud shouting and cries of "Mark roe," "Roe forward." I looked keenly out for a shot, but no roe came my way. Only two were seen; they broke out near where Hope was posted, and he luckily got one, a fine buck, which I found Fred contemplating with great delight when I joined the others.

It was now getting rather late, so we gave over shooting, set off direct for the farm, and having got the horses harnessed, drove in the dusk along the ticklish hill-road, and came safely home before it was quite dark; and very tired we all were.

After dinner there was an inspection of letters, &c., come to-day, and Hope gave us part of a droll letter from Annie Peyton, commiserating our bachelor loneliness and sombre dinner parties, holding out fairer prospects on our visit to Dunesk.

"But, Hope, you have two letters," Fred said, looking slyly at another paper in Ward's hand.

"No, not as you think; it is a rhythm, you curious imp."

"May you read it?" the Major smilingly inquired.

"Surely, if you listen with becoming reverence; besides, it is in some sort a warning to bachelors."

"In what way, Hope?"

"Just that the lines are by a young lady on the occasion of leaving, for her marriage, the home of an old bachelor uncle who had brought her up almost from childhood. Annie is her friend, and also a favourite with the old gentleman, so she was sent a copy of the verse."

"Oh, yes, I see; doting old uncle—spoilt girl—trousseau—farewell—anticipated future, &c., &c. Proceed with the recitation, circumventor of grouse cock."

"Very good; then listen soberly."

ON LEAVING MY UNCLE'S HOME, AND MY OWN.

The days when thy proud manhood shone,
Have quickly passed,
And time to find thyself alone
Hath come at last.

For one by one friends of thy youth
Are gone, or lost by newer ties,
While he, best loved for heart and truth,
Thy other self, near Alma lies.

Thy once bright mind subdued and still,
Its spirit fled;
The firmest foot on crag and hill
Must now be led.
Around thy chair no loving ones,
No wife's unselfish tending seen.
Where be the brave and manly sons,
On whom thy feeble steps should lean?

Yet one leal heart was close to thine,
Unseen, unsought.
Ah! hadst thou read that hidden line,
How changed thy lot
You then had come to love and trust
The mission a good woman bears,
Nor would she left thee, as I must,
For other duties—other cares.

Still, Uncle dear, I dare not blame
Gay years so brief;
For none e'er joined thine honoured name
With other's grief.
But when age bows the strong and bold,
The proudest feel, yet may not own,
This simple truth the sage hath told,
"Man is not meant to live alone."

GERTY.

"Well spoken, young lady—bravo!" the Major observed; "the old gentleman is bound to miss her and feel alone. What is your opinion, Fred?"

"I daren't venture an opinion, Major. I am no judge of rhymes; besides, Hope has just read it, and

is large-souled with potting a buck to-day. One must be cautious of his Honour for a while."

"Don't be jealous, small boy," Ward said; "your luck will come at Dunesk."

"I hope it may; but to-day when I heard the shouts of 'Mark roe,' I was so awfully shaky that they would have got away scot-free had they come my way."

"Oh, never fear; a roe is a big mark, and when you get a chance at one just you snap shoot at him with both barrels. I'll back you to scare—beg pardon—no, to secure him, Freddy."

The brief time we had yet to remain soon passed away, and much as before as regarded shooting, excepting certain days devoted exclusively to driving and thinning down mountain hares, which, when too numerous, are very detrimental to the hill pasturage. So, in having the sport we also did duty for the benefit of the sheep-farms, and distributed the hares amongst the neighbours. The great beats for mountain hares are generally made in winter and early spring—at that time they are pure white and in highest condition; but we made the best of circumstances, and were very successful. Grouse and black game had now become scarce and harder to come at,

but the more valued on this account; and by October all game-birds are in full feather and in perfect shape.

No days were more enjoyed than those now and then passed among the high, windy peaks of the hills in pursuit of ptarmigan. Doubtless the ascent always necessitated toilsome walking, but, having accomplished the climb up to the sky-line, the travel afterwards became easy enough; and after having ranged on these lofty crests and secured a few brace of the beautiful birds, it was so pleasant to bivouac for a time on some wind-sheltered slope, and look around us at the wild, barren cliffs, or to gaze far below on the wide moors and wood and water of the open country.

When descending from these high tops there was hardly any attempt at shooting; it requires all one's attention to avoid getting an awkward cropper, or, perhaps, a sprained ankle; but, when down to the more level moor, it was time to look out and make a finish with the grouse or golden plover, when we could sight a flock of them.

The golden plover, some of the gull tribe, the curlew, &c. &c., may be styled as partially migratory birds, for they never entirely leave the country.

Every spring these, and some others of like habits, desert the sea-coast and fly inland to rear their young in the undisturbed solitudes of the hills. The gulls soon return to sea, but the others long remain; yet when the weather becomes wintry and the earth frostbound they all go back to the seacoast.

Some of the peculiarities of migratory birds appear so mysterious and puzzling that I fancy no Fellow (of whatever distinguished association) can understand them. For instance, there is much sound and circumstance accompanying the migrations of certain birds, while others come and leave with secrecy and reticence. The migrations of wild geese, swallows, oyster-catchers, red shank, &c., are all carried out with more or less demonstration; while the woodcock, the landrail, the cuckoo, &c., arrive in the country silently and unobserved, and again disappear under silence and mystery.

I had often wondered that the landrail, which always journeys at night, should never use its powerful voice to indicate its whereabouts to the others; but once, and only once, about four years since, on a darkish night at the time of their arrival, I heard passing overhead the craik-craik of the landrail clearly and distinctly, and also the answering

call of another flying at some distance away to the north.

That the woodcock should be mute is not so much to be wondered at. No doubt it has a sort of voice, for in the breeding season it flies about at dusk croaking mildly, and occasionally gives a sort of chinking squeak; how different from its long-beaked swamp cousin, the curlew, which has a pipe like a railway whistle. Yet, sharp and loud although it be, still is it a wild and pleasing voice when heard near the whaup's haunts in the wide and desolate moor, or far out on the sandy sea-shore.

Another puzzle is the migration of the swift; it is the latest to arrive of all the swallow tribe, yet, strange enough, it is much the earliest to leave us. Not a swift is to be seen by the end of August, and at that time insect life is in full abundance. It has most wonderful powers of flight, and, considering its tardy arrival, should rather overstay the others, instead of being off so hurriedly. In fact, the only rational elucidation of the business seems to have been given long ago by Charles Lamb, who, when he worked in the India House, was rated for being always latest at his office: "Ah! yes," he said, "but I am first to go."

CHAPTER XX.

SUNDAY.—WE GANG TO THE KIRK.

Feeling a trifle stiff, and rather languid, after the week's hard exercise, some slight disinclination was shown to-day about going so far to church: the natural instinct being to stroll about in the sunshine, or to retire with a book to some shady corner; but indolence was conquered, and all of us duly present at the kirk as the bell began to ring in.

The country folks were arriving from various quarters, some coming by the high-road, others by cross-roads; many came over the hill, or were ferried across the water, and not a few had come from a distance, but all the people had the look of health and content. And so they may, for have they not nearly everything they understand and are accustomed to—home shelter, plain but wholesome food, health, and the purest air; and, in their humble

occupations, do they not feel as much interest as others do in what the world may consider things of greater moment, and affairs of dignity or diplomacy. Withal, the rural Celt hath little care, and, sooth to say, little grinding toil.

There is poverty sometimes amongst these country folks, but seldom destitution. Poverty in rural districts does not carry the sad meaning it has in towns, nor do the very poorest ever know an approach to the squalid wretchedness so miserably common in large cities. Moreover, the Highland cottar is generally healthy and enjoys long life. Even the very aged seldom take to their beds, but in summer they potter about their doors or sit in the sunshine, and in winter smoke their pipe by the turf fire. At last they die easily, and are laid in the kirk-yard.

I like to see those homely folks as they gather about the little church, near the graves of their grandsires and friends. All about the scene appears so natural to their state and condition. I like to hear the tuneless ding-dong sounding from the belfry, and to look at the parishioners standing by the grey, moss-grown tombstones, while the sun is shining brightly on the fair face of nature, and the light breeze gently

moves the long grass, and carries the sweet summer fragrance of the country into the doors and open windows of the kirk. I like the plain orthodox sermon (if not too long), the simple old-fashioned singing (if not too loud), and I like the benediction.

After kirk we went to the Fraser's Arms to talk over with John Fraser certain arrangements previous to our leaving the country, for, alas! pleasant times were drawing to a close; still, as Fred remarked, it somewhat broke our fall to speculate on the approaching visit to Dunesk, where we should meet our friends, hunt the roe, and get a swim in the sea; yet were we sorry to think of a good-bye to Ardenmohr: it must, however, be soon now.

On arriving at the Lodge we, as usual on Sundays, had an hour or two among books, and then a long walk before dinner.

In the evening the people came in for the reading, Major Duncan acting chaplain; and not only did they always come willingly, but usually brought some of their acquaintances.

When they had left, Ward remarked that it was satisfactory when those about us took an interest in

services which, for the time being at least, make all of kin. "Don't you agree, Abbott?" he said.

"Of course, it begets better mutual feelings, and a confidence sometimes wanting when one's surroundings look more heathenish or indifferent."

"Right, most virtuous Abbott; for if there be enough and to spare of hypocrisy in the world, yet I hardly think there is much DELIBERATE sham. Most men I believe to be genuine in such matters according to their lights. Why, the Pharisees even were only in a certain sense hypocrites; they believed in their views and in themselves, thanking God for not being as other men."

"Yes," the Major remarked, "but that same sincerity may be pleaded for rank heathens and for speculative infidels."

"No doubt," said Ward, "and I would humbly consider that the responsibility lies not so much in the mere belief, as how it comes about; if from hatred of restraint, from indolence, or from indifference. And, perhaps, what carries the greatest responsibility is the PROMULGATING of uncertain and mischievous doctrines on mere speculative opinion."

"Are you quite just, Hope, to Renan, Spencer, and

Darwin, and the other new lamps? Probably you have tried them all?"

"Of course; for when a certain section of thinkers, as they are termed, coolly assume that for more than eighteen hundred years all outside THEIR ways of *thinking* have been living in a fool's paradise, one naturally seeks to find how they make this out."

"And your sapient conclusion is——?"

"My own notion is that it is all very marvellous; and, notably, the evolved potentiality of redundant, flatulent, and intricate verbosity in seeming-like wisdom while settling nothing, not even a single will-o'-the-wisp mysticism. Besides, their even asking a definite conclusion on their premises, seems a mistake."

"You mean that if a Divine government be questionable, so is the truth of their speculations?"

"Quite so; but that is hardly what I meant. The mistake seems palpable all through; it begins at the beginning when they take up the position of teachers and ELEVATORS of humanity, and this by premising that humanity is evolved from the beasts, and like the beasts must perish; they then, at least some of them, elevate morally by teaching that vice and virtue are

just accidents of circumstance and temperament—a nice theory to give elbow-room to vice and crime. And, vilest doctrine of all, and most wanton, they would bruise the broken reed by telling the sad and wretched of the world, who have nothing left but hope, that their hopes are vain."

"Bless me, Ward! your feelings have led you on to give us quite a sermon. But don't you see, man, that abstract science has nought to do with faith or feeling; it is merely mental vivisection. Really, we had better let alone this unsavoury subject; it is all very sad."

"Right, Major," I said, "but I half suspect you yourself first moved it."

"For whilk indiscretion let me try and atone by burning some of the very particular Regalias. You fellows go out to the garden seat, and I'll get them presently." So we went out, and he brought the cigars. "So perish evolution *in smoke*," he said as we proceeded to light up.

"How charitable not to say *in fire*," I remarked. "Major George Duncan is not a bigot, and he really has some good tobacco."

"Cease, you remorseless cynic," he said laughingly. "Is it not enough to have brought me to confession

and a mulct of my best weeds, that you also must crush my wittiest reflections?"

"Massacre of the innocents! But what a lovely night!" And, indeed, it was beautiful.

Some of the aspects of nature have such charm that they never fail to delight, and one of these is a fair autumn night in the Highlands, when the moon, just risen over the crest of the mountain, casts a tender light on the edges and slopes of the hills, softening all that is rude and rugged into forms of weirdlike and dreamy grace, while far in the vault above the stars shine forth in their ever-mysterious beauty; nor is the enjoyment of such a scene much lessened by the more mundane accompaniments of friendly converse and unexceptionable tobacco.

We remained out this night to rather a late hour in talking of our departure from Ardenmohr, and even rashly, perhaps, speculating on a distant future.

On the evening of the 23rd October we sat round a blazing wood fire, talked of the pleasant days that had passed, and about going to Dunesk, for which we were to leave on the 25th.

For some time past we had been chiefly salmon fishing, only occasionally taking the gun to find a bird or two for the larder. The stock of grouse

did not appear very greatly reduced with all the shooting, but so wild that anything like shots at individual birds was quite exceptional now; "Stand not on the order of your going, but go at once," seemed to be their rule.

No particular event had occurred for a while, except that a few days since Donald brought to the Lodge an eagle which he had shot. He had been over the evening previous at the north march to meet Peter Doig on some business or other, when Peter told him that a pair of eagles had been seen by the shepherd passing regularly in the early mornings by the head of Loch Na Seachin; so Donald resolved to try and get a shot, and he and the shepherd were on the outlook at the place before daybreak next morning.

The shepherd was so posted on the side of the hill that he could watch them coming and signal to Donald, without being himself observed. As Donald hoped, they did come, and he shot one of the eagles; the other, he said, did not seem to be touched, as, on the fall of its mate, it merely swung slightly off its course, and then continued its flight direct across the hill. We did not quite approve of Donald's slaying the royal bird, but it was done now, and, being a fine specimen, we packed and sent him away

carefully to be stuffed and mounted on a mimic rock. Hope said that he should afterwards supplement the taxidermist's work by painting a background of Ardenmohr hills.

Our last day was spent in making arrangements for departure, and in a farewell ramble on the moor.

CHAPTER XXI.

DUNESK.

"ARE we all right then?" inquired Major Duncan as we settled in the carriage ready to start.

"Yes, Major, a' richt, a' in order," replied Archie, who had superintended; "and we will be wishing ye sune back."

"Good-bye then — good-bye to you all," and waving our hands to Janet Cameron and her daughter, who still stood at the door, we drove away down the glen; nor was it until we had passed through the valley, and were out on the high-road, that we felt fairly off from Ardenmohr.

Our journey was only about twenty-three miles, and as there was no particular hurry we took it easily.

For the greater part of the way the country around is monotonous enough, alternate moorland,

WATER LILIES

Not observed in Tennyson's "Brook."

plantation, and poorly-cultivated land; but as the day was cool and breezy, while the horses stepped easily along, the drive was far from unpleasant. We came in good time to the resting-place, a road-side inn, more than half-way to our destination, we took out the horses, rested for an hour or so, and then went on.

Shortly after leaving the inn we passed by a small stream, and on its banks came upon two Highland maidens washing clothes in the Scottish fashion. Hope and Fred, in their Southern simplicity, were taken aback and marvelled greatly; not so the damsels, who did not seem a whit discomposed, but merely took a look at the passing vehicle, and went on with their hornpipe.

About six miles from Dunesk the road turned left toward the sea-side, and after going through a long stretch of young plantation we came in view of the sea, and in about a quarter of an hour were driving along the level road, which now runs by the sea-side almost the whole way.

How fresh and exhilarating it feels when, after a long sojourn inland, one comes close to the glittering ocean and inhales the pure, strong sea air. It was by this time near high tide, and we could see

and hear the waters break on the rocks, and rolling in foamy lines along the strand, and view far out on the deeps the white crests of the great ocean waves: all this bright scene enlivened by the sea birds flying about in full enjoyment of life—and what free, roving lives they do lead! Observe the gulls, how leisurely and listlessly they swing about in the air, enjoying the sunshine, or now and again dipping into the waves; then, in contrast, see the ducks and sooty cormorants as they cleave their way through the air in a direct line, on business intent; and here again are our moorland friends, the curlew and the golden plover, skimming along the strand quite as much at home as among the hills. But on the sea-coast the scenery and objects to study are of endless variety and interest.

About a mile from our destination the road turned inland, and, on getting to the top of a long ascent, we came presently to the woods and well-kept parks of Dunesk, and saw the old grey mansion looming amongst the trees. Turning through the ancient gateway and along the avenue, we arrived at the house, and received a genuine Highland welcome from the Laird.

Mr. Grant, after introductions to his maiden sister

and niece, now took us to our rooms. My crib was at the top of the tower, and at the last step of a narrow spiral staircase, but just the room I would have chosen out of the many in the old house—a quaint, comfortable watch-tower, with a narrow slip of a window looking down on the tree-tops and away over the sea.

Before dinner we made the acquaintance of the only guests of the house, Captain Leslie and Mr. McKenzie, of the —7th foot.

The first evening at Dunesk was a fair prelude to a very enjoyable visit. The Laird (or Dunesk, as he was sometimes styled by one title, sometimes by the other, never as Mr. Grant) was a famous host: he had travelled a great deal, seen much of life, rough and refined, and conversed as one who had observed things; his anecdotes were short and racy. Captain Leslie, too, proved himself a capital *raconteur*, and so droll, with his languid air and ladylike voice—which seemed very little in keeping with many of his experiences, that had been "gey queer." He seemed quite reconciled to his old friend's good-natured quizzing on his gentle manners, and would blandly help the Laird with particulars of stories told at his expense; but Leslie soon showed us the real stuff

he was made of, as he could swim, walk, and shoot with the best, and was something of a scholar withal.

On going into the drawing-room little Maggy was caught at the piano, and easily prevailed on to sing some Jacobite songs, which she did very nicely. Miss Grant interpreted certain parts of the songs that seemed obscure, and was gradually led on to tell us stories of the old stirring times, which she related with infinite spirit; and having such perfect acquaintance with the country family histories and clans, this made her conversation particularly interesting. She brought many scenes before the mind as if they had happened yesterday. I could have sat all night to listen, and I began to understand in some degree the loyalty and devotion so uselessly spent on those selfish and ungrateful Stuarts.

Before going to bed we had a turn in the avenue, and arranged to have a sea bath in the morning.

After a sound sleep, undisturbed by ghost or banshee, I was out soon after seven, first at parade; but the others duly appeared, and we set off for the sea, a walk of about half a mile. Leslie took us to a ledge of rocks projecting into the water, where one may have a deep plunge at any period of the tide, and here we had a glorious swim among the waves.

On coming back, glowing, and hungry as hunters, every one was ready for the Highland breakfast—home-made bread and oat cakes, fresh trout and sea fish, grouse, roe liver, eggs, ham, and honey, finishing with the *ad valorem* thimbleful of cognac, approved by Frenchman and Highlander alike.

All this first day was passed in wandering over the grounds, inspecting Highland cattle and cross-bred sheep, and ransacking the stables and kennels; and in the afternoon we had a long ramble by the sea-coast.

In the evening there was much talk of sport, and of our qualifications for next day's work: the Laird having arranged to have the covers driven for roe and capercailzie. Mrs. Peyton and the young ladies were to come to Dunesk on the day following, and the Laird said we must do our duty as sportsmen, for all failures would be related and unmercifully quizzed. Of course each one thought he at least was safe to be on the laughing side.

After having music, round games, &c., Miss Grant showed us some curious and interesting portraits of the notables of the Forty-five and other stirring times; they were small pictures, and some of them not highly artistic, but they bore the impress of being genuine. In her collection was one of Claver-

house (the Bonnie Dundee of song), and what a striking, romantic countenance — fair, smooth, and almost effeminate in its pale and regular beauty, with little or no index of the firm, daring character of the man, nor of that cruel zeal which makes, even to this day, his name a hated sound in many parts of Scotland.

Why is it that no distinguished painter has pictured the death of Claverhouse? There seems everything in the subject to commend itself to a great artist: the remarkable grace and beauty of Dundee himself, which can be easily studied from authentic portraits, for the completion of his knightly figure, mailed and plaided; then the sorrowing Highlanders grouped around the dying chief as he droops with his death-wound—all this occurring midst some of the grandest scenery in Scotland.

Too many pictures now produced are just subjects for water-colour sketches, not for painting. Who would dream of making a water-colour sketch of Claverhouse, or of the Pass of Killiecrankie.

CHAPTER XXII.

DRIVING THE COVERS, ETC.

The heather bloom is come and past,
The tender wild flowers faded,
And withered leaves are falling fast
On mossy banks they shaded,
While earth looks sad and weary.

The misty mountains dim and grey,
The flooded streams yet filling,
Cool starry nights and shortened day,
The robin's plaintive trilling—
All presage winter dreary.

If such be some of the aspects of nature towards the end of autumn, it is not always so, and we have sometimes days, even weeks, at this season, which are perhaps the most beautiful and enjoyable of the whole year. Every season has its attractions, excepting, perhaps, spring, which is often simply exasperating, although frequently sung by poets, and always hopefully looked for.

On turning out in the morning to start for the

woods, this day was seen at once to be one of October's fairest gifts. The pale blue sky was without a cloud from north to south, while the sun shone brightly as at midsummer. High overhead the daws and rooks were wheeling round enjoying the sunshine; gossamer spiders busied themselves in spreading their webs from bush to bush, or in ballooning away on their mysterious voyages; and the small birds flitted about gaily, as if summer had come back again. Yet autumn was telling a tale, for the plants and late flowers were drooping under the heavy night's dew, while the white frost still lingered in the shadows of the walls and trees. Winter was clearly coming apace. But what of that? Does not the fair Indian summer of America pass like a bird of resplendent plumage? Are not our fine days still more brief? Yet is one day like this a boon to be thankful for, ay, and to be remembered too; for uneventful as these days may be, still do they come often back to memory, not unmixed, it may be, with sad recollections of the past, yet always lovely and always welcome.

"Now, are we all ready? I think we may go," the Laird said, and we set off for the woods.

After walking a mile or so along the highway, we

turned off by a steep path leading through a larch plantation, then over the moor to the black wood, and, crossing a deep gully, we pushed through bush and fern until we came to an open part of the cover where the stations were to be fixed for the first drive. Here the guns were judiciously posted from eighty to a hundred yards apart, and so placed that no one could be hit with the shot of another—the final orders being that on no account should any one leave his post until the beaters had finished the drive and come up. Nothing was to be fired at for this beat except roe and capercailzie; even black game and woodcock must go scatheless; a fox might be shot if any one had a chance.

The post fixed for myself was a hollow in rather an open part of the wood, where I presently arranged a neat ambush amongst some tall fern and behind a piece of rock about breast high, which commanded a tolerably clear space in front, while the wood on either side was sufficiently open to afford a fair chance at any passing game. So, with large shot cartridges in the barrels of my gun, I waited patiently.

When alone and ambushed in the silence of the woods, the ear soon becomes almost painfully acute, the rustle of a field mouse, or the movement of any

small bird is distinctly heard, the mere fidgetting of a restless squirrel overhead twitches one's nerves, and in the dead stillness the hum of a flying beetle sounds like the boom of a distant railway train.

As all had been now placed, silence continued for a good while, until by-and-by came the far-off sound of the horn, to tell that the beaters had moved on. They were still much too far away to be heard, yet their approach was very soon indicated by the movements of the game.

First appear the wary blackcocks, one or two at a time, going quickly past; next come the fine-eared hares, some of them louping leisurely along, or now and again stopping to throw back their ears and listen, while others, more alarmed, go scudding straight down the wood. By-and-by the great capercailzie begin to skim past the tree-tops, but, as yet, I had not got a shot, although a huge cock whished into a tree quite near; but I dare not leave my post, and presently he flew off at the other side, when I saw him go down the wood quite out of range.

By this time, shot after shot sounded near me, and twice I had heard the gun to my left. Ha, at last! three roe-deer coming down the wood on my right hand. Hang it! they have turned. No, not quite; the

report of a flanking gun changes their course, and they wheel sharply and pass me within twenty yards—right and left. Down goes that doe; the buck, only wounded, quickly recovers, and follows the other in line direct on the next ambush, whence presently comes a double report, but with what effect I cannot then say. Capercailzie are now passing freely; I have five shots and drop three, one of them a magnificent cock.

The beaters were now so close that I heard their sticks rapping the trees, and, just as I was thinking the cover had been beat out, an old roebuck sped from cover across the open, *ventre à terre*, being literally FORCED out when slyly seeking to double back through the beaters. I had a quick but clear shot and killed him dead.

The men now came up, and the game being collected, we went on to the edge of the wood to arrange about the next drive, the Laird saying that he considered this a very successful beat. Ward, Leslie, McKenzie, and Fred had five roe-deer (one of them my wounded buck), and two capercailzie cocks. The Squire and Major Duncan had chosen to walk with the beaters, as they could then, of course, fire at any kind of game: they had a great deal of shoot-

ing, and bagged one capercailzie, three head of black game, a lot of hares and rabbits, and also secured the first woodcock of the season, which was claimed by the Laird. As was to be expected they had no roe, these shy creatures being too cunning to be surprised in their forms, except in very rare cases.

The next beat was more open, and the greater part of it through Scotch-fir woods, with partial undergrowths of bush and long heather, then on by a hillside covered with broom and whins, the drive finishing at the birchwood and boggy ground skirting the moor. We all went with the beaters excepting McKenzie and Fred, who were sent on to be posted at the end of the cover.

We now beat through in line, but not at first with much success; the wood seemed too extensive and irregular, diverging away here and there to the right and left, so that a great deal of game must have gone off unobserved; thus only one roe, three head of black game, and some half a score of hares and rabbits were brought to bag here. On coming to the gorse-covered hillside there was a mighty peppering of rabbits, and three woodcocks were shot in the patches of broom—I shan't say by whose fault, but other four should have been bagged.

The finish at the birchwood turned out famously. Much of the game driven on before us had settled there, being the last cover between us and the open moors. Here we got another roe, a whole lot of hares, four head of black game and a cock pheasant. McKenzie and Fred were heard firing briskly, and when we joined them Fred was radiant; he had shot a roe—his second—and their show of game, in spite of misses manifold, was conceded to be creditable.

We now tried the bogs, got a mallard and two and a-half couple of snipe, and then sat by a turf dyke to have a pipe and see the game laid out for inspection: a sporting show it made.

Home being now the order, we set off in a direct line, and after a smart, roughish walk, came down on Dunesk before six o'clock, all being in time for dinner at seven.

In the evening, after some agreeable conversation, the Laird and the three soldiers made a quartette at whist. Miss Grant was delighting Fred with Highland legends, while I was teaching Maggy to play écarté, being well rewarded with her merry prattle and an old song which her aunt had taught her.

I like much to associate with well-disposed youngsters, boys or girls: they seem so pleased when their

elders show interest by answering their many questions, and listening to their little trivial stories, which, if you understand their way, they will relate so very seriously.

On going out to-night the weather looked threatening, and promised a speedy change of some sort, and not for the better.

Every one was up in good time for the sea bath, and we set off, although met in the face by a cold wind and drizzling rain—moreover, having to face the decidedly chilly operation of dressing on a bare rock, and be fanned by an ungentle north-easter; but after the smart return walk nobody felt hurt, only hungry.

After breakfast the rain had cleared off, and as it now blew a gale, Leslie, Ward, and I went away for a walk by the coast to have a view of the sea in its wrath; and brief time it takes to vex the Atlantic, and bring the giant waves thundering on the rocky shore—it is truly grand!

CHAPTER XXIII.

MEETING AND FAREWELL.

On coming to Dunesk, we found Mrs. Peyton and the young ladies had arrived. Emily Peyton was, as I expected—charming, and her soft voice and slightly-foreign accent pleasant to hear; but what can compare to Annie, with her frank manner, clear mind, and unique grace. Oh, you lucky Major! For myself I scarcely again expect to see anything so lovely—I am sure you do not.

In a sporting journal one can hardly go into sentimental journeys or pleasure-party details—the reader can fancy it all; the day ramblings, the cheerful evenings, and the sound sleep, except for—

Well, well; let that sleep.

After these gay excursions and some more capital shooting, we had at last to bid farewell and promised to meet again.

On the evening of the 6th November we returned to Ardenmohr.

"Again," said Ward, as we came to the lodge; "the dear old place, once more. Does it not look so homelike?" And really it was a pleasure to come into the old dining-room, illuminated as it was with one of Janet Cameron's brightest wood fires, and every one seeming so glad to see us back again.

Two days' rambling and preparations, and then—

We had bid farewell to Ardenmohr, and were driving south to the busy scenes of life.

"Well," said Ward (as he drew his plaid closer on this cool November morning), "people assert that no one would care to live his life over a second time. I, for one, wish the last three months were to begin again."

"Come, don't mope about small matters, old fellow," the Major said, "and give us that rhyme, after the old masters, you composed the other night—Herrick, or some such worthy, I think was your model; nothing is so healthy for the mind as shelving self often and looking a little to others—there's a platitude for you."

"Ho ho! Major; paternal instincts already,"

replied Hope, in his droll laughing way; "but you shall have the song:" and as we rolled on he repeated—

THE WINDS.

Be thankful when the north wind blows
For sheltered peace in hut or hall,
Let thought of many lacking all
Thy heart dispose
To seek the sad with griefs untold,
And help the helpless and the old,
When north wind blows.

Be patient when the east wind blows
With chilling blasts through lagging spring,
It but delays the swallow's wing,
Or budding rose;
Slight are the ills that do not last,
While summer's bloom yet cometh fast,
When east wind blows.

Be joyous when the west wind blows
With balmy breath o'er field and flower;
Work cheerfully, or, in the bower
Thy loved one knows,
Kiss thy sweet maid; but be ye wise,
Fix the glad day, time quickly flies
When west wind blows.

Be thoughtful when the south wind blows
On ruddy fruit and ripened field,
When earth and sea their treasures yield;
Their giver knows
If ye be worthy of possessing
With common gifts still deeper blessing,
When south wind blows.

Be frank and true whate'er wind blows,
Share joy and grief one with another,
See in each suffering soul a brother,
And smooth his woes;
The kindly heart is doubly blest,
Thy God is love, so take thy rest
Whate'er wind blows.

THE END.

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