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A REVIEW

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SERIES OF ARTICLES WHICH APPEARED IN THE *GLASGOW HERALD* OF 2ND, 9TH, AND 13TH NOVEMBER, 1867, HEADED

"EIGHT DAYS IN ISLAY:"

BY MEMBERS

OF THE

ISLAY ASSOCIATION.

GLASGOW:
PRINTED BY A. SINCLAIR, 62 ARGYLE STREET.

MDCCCLXVIII.

Price Sixpence.

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REVIEW, &c.

In the month of November, 1867, a series of three articles appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*, under the heading of "Eight Days in Islay." To these articles, thus sanctioned, we feel constrained to reply. We have no desire to hurt or offend the anonymous writer who attacked us; we beg his forgiveness if we say anything even in self-defence which may be disagreeable to him; but we cannot allow that which he has published to pass without remark. We too claim that right of free speech which the ancient Icelanders exercised on the hill of laws, the right which every Briton now claims, and will defend. Our race and our class are attacked,—we claim the right to defend ourselves, and to combat our opponent as best we can. We salute him, and if we slay him we will lament over him if he fights well. We propose to reprint and comment on the articles in question, to show the capacity of our judge—the spirit by which he was animated—and the relation of his facts to his conclusions, and to ours. The writer begins thus:—

ON THE WAY AND FIRST SIGHTS.

"I took the shortest and easiest route to this most verdant of all the Hebridean isles —that is, I left the Broomielaw by the Iona at seven o'clock, arrived at East Tarbert about twelve noon, walked to West Tarbert Loch, caught the Islay steamer, and about three or four hours after starting was landed on the rocky strand at the south-eastern end of the island. The day was one of the finest of the season, and the journey was consequently most delightful. Everybody knows the Iona and the beautiful route on which she plies, so that it would be waste of paper to say a single word of the scenery which the traveller, of almost every nation, views and admires from her saloon. It is not often, however, that the pleasure-seeker has, in this variable climate, the opportunity of seeing the Kyles of Bute under the same propitious circumstances, which was my lot in the middle of September last. There was scarcely a breath of wind, and though the sun shone bright and cloudless, there was a certain 'caller feel' in the atmosphere that told of the approach of frosty nights and mornings. One thing seemed to me to mar a little the enjoyment of the beautiful Argyleshire hills which the Iona skirted on her passage, and that *is the progress of city civilisation.* In the shape of bran new villas and cottages, which strike a stranger as being inharmonious with the scenery."

Before we proceed to consider that which chiefly interests us, namely, what the traveller had to tell about Islay and its people, it is well to consider the medium through which he looked. Does a man wear blue spectacles? then all things will seem blue to him. Thus far the traveller appears to be a tourist in search of the savage and romantic. He is somewhat offended by seeing comfort, wealth, and prosperity migrating from his home in the city to the Highland bounds; but there is no harm in that artistic view of the matter. We, when we travel the other way, are pleased rather than pained by the villas, but we may be in the wrong. We like to see evidence that tired citizens and their prosperous families, are rich and happy, and able to enjoy our fresh air and fine scenery, as we do ourselves. We do not grudge men the fruits of their honest industry and the free exercise of their tastes; and though we may be somewhat amazed at the variety of the tastes displayed in villa architecture, we do not complain. Many of the owners of these villas are West Highlanders like us, who began life in humble dwellings: how should such as we understand such architecture. This traveller, on the other hand, was pleased to see uncomfortable dwellings, and unkempt "redshanks" in their proper artistic place in the Kyles of Bute. He seems to have no grudge at a native so long as he satisfies his estimate of him and is wild, picturesque, and out of his way. He says,—

"*It was quite a relief* when I caught a glimpse of an old tumbled-down thatched steading on the face of a hill, with a few red-legged and shock-headed urchins playing round it. It seemed to fit in with and form æsthetically a portion of the grey hills and half savage scenery; but Italian and Gothic cottages, oriel windows, fresh venetian blinds, with croquet ground, and dandies of both sexes, were exotics to my eye, unsuitable to the place. Think of crowds of callous Sassenachs rustling in silks, and dapper in broadcloth, treading the heather of the Campbells and Macgregors, and squinting at nature through opera and eye-glass! It looks like a civilised outrage upon these once beautiful solitudes, where redshanked Highlanders and red-coated deer were at one time the fitting denizens. I have been told that bazaars for the sale of ladies' work have actually been held in some of these 'charming watering-places'—in aid, no doubt, of the funds for the erection of some modern ecclesiastical structure, with cushioned pews and 'kist o' whistles.' Shade of Helen Macgregor, could there be a greater desecration of the home of your fathers! Perhaps I should have used the word consecration as the more fitting one. For why repine at the inevitable, or why grudge these Highland hills the city civilisation which is spreading rapidly round their base? People now will carry the comforts of the Sautmarket and *the fashions of Buchanan Street to the Hielans*, and, however *outre* it may be in an artistic point of view, it is good for the Highlands and good for city people. They get the ozone there that they lack in the city, and some small crums of the 'comforts' they carry thither are distributed amongst the native race."

Here, as it seems to us, we detect the shade of the blue spectacles of prejudice, which we never lose, till we part from this traveller at the Broomielaw. He seems to carry the comforts of the Sautmarket and the

fashions of Buchanan Street to the Highlands, and to forget the benevolent artistic part which should be played out by the educated man of the superior race, who is about to instruct his inferiors by the power of his knowledge of men and manners. If this be the inevitable, we can but regret it, and proceed. The traveller continues thus :—

"But all this while I am lingering on the way to Islay. We pass through the Kyles of Bute, looking out, as other passengers do, for the 'Maids' of the Island, but were unfortunate in not being able to recognise them. One traveller professed to take their portraits, but whether he was successful in transferring their maiden features to his sketch-book, not having made out the originals, I cannot say. East Tarbert is reached, where I disembark; and, refusing the aid of the 'coffin' omnibus which runs to West Tarbert, I walked across, passing through the little fishing village. *East Tarbert is evidently only in the embryo stages of development, because a friend who wished to purchase* a wooden pipe could find nothing more respectable than common clay—and common clay he had to be content with. Mr George Augustus Sala drew ominous conclusions of the state of American society from the difficulty he experienced in obtaining lucifer matches in the large towns; and I dare say my friend had his own ideas of a place which could offer no better smoking instrument than a vulgar cutty."

The dreadful barbarism of this benighted place does not strike us. It seems to us, on the contrary, that the writer cannot be a cosmopolitan. Professor Wilson smoked a "vulgar cutty"—Doctor Johnston a long clay, and to us it seems an excess of refinement to smoke only from aristocratic wood. The chemist at Tarbert could have furnished tolerable cigars we believe, but to some of us the cutty is a familiar comrade, and a consolation in trouble, with which we are content. But to proceed :—

"The road to West Loch Tarbert is through a narrow vale, which, *if nature had been a little more energetic when the mountains were formed on each side,* would have lengthened *out Loch Tarbert till it met Lochfyne.* This would have shortened the route to some of the Western Islands very considerably, and as the distance between the two lochs is so small, and the obvious advantage of their being connected so great, there is little wonder there has been a good deal of talk about cutting a canal between the two. We believe that a project of this kind was actually set afloat at one time, and a good deal of money subscribed to carry it out, but somehow or other it fell through. The valley does not look as if it would be an exceedingly difficult work to do, and we have no doubt that the scheme will be revived when there is more *money and more enterprise in the Western Isles.*"

Here we have two new subjects freely handled, and here again we seem to trace that haze which spoils the whole view. Geology and Engineering are brought out to show their paces under the master of these hobbies, who rides them full tilt at the natives of the Western Isles. The Hebrideans have not enough of coin and energy to dig the Argyle Canal, and so finish the work of Nature :—that lazy, sleepy, Highland "Nature," which lost the energy of a southern earthquake, and could not even finish

the convulsion which made Loch-Tarbert approach Loch-Fyne. But why do not the citizens finish this abortive effort? They have coin and energy as it appears. It is refreshing to see this energy of the superior race break out in concert where Nature herself is nodding and effete.

"We have reached the steamer Islay, however, and embark, where we find preparations for lunch rapidly progressing, to which we sit down as the vessel steams out from the jetty. We miss the fine scenery on the shores of the loch in consequence, but everything must give place to an appetite sharpened by the sea air."

How we revive as we profit by the keenness of the energetic satirist, and the air; and the appetite with which he seems to enjoy them all. After lunch, the traveller refreshed, remembers a late case of witchcraft tried at Campbeltown; but some haze hides from his mental vision numerous cases of the same kind which were reported in the *Times* as occurring in Manchester, in London, and elsewhere in the South. Witches are in fact as common at Exeter as they are in Argyle. Table-turning, spirit-rapping, mesmerism, mormonism, and such beliefs abound everywhere; but these rocky Isles—seen through the false medium of this writer—appear to be the home of superstition, where even the fires burn blue. We read on and seem to understand our author and his frame of mind.

"When we reach deck again the broad expanse of sea between the mouth of the Loch and Islay is before us, with the Paps of Jura, soft and round in the sun, hazy atmosphere rising away to the right, and the low-lying shore of Gigha ahead of us. Gigha, it will be remembered, had a noted witchcraft case a year or two ago, which was tried before the Sheriff Court at Campbelton. It appeared from the evidence of the Gighians that a belief in the demoniacal power of certain old women was then as green and flourishing in their lonely little island as it was in New England in the time of Cotton Mather. I can hardly wonder at superstitions still lingering in such a place, for it must be a very eerie thing to be an inhabitant, I should think that the sound of the waves can hardly ever be out of the ears of the islanders. As we pass at some little distance from the rocky shore, the only sign of life we see is the low drifting heavy smoke from a kelp fire. Kelp is burned in almost all these islands, and the fires are generally tended by women, who, stirring up the weed on its stone-hearth by an old reaping-hook, remind one of the witches' caldron scene in 'Macbeth.' I visited one of these kelp fires on a small island off the Islay coast. Two old women were feeding the fire as we approached, whose smoke-begrimed and weird-looking appearance gave one an idea of something very uncanny. They could speak no English, or at least pretended that they could not, but gibbered away in Gaelic most volubly as they walked round and round the fire; and the scene for all the world appeared like an incantation."

"Cattle have long horns in mist," as our homely proverb has it. A simple kelp-burner may become a Shakesperian witch, and all rocks granite after lunch.

"Passing Gigha and its witches, the steamer keeps steadily over the smooth waters for Islay, and in a short time we near the shore of the Green Isle. There is a narrow channel *between a little archipelago of granite rocks*, each rising straight out of the water, and through this we pass. The sun is sinking westward away over the blue waters, the wood-clothed heights of Islay are before us, and I can scarcely repress the feeling that we have entered upon a little bit of fairy land."

Here is knowledge superior to that of the compilers of the geological map, for they did not mark this granite archipelago, which our traveller had the sole honour of discovering after witches, and after lunch.

Our adventurer now reached the place to which he was bound, and here we leave him to tell his story once more. He paints a portrait and a landscape: he make us see a sturdy human fact in knickerbockers planted in fairyland, and we feel for the fairies, if they refuse to work and learn their lessons, or dare to play, or sing, or dance.

"We drop out of the narrow channel and round into a beautiful creek, where we observe a small boat with two oarsmen approaching to take us ashore. In a few minutes we land, and find that we are on the pleasure-grounds of the Lord of the manor. We have scarcely stepped ashore when we are met in the woods by the laird himself, whose white beard, knickerbockers, felt hat, and huge cudgel make him look at a little distance quite the patriarch or hermit of this loving spot. But as we observe how elastic is his step, and how shrewd and clear is his eye and fresh his complexion, we see at once that there is little of the patriarch or hermit about him, excepting perhaps the white beard. At last we reach the manor-house, startling a few spotted fawn that are feeding not twenty yards from the door, and which, as we enter, bound gracefully away through the woods. After city life for a long twelvemonth this exquisite solitude seems something like a dream. I have mentioned the manor-house, but that dignified title is scarcely suitable to the very modest dwelling which we are to make our home for a few days. It is rather an old-fashioned, pleasant cottage, with a large verandah running its whole length, under which elegant plants are blooming, and half covering up the small lattice windows. Nothing could be prettier in its way, and after a little experience we found nothing could be more comfortable. Snugly ensconced here with our good-natured host, free from all care, and far away from the frets of the great city, I could think of nothing almost except Tennyson's Lotus Eaters.

> 'How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
> With half-shut eyes, ever to seem
> Falling asleep in a half dream.
> . . . . . .
> To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
> And tender-curving lines of creamy spray;
> To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
> To the influence of mild-minded melancholy,
> To muse, and brood, and live again in memory
> With those old faces of our infancy
> Heaped over with a mound of grass.'

As we stroll out to get a peep at the place we are in no way disenchanted. We pass through the woods by which our rustic mansion is surrounded, and gain the top of a little hill, from which an admirable view both of sea and a small portion of the

island is obtained. A flagstaff and an old rusty cannon grace the top. Seaward we can make out the island of Rathlin, and the coast of Ireland, while nearer is the Cantyre coast; and inland we note a somewhat wild and desolate looking country, studded with black hills, and here and there large patches of scrubby wood. *The shore line, however, is beautiful, and is bounded by an old church of the Catholic times,* containing some remarkable relics of antiquity. The most notable of these are two stone crosses of the Iona character, both of which, though covered with lichens, are in a fine state of preservation, and we can still trace out some of the emblematical sculpturing upon them. The largest of the crosses stands at a few paces from the wall surrounding the sacred edifice, and upon a little platform, with stone steps leading up to the foot of the cross. Here, no doubt, the devout worshippers knelt in prayer before entering the sanctuary. The sculpturing on both crosses is of the most elaborate character, and must have been executed by *delicate hands and subtle brains.* Amongst the humble tombstones of the islanders in the churchyard are two or three of considerable age, and of the same character as some of those in Iona. One has been built into the walls of the church, and bears in bold relief the effigy of a knight, clad in coat-of-mail, with a huge sword buckled to his waist. At the feet of the knight, and round the edge of the stone, are some finely-traced chiselings, and though the forms of the letters can be traced on at least one of the tombstones, it is impossible to make out the inscription. One of the tombstones bears the effigy of a lady, but whether an ecclesiastic or the wife of a knight, I do not pretend to be able to judge. *It is certainly somewhat striking to find these three or four sculptured headstones in this place.* One naturally asks, Whose is the dust that reposes beneath them? But I am not aware that the tradition of the islanders has a single word to say about them. Our intelligent guide, though not a native, has spent the best of his days in Islay, but can tell us nothing about these ancient warriors, or what execution they did with their great two-handed swords. Doubtless they were great men in their day, though now forgotten; but though

> 'Their bones are dust,
> And their good swords rust—
> Their souls are with the saints, I trust.'"

We have followed, and we have now taken our measure of the man who went to judge us. It appears to us that a worthy citizen of Glasgow who knew about as much of architecture, geology, engineering, and art; ethnology, archaiology, botany, zoology, and the Highlands, as did his famous townsman, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, went out for a holiday, cumbered with the notion that he was going a dangerous day's journey by steam to visit savages; and that he never got the notion out of his hazy head. Always, excepting this detestable prejudice of race which keeps Celt and Saxon apart, this seems to be a kindly, cheery, hungry, hearty, thirsty man, who, like Miss Grace in the old story, "wouldna hurt a hen." He had a kind word for everybody who was not a "Redshank;" he praised his entertainer and admired his place; he had his notions of Fairyland, and they were realized. He could see beauty in nature and in ancient art; but he could not comprehend how such art could exist amongst the varied relics of simple Islanders, and as it seems he grudged the living "natives" their place above ground. So now let us take the story and read it by this acquired light.

SECOND DAY.

An old story is told of a witty man who was ruined by strong liquor. A benevolent man inquired how he had come to poverty, and his answer was, "The rock I split upon was *quarts*." The second day is headed "Islay Whisky," and the language is somewhat confused at first. The traveller is describing "all that" from the top of a little hill—the reader is asked to pardon the venial offence of describing something which he had not yet seen, and the only thing described appear to have been seen the day before. The one was a piscina and a puzzle, which is explained. The writer begins thus, and we let him tell his own story in his own way. We cannot improve it by any effort of ours:—

ISLAY WHISKY—A CROMLECH—A VITRIFIED FORT—NORWEGIAN GRAVES AND SEA CAVERNS.

"I am describing all this from the top of the little hill; but that is of little consequence to the reader, who *will probably pardon the mistake of describing* a *place I had not at that time visited*, and so I will go on to tell what I saw besides in this interesting locality. In the church, which I formerly described, is to be seen the remains of a *piscina*—a word which has no doubt come across those of my readers who have paid attention to the present ritualistic movement in the Church of England. The *piscina* is a small stone-cup, pierced at the end by a small hole, and is intended to receive the consecrated wine that remains after sacrament. The cup in this case is fixed to the wall of the church, and the small hole by which it is pierced runs off the holy element somewhere through the wall into the ground. The meaning is to keep the sacred wine from being used for any baser purpose than that for which it was consecrated by the officiating priest. The cup in this old church is frayed at the lip, but otherwise it is quite entire, and a venerable relic of the olden faith. Not far from this is a still more ancient place of sepulture, which was partially opened lately by the formation of a new road. It is a little mound of earth and stones, where, by pulling away some loose earth at the side opened by the road, we find a clay urn stuck into the ground, and on turning out a small portion of the mould with which it is filled discover fragments of bones. At another end of the mound the point of a stone coffin protrudes. We believe that the barrow has only been partially explored, but it is quite of the same character as many others which have been described in archæological works. It carries one back to a very remote period; but who were the tenants of the stone-coffins, and whose or of what race were the bones that filled the urn, anthropology and archæology can tell us almost nothing with any degree of certainty. We are conveyed from the mound to perhaps a still more interesting remain of the pre-historic age of Islay, and that is a vitrified fort, and one of the most interesting, we believe, that is to be found in Scotland. The fort, when it was a fort, for it is now only a confused heap of stones, many of which have been smelted and run together, stands on a bold point not far from the entrance to the Sound of Islay, and commands a fine view of the southern end of Jura. The rock which the fort crowns starts sheer out of the water; and if it was

used as a defence against sea assailants, it must have been a most effective one in a period long anterior to the age of gunpowder. The manner in which the hard rock has been fused by fire is perfectly marvellous, Many portions of it resemble the slag from blast furnaces. Within half a mile of this relic of the ancient inhabitants of Islay there is *a large stone fixed in a park*, a short distance from the sea, which marks the spot where the crew of a French man-of-war landed after the ineffectual attempt, in the time of the First Revolution, to invade Ireland. The neighbouring farmers, it is said, were compelled to furnish the Frenchmen with some necessaries of which they were greatly in need, and the commander, after reaching his native country in safety, did not forget the hospitality of the farmer upon whose ground he landed, but sent him a present, which is still kept as an heirloom in the family. I believe it was the only instalment which any of the farmers received in payment of the forage which the 'Mossoos' got from them. *I thought, when looking at the rude monument, that it was not impossible that at some future time it may be learnedly described as a Druidical stone!*

"It is time, however, that we should descend from the hill upon which we have been all this time standing, especially as there is an antiquarian curiosity at its base at which we must look.] This is nothing less than the grave of a Norwegian Princess and Giantess; and if her body was as long as her sepulchre, she must have been an object that could be seen at a distance. There are a number of what are called Norwegian graves in the island, and they are all of the same character. A tall flat stone is placed at the head and foot—the one at the head being somewhat longer than the other. None of them, so far as I could learn, bear any mark of the chisel. The Princess's last resting-place is a beautiful spot, quite near the shore, on a grassy slope, nearly surrounded by natural wood. The distance between the head and foot stones is exactly thirty-six paces; so that if the lady's bones fill all this place, she must have been a 'caution' to the poor astonished islanders when she landed amongst them. How or when this gigantic specimen of Scandinavian humanity reached the island tradition saveth not, so far as I could learn. The graves are evidently of an era *anterior or probably coeval with the descent of King Haco on the Clyde*, as it is not improbable that some of his wounded chieftains may have found a resting-place in the greenest island of the West. A bay on the western side of Islay still bears the name, under a Gaelic disguise, of *Haco's Bay*—but I am not prepared to stand to this etymology, for I do not know any subject on which there can be larger difference or more interminable discussion than Gaelic etymologies."

The puzzle of the piscina is easily explained—not so the customs of ancient tribes who occupied these Islands before the invention of gunpowder, and made barrows and vitrified forts and graves. We seek in vain for information under these heads, but we find an every-ready sneer at some future ignoramus who may fondly imagine that a certain grey stone is a druidical monument. Even druids were not to be credited because they were "natives." Standing like one of Ossian's ghosts in a hazy mist on a hill, wrapped in anti-Celtic prejudice, the writer describes things invisible to him and incomprehensible, till he descends to the grave of Princess Eila, to Scandinavian history, and to Gaelic etymology, all of which appear to be puzzles, are as hard to solve as the rest. And now as our judge has failed to give his readers any definite information on subjects mentioned by him, which interest us, let us strive to tell

him something of our native history. According to our traditions, and according to Scandinavian, Icelandic, and Irish written history, two races have held these Islands for a very long time. These were Celts—Irish and Scotch—and Scandinavians. The people of the Hebrides were and still are a mixed breed, and the cross appears to have been a good one. It is now acknowledged by northern antiquaries that certain Celts, probably Irish monks, discovered Iceland, and that some of these same Celtic missionaries Christianized Scotland, and sent other missionaries from Iona through Europe. One story now current amongst us (the natives who speak Gaelic), tells that Iceland was first reached by a man who let ravens fly from his ship when far out at sea. The birds by their flight showed the direction of the nearest land, and he followed till he found the new country. Sagas tell a similar story, and we believe it to be true. Soon afterwards, a certain Norwegian monarch tried to make himself supreme in Scandinavia and in the Hebrides, where many Vikings and others had taken up their abode. Rather than yield to this monarch many of these Norsemen and Hebrideans embarked their household gods, and sailed to Iceland where they settled. These free Norsemen, whose blood is in our veins, and who were at war with all the world, invaded the shores of Britain and Europe, and part of Africa, founded a realm in Normandy, from which they invaded and conquered the Anglo-Saxons and England; and they did many other notable deeds of which our fireside tales give a distorted image. They discovered America before Columbus got there; they founded a colony in Greenland; they furnished a guard for the Emperors at Constantinople; they took the Pireus from the Greeks, and carved a long runic inscription on the stone lions which once graced the Athenian port, and which now stand at Venice, where the Venetians carried them. Of similar adventures our fireside tales are full, and we believe them. While thus sailing and conquering far and wide, these Northmen, of whom many started from the Hebrides to settle Iceland, founded a system of parliamentary government, from which our present British system appears to have grown.

They took their learning from Ireland, and from the shores of Britain and elsewhere: they also took gold, and wives, and prisoners whom they made slaves. In short, the ancient Hebrideans, and Scandinavians, and Icelanders, cut a conspicuous figure in that ancient northern history which has only come to be well known in England in modern times. This history can be read by those who care to learn. We only give this meagre outline to show that we know something about our antiquities, and that we would gladly learn more from men able to teach. We know

many tales about Princess Eila and her brothers, and about men who are buried under the sculptured stones. We are told by those who are able to judge, that the natives of Iceland closely resemble the natives of Islay, and an Islayman has published a paper which was favourably received by men whose verdict was of value, to show in detail how far the ancient races who held Islay, can still be recognised in their modern descendants.*

We confess that we are somewhat proud of our Celtic and Scandinavian ancestry, so we beg to be excused for this digression, and return to our judge.

As the traveller seem to know so little of the history, or even date, of the "French invasion," we beg his pardon, while we endeavour to extend the range of his information. In the beginning of the year 1760, the people of Islay were thrown into a state of great excitement by the arrival of the French squadron, commanded by Commodore Thurot, in Aros Bay. The squadron consisted originally of five frigates, and were part of a large naval armament, fitted out with the design of invading the British shores. It is now well known that Prince Charles Stuart was to have accompanied it on an arrangement favourable to France, in the event of his recovering the throne of his ancestors. Detachments of the English fleet, however, blocked up the French ships in their harbour for months; but in spite of all obstacles, Thurot broke through at Dunkirk, and sailed for Norway, a point from which he was afterwards to move, according to instructions. He had with him upwards of 1200 land forces. Although pursued by Commodore Boyes, Thurot got safe into Gottenberg, and after staying there for a short time, he proceeded to Bergen, on which voyage he parted company with one of the vessels in a storm. Towards the end of January, 1760, he set sail for Ireland. For weeks they beat about in the North Sea, suffering much from storms, want of provisions and sickness. Another vessel now parted company and was never more heard of. With the remainder of his squadron, Thurot appeared off Islay, on February 16th, being resolved to make an attempt to obtain some provisions; but as we have in our possession an account of this matter, written by an Islay gentleman, we give it here in full:—

"Colmkill in Islay, February 19, 1760.—On Saturday the 16th instant, the wind at S. W., I observed three ships about a league from land, which by their constant veering, and haling to a wind, seemed

* See an Article on the Comparative Anthropology of Scotland, by Hector M'Lean, Esq., in the Anthropological Review for July, 1866.

to be sounding. This made me conjecture that they were ships in distress, and had lost their course. I immediately took a boat and hands in order to hail them, and know what they were. When they observed the boat, they hoisted British colours, and bore down upon us, and we soon discovered them to be ships of force. As soon as we came close to them, they struck their colours, and we were hailed from the largest ship, in the English tongue, to come on board; which we did accordingly. Upon asking, what they were, and whither bound, they told us, they were Portuguese, who had lost their course, and were homeward bound. All on deck, when we boarded them, spoke only Portuguese, except a few who had broken English. We soon however found our mistake, and that they were Frenchmen. The gentleman who spoke best English, and conversed most with us, proved to be M. Thurot. He told us that he wanted a harbour directly, because the Belleisle was disabled in her rudder. Being thus compelled, we brought them into Aros Bay, a league to the south of the entry of the Sound of Islay. That night we were kept on board the Belleisle, and entertained with great civility.

"Next morning all the officers on board met in a council of war, among whom was Thurot. I understood they were engaged in a warm debate. Being called before them, I was asked by M. Flobert, their brigadier-general, whither they could be supplied with provisions in this island. Upon my answering that the country was but poor, and could scarce supply itself, he told me, they were determined to make a landing, and take them by force; but if they were cheerfully supplied, they would pay to the last farthing for what they brought them. The debate that happened before I was called I found was owing to M. Thurot's being averse to their landing; and when he saw them resolved, he charged them, as they should be answerable, to do prejudice or damage to no person; and, for his own part, he entirely washed his hands of any such thing.

"About twelve o'clock the same day, two hundred grenadiers with their officers landed in five boats, and brought me along with them. While they were drawing up along shore, I was sent to inform the country-people around of their intentions. I went straight to John Campbell of Ardmore, whose house was just at hand, and gave him notice. As his cattle and effects were immediately in their power I advised him to go down to them, to see what quantity would satisfy them. He then went, and gathered as many oxen as they wanted, with meal, butter, cheese, &c., for which he got part payment in cash, and for the rest a bill upon the French King's cashier. The country-people, seeing this, brought also poultry, eggs, potatoes, &c., and were fully paid. Yet all the provisions they got

would scarce serve them six days, though before this supply they were almost run out.

"M. Thurot is a young man, twenty-seven years of age, as he says, but seems to be past thirty. He is of low size, well made, of lively black eyes, and a fresh complexion; and is humane, frank, and affable. M. Flobert is about sixty years of age, a tall, thin, black man, and abundantly civil. The whole officers were stately, handsome, polite men, and generally young.—ARCHIBALD MACDONALD."

The above letter, as well as the one following, appeared in the February Number of *The Scots Magazine* for 1760, and while they give us a very minute account of the French invasion, they also show that Islaymen had some knowledge of the English language, even as far back as 1760.

"EDINBURGH.—In a letter from Islay we are favoured with the following particulars relating to M. Thurot, and his behaviour while he lay there:—M. Thurot speaks the English language well; and as to his name and country, circumstances with which the public have been amused, he told a gentleman that he was born in France, but of Scots parents, his father being a north-country gentleman of the name of Monro. When he appeared on the north-east coast of Islay, two of the gentlemen of the island went out in a small boat, imagining them to be English and that they wanted pilots, as they were then on a very foul and dangerous shore. They were conducted to M. Thurot's cabin, where he, and about ten or twelve officers were sitting, were placed at the head of the table, and had wine and glasses set before them. None of the company spoke English but M. Thurot, and another gentleman who was the interpreter to the land officers. After a short conversation about a safe harbour, one of the Islay gentlemen, Mr Macniel, was desired to go ashore, and tell the country-people they had nothing to fear; for that all they wanted was some fresh provisions; for which they would pay ready money. The other Islay gentleman, Mr Macdonald, staid aboard the Belleisle while they remained on the coast of Islay, but under no sort of restraint; on the contrary, he was treated with the greatest civility. M. Thurot knew nothing of some violence that had been committed by his long boats the night they anchored at *Claigeann-charrach* bay. When he was told next morning that they had plundered two sloops that lay at anchor hard by, one of which belonged to Mr Macdonald, he paid him fifty guineas for five tons of flour that had been on board his vessel. A lieutenant of the land-forces was charged with taking one hundred guineas out of the other vessel. The officer denied it; but M. Thurot having good reason to believe the truth of the accusation, threatened that

he would hang him at the yard's arm. To intimidate him the more, he ordered him to prepare for death, and having called for the priest to confess him, the fellow fell on his knees, and confessed the theft, but owned no more than fifty-one guineas, which he said the soldiers had got among them. In fact sixty-one was all they carried away. As they could not be recovered, M. Thurot prevailed with the general of the land-forces to pay the fifty-one guineas down in gold. The last was a peevish old man, who, on many occasions, disapproved of M. Thurot's moderation in an enemy's country.

"On Sunday the 17th, a council of war of land and sea officers was held in the Belleisle's great cabin, where Mr Macdonald was present. There were thirteen of them in all, of whom eleven gave their opinion for plundering, burning, and destroying the country. M. Thurot and one other only were of different opinions, and spoke with some warmth against the majority. He told them, they might, if they pleased, go ashore; but swore, that not a man of them should ever set foot on board the Belleisle, if they were guilty of the smallest irregularity; and at length he brought from his trunk the French King's order, which expressly forbid their committing any hostilities, unless they met with opposition, in Scotland. After this a treaty was set on foot with Mr Campbell in Ardmore, whose house was just at hand, for buying some live-cattle, poultry, &c., and about 200 of the soldiers were sent ashore to carry them off. We may judge of the situation of this squadron, from the conduct of these poor creatures, who had no sooner touched dry land, than with their bayonets they fell to digging up herbs and every green thing they met with. At length they came to a field of potatoes, which they very eagerly dug, and after shaking off the earth, and wiping them a little on their waistcoats, ate them up, raw as they were, with the greatest keenness. Mr Campbell gave them 48 stots of the best he had, for which the General of the land-forces offered him but 20*s.* apiece; and gave him a bill on the French resident at the Hague to that amount. Mr Campbell was unwilling to accept of such payment. He went aboard, and complained to M. Thurot, who told him, the bill was not worth a farthing; and having upbraided the General for cheating an honest gentleman, obliged him to give fifty shillings for each of the stots, to pay down fifty guineas in part (which was all the cash the poor gentleman had), and draw a bill for the remainder on the French King's banker at Paris; which he assured Mr Campbell was good money, even though the banker should not honour it —for that the General was rich, and might easily be forced to pay it, if the other should refuse it. Every other thing they got was paid in ready money. They paid twelve shillings for potatoes, seventeen guineas for

seventeen bags of oatmeal, and for poultry at the rate of half-a-crown for a goose, eighteenpence for a duck, and twelvepence for a hen. They had been about ten weeks away from Bergen, and met with very stormy weather, in which the Belleisle had received a strain, which made her so leaky, that two pumps were constantly kept going, and sometimes all the six together. On the Monday all the guns were brought to one side to make her heel, and carpenters were at work caulking her down to the water-edge. They said that if they could find in Islay the proper materials for mending her, they would proceed directly to France by St. George's channel, without touching in Ireland. M. Thurot knew nothing of the defeat of M. Conflans till he was told by Mr Macdonald; nor could give credit to it, till the other showed him a Magazine he then had in his pocket. This happened at dinner; and when it was told to the rest of the company, they hung their heads and laid down their knives and forks. On Tuesday they weighed anchor, and before Mr Macdonald came ashore, M. Thurot made him a present of a handsome double-barrelled fuzee, valued at twelve or fifteen guineas."

On the third day after their arrival at Islay, the French squadron set sail for Ireland, and took Carrickfergus. After keeping possession of the Fort for three days, and committing many depredations, Thurot sailed for France, but was chased by Captain Elliot of the Eolus, with the Pallas and Brilliant in his company, who brought him to an engagement. After a short but fierce and bloody action, Thurot, with 296 of his men were killed, and the three French vessels were taken, and thus ended the invasion of the "Mossoos," a movement which produced so great an excitement, not only in Islay, but also throughout Britain.

And now what about the "large stone fixed in a park" to commemorate the landing of the French in Islay? We find one of the gentlemen who wrote from Islay mentioning some depredations committed by the French fleet the night they anchored at *Claigeann-charrach* bay. We invariably find in Islay that wherever a large stone, or *carra*, is erected, that that spot of ground is named after the stone. We have *Gart-a'-charra, Geal-a'-charra, Carra-ban, Achadh-nan-Carranan*, and here we have *Claigeann-charrach;* so that the stone must have stood there before it could give its name to the field; and therefore the very thing which the traveller sneeringly predicts that future generations will do, he has done already! We could easily fill a volume of old stories about our ancestors and their adventures, but we must return to our author.

After a long time spent on a cold hill it is refreshing to take a dram. We never tasted nectar, but we have no doubt that the traveller was right, when he declared that nectar was small beer to whisky. He went

to a distillery and grew eloquent. The generous fluid crept through his inwards and upwards, to his brain, and he wished that his throat were a mile long, "*and every inch a palate,*" as he ought to have added, to make his quotation right. Under the spell of this potent and beneficent spirit, he let a compliment slip unawares—he wondered that the natives were *not* a drunken race, and then he suddenly remembered that he was on his way to Laggan to exterminate them; and on he went. He says,—

"The day after our arrival we set out on a short excursion to Laggan Bay, whose shore presents some fine rock scenery. Laggan is on Loch Indal, the arm of the sea which runs up to the waist of the island, and nearly splits it in two. On our way we pass one or two distilleries where the famed Islay whiskey is made. I visited one of the largest of these on a subsequent day, and was permitted, by the kindness of the proprietor, to explore the various processes which John Barleycorn undergoes in his transformation to usquebagh. These of course are familiar to everybody, and need not be further referred to. It would be much more interesting if the reader could taste, as I did, the produce free from all adulteration, and mellow with age. *I have a strong impression that the famed nectar of the gods is "small beer" in comparison with real Islay.* It—that is the whisky—has in its old age a faint-yellowish, oily appearance, and has a peculiarly mild, milky taste. It slides over the throat without that biting taste experienced from ordinary whiskey, and *when down, gradually worms the inwards, creeping upwards to the brain* if a reasonable potation has been indulged in, till the whole inner man has a sensation of indescribable comfort and pleasure. *He must have been an Islay Highlander, accustomed to this fine old liquor, who wished his throat "was a mile long" that the pleasure of swallowing might be so much protracted.* There are seven distilleries in the island, and though the whisky is various, it all bears, in a greater or less degree, the peculiar Islay flavour. What this flavour comes from distillers cannot tell you. It may be in the air, or the peat fires by which the grain is dried; or in the water, or in all put together; but there it is and there it always is. I believe that there is not such a demand for the Islay liquid as there was at one time, especially for home consumption. The high duty makes the manufacture of cheap, raw-grained whisky much more profitable both to the distiller and the spirit merchant. The strong, fiery liquid stands admixture with water much better than the Islay, and is consequently in greater demand by retail dealers, who can serve their customers at a greater profit to themselves. Then whisky drinkers of the lower order look to strength, to something that will half choke them, and bring the water to their eyes. But he who has not tasted old Islay knows not what whisky is. I was told by one who had, it was to be presumed from the confident way in which he spoke, some personal experience, that Islay whisky is the best liquid in the world to get drunk upon. You do not rise next morning, he said, half dead with a headache, and with a burning thirst you in vain attempt to quench with soda-water, but are as spry as if you had only fuddled on spring water the evening before, and are as ready as ever for another bumper of the same delicious tipple. *Strange enough, the islanders, with such opportunities, are not by any means a drunken race.* It is not supposed that there is much, if any, illicit distillation carried on, and none for the purpose of reselling the drink. A family here and there, in out-of-the-way localities, may distil a small quantity of unused barley; but if they do the produce is consumed upon the premises, and her Majesty's revenue can only suffer in an unappreciable degree.

What a pity that the natives should continue "sad and melancholy," when they have such facilities to get "filled with indescribable comfort and pleasure!"

"*I remember that we are on our way to Laggan Bay.* We pass a parish church of the old barn pattern, and its belfry is, perhaps, the most curious and primitive in Great Britain. The bell which summons the worshippers is fixed on a wooden triangle on the top of a knoll at the back of the church, and bears a strong resemblance to a Gipsy's fire-place, with a pot depending from the centre of the cross trees. If the church is primitive, not so is the manse, which is at a little distance, and is a fine large modern structure, more like a mansion house than a country parsonage. We also pass a new school-house, which the proprietor of this portion of the island has erected at his own expense. It is a fine church-like building of whin, with the windows and doors faced with white freestone, and is surrounded by a wall, with ample space inside for play-ground. It will be opened we believe, in a short time, and will be a great boon to the inhabitants of the locality, as, from the proprietor's well-known interest in education, it will undoubtedly be conducted in the very best manner. An inscription over the doorway tells us that it is in memory of the wife of the proprietor, a lady who took great interest in the welfare of the people, and had planned the erection of the school sometime before her death. This part of the island which we are traversing is remarkably well provided with the means of education. There are good schools at Port-Ellen, and two or three miles farther on the Bowmore Road there is a fine large new school house, with schoolmaster's house attached. The education afforded at all these places is very good, and is not perhaps inferior to other places with greater pretensions. Whatever the older generation of islanders may be, their sons and daughters have ample opportunities of mastering the three r's.

"We reach Port-Ellen, a village of white two-storeyed houses, skirting the bay like a crescent. The sandy fringe of the bay is as white and fine as flour meal, and has rather a striking appearance in the sparkling sunlight. Port-Ellen has a pier, a lighthouse, a post-office, a reading-room, and an inn, where accommodation, but of what sort I do not know from personal experience, can be had for man and beast. There is an air of idleness about the place, which is only broken by the numberless groups of healthy-looking children *gabbering* Gaelic as they play before the doors. How all these children and their parents find sustenance it would be difficult to conjecture, for nothing whatever appears to be going on at the place. The few shops are dull, dingy-looking, diminutive emporiums, with bottles of confections, thread, a half-quartern loaf, and clay pipes blinking at the passengers through the small window boles. But nothing is more astonishing than the facility with which a Highlander and his family can *pick up a livelihood* with the very minimum of exertion on his part. No fishing is carried on at the port, though I am told that plenty of fish might be got if the inhabitants could be stimulated to a little energy. The only fishing community in Islay is on the extreme west coast, where white-fish are got in large quantities. A little is done in the bays in the way of lobster-fishing, which are sent to the Glasgow and London markets. Leaving Port-Ellen we drive across a good large tract of flat country, most of which is under cultivation, and we see fields of corn and green crops not inferior to *the same fruit on some of the best farms in the Lowlands.* At last we reach Laggan Bay, and take boat for a sail round a portion of the coast, which is here in singular formation. *The granite rocks* stand straight out of the water, and rise to a considerable height. They are broken up and eaten away by the sea, and numbers of them stand out a little distance from

the shore, which gives the coast a rugged and wild appearance. They are haunted by flocks of cormorants and *northern divers*, whose evolutions in the air and *swift plunge* into the water attract our attention and admiration. The rocks are frequently traversed by veins of blue whin, which cleave the granite perpendicularly. We come every now and then upon deep fissures on the shore, up which the sea washes through narrow passages with a peculiar melancholy sound. Every now and then we find a fissure incomplete—or, in other words, a cave with low, narrow entrance, opening up, probably, into a large hall. We can enter none of them, however, owing to the swell upon the water. At last we approach a wild, stormy point on the coast, where the rocks are unusually broken, and where we find the chief of these peculiar caves, the *Slaogh Mhor Doraigh*—the great unexplored cavern, with a mighty pillar of rock standing solitarily up from the sea a little distance from the entrance. Visitors to Islay should not fail to see this singular place, and if possible enter the cave, which, I am told, presents a sight never to be forgotten, and is not much inferior to the celebrated basaltic cave of Fingal, in Staffa. The swell on the sea was too high to permit us to enter, as the mouth of the cave is very narrow; but I was assured that after passing inside the roof rises to a height of thirty feet, while the cave extends to a great distance, and has never been fully explored. The roar of the waves within is perfectly deafening. The huge rocky pillar which guards the entrance looks like an uncouth monument to some hero who sleeps in the cave amid the roar of the breakers. *It would be a fitting place for the grave of Ossian, and a fitting monument for the bard who sang of the stormy wars and loves of the ancient Western chieftains.* After leaving our boat we examined the pillar and the cave entrance from above, and explored also—that is we peeped fearfully down—some of the fissures at their narrow end, and watched the waves with a sort of dizzy feeling breaking into spray at the bottom."

As the traveller is not quite sure what sort of accommodation the Port-Ellen Inn can afford we can assure him that, in the event of his not being the laird's guest the next time he visits Islay, he need not be afraid to risk his person in the Port-Ellen Inn for a night. The traveller finds "an air of idleness about the place, which is only broken by the numberless groups of healthy looking children gabbering Gaelic, as they play before the doors." As to the groups of children being "numberless," if so to the traveller it shows that his knowledge of Simple Addition is very limited indeed, for the population of Port-Ellen is only about a thousand altogether. He also finds these "children gabbering Gaelic." There is a story told of two old country women, who, while returning from church, during the French war, entered into conversation. One of them said, "I am sure our side will gain." "How do you know that?" inquired the other. "Because all the ministers are praying for our army." "But their ministers will be praying for their own army as well." "The gabbering bodies who can understand their prayers?" We pity the man who makes pretensions to a knowledge of letters, especially one who has got the length of quoting Tennyson and Augustus Sala, and yet calls a venerable and a noble language gibberish, because he does not understand it. We know a Professor of Greek in one of our Universities, who would willingly give

a year's salary to be able to "gabber" Gaelic as well as the Port-Ellen children. The Port-Ellen shops are "diminutive emporiums." They are not indeed so fashionable as he would find in Buchanan Street, or in Argyle Street; but notwithstanding, several Glasgow merchants do not consider it beneath their notice to send their travellers to solicit orders from the owners of these "dull, dingy-looking, diminutive emporiums;" and had he condescended to patronise them, we have no doubt but he would be amazed at the variety, quantity, and quality of their goods; and we are pretty sure that he would not find bricks and empty boxes parcelled up on their shelves, to help appearances and to deceive the public, as has often been found on the shelves of the flashy emporiums of many of his Glasgow neighbours! As to "the air of idleness" about Port-Ellen, necessarily this is the case; for very little work is done about the village, and the consequence is that those depending on their daily work have to travel every morning three, four, and even six miles, as the case may be, to work. If the traveller had come towards Port-Ellen about 5.30 a.m., or 6.30 p.m. he would meet with numbers of men and women going to and returning from their work; some of these old and feeble,—so much so that it would be work enough for them to travel the distance, it would account to him for the "air of idleness." Does all this confirm what he insinuatingly calls, "the very minimum of exertion" to "pick up a livlihood?" We wonder how he would like to work the work they have to do and be paid at the rate of eight or nine shillings per week. The traveller is "told that plenty of fish might be got, if the inhabitants could be stimulated to a little energy." There are fishermen in Port-Ellen who are as active and exert themselves as much as any of their class in Scotland, and yet they cannot support themselves and their families by fishing alone, for the plain reason that fish is not abundant on the coast.

Even when thus inspired by John Barleycorn, how strange it is to find that haze with which we left the Kyles of Bute still tinging everything described. The modern church is like a barn and detestable; but the old Catholic ruins, which are smaller, and of the same pattern, without the roof, are venerable.

The new schools are good, but it is implied that those in which we—of the older generation—were educated, were so bad, that we had some difficulty in mastering our three "R's." We were never taught the English verb to "gabber,"—but that is our misfortune—and we rejoice to learn it now. Port-Ellen is pretty, its people are lazy and idle. Fairy fruit is equal to Lowland fruit, and so with praise and blame, compliment and banter, we are carried to Laggan at last; and there we go to sea. "We" "split upon quartz" once more, and founder.

The rocks are "granite:"—whereas we believe that it would be difficult to find enough granite in this district to make a paving-stone. The Solan geese, whose necks though long, are not so long as the traveller wished his own to grow, are called "northern divers," and so "We" and his readers plunge and flounder amongst rocks and geese, caves, waves, and creeks, till writer and reader grow dizzy and pause for a while. He then makes ready for a fresh tilt at our race, "the natives," who have occupied these savage but green and fertile fairy lands for so many centuries, and who have become weeds at last, as it appears from the next, third, and happily the last of this series.

THIRD DAY.

A zealous sea-captain, fond of instructing those who were under his orders, once made his midshipmen keep and show up journals under various heads. One of these wrote under the head of "manners and customs of the natives," "They have no manners, and their customs are disgusting and obscene." That was making short work of foreigners, and the traveller makes short work of us.

So far we have dealt chiefly with the writer's power of judging what he saw; now we come to his facts, some of which we deny, and to inferences from which we differ. A Glasgow citizen out on a holiday might have enjoyed himself in his own way to his heart's content, and he might have floundered over all the *ologies* in turn without disturbing our equanimity; but when we come to the third division of the "Eight Days in Islay," we feel constrained to reply. The hardest blow dealt to the old lion was a kick; and this blow is a hard one to bear in silence. The "natives" described are our kith and kin, and we believe that their manners and customs, bodies and minds, will compare favourably with any like class, in any land, and this is the account given of them and of their fate:—

THE LAND QUESTION—CROFTERS AND FARMERS—CONCLUSION.

"Our next object, after having seen this rock-splintered coast, was to reach Glen Astle, where there is a fresh-water loch, in which good trout-fishing can be got. We accordingly set out on a short tramp over a hilly ridge between Laggan Bay and the glen. How pure and sweet the air was as we got up to the heights, and how light and springy one's feet upon the soft sward! *We pass the ruins of many houses, and are told that at one time—not long ago—there were a considerable number of small crofters living here, and each with his twenty acres of ground or so, upon which he and his family eked out a scanty subsistence. They and their ancestors had vege-*

tated there for generations, but now they are all gone, and their small farms are thrown into one, occupied by a man, we suppose, with modern notions and money. These small crofters, once a numerous race in Islay, are now slowly and gently, but not the less surely, *being weeded out.* The truth is, their day is past, if ever they had a day, when it could be said that the world flourished with them."

Does the traveller wonder that Islaymen are so reluctant to leave "pure and sweet air," and the "light and springy soft sward," to breathe the foul air, and tread the hard, unyielding pavements of Lowland manufacturing towns, or to endure a scorching summer sun, and biting winter frost in the Canadian bush? We believe it impossible to inhale a more invigorating and healthy atmosphere than an Islay sea-breeze, perfumed with heather, wild-myrtle, and the many other plants and herbs that yield their sweetness, and no carpet can be so soft and springy as the mossy Islay sward.

The traveller passes the ruins of many houses where small crofters once lived. Perhaps there is nothing that will awaken more melancholy reflections in a contemplative mind than a sight of such ruins, where a brave people, good and kind neighbours, lived generation after generation, reared blooming daughters and stalwart sons, fought their life-battles honestly and manfully, and from which songs of praise and prayers to their heavenly Father ascended morning and evening, but with no trace of activity or life now about them but the dumb animals that are grazing among them. We find, however, in other districts in Islay where the work of desolation has been going on for years, that even ruins have been made to disappear so completely that there is not a trace of where these humble tenements stood, only that the grass looks more sappy and greener. If it is any consolation to an Islayman to know it, he is told here that these small farmers are "slowly and *gently*, but not the less surely, being weeded out." It is amazing how language sometimes is misapplied. Here people are turned "gently" out of their holdings! The traveller is horrified at the idea of turning them out wholesale and burning down their cottages; but for our part we cannot see much difference to the ousted tenant whether the house he is not permitted to occupy is burned down, pulled down, or allowed to stand.

"It would do good to Mr Ernest Jones and other advocates of small land holdings to see the condition in which these crofters are in Islay. In the district of the island which came more immediately under my observation, there are some forty or fifty of these petty cultivators, with farms of about twenty acres, for which they pay their landlord one pound per annum, when they pay him anything, for I understand that that is about the last thing they think of. They have no leases, and do not want to have anything to do with such documents. Of course, the land they farm is not in the highest state of cultivation, and their unenclosed crops present a miserable appear-

ance. Their houses are wretched, tumble-down affairs I should think that the worst colliers' village in the neighbourhood of our large ironworks has no place of accommodation which will bear comparison in point of discomfort with these. The crofters have a hard lot to feed themselves and their families from these 20 acres of ground. They have no capital to expend except their own strength, and have nothing to put into their poor lot of ground, and hence get nothing except bare life out of it. It is possible that with a little more energy and a little more skill they might succeed better, but these they neither have nor seek to have. Such of them as I saw had a sad melancholy cast of countenance—a sort of quiet unprotesting resignation to their fate—which struck me as singular, but not perhaps to be wondered at, considering the hopeless sort of life they lead. Yet I daresay all these crofters are strongly attached to their little farm, and would not accept far better prospects and part with it. This is not surprising, considering that they have lived there all their days, and their fathers before them; and we know there is scarcely a stronger feeling in the Highland peasant's breast than his love for his farm, especially if it is his birthplace, which it usually is."

It is quite true that it would do good to Ernest Jones to see the condition these crofters are in. It would supply him with some of his best arguments for insisting on a revision of the land laws; and besides, there is an admission here which, coming from the "Glasgow Herald," is worth something to Ernest Jones, as it corroborates statements made by him in his Glasgow City Hall Lecture, namely, that violence is being used by landlords towards their tenants; for according to this report people have been turned away wholesale somewhere, and their dwellings burned down, although the writer does not tell us where.

"It is no doubt very picturesque and very poetic to many persons to read and think of Highland valleys peopled by small farmers, each living in a primitive way upon the produce which he raises; but the facts are generally far from being in harmony with the fancies of these good folks. It is mere inertness which keeps these people starving on their plot of ground. Had they energy they would seek their fortune in a wider field. The worst thing is that they do not take out of the ground what it could give at the hand of a skilful farmer, with means at his disposal. The ever-recurring difficulty with the landlord is what he is to do with these feeble tenants of his. To turn them away wholesale, and burn down their cottages, as has been done, is an act of barbarism pure and simple, which ought to meet with the reprobation of every Christian man. At the same time, it is very hard to see acres and acres of ground bringing in almost no return, when it might be well cultivated and yield a good rent. The landlord of the estate upon which we are now walking on our way to Glen Astle has adopted the persuasive manner whenever he could find opportunity. A good number of his small farmers have gone away, assisted by him and other friends, to Canada, where they are almost all doing well. Still, it is a difficult task to show the poor crofters that their real interests lie elsewhere than on their poor comfortless farms. They know nothing else than hardships, and with their brose and potatoes, and a lounging life, are apparently contented. They are a very quiet, honest class of people, simple in their habits, and, as far as morals are concerned, the best people that a landlord could wish to have upon his estate. There are also another class of cultivators of the soil here, who, though a little removed from the crofters so far as the size of their farms go, are not much better than them in position.

The traveller has alluded repeatedly in these articles to the Islayman's lack of energy. Now we could adduce many proofs of the energy and intrepidity of Islaymen in times of danger, if that were required; but we will content ourselves by giving a single one. Who were they that risked their lives when they saw a boat rapidly drifting past the Mull of Oa into the western ocean about eighteen months ago? Some of these "lounging," "inert" people, the residue of the despised and down-trodden crofters; and with all the tall talk of the traveller, we suspect that the captain of the steamer "Falcon" would have but a poor chance of his life if he had to depend on him, with half-a-dozen more of his kind, in the hour of his extremity. We are sorry to state that one of these brave men perished on the 13th of April, 1868, while swimming for the shore, after the boat in which he and others were out fishing had been capsized. He left a widow and a young family in very poor circumstances.

We cannot say that we have any particular sympathy or pity for the laird in the ever-recurring difficulty of dealing "with these feeble tenants of his," as he had been long enough in the Island to know all the outs and ins connected with the people on this estate; and if he knew them to be so incorrigible, or feeble, he ought to have looked for a more promising field for investing his capital, and allow some other one to undertake the responsibility of dealing with these ne'er-do-weels. We are told that a good number of these farmers have gone to Canada and "are almost all doing well." How does it happen that a people who have left acres on acres of good land untilled in their native island are all doing so well in Canada? There must be something grand in a Canadian climate that can make Celtic weeds grow into valuable plants!

The traveller says that it is difficult to convince them that their interests lie elsewhere. It is not so obvious to a Highlander that should he take it into his head to leave his native land, everything necessary for his comfort is awaiting him in the land of strangers; and many of those who go "elsewhere" find out to their cost that their interest does not lie in foreign parts. Many a sad proof to the contrary the Gaelic Missionaries labouring among the lapsed Highlanders of Glasgow could give. Highlanders can never sink to the same depth of poverty in their native land that they come to in Glasgow. And besides, some natives, as well as strangers, have made well of it even in Islay. It cannot be altogether an unpromising soil where a poor orphan boy can grow into a laird.

"They know nothing else than hardships, and with their brose and potatoes, and a lounging life, are apparently contented." They are not certainly rolling in luxuries, but with their porridge (not brose), and milk,

potatoes and butter, and fish occasionally, with good fresh air to whet their appetites, their condition is much more enviable than that of thousands of the traveller's fellow citizens. Let the reader compare the condition and prospects of the Islay small farmers and their children with the following account, given by the Rev. William Robertson, of the condition of the children of some of the poor people in Glasgow, and inserted in the *Glasgow Herald* of 29*th* April, 1868.—"This afternoon 321 children of the most destitute class, and of tender age, were entertained to dinner in the New Vennel School. Being in the district immediately under my ministerial care, I took the liberty of attending. The scene was one of interest—children were there in their ragged clothes, with their pale faces, many of which showed signs of inveterate scrofula, and not a few so weak as to be carried in their mothers' arms to the table. All, however, sat in the most orderly manner. A plentiful supply of roast-meat, potatoes, bread, and pudding was served to each, and after grace, in a very short time the whole was eaten up with the most pleasing satisfaction. On inquiry I found that many of them had never got such a good meal in all their life. And this I can vouch for, from my experience in the district, to be a fact. Hundreds of children there are in every poor district of our city who never know what it is to get a regular, and far less a satisfying meal. The consequence is that they grow up with weakly constitutions, and in a few years drop into an untimely grave, or if their lives are prolonged they settle down into a condition of chronic infirmity, and ultimately become a burden on the parish. Now, to try and prevent such misery being the lot of these helpless children, it is proposed to open a room where they may recieve a good and substantial dinner twice a-week. Any person may become a subscriber by paying the sum of 5/, for which ten tickets will be given, admitting an equal number of children to dinner."

"At the time that Islay passed out of the hands of the Campbells, few of these had any lease, and the rent they paid was, comparatively speaking, nominal. It is needless to say that they did little or nothing for the soil, and it is not to be wondered that they should be pulled up somewhat by the new proprietors. I was told that there were numerous instances in which farm rents were raised from 50 to 100 per cent. while the farmers, so far from suffering, are really doing a great deal better than ever they did. Some of the worst class of these tenants have been removed by gentle methods, while every effort is being made to induce the better class of them to accept leases—against which however, they have strong prejudices. They do not seem to be able to recognise the fact fully that the landlord has the legal right to turn them out whenever he chooses at the expiry of a year. They have no tradition of anything except the old system, under which the land seemed as much theirs as the laird's. I am glad to state that there has been no case of real eviction, and that the endeavours of the proprietor to promote the better cultivation of the land, to assist in reclaiming, and in enclosing, are being to some extent appreciated by many of the old tenants. Some of

the large farms bear every appearance of good and skilful management, and the crops I saw certainly bear testimony of the oft-sung fertility of green Islay."

The traveller is "told that there were numerous instances in which farm-rents were raised from 50 to 100 per cent., while the farmers, so far from suffering, are really doing a great deal better than ever they did!" Capital excuse for rack-renting. This reminds us of what is said of the donkeys, that "the heavier their burden, the better they go." "The people will not accept of leases, against which they have strong prejudices." We would like to see a list of the names of those who refused leases, and the conditions on which they were offered. "They have no tradition of anything except the old system under which the land seemed as much theirs as the laird's." We are not aware that any landlord, ancient or modern, had done more to strengthen this belief than the Kildalton laird, as he frequently declared both in public and in private, that it was not for himself that he purchased the Kildalton estate, but for the benefit of the people; and if words have any meaning, is it unreasonable that tenants should cling to this old "tradition?" But some of them have another reason for clinging to this "tradition" which, to themselves at least, appears more tangible than even the laird's declaration, and that is, that they have reclaimed the patches now under crop from the upland waste or common formerly attached to the farms of Duich and Glenegidale, which the late proprietor, about forty years ago, had portioned out in twenty acre lots to poor but honest labourers, and from which they have supported themselves and families ever since. The traveller, however, jumbles these lots with the Oa small farms, and leaves the impression on his readers that none of them pays more than twenty shillings of yearly rent for twenty acres, which, if true, would certainly prove they are unprofitable tenants indeed; and particularly so as it "is about the last thing they think of" to pay even the twenty shillings!

"I was told that the want of communication in the Island, and the consequent shutting up of the inhabitants into districts, has had a very deleterious effect. The people of Islay are not a travelling race—in fact, they seem rooted to the soil, where they vegetate all their days. Cases were mentioned to me of old men who lived for seventy and eighty years, and had never been beyond sight of the smoke of their own dwellings. The evil is that intermarriage has gone on in these secluded districts to a most dangerous extent, and a tendency to insanity has been the result. I was told of many cases of mental aberration breaking out among men and women in the prime of life within quite a narrow circuit, and I have no doubt that the painful disease is to be mainly attributed to the infrequency of the introduction of fresh blood. With new roads, with the migration of many of the old tenants, and the introduction of new men from the mainland, there can be little doubt that some amelioration has already taken place."

Cases have been mentioned to the traveller of old men who had lived for seventy and eighty years, and had never been beyond sight of the smoke of their own dwellings! Surely his informant here, whoever he be, must have been imposing on his credulity. We remember of hearing a guess in our young days which ran thus:—

"Tha cailleach 'an Cille-Chiaran 's cha 'n fhac i riamh an fhairge:
Tha cailleach eile 'n Cille-Choman 's dh'itheadh i bolla slàbhacain."

Meaning two conspicuous rocks in these respective localities. We suspect the traveller's "old men" are some kindred of these two "old women."

The traveller has been told that many cases of insanity have broken out among the people quite within a narrow circle, as the result of close intermarriages. Now there are only about twenty-five cases of insanity among the whole population of Islay, and so far as we are able to learn not one of these cases can be traced to close intermarriage. Islaymen, no doubt, like other Highlanders, act very much on the strength of their well-known proverb, "Goisteachd thar muir, 's pòsadh thar dùnain," meaning that a matter of so little consequence as sponsors, can be taken from unknown parts, while a wife or a husband should only be taken from the immediate neighbourhood where their own and their ancestors' antecedents are well known, and the habits of the people are alike. There is wisdom in this, and we have seen many marriages turning out unhappy because this maxim was not acted upon. In Islay, where one knows more or less of every family in the Island—and if he has an interest in knowing more he can find out their history for generations back—there need be no fear of marrying from a neighbouring parish, which is as frequently done as otherwise.

Considering then the elements which make up the Islay population, that about 10,000 have emigrated to Canada and elsewhere since the year 1830, leaving their quota of the insane behind, because not permitted to accompany their relatives on board ships, and that the present population is over 9,000, could the traveller find fewer cases of insanity in proportion to the population among any people?

"As I have said a good deal about what may be called the indigenous farmers and crofters of the island, and as it may be thought that my remarks bear a little hard upon them, I shall willingly wind up further reference to the subject by retailing a story which, I think, shows that they are far from being devoid of the virtues of persevering industry and frugality. My friend the laird had at one time a farm of considerable extent to let, and the foremost applicant was a man who had worked about his grounds as a common day-labourer. Naturally astonished that Duncan should be an applicant for a farm that would require at least two or three hundred pounds

of capital, the laird said—"But, Duncan, where will you get the money?" Duncan at once replied—"I will pay a year's rent in advance, Sir." The laird explained that that was not exactly the question, for he would require a deal of more money to stock the farm. Nothing daunted, Duncan said he would be able to raise the amount, he was quite sure, Knowing the fondness of the Islay man for a farm, the laird naturally suspected that Duncan, though he might have a little money, merely wished to get the land into his hands, and would trust to credit or friends—the Islay man always has an uncle or aunt who can assist him—for the future. As the farm was a valuable one, the laird was not willing to give it to a man who probably would starve it and bankrupt himself, and he therefore said—"Give me evidence that you are a man of some substance, and I will willingly let you the farm." Duncan went away, but returned in a day or two and renewed his solicitations for the farm, offering again to pay down a year's rent in advance, and assuring the laird that he had plenty of means to stock it. "Well, Duncan," was the answer, "bring me your bank-book, your deposit receipt, or any document you like which will convince me that you have the means you talk about, and the farm is yours." Next day Duncan returned, and, drawing out an old stocking-leg from his coat pocket, presented it to the laird, saying, "There." The proprietor, much astonished, turned out the contents of the stocking upon the table, and found them to consist of bank-notes, crumpled and worn with age, sovereigns, half-sovereigns, crowns, and half-crowns, amounting in all to about three hundred pounds. Duncan's bank—which represented the savings of himself and brother—was, of course, at once accepted as sufficient evidence of Duncan's substance, and his industry. He got the farm, and is, I believe, doing exceedingly well in it. It afterwards turned out that the mother of the brothers was the custodier of the old-fashioned purse, and Duncan's reluctance to show evidence of his means arose from the difficulty he had to persuade the "old woman" to let it beyond her surveillance, even for a few hours. No doubt the good lady had no faith whatever in banks, and knew nothing of the currency question."

Duncan's story is supplied here as a cordial to mollify and soothe the wounded feelings of Islaymen; as if the traveller had said, "Poor fellows, you are bad enough, but you might be worse; there is some faint hope of your improving—I discover some useful elements in your constitution, and when you get some useful hints on banking and on the currency question, which you are sure to get now, as there are men among you with 'modern ideas and money,' you may yet become useful members of society!" Verily, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

As we have already said it seems some natives have made well of it in Islay. We think we could relish to be among the laird's day-labourers, where we would have such a chance of rising to material comfort; but we would not desire to be immortalized in the pages of the *Herald*, as an illustration of the antiquated habits of the natives, as well as of the munificence of the laird.

"I have nearly exhausted all I have got to say about Islay, although I think I have only got the length of my second day in the island, and am still, as

yet, on the way to Glen Astle. If it be any satisfaction to the reader to know, I reached it in safety, where I found a conveyance, and soon arrived under the rooftree of our host. Another day I made an excursion to Bowmore and Islay House, but saw nothing worthy of particular notice. Islay House is a large mansion, part of it ancient and part modern, but the new and the old do not seem to me to hold well together. It belongs, together with the larger half of the island, to an English gentleman, named Morrison, who is seldom present on his estate, but, I believe, makes an excellent and intelligent landlord. The park round the house is large and beautiful, and very well kept."

Indeed Islaymen have not much cause to concern themselves about the traveller's safe arrival at Glen Astle; still it is condescending in him to let us know. He made an excursion to Bowmore and to Islay House, but "saw nothing worthy of particular notice!"

"There is a capital inn at Bridgend, near the mansion house, and it is here, I believe, that visitors to Islay generally stay. Good fishing may be had in the vicinity, and there is an excellent road, about eight miles in length, leading to Port-Askaig, on the east of the island, from which Jura can be reached by a ferry, and fishing in Jura is capital sport, as I was told by an enthusiastic old Izaak who had been there a day or two before and filled his basket. A considerable portion of the road from Port-Ellen to Bridgend passes through a large, flat track of country, which, with a few well-cultivated patches here and there, is dreary moss land with huge-stacks of peat standing at intervals. Upon the whole, however, Islay is a most attractive island, irrespective altogether of its far-famed whisky, and is well worth being patronised by Glasgow tourists who do not mind roughing it a little in the summer months, when conveyance to and from it is frequent and easy. We had a pleasant passage to the island, but a very rough one on our way home. We left Port-Ellen about three o'clock in the morning by the steamer Islay, on our way to Port-Askaig, from whence we were to start at eight o'clock for Loch Tarbert. The night was wild and stormy, and we had the satisfaction of being rocked in the mighty deep. An amusing scene was going on at Port-Askaig when I reached the deck, after an unsound and unsatisfactory sleep. The pier was quite choked with sheep and West Highland cattle, and the shouting and swearing in English and Gaelic to get them aboard was most bewildering. The sheep were managed with considerable ease, as all the driver had to do was to drag an old leader on board, when the rest immediately followed. But it was quite another affair with the West Highlanders. Dragging by the horns, rolling up of the tail and shoving from the hinder parts, with energetic applications of the stick, only seemed to confuse the poor brutes, who crowded into knots, and turned their heads in every direction except toward the gangway. One brawny Highlandman, named Sandy, distinguished himself by dragging some two or three by almost sheer force over the plank, and chiefly by his assistance the lot were got on board."

It is gratifying to know that the traveller had seen even one *energetic* Islayman. Highlanders will show what they can do when there is occasion for it; but they are not in the habit of bustling about, or of show-

ing their *energy* when not requiring to do so. Hence the mistake of the traveller in taking sober-minded Celts for melancholy idiots, resigned to their fate. Scores of those whom he had seen with "a sad and melancholy cast of countenance" could pull cattle by the horns as well as "Sandy," if they were called upon to do so.

"At last we got away, and, after plunging for a couple of hours or so, we reached Loch Tarbert, caught the Iona, and were landed safely at the prosaic Broomielaw."

So ends the story of this traveller. In it we are solemnly told as the climax that a whole class, or a whole race, who are moral, honest, sober, frugal, quiet, and well-behaved, given to saving money—the best kind of men that a landlord could desire for tenants, are weeds undergoing the process of tearing up by the roots—melancholy, unresisting, helpless, and resigned. We are not told that these human weeds are undergoing cultivation, but weeding—deliberate, intentional rooting out, root and branch. In order to extol the virtues, intelligence, and enterprize of the laird the traveller considers it essential to his purpose to give a distorted view of the circumstances of the natives; he exhibits them as poor and abject creatures, without any present comfort, and their future prospects extermination; and the only exception to this rule must be held up to ridicule. But instead of impressing his readers with a due sense of his host's greatness, he has made him to appear rather as an ogre in our fairy-land, taking advantage of the absence of leases to banish whole communities. It is the proud boast of many English landlords that they and their tenants-at-will have such confidence in each other that generation has succeeded generation in the same holding for centuries without written contracts of any kind. Landlord and tenant honour and trust each other as much as ever did Chief and Clan. We are told by our traveller that his host or landlord is "slowly and gently" weeding his land, that natives are the weeds, and strangers the good seed that is to renovate the exhausted race. It makes us melancholy to read word pictures, painted from nature on the spot by this holiday tourist, who settles agricultural problems in a day which have puzzled mankind for eighteen hundred years. He shows us ruins where hamlets stood, and points to hamlets condemned to ruin, with the melancholy occupants awaiting their doom. It is sad to see acres of fertile ground which might yield a good return yielding nothing either to landlord or tenant; but we are told that such is the fact. We do not ask quarter for idle laggards of any class—we admit that such men are weeds; but these are admitted to be good men and true, and they are sentenced to transporta-

tion. The only crimes laid to their charge are poverty and lack of farming skill; and if such men be weeds, where is better seed of Adam to be found? If men be rooted out, then this fertile Island will become a green sheep-walk. The American prairies are fertile, but they are waste for lack of men, and men are at a premium. We may yet live to see how South-downs will nibble thorny Celtic prairie weeds, which have taken root beyond the sea. From such weeds sprang Lord Clyde, Lord Colonsay, Vice-Chancellor Stewart, Dr Livingstone, and a host of others who have served and are serving their country. Of the same seed, transplanted, were many of the best generals who fought in the late American wars. M'Lellan has kindred in Islay. Colonel M'Vicar was an Islayman. Grant, M'Gruder, and many more, are of Highland descent. Of such weeds as these we would say in the words of the old song,—

"I 'd rather hae him for a friend than for a deadly fae."

We may be in error, but we think that one great curse of our native land is the incongruity of character, and ignorance of each other, which is so very conspicuous a feature in every part of these three papers which we have reprinted and reviewed. We, natives, are not ignorant savages, gabbering only Gaelic, melancholy, idiotic, crazy, and worn-out; nor is every stranger our deadly foe; but many of our nearest neighbours are as utterly ignorant of our nature and feelings as they are of our history and of our language, which they scorn to learn. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* In other lands shepherds walk before flocks and herds which follow them at a word or a sign, at the cost of a little salt and kindness. So are we led by those who understand us. But our leaders, according to this eight day traveller, treat us as we treat obstinate old tups, and obstreperous stots, which are only good for their money value, and yet ignorantly object to leave their hills for market. We don't want to go, we want to stay, and wish to learn how to rise. Our traveller would have us believe that our landlords don't know how to teach us, won't take the trouble to learn, and use their powers only to drive us away. He would lead us to believe that strangers who can make nothing of Redshanks drive them by fair words or fair force from their hills into ships, and send them to found new powers in the Far West. There they have elbow room—there every man is his own master, and serves himself. We think that the traveller has mistaken the facts in Islay. We think that there is room enough and to spare in our native land, more waste ground than the people can till. Men of our hardy sort may soon be needed to rough it in war, and when the pinch comes they may return as foreign foes; still gabbering Gaelic, but with a Yankee twang. They may roll back the wave which once set off from

these same isles, and waxed higher and higher, till the resistless flood overwhelmed England. *Absit omen!* but *Fenii adsunt*, and all the energy and discontent of Europe transplanted to America is there growing and biding its time. Lord help the old country and the landowners in it if all landlords take to weeding their lands to feed American fire with angry men.

And now once more we beg our adversary to pardon us if we have in ought offended through ignorance of the rules of courtesy and good breeding in dealing with his published attack on us. We earnestly desire to show that we have no ill feeling towards him, and to bear ourselves as gentlemen should, even in this war of words. We do but wish it to be clearly understood that we are not human weeds. We lay no claim to superiority; but we do claim to be equal to any of her Majesty's subjects in all the qualities that make good citizens and useful men.

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