Summers & Winters at Balmawhapple

By the North Sea
Among the Summer Isles
Alpine Resting Places
Home Again!

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Summers and Winters at Balmawhapple

BY THE LOCH-SIDE.

The Second Series of "Table-Talk"

Summers and Winters at Balmawhapple a Second Series of The Table-Talk of Shirley by John Skelton C.B. LL.D.

With Illustrations

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BOOK TWO

AMONG THE SUMMER ISLES

AMONG THE SUMMER ISLES.

THE Holdfasts used to leave us in Spring; our East winds were rather too keen for Mark, who, though not exactly an invalid, was far from robust. In the fierce struggle of the bar one or other of the nerves or cords or fibres or ligaments of the heart had gone perilously near snapping, and the tone of his system had been permanently lowered. Consequently at times the tension needed to be relaxed; and "in other kingdoms of a sweeter air" (as poor David Gray sang) relief was found. A distant cousin had left him a modest shooting-box in a famous

Western Island; and to this, when May had set in with its wintry severity, and its six weeks of east wind, the whole family retreated. But the letters which Mark wrote to his friend, the Editor of *The Tomahawk*, gave us a lively insight into the life they led on the moist seaboard of the Atlantic, and became for some seasons the standing dish of Balmawhapple's sole literary organ. I know nothing sorrier than an old newspaper; it is surely the dreariest possible commentary upon the vanity of life and the futility of popular favour. Why these frantic cheers? we ask ourselves, when we find that the orator's most stirring appeal fails to elicit even the most languid response. And then we remember blankly that we ourselves were of the audience that roared and yelled like maniacs. Some such feeling I experienced when seeking through a file of *The Tomahawk* for Mark's Letters from the West. The ink had faded; the paper was musty; the people were dead. Whenever I had secured what I wanted, I opened the window, so that the fresh air might blow the cobwebs away.

I had sometimes said to myself—Is not the man who has once taken part in the Great Game permanently disabled for playing the pastoral pipe, and joining in the Shepherd's dance? To *him*, sunset or sunrise, the bloom of heather or the song of lark or mavis, is at best an Interlude of which he will tire before "Finis" is reached. But it would seem after all that Mark had not tired.

These are some of the letters that I recovered.

I.

THE FIRST SPRING MORNING.

MANY years ago I said somewhere—it was in the *Cornhill*, I fancy, in the great days when Thackeray was editor, and used to write his contributors those queer angular upside-down little notes which one remembers so well—why don't we have an edition of his letters with his own illustrations?—there, or elsewhere, I said, a hundred years ago, that there is always one particular day in the year when the spring seems to me to awake—the first spring morning in fact, and not by the calendar. The snow has been gone for weeks, the sun has been shining briskly, the pear and the plum are white with blossom; yet the sky remains hard and stern, and the earth is black and inhospitable—as if the thought of winter still chilled her heart. But one morning we wake unwarned, and we have barely drawn aside the curtains ere we are aware that the bonds of death are loosed, that a new life has been born into the year, and that, like the eyes of a girl who has begun to love, the blue sky and the fleecy clouds have strangely softened since nightfall. Spring is abroad upon the mountains, and her maiden whisper thrills your pulse!

Ever since then—during the intervening hundred years or so—I have made a red cross in my journal on that particular day. The anniversary of the youthful year is emphatically a movable feast. It is as incalculable as the caprice of a coquette or the orbit of a political leader—a Disraeli or a

Gladstone. Sometimes it comes in March, sometimes in April, sometimes in May. Once it surprised us in February; but it was leap-year, and possibly the odd day had been overlooked. Once June was imminent; but that year there had been patches of snow in our deep glade till May, and poet and farmer alike had expostulated in vain: "O sweet new year delaying long, delaying long, delay no more." But it turned a deaf ear to our charming, and it was well on into August before the hawthorn was in blossom. The Tories, to be sure, were in power at the time, and we never can tell what the clerk of the weather will do when *that* happens.

Once more the blessed day has returned, and what can I do better this balmy morning than send a spring greeting to the Balmawhapple *Maga* and its Editor? Many happy returns of this admirable number. We have had a great deal of controversy lately on the condition of the people question, —whether life upon the whole is easier and sweeter for the great mass of our workers than it was forty years ago. We have been told all about the comparative values of bread, and butcher-meat, and rents, and taxes, and so on; but not a word has been said about our cheap literature, and about the novel conditions which have made such a venture as yours possible, and, I hope, profitable. Man does not live by bread alone; and when balancing our gains and losses we should not fail to take into account the mental feast which the poorest artisan may now enjoy for a copper or two. Honour to whom honour is due; and those who cater in an honest and friendly spirit for the entertainment of the teeming masses of our great cities are among the true benefactors of the race.

Yet it makes one sad to think to how few of them, in their vast hives of industry, beneath their sable canopies of smoke and fog, is the message of the spring-time brought. "I saw," says Heine, "the young Spring God, large as life, standing on the summit of an alp." It is not on the summit of an alp that I have met the youngster to-day, but in a deep glade, carpeted with cowslip and anemone, and vocal with woodland song. A great city lies on the other side of the

hill—a hill famous in Scottish poetry—but to our secluded glen the smoke of the factory and the forge, and the thunder of their traffic, do not penetrate. Nature is hard at work to be sure,—but she works in silence; she is making a New World, but there is no sound of hammer or of axe. Fair and shapely, and fashioned by an instinct more inevitable than fashioned the temples of Jerusalem or of Athens, this beautiful new world rises day by day before our eyes—how often unseen or unregarded!—until the forbidding blackness of the wintry earth is covered all over with summer greenery. Foolish people say that the age of miracles is past; how can that be when the unique miracle of spring is always with us? At a time when all the professions are overcrowded, I often wonder, with Mr Gladstone, why some of us do not take to market-gardening. A garden is one of the best teachers, as it is one of the greatest enjoyments, in life. For it brings us face to face with the wonderful processes of *growth*. That the earth this spring should be as able and willing as ever to produce green peas and young potatoes and French beans (not to speak of subtler and more ethereal products), often touches me, in view of our own decay, with unspeakable astonishment. It is good for us, moreover, to make our hands familiar with the soil from which we have been taken, and to which we must return. If we come to love the earth, and to feel that kind, beneficent, and fruitful processes are at work among the sods, we shall banish a great deal of the foolish sentimental sadness about mortality which the Modern Muse affects. Perhaps indeed a disorderly bit of woodland like ours is even better and more instructive than a well-ordered garden or nursery,—we watch Nature at work in her simplest moods and in her most rustic dress. Here, if anywhere, the solution of the mystery is to be reached. The miracle transacts itself, night and morning, before our eyes; and (assuming that it is capable of explanation) we have only our own obtuseness to thank if we remain as ignorant as before.

A charming little volume has been recently issued by Mr Harrison Weir, the eminent artist and naturalist, which ought

to be in the hands of every child, old and young, who wishes to keep a daily record of what is going on out of doors. It is called *Every Day in the Country;* and from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, there are regular entries of the "events" in the animal and vegetable world, as observed by the author, as well as characteristic illustrations of each. On the opposite page blank spaces are left where you record your own observation of the advent of bird and flower. Looking over the copy which has been assiduously posted up by deft little hands this year in our glen, we learn how much there is to see within a hundred yards of the dining-room windows—how many welcomes and farewells, how many comedies, how many tragedies even. The winter just gone was, as we all know, a mere pretence. We had a shower of snow once and again; but it melted before mid-day. So that we are not surprised to learn that on the First of the year a stray celandine and campion were visible; that on the Second the water-ousel (which, strange to say, Mr Ruskin has never beheld) was singing; that on the Fifth there were no less than twelve flowers on the Gloire de Dijon; that on the Ninth, daisies, violets, and primroses were showing themselves in the garden borders; and that by the Eighteenth the wood-land concert had begun in earnest. Already, this 26th of April, nearly all the firstlings of the year have faded. The snowdrop, the crocus, the wood-anemone, the sweet violet, the winter aconite, have come and gone. The wood-sorrel and the cowslip, the periwinkle and the primrose, are yet in bloom; the glen is still bright with yellow celandine and crimson campion; and in another day or two the wood-land carpet will be blue all over—blue as the heaven—with hyacinth. In our chilly climate, as a rule, few of these events "come off" before May or June; but this season we are six weeks earlier than usual. Then the birds have been busy at their nests for months. There are eight or nine eggs in the water-ousel's nest beneath the waterfall before April had well begun; and, while her mate is still sitting on her first, the male water-hen is already occupied in building a *second.* (A humorous battle between him and a water-rat has this

moment occurred, resulting in the complete discomfiture of the rat.) Last night the owl was hooting from a coign of vantage above his nest in the ivy, and, if I am not mistaken, I have heard more than once the shrill complaint, the curious *yelp, yelp*, of the young birds. (As we have had a sharp frost lately, the little unfledged creatures possibly find it chilly.) The cuckoo has not yet returned from the Riviera, and only an occasional swallow has been seen; but otherwise the woodland season is at its briskest. The wagtail, the creeper, the wren, the robin, the thrush, the missel-thrush, the blackbird, the starling, the skylark, the yellow-hammer, the tit, the fly-catcher, the chaffinch, the cushet, are in their best dresses, and hard at work from daybreak till dark. What with building of nests, and laying of eggs, and hunting of worms and grubs and larvæ, and vigilant observation of magpies and carrion crows and water-rats, and general conversation, and an occasional irrepressible outburst of joyful melody, not one of them has an idle moment. Where does this happiness come from? Who has put it into their hearts? There are no pessimistic philosophers among our birds,—merle and mavis are as happy and hopeful to-day as when they sang in Eden, while *we*, who look before and after and sigh for what is not, are disquieted in vain. "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them."

Yet after all is said, and in spite of the Fall and the east wind, this England and Scotland of ours are very fair and sweet in the spring-time; and I do not wonder that even in Italy Robert Browning remembered the Hampshire downs and the Devonshire lanes—

"Oh, to be in England,
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning unaware,

That the lowest boughs o' the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough,
In England—now!"

It is thus, and in these manifold, mysterious, beautiful ways, that the miracle of a New World repeats itself year by year. Were it not for this ever-fresh childhood of the spring, the earth, I suppose, would grow old as the rest of us do. But, like the hero of the fairy story, it bathes itself in an enchanted fountain, and so renews its youth. Here as elsewhere, each of us makes his own choice; to *you* the coming of the flowers —to *you* the coming of the birds—is the special message of the opening year. For my own part, I do not think there is anything so exquisite and incredible in all this miraculous season as the rising and unfolding of the delicate frond of the fern. There are ferns here on every hand—brought from every quarter of Europe. Other travellers bring pictures or carvings or cameos to remind them of the pleasant places they have visited; I am content with a fern root or two, which may be carried quite safely in a spare sponge-bag, and which to my mind are even more directly associative and suggestive. This delicate asplenium was gathered in the Val Anzasca in sight of Monte Rosa; that rare polypody is a native of Monte Christallo in the Dolomites; this plant of holly was found on the summit of the Simplon half buried in the snow, that in the Fuscherthal on the route across the Pfandlscharte to the mighty Pasterze Glacier; from the cool depths of the well in the convent courtyard at Padua, where Giotto's frescoes are still dimly visible, came this tuft of fragile maiden-hair — as old perhaps as the frescoes; the stately Osmunda is a relic of an unforgotten visit to Mr Froude and the Kerry coast; the oak and the beech, and the parsley and the hartstongue, and the hay-scented and the green Asplenium marinum (which first saw the light in a cave at Colonsay) are reminiscences of English lake and Western Island. One or two of them are already perfectly

developed—others have only begun to stir the soil above their heads. But in each and all an inscrutable and irresistible force is at work, a power so potent that even the hard-trodden sod is moved aside by a slender needle-like shaft which the faintest breeze will bend. A miracle, indeed! before which science is mute.

II.

THE QUEST FOR THE OSMUNDA.

I COULD not help asking myself, as I mounted the hillside this morning—Is it possible that life can be more perfect anywhere than it is among these Western Islands during the summer and autumn months? I am staying at a little inn which looks out across the stormy sound where the fugitive Bruce was driven by stress of weather into his enemy's stronghold—as we learn from that altogether delightful and authentic history, *The Lord of the Isles*. We have been recently assured by Mr Matthew Arnold that Sir Walter's poem is not poetry, and that it is only old-fashioned people without any ear for music who can admire the jingle of his rough-and-ready rhymes. Surely, this is the merest fatuity of criticism. I am certain at least that every yachtsman and fisherman will tell us that the run from Skye to Arran in the Fourth Canto is one of the breeziest bits of writing in the language; that nowhere else has the joy and gladness and sparkling merriment of "Old Ocean" been more rhythmically rendered. And I should like to know where we shall find stronger and more dramatic action than at the interview in the old castle over yonder, between the aged Abbot of Iona and the outlawed king:—

> "De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
> Hath at God's altar slain thy foe:
> O'ermastered yet by high behest,
> I bless thee, and thou shalt be blest!"

We had our trout-rods with us; but fishing was only a subordinate and incidental sport to-day; we were in quest of nobler game.

The old Ross-shire shepherd had solemnly assured us while we were smoking a pipe in the harness-room the day before (it was a wild day of wind and rain, and we had turned the harness-room into a smoking-room *pro temp.*), that the great Osmunda regalis was to be found in profusion within five miles of the inn door. There was a stream in the heart of the hills along which it grew in thickets—as high as a man's head, he said. His directions were rather indefinite, and his Gaelic abnormally vague; but we could not doubt that somewhere among the hills round about—two feet, or four feet, or six feet high—the Royal Fern was to be found. To some of us the news that this noble plant, which in a few years will be as rare as the Great Auk, if not as extinct as the Dodo, might be seen in a state of nature within easy walking distance, was great news, and caused such a thrill of excitement as the discovery of a big nugget causes to a colony of Australian or Californian diggers. In this age of grandmotherly legislation, when the Home Secretary has become a sort of head-nurse, and we are drilled without mercy or pity into virtue and happiness, I am astonished that a bill to protect wild flowers, and to punish their unscrupulous enemies, has not been thought of. There is a statute for the protection of wild birds; and, between ourselves, wild birds are by no means so innocent as wild flowers. Gulls, solan geese, herons, and various other sea and water fowl have prodigious appetites, and when they get among a shoal of young fry work wholesale havoc. Still the Act is a good one—only I should like to see it extended. The brute who shot the last Great Auk on our coast cannot have been more hopelessly wicked than the wretches who extirpated the Killarney fern. The bones of the Great Auk may still be seen in our museums (the skeleton is as costly a rarity as an Aldine or an Elzevir); but what a splendid fellow he must have been in the water—through which he could dive with the ease that a swallow wings its way through the air! It is a thousand pities that the Act for the Protection of Wild

Birds came a few years too late, and after he had been finally worried out of existence. But unless some such Act as I suggest is speedily passed, we shall be familiar with the Osmunda and its kindred only as we are familiar with the Great Auk and the Dodo. The poacher who is found on the public highway with a hare or a pheasant up his coat-sleeve is sharply punished—as he deserves to be, no doubt; but the rascal who has stolen the only root of Woodsia hyperborea in a county escapes scot-free. What is a hare or a pheasant more or less in comparison with a crested lastrea or a plant of Cystopteris montana? When we nationalise the land we shall, I suppose, have neither deer nor hare, grouse nor pheasant; and when in addition we have cut down our last wild rose and uprooted our last fern, we shall have reached a dead level of dulness that cannot in any direction, it is to be hoped, prove obnoxious to republican simplicity.

In the meantime, however, in the remoter islands the Osmunda continues to flourish; and, inspired by the shepherd's narrative, we started this morning on a voyage of discovery.

The long sea-loch or fiord is, perhaps, the most attractive and characteristic feature of our Atlantic seaboard. Brilliantly blue, it winds among purple heather or greenest bracken. This is a bracken country—from the water-edge to the hill-top we wade through a forest of fern. The turf beneath the wavy branches is short and sweet, and here the blue hare burrows and the curlew nests. The whaup, indeed, is the *genius loci*. Night by night, if we are wakeful, we hear its melancholy wail, a wail in which all the pathetic loneliness of solitary places finds voice.

"The wild buck bells from ferny brake,"

and the rabbits scuttle past our feet. Below us the water is enchantingly blue and breezy, and when we reach the summit the great Ben More range opens away to the Atlantic.

We keep to the hill-path that leads to the upper loch. It skirts the moor, crossing many a deep gorge where the burn leaps from ledge to ledge, and where, among birch and

hazel bushes, and the red berries of the mountain ash, the pensive Lady Fern spreads fan-like her drooping fronds.

> "Where the copsewood is the greenest,
> Where the fountain glistens sheenest,
> Where the morning dew lies longest,
> There the Lady Fern grows strongest."

There are oak and beech and filmy ferns besides, and wonderful patches of green and yellow and orange moss; a black-cock rushes up like a rocket; a spotted snake steals away among the stones; but we search in vain for the Osmunda. Has our shepherd, with his natural Gaelic affability, and Celtic anxiety to please, sent us on a wild-goose chase after all?

One of us knows of a perennial spring among the heather; and there, on a natural terrace that faces the cloud-capped Ben More, we lunch royally on whisky and oat-cake—a few marmalade sandwiches being provided for the weaker brethren. It is the unexpected that always happens, says Lord Beaconsfield; and it is quite true that the big moments of life are not announced beforehand, or ushered in by any preliminary flourish of trumpets. There is no overture to our opera, no prologue to our play. When least looked for, what we had vainly and eagerly pursued steals quietly in. We had been on this very spot before, more than once; we were satisfied that no fern rarer than a marsh or a mountain lastrea was to be found in the neighbourhood; and all at once, as we sauntered about with pipe and cigar—lo the Osmunda! One or two dwarfish plants were growing along the open stream; but following them into the copsewood which fringes the burn, where it dashes through a cleft in the hillside, we came upon it at last in all its glory. We had seen it at Muckross; we had seen it at Derreen; we had seen it at Oronsay; but we had never seen anything like this. As we picked our way up the slippery staircase *it fairly met above our heads.* In this inviolate solitude, where, since the creation of the world, it had probably never been disturbed, it had attained positively tree-like dimensions. It was pos-

sible now, as we gazed at the glorious sweep of its spreading branches, to understand the enthusiasm which it has roused. The poor Auk has left the world without ever an elegy; but even if the Osmunda should finally perish by the hands of miserable Cockneys, it has lived long enough for fame. It is enshrined in imperishable poetry, preserved in some of the most monumental verse that even Wordsworth has written :—

> "Flower or water-weed too fair,
> Either to be divided from the place
> On which it grew, or to be left alone
> To its own beauty. Many such there are,
> Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern,
> So stately, of the queen Osmunda named;
> Plant lovelier in its own retired abode
> On Grassmere's beach, than Naiad by the side
> Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere
> Sole sitting by the shores of old romance."

Think of that! Is not that immortality? Was finer epitaph ever composed for poet's Laura or Beatrice or Lycidas? What great general or statesman or orator would not be happy to be so commemorated?

"Ah," said one of our party, who has a fancy for being in the minority, "I detest all your popular favourites. It seems to me that you are bewitched—the victims of some malign enchantment. What a spectacle at this very moment do we present to a scandalised and astonished universe! Our high Abbot of Unreason!—and the whole community, like a pack of frantic Mænads, dancing and piping and fiddling after him to destruction! A mad world, my masters! But on this Osmunda question I go, as it happens, with the majority."

Up till this moment the morning had been breathlessly calm, and even our most inveterate angler was content to leave his rod in its cover. But now clouds have gathered, and a fresh breeze is rising. The tempting change of weather is, of course, irresistible, and we clamber up the hillside to the loch. We are just in time. Scarcely has the boat been launched before the big trout begin to bite. We drift along the northern shore within a cast of the ivied rocks, which rise

sheer from the water. Among the huge boulders which cover the bottom, and occasionally show above the surface, the sweetest and gamest of the loch trout lie. The breeze has risen to a gale, and delicate steering is required. But Angus knows his ground, and we work back and forward in first-rate style—at every second or third cast raising a good-sized trout, which, as often as not, swallows the fly (a Zulu is as deadly as any) with hungry avidity. An hour or two of such fishing in a wild Highland loch in a gale of wind (with an occasional sea-trout where the swollen stream enters the loch) is about as good a time as a modest-minded angler can desire.

Then we walk home in a beatified twilight—Angus being despatched across the hill with some of the biggest fish—for these mountain trout should be cooked and eaten without delay. The homeward talk in the twilight turns, as is meet, upon trout and flies and ferns. Is a Zulu or a worm-fly the deadliest lure? Would Mr Ruskin be good enough to supply a new classification for ferns as well as for flowers? Can anything be more absurd than the present system—which puts the beech and the oak and the common polypody together? Is the passion for ferns, like the passion for mountains, of modern growth? Was not the bracken once a sacred flower —regarded with a certain mysterious awe? Who is the old herbalist who declares that its root, boiled in oil, "makes very profitable ointments to heal wounds," and is, moreover, "good for them that have ill spleens"? How much is fancy and how much is fact in the legend that on one night only of the year was its mystic seed made visible to mortals? And stay—is not this the very night when the miraculous vision was vouchsafed?

> "But on St John's mysterious night,
> Sacred to many a wizard spell,
> The hour when, first to human sight
> Confest, the mystic fern seed fell."

III.

WITH THE SEA-SWALLOWS.

A SAD tragedy took place last night, we hear,—the mother Merganser was shot. We had seen her often upon the loch with her tiny brood behind her, oaring swiftly and deftly from side to side. No one had meddled with her on the loch; but yesterday she had made up her mind to take her little ones down the stream to the sea, and she had been discovered by some rustic sportsman who had valiantly then and there brought her maternal solicitudes to a close. Would the little waifs be able to shift for themselves? How did they feel in the great, big, unknown world, as they huddled in among the rushes without guide or guardian? Would they all die of hunger and fright, while waiting in vain for the mother who does not return? Possibly these and similar reflections did not occur to the mind of the enterprising sportsman—more's the pity.

And yet, to do him justice, the man was not much worse than his neighbours, I daresay. It is hard to justify sport, but Mr Ruskin is quite wrong in his passionate invective against sportsmen. We all know that fishing and shooting do not harden the heart or sear the conscience, and that in point of fact the most ardent sportsmen are to be found among the most tender-hearted men. To be logical and consistent, no doubt they ought to be cruel and bloodthirsty; but fortunately, as Mr Ruskin knows, human nature is superbly illogical and splendidly inconsistent. It is not merely that they do not

beat their wives or swear at their mothers-in-law; their kindliness is positive, not negative. Izaak Walton and Charles St John, for instance, have the most direct and catholic sympathy with the innocent creatures of wood, and field, and river. Yet, when their blood is up—nay, even in cold blood—they think no more of landing a trout or stalking a stag than does the merest Red Indian. I never knew a finer, gentler, or sweeter nature than St John's; and I venture to say that the books of that delightful naturalist are the soundest and healthiest reading we can give our boys. If they imbibe his spirit they will learn how to reconcile what appear at first sight to be inconsistent qualities—how it is possible, even in sport, to be high-minded and chivalrous. For sport is one thing and butchery another; and instead of shooting the poor maternal goosander, St John would have watched her perilous journey down the stream with infinite sympathy and delight, and given her a helping hand if he could. And how the deft ways and the pleasant, crafty wiles of the little goosanders would have sparkled in his pages!

There is not a breath of air in the sky, not a single mare's-tail even; not by hook or crook to-day could a trout be tempted to rise; so we put our rods aside and saunter down to the beach. It is a pleasant shore—the yellowest of yellow sand, brown tangle, and then the cool, fresh, intense blue of the sea. The oyster-catcher flits with shrill whistle round the point; the warier whaup keeps farther out. One, two, three, four herons are standing at intervals, like sentries, along the rocks, each at his favourite post. With hoarse croak, the chronic Darwinian development of some primeval influenza, and slow-flapping pinions, the unwieldy creatures rise as we approach. I do not love the heron; it seems to me that there is something cynical and sardonic in his expression—a natural ironic reserve which experience has only served to confirm. But the sandpipers, and the oyster-catchers, and even the curlews, with their ridiculously long bills (which, one would fancy, must be immensely in the way of anything like familiar intercourse or close friendship), form an altogether agreeable and delightful society.

Push the boat out, and we shall make our way to the Delectable Islands in the middle of the Sound. 'Tis a long pull, but the skiff is light as an eggshell, and the tide runs strongly with us. As we cross the bay a whaup is startled from the shore and comes just within range. A snap-shot brings him down—quite an event, for the whaup is the shyest and wariest of birds. Our Delectable Islands are merely a few jagged reefs of grey, weather-beaten rock, with patches of coarse grass, among which a populous colony of the black-headed tern have established their nurseries. The nests (if nests they can be called) are now empty, and only one or two downy little morsels are to be found, lurking among the long grass. The whole colony, young and old, are on the wing, and wheel clamorously round our heads. Between the islands the tide runs like a river—a famous fishing-ground for saithe and lythe. But the only fisher at present is a round-faced, inquisitive seal, who persistently follows the boat until we fire a cartridge over his head. Then he drops away, and we see him no more. There is a family-party of half-a-dozen oyster-catchers on the outermost reef, and as the taxidermist of our party needs a specimen for stuffing, a shot is fired. Amid deafening clamour (for the terns almost pitch themselves into our faces) one falls upon the water. But he is only winged, and when we approach to pick him up dives as a duck or a guillemot would dive, reappearing on the surface after a long interval, quite a hundred yards off. I had never heard of the oyster-catcher (who is not one of the web-footed race) diving in this masterly fashion, and it was a surprise to us all. Is it possible that extremity of peril suddenly develops a dormant talent? We fired at him again, but he dived with the shot; and a third cartridge was needed before we secured him. The oyster-catcher is a brilliant little bird—his red, white, and black telling effectively against the blue of sea or sky.

By this time the day was beginning to wane. We had a plunge into the clear sparkling water, an *al fresco* tea, and then we hoisted an artist's umbrella (for a fresh breeze had risen as the twilight fell), and drifted back leisurely to the

mainland. It was a perfect night; day still lingered upon the summit of Ben More, but the shadows had gathered round about us. There was not a sound, save the occasional wail of a curlew passing high overhead, or the twitter of a belated sandpiper.

Yet even on such a night there is not, I think, absolute silence upon the sea. For the ocean is never at rest; and the beating of its mighty heart is audible in the deadest calm. Deep calls unto deep. There is surely something strangely impressive in an everlasting ebb and flow which, like the swing of the pendulum, is adjusted with delicate nicety and absolute precision. But this chronometer that beats through the ages—was it set agoing once for all at the beginning, or is it periodically wound up? "The will of mortal men did not beget it, neither shall oblivion ever lay it to sleep." There is the fact—make of it what we like. For my own part, I do not think that Greek or Latin sage, French Renan or English Matthew Arnold, has said anything much better about the mystery than was said by the Sheik of an obscure Arab tribe thousands of years ago. Our New Testament is very beautiful; but there are glimpses of insight, felicities of expression, in the Old, which, considering the time and the people, are even more surprising—especially from a purely literary point of view. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." How did Moses rise to this height? All round about there was darkness—thick darkness—darkness that might be felt: yet on one favoured spot the light was absolute and unconditioned. May we not say that it is this intense imaginative vision that is the unique element in the early history of the chosen people?

The newspapers have arrived during our voyage, and what between Egypt itself and the more than Egyptian darkness of the peers, the prospects of the Monarchy are thought to be gloomy in the extreme. The British Constitution is on its last legs. Be it so. Whether indeed we have lost the faculty for governing ourselves and others which our fathers possessed remains to be seen. But the end must come some time. We cannot hope to escape the paralysis which has

attacked, one after the other, the ruling races of the world. Meantime, however, there are big trout in Morar, and the Atlantic ebbs and flows through the Sound as it did before the British Constitution was set up, and as it will continue to do after it is taken down and put away on the shelf where we keep our antiquities. "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" So the great Mr Burke remarked; but Mr Burke lived before the Burgh Police Bill was passed; and with the Burgh Police Bill positive history begins. Shadows indeed! when we have a telegraph wire right round the globe, and a telephone next door, and the whole tittle-tattle of the universe ready for us every morning with our muffins. There are grumblers everywhere and in every age; but even the Mummy who had helped to raise the Pyramids was forced to confess with a blush that his countrymen had no knowledge of Ponnener's lozenges or Brandreth's pills.

IV.

WHERE THE SEA-EAGLE NESTS.

THE Sorceress was at anchor in Loch Laxford. We had had a famous run. In the early morning we had steamed along the Shetland coast; in the afternoon we were off Cape Wrath; in the summer twilight—it was the 20th of June—we had quitted the open sea, and glided through a cleft in the rock into this land-locked bay. The dressing-bell was ringing, and the moon was rising over Ben Arkle, as we quitted the deck. The anchorage was good; there was not a breath of wind in the sky; and the anxious mind of our captain—as good a man and as skilful a skipper as there is in the Navy—was at rest. He could spin his pleasantest yarn and laugh his jolliest laugh without any thought of the morrow.

Laxford was flooded with the moonlight when we came outside again to smoke a final pipe. At least, a broad lane of liquid light ran from shore to shore. But the shadows lay thick upon the rocky channels, which led, on either hand, we knew not whither. We heard at times, in their dim recesses, the wail of a curlew; at times the hoarse cry of a heron; at times the splash of a seal; more than once the rapid beat of invisible wings was audible overhead,—the mire-duck or the grey lag making his way to inland marshes, where his mate waited with half-fledged gosling or tiny flapper. But for the most part, as we watched, the silence was unbroken—the perfect stillness of sea and sky, of earth and heaven, was intense, ghostly, magical,—the stillness of the sleeping Princess and

her Palace in Mr Burne-Jones's masterpiece. The bright and cozy saloon, with its books and papers, and maps, and easy-chairs, and stirring stories of Indian life by Rudyard Kipling, and charming sketches of Stuart relics [1] by William Gibb, and bottles of Apollinaris and seltzer, seemed like a different world. "Half-a-bottle of potass, and the laste little taste in the world—" were the last words I heard as I opened the port-hole of my cabin to admit the tonic saltness of the sea, and drew up the sheets.

We had completed our work. We had overhauled the whole of the Western Islands,—the islands that look out on the Atlantic. We had seen with our own eyes the hovels in which human beings contrive to live. We had seen the people themselves, and had found that in spite of poor living and peat-smoke and the company of sheep and cattle and poultry and pigs, summer and winter, day and night, all the year round, they were as fine specimens of the Celtic race as are to be met with anywhere. We had seen hundreds of herring-boats at Stornoway and Castlebay—Castlebay, the great natural harbour of the West—returning from the fishing-grounds in the early morning, their brown sails flapping idly against the mast while the long oars were busy on a sea like glass; we had seen the sea-birds drifting like snow-flakes across the great cliffs of Mingulay and Barra; we had searched the grassy table-lands of Fair Isle for the nests of the eider; we had found the eggs of the arctic tern on the shores of Loch Bay, and of the red-breasted merganser on the islands of Loch Roag; we had landed on Foula, and been driven away from their moorland breeding-places by the sharp beaks and sweeping wings of the most intrepid of birds—the hungry hawks of the sea—the greater and the lesser skua; we had seen the prehistoric Mousa, and the stones of Callernish, and the great cathedral which in remotest Thule had been raised to the memory of Magnus by the ingenious and industrious

[1] *The Relics of the Royal House of Stuart*—forty water-colour sketches by Mr William Gibb of Edinburgh—for which one of our party had written the Introduction—is probably the most splendid book of its kind ever published in this country.

Northmen; we had climbed the Cuchullins and looked into the mighty corries where the red-deer lodge; and everywhere we had had kindly greeting or eager welcome; and the Chief, by his tact, his urbanity, his ready sympathy, his utter absence of pretence, had won golden opinions from all sorts and conditions of men.

This was so far well; but it had been manifest for some days that two of our party were "taking their pleasure sadly." I would exaggerate if I said that they were unhappy; "unhappy" is too strong a word; in that delightful air, in those vast spaces of sea and sky, unhappiness could be only skin-deep; they were victims—let me rather say—of that divine discontent which leads, as we are told, to a higher felicity.—The dream of Sir George's life had been to shoot or otherwise secure a perfect specimen of the Fork-tailed Petrel; but during our cruise the fork-tailed petrel had judiciously absented himself: and while marrots and parrots and guillemots, and even geese and mergansers and skuas, had been as common as blackberries, the fork-tailed petrel was nowhere to be met with. From Cape Wrath to Laxford the summer sea had been *solid* with sea-birds; we had sailed all day through regiments of razor-bills who had hardly been induced to move aside as the steamer passed; but the fork-tailed petrel was conspicuous by his absence. Harvie Brown had found him in the ruined chapel at Rona; he had watched him in his zigzag flight, in his mimicry of bat and butterfly, of snipe and swallow; but Rona was quite out of our way, and Sir George's spirit was troubled.

"I have done my best for you, Sir George," said the Chief that night, "but the fork-tailed petrel is more obstinate than a pig, and more powerful than a minister of state. But what say you to the white-tailed eagle? It has its eyrie on a nameless rock that lies between the Long Island and Dunvegan,—a rock that has seldom or never been visited except by Harvie Brown and the lobster-fishers from Harris; and we have a spare day on our hands. If our good captain consents, shall we try our luck to-morrow?"

It was thus that we came to visit what I call for distinction

the Summer Isles; for it is only in the calmest and most cloudless day of summer that this reef in the stormy Minch can be approached with safety.

I have indicated that Sir George was not the only member of the party who was taking his pleasure sadly. We had a gay (a gay but perfectly guileless) Lothario on board, who ever since he had read of Princesses in Thule had inwardly resolved to find a bride among the farthest Hebrides. His search, like Sir George's (or Sir Galahad's) had been hitherto fruitless.—Lawrence was invariably late—late for breakfast, for lunch, for dinner, for tea, for tiffin (the number of meals that we consumed on board that vessel was simply incredible; Graham's resources were taxed to the uttermost, but Graham is an incomparable strategist, and the commissariat arrangements were admirable from first to last); and he made no secret of what he had been about. He had missed his meals; he had eaten at untimely hours; he had tampered with his stomach; because he was engaged in a Quest. He was looking for the Princess,—for the Princess who remained obstinately invisible. He talked with every pretty girl he met (unluckily he had "no Gaelic"), on the bare chance that it might be the One in question. He had the captain's gig out whenever a petticoat was in sight. The hazards he ran with a light heart and a cheery laugh might have daunted a Lorrequer or an O'Malley. A murderous red-bearded Celt, who had found him conversing with his betrothed, had publicly offered to "stap him in ta powels,"—an offer that had been hastily declined. On another occasion he had been even more unsuccessful; impressed by the graceful contours of her Shetland shawl, he had run her down in the steam-cutter, only to find that she was old as Methuselah. It was no good, in short, and Lawrence was now returning, in middle life, to his family, a disappointed and disenchanted man. Think of that, Mr Black![1]

[1] We had Dobbs with us too (the process of evolution by which the baptismal "Samuel Ebenezer" became "Dante Gabriel" may be indicated hereafter); but a Higher Power kept Dobbs mainly to his cabin. He was virtually invisible (if not inaudible) during the whole voyage. What

The dawn was lovely. The Chief and I (slightly but not inelegantly attired) took our early cocoa in the chart-house on the bridge. I had had a dip in the salt water soon after midnight (to call that modified radiance "night" is, however, an abuse of language), and we were out at sea before the others were out of bed. That six-o'clock cup of cocoa on the bridge, while the sun was rising, and the mists were lifting, and the marrots and parrots on Handa were clearing their throats (a curious guttural chuckle swept across the ledges as we passed), will not be readily forgotten. And the morning was only the prelude to an incomparable day. It is true that we went back to bed for an hour or two; and when we met at breakfast the good ship was well away from the land. But the mountains of Ross and Sutherland, the great range which stretches without a break from Laxford to Strome Ferry, still towered above us; and, as they sank, the Cuchullins rose. The angry Minch itself was as smooth as a mill-pond, and populous as a crowded city. Gay parties of marrots were busy with their morning meal; gannets fell like bullets into the water; the great cormorant and the green cormorant were constantly crossing our bows; and, while the great black-backed gull swept overhead, flocks of noisy terns and kittiwakes followed us everywhere. Once and again we sighted a black-throated diver—now that the great auk has left us for good and all, the strongest bird that swims.

If we laymen can believe what the experts tell us, the columns of a mightier temple than any built by man—what to it was the temple of the Olympian Jove?—must once have extended from the Faroe Islands to the coast of Ulster, four hundred miles as the crow flies. This majestic minster has been wrecked—by what obscure primeval Titan who can tell?—and only a few scattered and shattered pillars are now visible, though I presume if we got to the bottom of the sea

he suffered, only an impressionist poet could fitly relate. But you will understand Dobbs better when you have read his *Autumn in Arcady*. And Lawrence's *Across the Moor* will prove after all that there are still Princesses (native or imported) in Thule. Of their subsequent adventures —how each fared with the fair—they themselves shall tell us by-and-by.

we might find the bases of others. Those that remain, however—the pillars of columnar basalt at the Giant's Causeway, at Staffa, and along the coast of Skye—suffice to indicate the course it took. I have seen them all; but they are nowhere, I think, so fine as at Garbh-eilean; and Garbh-eilean is the most considerable of the Summer Isles. Though worn by ceaseless storm—beaten by the rain and lashed by the surf from the beginning of time—the gigantic columns on its northern face are wonderfully well preserved. This great mural rock is of prodigious height; we have nothing here indeed like the thirteen hundred feet of Foula; but then the Garbh-eilean precipice is sheer, and overhangs rather than otherwise, whereas there is ridge upon ridge at Foula,—a series of gigantic steps, such as we find on what was once considered the impregnable Matterhorn, leading up to the central peak.

The huge rock rose before us as we advanced until the Sorceress was well under its shadow. The sea that day was so absolutely smooth that I believe we might have taken our thousand-ton vessel close to the cliff and jumped ashore—had there been footing. None of us, indeed, had ever known the boisterous Minch in so placid a mood. Even in the height of summer the ground-swell seldom entirely subsides; the water may look like glass, but, all the same, it breaks whitely against the granite boulders, and one hears its muffled roar in the caves where the "blue rocks" build. But this day there was not a ripple; where the rock met the water a paper canoe might have been moored.

Ours was not a canoe, however. We left the ship in the captain's own launch, with eight blue-jackets at the oars. Fine fellows our blue-jackets are,—trim and clean and good-humoured, and ever ready for a lark. I do not imagine that they are very easily impressed; but this stupendous rock fairly staggered them. When we had rowed close in, and *felt* it rising sheer over us into the sky, "the boldest held his breath for a time." Fancy what the impression must be when the Atlantic rollers dash madly against its face and the stoutest bark is swept about like a cork!

As we approached the islands (there are some ten or a dozen in all, most of them, except Garbh-eilean and Eilean Mhuire, mere jagged stacks and skerries rising a few feet out of the water) the stream of birds had sensibly thickened. Even before we quitted the Sorceress it seemed to us as if the whole sea was astir with them. They crossed our bows; they swept through the rigging, sometimes dashing themselves against the ropes in their headlong flight; the rhythmic beat of wings overhead became almost monotonous. All this, however, as Mr Disraeli said of the National Debt, was a mere fleabite. It was not until a shot was fired from the boat that we began to realise how densely populated this bare rock must be. Millions of puffins (there must have been millions) swept down upon us from every ledge, from every nook and cranny. I don't wish to exaggerate, but I seek in vain for any comparison that will do justice to their amazing number. A swarm of bees? But this was *a swarm of birds miles long.* Far as we could see, the air was as thick with sea-birds as it is with snow-flakes in a winter storm.

But the crowning glory of Garbh-eilean is the white-tailed eagle. This eagle—either this identical eagle, or his father or grandfather—nobody really knows how long they live—had his eyrie here two hundred years ago; and, as far as one can judge, he has never been, and is never likely to be, disturbed. Protected by an overhanging ledge—a broken column of basalt—halfway up an inaccessible cliff, on which there is no footing for anything heavier than a bird, he is, I should fancy, tolerably safe. The pair—they had, of course, observed our approach—were away when we arrived; but they had not gone far. The precipice is five hundred feet high; five hundred feet above the precipice, a thousand feet above our heads, they circled slowly and majestically in mid-air. The eagle and the hawk are nearly allied; but the hawk's manners have not the repose which suits a royal bird. The peregrine assails the intruder on its domain with an angry scream as it leaves its nest; but the eagle, high in heaven, sweeps past in silence and makes no sign. Nor are his wings pointed like the peregrine's: square cut, they convey the im-

pression of enormous, if latent, power. Twenty years ago the sea-eagle had many eyries among the Outer Islands, but they were not so inaccessible as the eyrie on Garbh-eilean, and most of them are now deserted—more's the pity!

The puffin or sea-parrot, however, is the true lord and master of Garbh-eilean and her sister isles. All along these cliffs, three or four miles in length, they breed in incredible numbers. There are vast colonies of razor-bills and guillemots and kittiwakes; but for every razor-bill or guillemot or kittiwake there are a hundred parrots. The sea-parrot, as everybody knows, is the caricature of a bird. He is one of the creatures that burrow; and his enormous beak, I presume, has been provided to enable him to shovel out the earth from the hole where the eggs are laid. (The puffin has only one egg—as has the guillemot, but the guillemot's are streaked and spotted, whereas the puffin's are pure white—possibly because they are laid in the dark?) The great triangular beak (it is of a brilliant red, and in consequence all the more conspicuous) is thus out of all proportion to the size of the bird, and the effect is comic in the extreme. One cannot help feeling that he has been heavily handicapped in the race of life, and the gleam of suspicion in his watchful eye is due no doubt to the unpleasantness of the position in which he finds himself. Fancy having to go about the world, like the Dougal in Aytoun's unpublished ballad—

> ". . . Dougal,
> To whom the ladies were of their attentions frugal,"—

with *such* a nose! There was a book I delighted in when a boy—the immense folio of Bishop Pontoppidan, the Swedish naturalist. Pontoppidan was an enthusiast all round; but he had a special regard for the puffin. "With his claws and his beak," he tells us, "he defends himself against the raven, his enemy, whom he holds by the throat, and will carry him out to sea and drown him before he looses his hold." It appears, moreover, that "when in his nest he lies on his back," and that when one is stunned the others gather about him, "and never leave off pecking till he revives"—a mode

of restoring animation that may be recommended to the Faculty. Another legend is also current in the north. The chicks, it is said, grow so fat before they fly that the parents have to administer sorrel leaves to enable them to quit the nest. It is undoubtedly true, however, that both old and young are excessively pugnacious, as any incautious inquirer who pushes his arm into one of their burrows will find to his cost. A puffin holds on like a bull-dog, and will bite the finger to the bone.

Meantime we are still on the north side of Garbh-eilean. There is a circuitous channel between Garbh-eilean and Eilean Mhuire, by which one can eventually reach the isthmus near which the solitary shepherd has his shieling; but on a fine day a boat can venture through a vaulted passage, forty yards long, in Garbh-eilean itself, which is much more direct. This wonderful arched way twists a little (as the letter "S" twists), but from the central shaft one can see blue sea and sky at either entrance, like a "bit" by Stanfield or a brilliant vignette. The blue-jackets took us through very cleverly, and then we landed upon the shelving beach of the isthmus. This isthmus, which is sometimes flooded when the tide and the wind are high, is almost the only place where a landing is practicable. The smooth rounded stones of which it is composed form a narrow causeway which connects the two limbs of the island, Garbh-eilean and Eilean-an-Tigh. There is a wealth of vegetation on the gentle slopes of the latter (where the shepherd lives); the Chief gathered in the course of an hour a score at least of wild flowers—the red and white wild rose, ling and bell heather, butter-wort, bracken, hard fern, asphodel, eyebright, primrose, dwarf willow, leopard's bane, marsh buttercup, yellow iris, yellow and red rattle, silver weed, rag-weed, house-leek; the other is more rocky and rugged; moreover, the puffins have undermined the shallow coating of earth, and withered the grass. There is a path that leads to the summit; mounting step by step from the shore, it winds round the southern side, but thins away into a mere sheep-track before it reaches the tableland at the top. These steep grassy slopes are always trying, and after a long

spell of dry weather, are apt to grow dangerously slippery. They need a steady head—the slightest touch of giddiness is certain death. I sat down on a ledge where the parrots were in force, but they barely took the trouble to move. They wagged their heads, and smacked their bills, and gazed at me with glassy eyes. Swarms of them were sweeping round the rock within arm's length, and with a quail net I might have caught any number. There was a deep ravine at my feet into which they seemed to plunge, and which was literally alive with birds;—gulls poised on steady wing, cormorants in solemn session, flocks of brilliant oyster-catchers among the tangle, flocks of black guillemots upon the sea itself. The others had left me by this time; I was quite alone; I began to reflect on the *mauvais pas* I had to cross in returning; my eye *would* follow the razor-bills in their headlong dive into empty space; the aërial clamour, the unceasing beat and constant whirr of wings, brought on that uncomfortable sensation about the diaphragm which is, I am told, the prelude to vertigo. Marvellous and commanding as my watch-tower was, I dared not linger longer; and I was by no means sorry when I reached terra firma,—if those polished pebbles over which one scrambles and stumbles deserve the name.

We went into the shepherd's house, where two rather pretty girls, with soft eyes and low voices, who had never been outside the island, were closely scrutinised by Lawrence. They were little more than children as yet indeed; but this was quite in accordance with precedent; for everybody knows that the first thing a man does who is to marry a Princess from Thule (especially when she has "no English") is to send her to a suburban boarding-school. The rest of us meantime were looking over the shepherd's eggs, which were tastefully hung upon the bedroom wall—the white and red of the parrot and the peregrine forming an agreeable contrast to the green and brown of shag and skua. One egg which Sir George was at first inclined to attribute to the fork-tailed petrel, turned out on further inquiry to be that of the domestic fowl—which is indeed the greatest rarity in the island. Of the fork-tailed petrel himself no intelligence could be obtained.

During our rambles the morning had slipped away. It was now two o'clock. The Sorceress had been brought round, and lay at anchor in the bay. "What on earth are they about?" Sir George inquired, pointing to the bridge, where a slim blue-jacket, with a striped flag in either hand, was signalling violently. It was obvious to the meanest capacity that something was wrong. The Colonel was appealed to—our Colonel of Engineers—we always appealed to the Colonel—the Colonel would know. His glass was unslung and pointed severely at the bridge. After a long and steady gaze his face brightened. "It is a summons from Graham," he said as he replaced the glass, "an urgent summons. We are to go at once. The salmon cutlets are done to a turn." Without another word we made for the boat.

We were off the coast of Skye when we came on deck again. The morning had been lovely; the afternoon was gorgeous. We lay on the bridge in the mellow Atlantic sunshine, and read and sketched, and smoked and talked. The officers—real good fellows all of them—were at no time indisposed for a chat. I am afraid, however, that they did not care overmuch for this cruise in strange waters, and our enthusiasm, I take it, rather bored them. Lucas, the chief engineer, told us quite frankly, indeed, that the bare rock and the couple of gulls which, when visible through Scotch mist, were the most characteristic features of Scotch landscape, had become during the past two months slightly monotonous to him. The people, too—why an English pig was better housed than a Skye laird! It was in vain that we assured him that the Scots, Highlanders and Lowlanders, in spite of squalid surroundings, were a fine, poetical, imaginative race. Had he never read Ossian? Had he never heard of Plackie? Lawrence, who is a Border man, would not see the joke. He was furious. They might say what they liked against Ossian, indeed; but the ballads of the Border minstrels—indestructible as the Psalms of David—defied oblivion. And even to-day, the writers of *Burd Helen* and *Young Tamlane* had worthy representatives,—as he happened to know. *The Imp of Loch Avich*, for instance, had been published quite lately at Kirkin-

tilloch. It was by a Galloway drover. Written in the irregular ballad measure, its finely satirical reflections upon English gluttony could not fail to please. Would we like to hear a stanza or two? It was more or less of an allegory, he added, showing how the Celtic appeal to the grosser appetites of the Saxon,—

"'Noo bide a wee,' quoth the bould Baldie,
'Nor gang sae soon to the sooth countrie,
Where there's never a muircock on the hill,
Nor a salmon in the sea.

'But ye sall bide by Loch Avich's side,—
For in Avich there's mony a toothsome troot,
And bonny mire-ducks and fat roebucks,
And the whuskey—it is goot,'"—

had proved successful.

"The road was lang and the wind was strang,
And the gatherin' nicht grew grumly:
'*A muircock's wing or the woodcock's trail?*'—
Alack-a-day! but man is frail,
And the nicht was dark and drumly."

Here Lucas said that he must go and see how much coal they were burning,—a move that Lawrence justly construed into a confession of defeat on the part of the "auld enemy." In these circumstances it was resolved that the rest of the ballad might be "held as read."

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"It has been a perfect day," said the Chief, as, in the cool of the evening, we steamed up Loch Harport.

"A perfect day," said Lawrence; "but where is the Princess of Thule?"

"A perfect day," said Sir George; "but where is the Fork-tailed Petrel?"

And then—to each of them—I made bold to reply, in the awful words of Mrs Prig,—

"I don't believe there's no sich a person."

V.

ACROSS THE MOOR:

A LETTER FROM LAWRENCE.

THE failure of our friend Lawrence, when on board the Sorceress, to find "A Princess in Thule," secured for him general sympathy. The circumstances of the case were brought under the notice of Mr William Black, and an appeal was made to him on behalf of the sufferer. He responded with his usual urbanity; but he declined to accept any responsibility. It was Lawrence's own fault, he asserted; Princesses were in Thule for those who had eyes. "My dear sir," he wrote to the author of the appeal, "let me confess that the topography has puzzled me. However, who can track Ulysses from Æolia to Ogygia? — it's of little account so long as you are interested in the narrative. And I'm sorry your companion failed to find any Princesses in Thule. There are plenty; *but you've got to take the proper pair of eyes with you.*"

Mr Black's concluding remark (let me say in passing) reminds me of a characteristic anecdote of Mr Watts (our great ideal painter) which Mrs Hodgson Burnett tells. "Well, Mr Watts," a lady said to him, after examining his picture of Covent Garden Market, "this is charming; but I know the market, and I confess I never saw it look like this." "No?" Mr Watts replied. And then, looking at her thoughtfully, "*Don't you wish you could?*"

I am not myself sure that Lawrence was to blame; but I do not care to enter upon a controversy which has ceased to have any practical importance. The fact is, that a Princess *has* been found—found, too, in a Western Island; and Lawrence himself has apprised me of the fact. The record of his adventures and misadventures in pursuit of the fugitive damsel will no doubt gratify Mr Black; for the letter which I have ventured to christen "Across the Moor" is as animated as it is copious.

Lawrence, as we know, was not the only guest on board the Sorceress whose patience in pursuit of an ideal was unrewarded by success. "Sir George," it may be remembered, failed to secure a specimen of *the fork-tailed petrel*. But "Sir George" was thereafter appointed a commissioner to inquire into the manners and customs of the fur-bearing seals of Alaska (in connection with a famous arbitration), and he was no sooner in these remote seas—— But he must tell his story in his own words,—a story that to Mr Stead or Mr Lang would no doubt have suggested the inter-

vention of one of those ghostly messengers who knock chairs about in the attics, and otherwise misconduct themselves:—

"S.S. DANUBE,
"BEHRING'S SEA, OFF COPPER ISLAND, 11 *Sep.* '91.

"I came up to these seas in July—into the latitude of Kirkwall and Vaila Voe and Foula—on a Government quest, and with many an act of commission and omission to recall my pleasant experiences of last year—but none so startling in its reality as the strange, and sudden, and almost uncanny proposal of the Russian Commandant of the Behring Sea Islands—only the other day—to give me a rare bird he had shot and skinned. 'Oh, thank you,' I said, in my very best German; 'and what sort of bird is it?' I added, merely to round off the sentence. He was opening a drawer; and, handing me a bird's skin, I read on the label attached the ominously significant words, 'FORK-TAILED PETREL.' So that you will see that under a beneficent dispensation 'Sir George' has been satisfied. I must not run on, however, or I should be overwhelming you with the wonderful details of seal life to be seen when thousands upon thousands of them are ashore for three months in the year to breed."

This is Lawrence's letter:—

"And to-morrow, Lawrence, we shall cross the moor!"

But a good deal, as you will find, had happened before "to-morrow"; and it may be convenient that I should, in

the meantime, tell you about "yesterday," and possibly the day before.

I met her first at Gsteig. Gsteig is the most out-of-the-way place in the world,—one of the obscure Swiss valleys, obscure but cosy, which lie hidden away between the busy thoroughfares of tourist traffic, and through which a mule-track only winds. The cattle, when they come home with their bells in the summer evenings from the knee-deep, sweet-smelling clover meadows, occupy the ground-floor of the châlet which does duty for an inn; and there is a picturesque outer stair, by which the other inmates ascend to the living-rooms above. The wooden balcony which runs along the front of the house, though black with smoke, is curiously carved. Zimmermatter and his comely wife occupy one end of the upper storey; but three rooms—two bedrooms and a *salle-à-manger*—are reserved for the infrequent guest. They are lined with polished pine, and when the fire is lighted at sundown they smell of resin, and fir-cones, and the great woods that overhang the village. These are the woods that stand out so blackly against the pure snows of the Wildstrubel—snows which, long after night has fallen upon the valley, reflect the sunset.

Zimmermatter and I had been among them all day. We had climbed rocks, and crossed glaciers, and from the crowning peak had seen the queenly Jungfrau on one hand, and the mighty Mischabelhorn on the other, and the broad valley of the Rhone between. The light had failed us ere we reached the pastures, where the lily of paradise and the crocus bloom; but the moon was rising when we stood in front of the inn. A white figure leant lightly against the balustrade of the balcony,—a ghostly figure in the deep shadow of the overhanging roof. A gleam of warm light came through the open door of the *salon;* but it did not touch the apparition, and only emphasised the darkness. Some one was in the *salon*, for we presently heard a voice, "Come in, Patty; you will get your death of cold." And then the girl outside (for it was no ghost) responded, "O, Auntie dear, it is quite too lovely—the moonlight on the snow of the Wildstrubel is just heavenly."

"The English ladies have come," said Zimmermatter in a whisper, as we mounted the stair.

During the next week I came to know them well. We rode, and we climbed, and we picnicked, and we penetrated into every corner of that primitive pastoral valley. The maiden aunt was pleasant and well informed, and Patty was a girl in a thousand—bright, fresh, eager, outspoken; facing the world with the brave candour of a virgin soul, and a frankness that was never immodest. During these long rambles there was leisure for many friendly controversies; and Patty had one or two convictions to which she clung with invincible tenacity. One liked her all the better, to be sure, for her pretty fanaticisms, which neither raillery nor argument could shake. She was Scotch by extraction, and nothing could persuade her that the Scotch valleys and mountains were inferior to the Swiss. This was a standing dish with us; the English aunt rather sided with me, but Patty was quite able to hold her own against us both. Where in Scotland, I would say, will you find a vast field of snow like that you cross to the Cima de Jazi? or such a mighty multitude of jagged peaks as you see from the Bella Tolla? or such a valley as the Zinal? or such a peak as the Weisshorn? or such a mountain wall as the Monte Rosa range from Macugnaga? But it was no good; the damsel was not to be moved; a sunset among the Hebrides was finer than the after-glow on Mont Blanc, and the Marjelin See a duck-dub when compared with the Atlantic, or even with Loch Maree. A Scotch hillside with the heather in bloom, and a pack of grouse on the wing, and a broad landlocked bay in the offing, with white sails skimming across the blue water where the Solans dive, was out of sight the most perfect picture which Nature had hung in her gallery.

"When I go back to Scotland," I said in effect at last, "if you will only undertake to be my guide, I am ready to be converted."

But this was flippancy, she answered, with grave reproof in her brown eyes, mere flippancy. It was only honest conviction that she valued.

We had parted somewhat abruptly; they were called away

suddenly when I had gone for a couple of days to Thun to reconstruct my knickerbockers; and, though on my return I forthwith followed them to the inn at Diablerets, where they were to rest for the night, and thereafter to Aigle, Lausanne, and Neuchatel, I was always, as it chanced, a day too late. I finally lost them among the Jura Mountains; in the inn album at Pontarlier the entry ran, "The Misses Maxtone *en route* for ——, Scotland." Where I have drawn a dash a drop of ink had fallen, rendering the word underneath illegible. The entry was in Patty's hand. Had she left the address for my benefit, confident that I would follow? and had some awkward donkey, some miserable miscreant of a bagman, divided us for ever? Was it the malice of Fate, against which, like Evangeline, we struggle in vain? or accidental mischance, the misadventure of a mere blundering mortal?

It was the memory of Patty—a memory which had not a whit faded, but was, in fact, more vivid than ever—which a year afterwards induced me to accept Dick Bramwell's invitation to spend a fortnight with him on his moor. Dick, who is a "sentimental enthusiast" about our poor relations, who wear feathers instead of seal-skins, and use wings as well as legs, had rented an island off the coast of Sutherland, where there were grouse, and snipe, and sea-trout, and an old-fashioned country house, and an old-fashioned garden bright with hardy flowers, and whatever else the heart of sportsman, and naturalist, and artist could desire. "And a lot of pretty girls!" Dick added in a postscript. Was it possible that Patty might be among them? I asked myself with a sigh as I accepted the invitation.

I had now been with him for a week. The place altogether was delightful. It stands between two seas, on the low, narrow isthmus which separates an inland mere from the Atlantic.

> "On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
> Lay a great water, and the moon was full."

That was the nightly picture on which I looked, while through the open windows the plaint of the whaup and the hoarse cry of the heron mingled with my dreams. And all

day long the great black cormorants passed over the roof, crossing from one sea to the other. And then there were nice girls, as Dick had promised; but—and this was the one bitter drop in my cup—no Patty! We shot snipe, and we caught sea-trout, and we ferreted rabbits, and we photographed the natives, and we sat in our boat in the bay and read Longfellow and Dante Rossetti to Maud and Clara; but Patty, alas! remained obstinately invisible.

It was then that Dick had proposed, as we have seen, to take me "across the moor," to visit a famous "stack" at the other end of the island. We would be away the whole day; it was possible indeed that we might have to seek shelter for the night in one of the fishers' cottages on the Mishnish shore, or at the shooting-lodge—a mere hut—which was presently tenanted, however—the Twelfth had not yet come—by the under-keeper only.

The morning was splendid. The faint flush of dawn had barely died away when we were in the thick of a Highland breakfast. The creamy trout, and the devilled kidneys, and the clotted cream, and the honey, and the oat-cakes, and the mushrooms—are they not written in the chronicles of the immortal Christopher? The "gluttony" of those ambrosial nights makes the cockney moralist shudder; but, after all, it is a gluttony enriched by wisdom and seasoned with wit. "And indeed," continued Dick, in answer to my implied apology for an appetite that in the shattered state of my heart might almost be called "brutal," "may it not be said quite truly that it is gluttony, in the higher sense of the word of course (that is to say, a sound and wholesome and judicious relish for good cooking), which distinguishes man from the lower animals? The most advanced monkey cannot boil a potato."

Dick paused for a moment, as we crossed through the library, to take down from its shelf a quaintly bound and quaintly lettered duodecimo which he gave to the ghillie, who was waiting for us in the court. "Put it in the knapsack," he said, "and I will read you the *Ladbroker-Quida* at lunch."

The world outside was newly awake, the dew of sleep still

upon its eyelids. The rabbits popped in and out of their burrows—populous, they must be, as an Eastern city—as we crossed the links,—the pale green of the bent contrasting finely with the intense blue of the Firth beyond. It is quite still here among the sandhills, but a breeze of morning moves upon the sea. *That* is why it is so blue, and why the white sails of the yacht that has been simply drifting to and fro like a lifeless log begin to fill. Ere we leave the links a brilliant sheldrake passes over our heads within easy shot. Like the rabbits, it has its burrow in the sand, where the mother duck and the ducklings are still safely housed.

We had reached by this time a mass of granite boulders heaped upon the shore. Here the long line of cliff begins—the line of cliff which, with hardly a break, runs round the coast to Mishnish.

"This is one of the flighting-places of the blue rocks," said Dick. "The face of the cliffs for twenty miles is seamed with caves, where (upon the eaves) they breed in hundreds. There is little food for them, however, on the adjacent moor when the summer berries are over, and so they have to visit the turnip-fields and the stubbles at our end of the island. They fly with prodigious speed; but even the blue rocks can make little way against a gale, and thus they are forced to follow what is called the line of least resistance. With the wind in any quarter except the north-west, for instance, you might sit here all day without seeing a bird; but the moment it gets into the right 'airt,' a stream of pigeons returning home will pass you for hours. The cliffs afford them the cover which they need, and this is their shortest route to shelter, every coign of vantage being skilfully utilised. I often sit here the whole afternoon with my gun pointed over that slab of sandstone; for I know that flock after flock, and the single birds as well, will pass within a yard of my mark. The most accomplished sergeant could not have secured by years of drill more absolute uniformity. Is it not astonishing? How has it been achieved? Is it hereditary instinct or inveterate custom? The young bird just out of the nest has learnt the art, no less than the veteran campaigner. And

this fundamental law of flight—to follow the line of least resistance—is everywhere, and under all conditions, obeyed. Certum est, quia impossibile est!"

Dick's rhapsody was interrupted by the clamour of gulls. We had been pushing briskly along while he discoursed; and now we found ourselves, without warning, in the midst of a colony of herring-gulls and terns. The little downy morsels were just beginning to run; it would be weeks yet before they were ready to fly. So the parents overhead shrieked themselves hoarse. They were warning their chicks to lie close; and the warning was apprehended with astonishing cleverness. So long as the young ones did not stir, it was almost impossible to distinguish them from the grey stone or grass or lichen among which they lurked. Only their bright brown eyes, fixed solemnly on us as we searched, were apt to betray them. "What a din they are making up there!" I said; "I wonder they don't attack us in force. We should certainly be worsted."

"Wait till you see the skuas!" said Dick. "But we must hurry on—the steep slopes of the Tor, with the sun blazing down on us, will try our metal."

The Tor is one of the noblest cliffs in these parts. It has a sheer rise (ought one to say "fall"?) of six hundred feet. This is the sea-face of course; but even on the land-side the ascent is sufficiently trying. There is a faint track made by the sheep; but on either hand the dry grass is like glass, and when you near the summit you look down into an abyss. This tremendous rent cuts the great headland in two, and is the home of innumerable sea-birds, who move along the giddy ledges with enviable ease. Farther on you can seat yourself securely on a flat slab of granite, and watch the cormorantry below—the "cormorantry" being the nursery of the great black cormorants. The parent birds are constantly on the wing, fetching supplies for their voracious offspring; for the "scart" from his birth is a glutton. Between scart and seal and steam-trawler it is wonderful indeed that any fish escape. But the supply of "cuddies" at least, here as elsewhere, appears to be inexhaustible—though the sea-trout, no doubt,

are thinned out or scared away by the ravages of the seals. (Herds of the common seal we can see are basking in the morning sunshine upon the tangle.) I never could quite understand, by the way, how it is that the sea-trout, one of the liveliest and most active of fish, is so easily captured by the seal in the open bays. The seal certainly does not swim so swiftly, but possibly its presence has the paralysing effect of the rattlesnake on the bird.

There are fresh-water lochs on the summit of the Tor, and their margins are brilliant with purple and scarlet berries—the black bear-berry and the red. Snipe are constantly rising from the marshy flats before Oscar's nose (the dog is clearly at a loss to understand why we do not fire), and a family of flappers are hiding among the reeds. The view is vast and varied,—on one hand, across the narrow sound, the great mountains of the mainland; on the other, the shadowy outlines of the Hebrides, and the illimitable Atlantic. We see, miles away, beyond the long line of cliff, the fishing village for which we are bound. It is clearly a stiff tramp.

Among the "Loomi-shuns" (as the Tor lochans are named) the red-throated diver is said to build; but we looked in vain for any sign of a nest. Yet the birds must be about somewhere; for along with the mocking "honk, honk" of the wild goose (high up in the ether, so high that the birds themselves are invisible) we are constantly startled by the harsh and insistent challenge of the "loom."

We had only descended a few yards from the lochans when we entered the territory of the skua. There was a rush of wings about our heads; Oscar, after a gasp of incredulity, came voluntarily to heel; these swift assailants swooping down upon him without rhyme or reason, and contrary indeed to the whole course of nature as previously comprehended by him, were obviously "uncanny." Even upon the land the hawk of the sea is an enemy that one cannot fail to respect; and during the breeding season his audacity is unbounded. But they occupy only a corner of the hill, and by-and-by Oscar is himself again, though a couple of scouts from the main body follow us for a mile.

"Some of them are black as night," Dick remarked, "while some of them—nobody can tell why—are of a delicate cream-colour. It is still a puzzle for the naturalist. The great skua, which is only to be seen in Foula, is a grand bird; ours are the smaller variety, and though even more supple, are not half as powerful. Yet a blow from that hawk-like beak would be nasty."

So we trudged on across the moor, which was mostly silent in the mid-day heat, except when an old cock-grouse occasionally sounded a shrill alarm.

"That is the rock where the Manx shearwater breeds," Dick said, pointing to what appeared an inaccessible precipice,—"our rarest and most distinguished visitor. They are all at sea now; they seldom return till it is dark; but that is the cliff they love best when on land. We are going to lunch at the foot."

It was a delightful surprise. The fresh green turf, smooth as velvet, was dotted over with mushrooms. A stream from the moor leapt over the cliff—a terrific leap, three hundred feet at the very least; and *within* was a hollow recess, a shadowy sanctuary, where a mermaiden (and there are mermaidens about, they say) might have lodged; for it was cool as the crystal depths of the sea. The mist of the cascade hung over it like a veil, and the air was sweet and moist.

But this was not all. The rocky walls were lined with moss, and the Asplenium marinum, which had taken root in every crevice, was wonderfully luxuriant. There are friends of mine, excellent in their way, who rave about the Osmunda. For my own part I prefer the sea-spleenwort as it grows on a Western Island. I stuck a tuft in my buttonhole, and thought of One who had assured me with fine scorn not many months before (but how long it seemed!) that this shy and modest fern (which yet loves the stormy Atlantic) was more to be commended, was better and worthier of our regard, than tiger lily or Alpine rose. I had been mildly sceptical at the moment; *now* I knew she was right.

A fire of drift-wood was quickly lighted by Malcolm; and the mushrooms, creamy without, pink as salmon within, were

fizzing among the embers. If I say, How good they were! I shall be told, probably, that I had no right to the unearned increment; so for this and other reasons I forbear. And might not any allusion (however indirect) to Glenlivet or Glendronoch be just as imprudent?

But I do not know why I should not freely admit that I was won by the *Ladbroker-Quida*. There are moments when, in spite of the sweetness and light of democratic surroundings, one returns with a fierce relish to the ancestral barbarism; and this was one of them. I had heard nothing of Patty; and there was no reason, so far as I could see, why I should continue to cultivate the finer and more ethereal emotions.

"It is the death-song," said Dick, "of one of the Rovers, who stole our cattle and murdered our men, and it should be read within sound of the surf—on the shore where they moored their galleys."

And then Dick, "mouthing out his hollow *o*'s and *a*'s," began to declaim the English translation, which was made, I found, in 1782, by the Rev. James Johnstone, of Orkney, who was then Chaplain to the British Embassy at Copenhagen. "You must join in the chorus," said Dick—

"Hiuggom ver med hiaurir!"

which translated means merely, "We hewed with our swords!" —surely a characteristic refrain. And remember that it was Regnier, King of Denmark, who, made prisoner by Ella, a Northumbrian noble, and condemned to die by the bite of vipers, sang the "Death-song of Lodbroc":—

"High I bore my lance, and wide I carried my ensanguined blade, before I numbered twenty years. Eight earls graced my triumph at the Dwina's mouth—there we the falcon entertained with plenteous meals. The crimson sweat of death poured on the sullen sea. Gore distained the deep. The raven waded through the blood of the slain.

"*Chorus.*—We hewed with our swords!"

And so on through a hundred battle-fields by sea and land. Then it ends:—

"Full fifty times my lance, dire devastation's harbinger,

announced the distant enterprise. Methinks no King has truer cause to glory. It was the pastime of my boyish days to tinge my sword with blood. The immortals will permit my presence in their company. No sigh shall disgrace my going. See the celestial Virgins sent from the Hall where Odin's martial train resides invite me home. There, happy on my high raised throne, I'll quaff the barley's mellowed juices. The moments of my life are fled. The smiles of death compose my placid visage.

"*Chorus.*—Now let us cease our song."

This sincere and unsophisticated life, I said to myself, was clearly what I needed. It would brace like a tonic. The morbid subtleties of unrequited affection and pessimistic philosophy and poetry would no longer perplex one. Why not have a relapse? Why not revert to primitive methods? Why not become a Viking?

Meantime Malcolm had disappeared.

"What has come of the lad?" Dick said, as we went out into the open. "He climbs like a cat, and I know there is a gled's nest somewhere along that ledge."

We looked up; though the great black-backed gulls were sailing placidly along the face of the cliff, an angry peregrine, as it mounted aloft, screamed shrilly. Malcolm was not to be seen, and Dick's whistle brought no reply. But by-and-by he appeared bareheaded high overhead, creeping along a slippery shelf, where a whitret, as it seemed to us, watching him from below, could barely have found footing. "He has got the young gledes in his cap," Dick explained, "which he has swung somehow round his neck, and in his stocking-soles there is no chance of a slip—unless, indeed, the old bird, who is growing vicious, strikes her claws into his face. There now, he has crossed the *mauvais pas*, and the rest is plain sailing."

The half-fledged little creatures, who with hereditary pluck snapped their bills fiercely in our faces, were placed in the knapsack; and after Malcolm had been soundly rated for his rashness, we started at a run.

But it quickly became apparent that we had loitered too long by the way. The afternoon was closing in ere we reached

the Mishnish village, and the great rock for which we were bound—the Devil's Needle, they call it—was still miles away. "We must make a night of it at the hut," said Dick. "I hope there are blankets enough to keep us snug. Duncan must be at home," he added, after a pause; "that's the smoke of his peat-fire curling up the hill—but what a blaze! Can the fellow have company?—company it is, Lawrence—five o'clock tea, and a petticoat, by the powers!"

And indeed, as we rounded the hillside, we saw that some one was seated on the bench in front of the hut. The costume was unfamiliar — deer-stalker's hat with black-cock feather, rough blue serge jacket such as sailors wear, skirt to match, a stout pair of boots with serviceable tackets; but the delicate life of the complexion, the soft maze of wavy hair which the breeze had tangled, the easy poise of the head, the tender grace of the slight girlish figure!—surely I could not be wrong, surely I had found her at last. And indeed it was Patty herself—Patty, browned with the sun and rain and wind of the Western Sea, but the identical adorable Patty of whom I had been dreaming for months.

They had come across the Sound from her brother's shooting, and their boat was waiting for them at the pier.

"And you still dote on the Weisshorn, and the Jungfrau, and the Dom?" she inquired rather mischievously, as later on we sauntered down to the boat.

But I could assure her quite honestly that *since we parted* my passion had cooled.

"And what of poor old Scotland?" she continued, with an air of grave concern that, perhaps, was not wholly assumed.

I did not at the moment frame the answer into articulate words; but I think she read it in my eyes: "Scotland—with Patty—is Paradise."

VI.

AUTUMN IN ARCADY:

THE IMPRESSIONS OF AN IMPRESSIONIST.

IT was a surprise to Balmawhapple when Dobbs became famous. We had not thought much of him as a boy; he had been steadily and persistently flogged for many years without much apparent result; when he left us for the metropolis—shaking the Balmawhapple dust fastidiously off his duck gaiters—we imagined that he would be quickly sucked into the whirlpool, and lost to sight. Lost to sight, and not even to memory dear. But we were wrong: what we took for a crack in the brain was only, it appeared, a streak of genius; when we ridiculed "Miss Dobby," as we called him at the grammar-school, we had mistaken delicacy of imagination for constitutional flabbiness. The *St Giles' Gazette*, which declared on its honour that there were only three men in the country who could have written *Autumn in Arcady*, first opened our eyes; and, had he lived, the freedom of his native burgh would no doubt have been unanimously con-

ferred upon Dobbs. But the pale Impressionist is first cousin to *pallida Mors*, and Dobbs, with most of the school to which he belonged, has gone over to a majority which is increasing with alarming rapidity,—the catastrophe which Beddoes anticipated appearing indeed to be imminent:—

> "In the old time death was a feverish sleep
> In which men walked. The other world was cold
> And thinly peopled, so life's emigrants
> Came back to mingle with the crowds of earth;
> But now great cities are transplanted thither,—
> Memphis, and Babylon, and either Thebes,
> And Priam's towery town with its one beach.
> The dead are most and merriest; so to be sure
> There will be no more haunting till their towns
> Are full to the garret; then they'll shut their gates
> To keep the living out."

Although a Scot by birth, and an Impressionist by adoption, Dobbs has been known to laugh; and I have sometimes fancied that he was not so demurely innocent as in *Autumn in Arcady* he affects to be.

I.

I NEVER could tell why she threw me over. I don't know yet. The Chief said it was because I wore the shabby old hat of an Italian brigand (shabby it might be, but entirely artistic); Mrs Mac thought it was because I swore by Sandys and Swinburne (I never did swear in my life); on the other hand, my brother Sylvester declared it was quite clear that a girl with any self-respect could not marry a man who had failed, as I had failed, to live up to the Japanese flower-pots she had given me. (He called them Siamese twins; but

Sylvester, who is in a public office, and as ignorant as an Eton schoolboy, does not know Cloisonnè from Satsuma.) The matter was a good deal discussed in our circle, and I think most of the critics ultimately came to agree that the misunderstanding was somehow connected with the "whitey-brown paper" which I had used for my study. It was as little "whitey-brown," indeed, as I am myself,—being, in fact, one of William Morris's most choice compositions; but there is no accounting for tastes: and our friends are so constitutionally inaccurate that when I proved conclusively that it was not, and could not be, "whitey-brown," they shamelessly retorted that I would not venture to deny that it was at least "dirty green." These sophistries are as transparent as Mr Gladstone's, and do not require to be refuted. The paper, I may mention, has been much admired by Mr Pater, who was good enough to suggest that it had much of the modest reserve and chaste insipidity of his own style. With the blinds down and a pair of wax lilies in the jar (it is only the wax ones that are good all the year round, and you could not indeed tell them from Rossetti's), its studious gravity inclines the mind to serious reflection; and the silence which so often falls upon the select society which meets there of a Sunday afternoon has been attributed to its delicate but incisive condemnation of "startling effects." At all events, the boisterous spirits of the barbarians are unknown in that vestal chamber,—that temple of more than virginal reserve.

It was perhaps as well that we parted. Evadne (Polly was her own name, but she became Evadne—out of the old English play—after we were engaged) never could conquer her inclination to yawn. A girl who turned her back on Madox Brown, and fell asleep when we were reading Mr Pater's articles in *Macmillan*, was obviously out of place in a community like ours. Her language, it is true, was unconventional; but the unconventionality of rude health and spirits has nothing in common with the unconventionality that has been studiously prepared and anxiously rehearsed. The natural gaiety of the untutored savage cannot compare—for

moral value—with the serenity that is attained by constant, and it may be painful, experiments on the emotions, and which indeed is closely akin to tears. The truth is, I could make nothing of the girl. Her hair was brown, abundant, and curly; and she threw it out of her eyes as a Shetland pony does its mane. She was never pensive, never languid. I could not detect, in sparkling eye or ruddy lip, the slightest trace of ill-health. I looked in vain day after day for any symptom of constitutional delicacy. Where were the lean neck and pallid cheek which I had learned to love in the works of the later Masters? She could have no acquaintance, it was clear, with the deep-seated dyspepsia which communicates a chronic if somewhat angular charm to the Iphigenia of Burne-Jones and the Mary Magdalene of Holman Hunt. I tried hard to persuade her to put her curly hair in long plaits, and let it hang down her back like the Japanese tea-girls, or Rebecca at the Well; but she declined with a laugh that was barren of sympathy: she said it would ruin her in pomatum. It was of course impossible for me, with my subdued and sensitive tastes, to marry a *robust* girl; but I hoped against hope. It was possible, I argued, that sorrow, if not sickness, might refine her. Something or other might prey upon her damask cheek. But her good-humour was invincible. She defied the green-eyed monster in either form,—she was as superior to jaundice as to jealousy. We took her to see Mr Irving in "Faust"; we gave her a dose of *John Inglesant;* we put her through a course of *Robert Elsmere.* I got a ticket for her to the Ladies' Gallery on an Irish night. She attended a penny-reading by Professor Plackie, and a lecture on "Shelley and Water," when Mr Furnivall was in the chair.[1] But the one had as little effect on her as the other. She was none the worse. She rose next morning as blithe as a lark, and as busy as a bee; and we could hear her humming the Huntsman's Chorus to herself while she was putting on her habit.

[1] This must be a mistake, for Mr Rossetti's lecture on "Shelley and the Element of Water, Part I.," was not delivered to the Shelley Society till later on.—S.

I have been able by long practice to curb the native irritability of genius; it is bad form, of course, to show any trace of the Old Adam who turned upon Eve when the apple disagreed with him; but I confess I was vexed. Here was a girl who was capable, I had fondly believed, of better things. She had been fortunate enough to interest *me*, and on certain conditions I was willing to take her in hand. But she must have known that unless these conditions were strictly observed, I would no more think of marrying her than I would think of marrying a milkmaid. The conditions were not observed. No tragic shadow dulled her eye or paled her cheek. Her flush was not hectic, nor eloquent with the pathos of rapid decline. She sang like a bird, and there was as little of Wagner in her songs (which were even comic occasionally) as in the songs of a thrush. She did not smile dreamily like Cleopatra in her barge, nor drearily like Mariana in the Moated Grange,—she positively laughed; and, with the profane vulgar, her laugh was as infectious as fever. I have no wish to exaggerate,—poor thing, it is all over with her now; but I believe that I am within the mark when I say—can I write the words?—that she actually became *stouter* during the period of our intimacy.

I felt it a good deal, I admit. When I had thrown her over (or was it the other way?) I began to ask myself, as I sometimes do in moments of uncritical despondency, whether the game was worth the candle? (I put it to myself in French, but translate it for the benefit of the Foreign Office clerks.) Was renunciation for a noble end a virtue, or was it not? Was I to give up Polly or the Japanese Jar? Was I to allow myself to be dragged down from the serene seat above the thunder to which I had clambered with labour and difficulty, for the sake of a woman who (unlike Mr Campbell Bannerman) had not found, and did not apparently wish to find, salvation? The temptation was only momentary; the higher nature asserted itself. "Get thee behind me, Polly!" I said, not with the calmness of despair, but with the gentle superiority of the criticism in the *Parthenon*, and forthwith sat down to write an essay On the Artistic Repression of the Domestic Affections for the *Hobby-Horse*. (The *Century Guild*

Hobby-Horse, published quarterly, price 2s. 6d.) I ceased to call her Evadne,—the Evadne I had created was dead and buried; and I relieved my feelings by calling her "Polly." But as the sonnets that I addressed to Evadne may one day see the light—the sonnet is my favourite form, and though the Being to whom they were addressed has proved unfaithful, they are too good to be lost—I shall burn her photograph instead, and the altar shall be heaped with *pot-pourri* and lighted with a billet-doux.

The Chief, to do him justice, was kindness itself. "Come down with us to Cairnbana, Professor, and we shall find medicine for the mind diseased. The Highland moon and the Highland moor are hardly up to the mark of the New Gallery, I grant you; but we have a sweet oblivious antidote in these parts which has been found efficacious in many difficult cases."

I learned afterwards that this was a sample of what is known as Scotch "wut,"—a very inferior brand to the English; but, poor fellow, he meant well. "Don't you believe anything they tell you about Scotland," he continued, in the same vein, when I asked him afterwards at Cairnbana if it was true that his countrymen, as was alleged, could only joke "with deeficulty." "They say it takes a surgical operation," he replied, "to get a joke into a Scotsman's head; and when it is an English joke," he added grimly, "I am not surprised. Now, in England, they would call this mild morning mist *rain*, and it might probably wet *them*. That's how they explain Bannockburn, my lad,—they couldn't stand the Scotch weather. But we,—we never fash our heads about a bit drizzle."

It was coming down bucketfuls while he stood beside me,—bareheaded and barelegged, a mature Apollo. He was certainly a splendid specimen of the primeval savage,—as much a product of the soil as the deer-hound at his feet; and while he shook his blond curls at the black thunder-cloud overhead, he might have been taken by an itinerant photographer for Ajax defying the lightning. I looked at him (from under my umbrella—the symbol of civilisation) with a mingled feeling of admiration and pity,—the feeling Columbus may have ex-

perienced when he landed on the New World, and beheld a Red Indian in his war-paint for the first time.

But even while we stood there the cloud moved past and the fog lifted. We were on the terrace above Cairnbana (for the house, to shelter it from winter storm, lies in the hollow), and it fairly took away my breath. There were the sandhills below us, through which the rabbits were scudding. The snowy sand, as it advanced, had been partly overgrown by grey-green bent; and both—the white sand and the grey bent—were drawn with almost startling emphasis across a sea blue as indigo. Then along the horizon, phantom islands rose out of the Atlantic,—the farthest Hebrides! While right before us—close at hand, as it seemed—stretched the mighty range of the Coolins—with Skye, and Rum, and Eigg, and Canna—round to the point of Ardnamurchan on the south, and on the north to the great mountains of Ross. The mist was trailing along their flanks, surging out of their corries; but the sun had already gained the day, and the air everywhere was full of light.

"That beats Ruskin!" the Chief exclaimed victoriously, slapping me on the back with his open palm, while he gave the war-whoop of his clan. The cordiality—let me say in passing—if well-meant, was ill-timed. The hug of a bear—a blow from the battle-axe of the Bruce—would have been borne with greater composure by our unclothed and unlettered ancestors than this alarming demonstration of regard from a Highland Hercules by the not altogether unknown representative of the later culture. These Celtic lairds, indeed, do not understand the amenities of modern life any better than their black cattle do. I speak from sorrowful experience,—I, too, have been in Arcadia. There is a neighbouring proprietor with whom I shook hands on landing from the Clansman (I need hardly add that I have avoided him ever since). He took my hand in his hairy paw, and squeezed it till I could have roared. "You do not look ferry well," the brute said, as tears of rage and pain came into my eyes. "You will take a glass of Talisker,—it is not pad, though Long Shon is petter."

"That beats Ruskin!" Beats Ruskin? It was too much. I had to go and lie down.

II.

Sometimes after a pouring wet day we have a dance in the servants' hall; we get on very well with the pretty milk-maids and demure daughters of water-bailiff or gamekeeper, when the pipes are sent outside. The native music, of which more hereafter, is all that could be desired—at a distance. The piper of Glengarry, strutting up and down the terrace below the open window, with tartan kilt and flying ribbons, excites the emulation of the bubbly-jock to such a degree that their united efforts nearly blow our heads off; whereas a cheerful coronach or a pensive pibroch—*with the loch between us*—affects me deeply, and on more than one occasion, indeed, has moved me to tears. These innocent festivities are presided over by the cook, a buxom dame, who acts as master of the ceremonies, and introduces us to our partners. It is like a leaf out of the Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich; and had there been a Philip among us, he might have searched the whole country-side—

"Knoydart, Croydart, Moidart, Morar, and Ardnamurchan"—

for a prettier Katie than we can boast. Unfortunately there is a gigantic Angus or Alister of native breed to whom she is said to be engaged. He is red-bearded and wild-eyed,—an altogether objectionable sweetheart, I should have supposed; yet, curiously enough, she seems to prefer his coarse homespun to the velveteen knickerbockers of the south. I tried a little mild flirting at first (a few distant endearments); but I did not prosecute it far: there was a threatening "Wha daur meddle wi' me?" air about the fellow which I did not relish; and after he had presented her with a parcel of (highly perfumed) peppermints from the "merchant's" at Balmacrapple, I felt that further pursuit was hopeless. Had Alister of the Red Beard been one of the fair Katie's suitors,

I am doubtful if Philip would have been permitted to carry her off; for he was in every sense an ugly customer.

After the dance we go with the Chief to his den, where, as the night advances, he bitterly denounces the Saxon. English gold—this is the burden of his complaint—had demoralised the incorruptible Celt. The stout clansmen of Clan Ranald had been shipped across the water. The house of Glengarry, which we had seen yesterday from the road, was a roofless ruin. Where were the brave gentlemen who had stood by their Prince upon Loch Ailort? Where were their sons and their grandsons? Not one remained except himself—save himself not one. His only neighbours were an Irish peer and an Irish whisky-dealer. The peer was a penurious Radical who had married a dairymaid; and the whisky-dealer—why, the whisky-dealer brought his own whisky with him. "Irish whisky!" exclaimed the Chief, in a tone of deep disgust, as if the discontent of the crofters was fully accounted for. "Hear to them now!" he added, pushing back the door which led into the kitchen passage.

The dancing had ceased, and a low monotonous wail sounded through the hall. It was a song in Gaelic set to a Gaelic air. The drone of the bagpipe was heard outside, but—as if subdued by the hopeless sadness of the song—all its harshness was banished. The Chief gave me the words afterwards; and I venture to translate them for the sake of the illiterate Lowlander,—two or three of the best lines, however, being by another—an unknown—hand:—

THE CANADIAN CROFTER'S BOAT-SONG.

Listen to me, as when ye heard our father
Sing long ago of other distant shores;
Listen to me, and then in chorus gather
All your deep voices, as ye dip your oars:—

"Where Scuir-na-Gillean braves the wind and rain,
And round Ben More the mad Atlantic raves;
Where grey Iona's immemorial fane
Keeps solemn ward by unremembered graves;—

"No more our voices echo through the valley,
The stag unchallenged roams across the glen;
No more around Clan Ranald's banner rally
The fairest women and the bravest men.

"No more the lovers on the leas are meeting,
No more the children paddle in the stream;
We hear no more the pibroch's kindly greeting,
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam.

"From the lone shieling on the misty island
Mountains divide us and a world of seas;
But still the heart is true, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

"Green are the woods that gird the mighty river,
And green the meadows sloping to the strand;
But we have left our native hills for ever,—
But we are exiles from our father's land."

This is pretty; but, to tell the truth, Highland singing is not much to my taste. It is mainly produced through the nose, and may be held to represent the drone of the bagpipe in a minor key. Ossian was all very well for the barelegged barbarians to whom his archaic minstrelsy was addressed; but much as I admire the author of *Humphry Clinker* (for a more than Swiftian sincerity and candour, which I find nowhere else now, except perhaps in my friend Mr Symmonds' *Benvenuto Cellini*), I cannot truthfully aver that "*when I enter our landlord's hall, I look for the suspended harp of the divine bard, and listen in hopes of hearing the aerial sound of his respected spirit.*"

III.

I HAVE often wished that I was a Greek, and I have sometimes thought of buying a Greek island. I might possibly have entered into negotiations for Cyprus had I not been anticipated by Lord Beaconsfield. But even in the Greek

Islands "Pan is dead," whereas among the islands of the Western Sea, "the fair humanities of old religion," the benignant or malignant beings of the popular mythology, have not been disturbed. The melancholy ocean is favourable to the growth of fable, and miracle dies hard among the hills. Had Mr David MacBrayne, the good genius of the Hebrides, lived a few centuries earlier, he would long ago have had a place in Walhalla beside Odin and Balder; and the exploits of this Lord of Many Waters, this potent Neptune whose sceptre swept the Northern seas, would still have been the theme of song and story. I was lying on the margin of the bent, like Lady of the Mere, "sole sitting by the shores of old Romance," waiting for the boat. There was a slight haze on the water (which was smooth as glass), though the highest peak of Rum penetrated into an unclouded heaven, and reflected the Atlantic sunset beyond. The boys had gone to shoot flappers at the mouth of the Lora, where the fresh water twice a-day mingles with the salt. There was a great drowsiness upon sea and land,—the clamour of the gulls had ceased, and even the oyster-catchers were mute. Then a cry, or rather a wail—a strange, uncanny, and unearthly wail —rose from the middle of the bay. It died away. Then it was repeated—nearer at hand each time—until it seemed to come from below my very feet. What happened next I do not precisely know: the drowsiness of the day was infectious; in that soft air Oblivion scattereth her poppies. I was barely awake, it might be, and yet I did not dream. I saw through the mist a gleam of golden hair, and then, in a ravishing whisper that thrilled me to the marrow, I heard my own name,—"Gabriel—Dante—Dobbs." The short and the long of it was, that in an incredibly brief space of time I found myself in confidential conversation with—a mermaid! She did not enter into particulars; but from an incidental allusion to Sir John M'N—ll, I understood that she was the Colonsay siren. She knew Leyden's ballad by heart, and warbled a few of the lines:—

> "On Jura's heath how sweetly swell
> The murmurs of the mountain bee!"

Her voice was still clear and flute-like, though some of the upper notes were rather worn,—at which, indeed, I was not surprised, for she must have been a good deal older than Patti. But—old or young—her adorable beauty had not suffered; for seductive charm and stealthy grace she was still peerless,—peerless as the "sea-maid" of Shakespeare, or the Mary Stuart of Froude. She wore a loose jacket of some gauzy material, which did not conceal the native grace of a figure that had not been injured by tight-lacing; and through her golden hair a chain of pearls was strung. Although she assured me more than once during our brief interview that her intentions were strictly honourable, I had an uneasy suspicion from the outset that something was wrong; and her invitation to accompany her home—I think she mentioned afternoon tea—was politely, if reluctantly, declined. I say "reluctantly," for the truth is I was on the point of yielding when, happening to glance behind me, I beheld an enormous sea-horse or walrus—in fact, there was more than one—a dozen at least—getting between me and the land. The truth flashed upon me. I was the victim of a base conspiracy. These monsters were in her pay. She had retained them at so much a tusk; and their tusks were bigger than the biggest in Mr Rider Haggard's collection. I tried to shout for aid, but my lips were glued. I tried to rise, but my limbs refused to move. The malign enchantment had done its work; and like Thomas the Rhymer and the Young Tamlane and Bonny Kilmeny, I was about to bid farewell to the sweet upper air and the wholesome sunshine during the rest of Lord Salisbury's administration. If I returned at all (which was doubtful), it would be seven years hence—for they have a Septennial Act as we have—to find Mr Gladstone in office and a changed world. Acutely conscious of what was in store for me, I braced myself up for one supreme effort, and with a despairing shriek threw my stick at her head. She ducked like a diver before the shot reached her, and with one flap of her tail (which now showed itself for the first time —I had begun, indeed, to fancy that, to oblige Mr Darwin, the tail had been discontinued), was out of sight. And

I——, where was I? The mist had lifted, the boys had landed, and Black John was bending over me with a grin.

IV.

TIME passed placidly away. The barbarians were hospitable and friendly. They listened to my criticism of life with respect and appreciation; the close attention and sustained interest of one old man particularly pleased me. Though it afterwards appeared that he was stone-deaf, and understood no English, the expression of his nose as he fumbled with his snuff-box is still pleasant in the retrospect. There was a *juiciness*, indeed, about the old fellow which reminded me of Romney and Raeburn at their best, though in his case it was possibly to be attributed to an unlimited supply of peat-smoke and whisky. To the educated eye of the artist, however, the hovels of the peasantry were even more precious than their inhabitants,—the dirt and squalor and dismal darkness of most of these "cottage interiors" being positively Rembrandtesque. Altogether we got on very well. Respect rapidly ripened into affection. I was always ready to aid them with —my advice; and the impression that I was a missionary who had been despatched by Providence to assist them in resisting the Saxon, and recovering their tribal rights, was confirmed by more than one incident. I am one of the artists in whom the mimetic faculty is strong, and I had no difficulty in assuming the character that had been assigned to me. I had always been drawn to St Columba; and when, at a meeting of the local Land League, I was publicly identified with "the luminary of the Caledonian regions from whence roving clans and savage barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion," I thanked them (on the top of a barrel) from the bottom of my heart. The speaker who succeeded me proposed that I should stand for the county, and the proposal was cordially adopted,—the members present resolving themselves into a committee to secure my return. I thanked them again from the bottom of my heart, but not from the

top of the barrel,—the unpretentious platform (an old whisky-cask) having given way with the previous speaker, who, during a vigorous peroration on Sheriff Ivory, had disappeared into its interior, and whose absence, in the enthusiasm of the moment, had not been noticed. The pipes, which had been perambulating outside, were now brought in; and we had long speeches in Gaelic, and after each resolution a fresh jug of whisky-toddy,—though most of them preferred to take it "neat"; and we heard a good deal about the original St Columba, and how he had blessed the land and the loch, and how he had assured them that land and loch would belong to them and to their children for ever, and that they would get bread from the one and *Salmo ferox* from the other. It was long past midnight before we parted, and we shook hands all round, and the Chief declared that it had been a great day for Ardnamurchan—"a great day whatever"—and advised them to go home quietly.

I suppose they did so; though I had been an hour in bed before the bray of the bagpipes and the clamour of angry voices had died away up the glen. Cunning as foxes, simple as children, credulous as savages, idle as monkeys, obstinate as mules—one might exhaust the whole adjectives of the language—what can be made of these charming and provoking people? How can they be saved from themselves, and from the charlatans who profess to be their friends? It is a problem which political economy has failed to solve,—will the gospel of sweetness and light prove equally helpless? We shall see—at the next election.

It was a lovely moonlit night; and Cairnbana, which, like the field where Arthur fought his last battle, lies between two seas, has the benefit of the moonlight upon both. It travels from one to the other: when high in heaven it touched with a wan brightness the lonely bays of Loch Lora; now in the last watch of night it follows the long heave of the Atlantic, and moves with the moving waters. I am just closing my eyes when a phantom bark (my window commands all the western horizon) passes across the band of light. What bark is this which, as the night wanes, steals out of the dark-

ness? On what errand is it bound? Is it the spectre-bark of Death and Life-in-Death? Is it the Flying Dutchman? I am still contemplating the problem, which becomes momently more intricate and insoluble, when through the murmur of Wagner's ghostly music a clear soprano voice defines itself with growing insistence,—"Please, sir, breakfast is on the table!"

V.

We stroll up before dinner to meet the postman, who passes three days a-week; and after he is gone we sit on the parapet of the bridge over the Lora to read our letters. The Chief has a host of correspondents, from Skye crofters to Cabinet Ministers, from Indian proconsuls to the county police. Whether a State secret is more entertaining than the gossip of the village it is hard to say; in great things and in small, men are wonderfully alike. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is staying with the M'Leods, has set his heart upon a skye-terrier; Lord John up at Meuble wants to know if we have any spare cartridges; would the Chief be good enough to oblige Miss Skinflint, who has twisted her ankle and keeps a birthday-book, with his autograph and a sheet of sticking-plaster? Of these and similar inquiries the name is legion. Yesterday, however, there was only a single letter,—a long one, it proved, such as they used to write before Rowland Hill discovered that a letter could go for a penny. "He's a man worth knowing," the Chief explained, as he opened the envelope,—"not your style at all, Dobbs; on the contrary, life's fu' o' sariousness to him—he just never can get eneuch o' fechtin'. He thinks we have been going to the dogs ever since Mary was beheaded, and that the last statesman of repute was Guy Fawkes. But he writes well—at least he used to do so before he took to the dismal science. Let's hear what he says." And we all gathered round while he read:—

"It seems to me, Mac, that we are getting very tired of each other. Our friends bore us more than they used to do.

Society as such has become *blasé*. We are wearied to death by what our grandfathers would have considered the keenest enjoyment. They used to begin to dine about two o'clock in the afternoon, and they kept it up till midnight. Those who were able to leave the table went to bed for a few hours, and were hard at work by daybreak, as fresh as larks or daisies. Now we dine at eight, hurry through a few French dishes, and then rush away as if we had suddenly discovered that our hosts were in quarantine, and their house infected by the plague. We have no leisure to be agreeable, and in the hubbub the capacity for enjoyment appears to be leaving us. There are some wits among us still, but no one cares to listen to their *bons-mots;* and the gay wisdom of Sydney Smith himself would fall quite flat in circles where a rude practical joke is treated with imbecile laughter. People have been brought close together by railways, and steamers, and telegraphs, and morning and evening newspapers; and yet each man seems to get more isolated. The old classic friendships have died out. There is little real intimacy, for we cannot cultivate confidential relations with a mob. Then our scholars—our hard laborious workers—are as scarce as our wits; and they have no audience who care to listen to them. The writers of books have become the pensioners of Mr Mudie; and Mr Mudie cannot afford to invest in a class of books which, though of permanent value, are neither light nor flashy nor sensational. So, as the Laureate says, 'Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers'; and thus it happens that the smart young men and women, who read as much in each day's paper as their solid grandfathers and grandmothers read in a month, are yet essentially uninformed. The mind is frittered away on trifles which leave no abiding impression. Moralists abuse our morals; but our intellectual frivolity is worse than our moral. What we hear and read is not assimilated,—running off our minds as water off a duck's back. A nation educated in this fashion—a frothy, flighty, unsocial democracy, demoralised by light literature and greedy for change—becomes dangerous to itself and to its neighbours. It loses the steadfastness which belongs to old-fashioned habit, to immemorial tradition, as well as to

real knowledge. Unless it can pull itself up in time, it is on the road to ruin, and will one day topple over into the abyss.

"Social reform, however, is a grave matter; and you know, Mac, that I do not care to pose as a social reformer. It is not in my line. I have no vocation for fighting with beasts at Ephesus. If I get furious at times at the crass folly of official mankind, I keep my feelings as far as possible to myself. When I hear eminent men argue that children are better in a workhouse school than running about the fields, I simply grind my teeth (such of them as are left). When I hear eminent men maintain that, as malignant smallpox is a 'home-disease' (a kind of domestic pet, let us say), no precautions should be taken against its importation from foreign parts, I appeal mutely to the indignant gods. When I am told that So-and-so and So-and-so and So-and-so are the greatest statesmen and poets and actors that the world has ever seen, I 'jouk and let the jaw gae by.' Why should I interpose? It will be all the same a hundred years hence. The popular idols of 1888 will be mere scarecrows before the century is out; but in the meantime, who can close the floodgates of folly? What is Mrs Partington against the Atlantic? But do not misunderstand me, Mac. Though a fatalist, and possibly an Epicurean (in the philosophical sense, of course), I am bound to own that I admire that admirable woman. I could not become a Mrs Partington myself; yet—from a high, abstract, ideal standpoint—I incline to hold that she has been scurvily treated. The magnanimous qualities of a really heroic nature have not been sufficiently recognised. The woman who could address herself with invincible industry to sweep out the Atlantic must have been a fine specimen of her sex. Like the British army, she did not know when she was beaten. It is because they do not know when they are beaten that British soldiers win in the end,—and why not Mrs Partington? She is the typical Englishman—Shakespeare's Englishman—the Englishman before he had been enfeebled by cheap newspapers and sweet reasonableness. Thus I should be inclined to include Mrs Partington in that catalogue of the ten most eminent women of the world, from Eve to Mrs Josephine

Butler, which an evening journal is so anxious to obtain. With the exception of Semiramis and Joan of Arc, all the most eminent women of the world, I observe, appear to be our contemporaries; but Mrs Partington, whose obstinate heroism has seldom been matched, is not included in any of the lists that have been returned. It may be said that she failed; but the merit of an action does not depend on its success. Her methods may have been faulty,—the Dutch dykes possibly may be better adapted for the purpose than her mop; but how often did Watt try his hand at the steam-engine before he got it to go? Nor with the information at present available can it be positively asserted that she *did* fail. It has been assumed somewhat hastily that the Atlantic was victorious; but full details have not been forwarded; and we know, in point of fact, that the Atlantic ultimately *retired*, —whether intimidated by the undaunted woman's broom, or for other reasons, does not appear. The more we consider the matter, indeed, the more will we be inclined to conclude that in this instance Sydney Smith was not true to his own admirable common-sense. He might have disapproved of Mrs Partington's attitude, but he need not have held her up to popular ridicule; and when he did so, he was guilty of an offence against the clear and nervous logic of which he was a master. He used her, in short, as a sophist or a rhetorician might have used her. When he observes, however, later on, *Every man knows that he must keep down his feelings, and witness the spectacle of triumphant folly and tyranny* (qualified as the observation is by the proviso, *A few scraps of victory are thrown to the wise and just in the long battle of life*), we feel that Sydney is himself again,—a man of admirable temper and candour, whose practical philosophy was as modest as it was genuine.

"'Every man knows that he must keep down his feelings, and witness the spectacle of triumphant folly and tyranny.' It is fortunate or unfortunate (as the case may be) that we cannot always practise what we preach. I had for some time been finding the effort to keep down my feelings (as well as to hold my tongue) attended with growing difficulty. Why

are people so exasperating? You would fancy that a fool would be anxious to conceal his folly; but it is not so. It would really appear as if he were careful to parade it; and the diseased craving for publicity is possibly a symptom of the complaint. I was a member of divers select societies, literary and scientific, and I used to attend pretty regularly at first; but I quickly discovered that folly was not confined to the masses. The twaddle that was talked by Colonel MacBlethers at the Harmonic, and by Professor Stodger at the Helvetic, was fully as tedious as the twaddle outside. So I sent in my resignation, which—there being shoals of candidates—was at once accepted. Then I ceased to dine out. I had met the same people night after night for months, and made myself ill with the same dishes. My digestion, it may be, is not so good as it once was; but I connect my indisposition for society with moral rather than physical causes. I am a bachelor, and the young women of the house were generally intrusted to my charge. They used to be bright and lively, and inclined to flirt; but now, unless you know something about conic sections, or the multiplication table, or the professor's lectures on pre-Adamite literature, you have no chance with them. Not that they know much more than you do; and, spite of conic sections and pre-Adamite literature, some of them are quite nice,—sweet girl-graduates who will never take a degree, and who are neither prudes nor proctors. But—I must make the confession whatever it costs, whatever the consequences may be—if there is one girl I detest more than another, it is Matilda Black. The fate, the evil fortune, that has dogged our family for generations (see *The House of the Seven Gables*) is personified in Matilda Black. Whenever I meet her on the stairs, I know instinctively what is in store for me. A tragic attraction draws us together; and I could lay any odds that the hostess will remark, with an idiotic simper, before I have got to the rug—'Mr Green, you will take in Matilda?' Heavens!—take *her* in!—you might as well attempt to take Sir Henry Hawkins in. 'A low voice is an excellent thing in woman.' But Matilda's voice!—it goes through you like

a knife, it rasps you like a saw. You hear it across the street. Her softest whisper is trumpet-tongued; and when she informs you (for instance) in the closest confidence that Mrs A. (at the other end of the table) is rather carrying on with Major B., or that Mrs C. is taking more champagne than is prudent, every word is distinctly audible to the maids who are tittering in the lobby.

"So, as I have said, I gave up dining out; and as I was always in danger of coming in contact with one or other of Professor Plackie's West-End friends, I have moved my household gods to the Old Town. You will be interested to know that I occupy the house occupied by Francis Horner when he was visited by Sydney Smith. 'He lives very high up in Gordon's Court, and thinks a good deal about mankind.' I live very high up too; and if I think a good deal about mankind, I cannot say that my reflections are particularly agreeable. Though it is the middle of July, the wind is from the east; and when the wind is from the east I hear, or fancy that I hear, Matilda's voice across the Nor' Loch; and old MacBlethers, who proposed me for the Harmonic, has marked me down again, as a keeper marks a wounded bird. After the venerable colonel has toiled up six pairs of stairs on his gouty old legs (and I can identify him by his wheeze long before he comes in sight), I have not courage to tell the girl to say that I am particularly engaged. Consequently he is admitted, and sits with me (and on me) most of the afternoon. *So few people are in town*, he remarks cordially, *that those who are left should draw together*. There shall be one fewer to-morrow, I inwardly protest, as, seized by a sort of St Vitus' dance, I listen with growing irritation to his wheezy platitudes; and, whenever he leaves, I begin, like Silvio Pellico, to plan how I am to escape. There are havens of rest which MacBlethers does not trouble,—valleys of Avilion to which even Matilda's voice cannot penetrate. Am I chained like a galley-slave to the oar? Why not take a holiday as the others are doing? That sweet girl with the blue eyes and a liking for Longfellow is ducking her little sisters at Largs; the Keeper writes that there are lots of

flappers in the river, and that the trout are rising freely on the loch; we have been advised by the *Oban Times* that the dismal weather of the east coast is strictly local, and that the sun has been shining without stint since early in May on western moor and glen. So the volume at which I am working is pitched aside. Guy Fawkes has waited so long for justice, that he can afford to wait a little longer. The tackle is seen to, the portmanteaus packed, the rods strapped, and I leave by the night mail. As I drive along Princes Street, I observe MacBlethers in amicable conversation with the porter who speaks Gaelic at the corner of Castle Street; and it is not until the train has crawled slowly up the pass above Ardvoirlich, and the dawn has flushed the sky over Etive —not until I have ceased to confuse Matilda's voice, in a disturbed and feverish dream, with the scream of the steam-whistle—that I feel safe. By the time the Fusilier has rounded the Ardnamurchan Point, my town-bred troubles have vanished with the mist. I begin to contemplate the feasibility of founding a school of political economy from which the 'dismal' element shall be entirely excluded. And I mean to look you up, Mac, in the course of a day or two, to discuss the 'preleeminaries.' For, as it happens, we are near neighbours,—Malloch, where I have built a wooden shanty, which is only accessible, I find, during an exceptionally dry summer, being within easy reach of you,— when you have once mounted an inaccessible precipice and crossed an unfathomable bog. By the way, Mac, has anything been heard in these parts of a ridiculous creature called Dobbs——?"

The Chief drew himself up with a jerk that nearly sent him over the bridge into the whirlpool where the salmon lie before they leap the fall. There was a general titter, and a rush to the house; the dinner-bell was rung vindictively by a frantic domestic; and (as diplomatists write) "the incident terminated." I may say truly that, apart from any personal feeling, I regretted the interruption: for I know there was something on the last page about the girl with the blue eyes and the liking for Longfellow; and I should have

been pleased to ascertain whether she was still ducking her little sisters at Largs. Polly is the eldest of a large family; I have reason to fear that she cares a deal more for Longfellow than for Swinburne or Rossetti; and her eyes are blue, sea-blue, except when I have had to make them brown or black to suit the rhyme. Polly? O, my prophetic soul!

VI.

I QUITE agree with Mr Ruskin that field-sports are demoralising. What is worse, they spoil anything like rational conversation. At St Andrews, for instance, I might as well belong to a Trappist community; the Philistines of the Links speak a foreign tongue; for what meaning can an intelligent being attach to "cleeks," and "niblics," and "putters," and "long spoons," and "hittin' the grun'," and "tappin' the ba'"? Here, at Cairnbana, it is just as bad. The boys —and they are nice boys too—can think of nothing but loch trout and wild duck. There is a big *Salmo ferox* which haunts their dreams. The brute lives at the bottom of the loch, and only comes to the surface at intervals to play the deuce with their tackle. In such a society, moreover, all the ordinary relations of life are inverted. Ronald Macdonald, the water-bailiff, is a much more important personage than the Secretary for Scotland; and the exploits of Angus Cameron, the keeper—the deer he has stalked, the salmon he has landed, the eagles he has shot—are spoken off with bated breath. The most valued correspondent of the family (to judge from the constant allusions that are made to him) appears to be a gentleman of the name of Wells. Wells will do this,—Wells will do that; and mysterious packets arrive from him by post. I fancy at first that he is connected somehow with the Local University examinations, for which the boys are presumed to be reading; it turns out that he is an Edinburgh tackle-maker. The discussions about "flies" are interminable. Are Zulus killing? Are Alexandras any good? What about the little Doctor? The preparation of a "cast"

involves no end of care,—a great artist could not select the colours for his palette with a graver sense of responsibility. And the intelligence that a big fish has been seen in the Salmon Pool (and whenever Donald wants a glass of whisky on his way home, a big fish is sure to be about) drives the whole household fairly frantic. If Mr Andrew Lang would like to watch the formation of a myth, he ought to come to Ardnamurchan. The day that a fish is lost, it weighs ten pounds. Next day it rises to twenty. By the end of the month it is as big as the Snapping Turtle of Alabama,—the monster who "swallowed Langton Bennett, and digested Rufus Dawes." The growth of the legend in the course of ages is easily accounted for, when we remember how a salmon quadruples his weight in a week. "They were telling me that John had lost a big fish—ten punds they were saying." "It was not less than twenty punds the fish that John lost—he was fast for an hour and a quarter and a half, but he would not move from the bottom, whatever John would do." "You will have been hearing of the fish that John lost—I saw him myself—he would weigh forty pound—forty pound and more —he jumped clean over the linn, and never stopped till he got to the sea. He was a fine fish."

We were on the loch on Monday. Loch Lora is certainly a grand bit of water. The mountains round about are bleak and bare,—at the far end, where the goats look down at us through the mist, the precipices are wellnigh inaccessible. The islands, however, where we lunched, are finely wooded, —gaunt Scotch firs rising from banks of heather as high as our heads. Here, and on all the lochans round about, the shores are green with the great Osmunda regalis—the Royal Fern. There were hundreds of gulls overhead—screaming at us out of the sky; and we saw a bird that is hardly, they tell me, to be seen elsewhere in Scotland—the black-throated Diver. The young ones had left the nest—but we could not distinguish them; we only knew by the mother's warning cry —strangely weird yet melodious—that they were somewhere about.

I do not see the fun (apart from the moral considerations on

which Mr Ruskin has so copiously enlarged) of fly-fishing. The line has a bad habit of coming back in your face, and in my own case the hooks were always catching in one or other of the boatmen. They did not seem to like it, and after a little I came to the conclusion that there were no fish in the loch, and went ashore with a volume of Wordsworth. It was a drowsy day; there was hardly a ripple on the water; and I lay for a while on the bank, looking at the boat as it drifted slowly past, and watching the boys who were casting as industriously as ever. They were good anglers, I daresay; their lines fell with surprising lightness; and ever and again I saw the line tighten, the rod bend, and after a brief conflict, John would lean over the side with the landing-net in his hand, and a cheer from Jack directed my attention to the fact that a fish had been captured. The trout had begun to feed, they told me afterwards; and for half an hour the big fellows seemed as hungry as hawks. "Won't you try it a bit?" they shouted cheerily; but I only shook my head, and the boat drifted away again. Then I opened my book (it opened curiously enough at the page where the poet warns the shepherd never to mix—his drink, I had written inadvertently—never to mix his pleasure or his pride with sorrow of the meanest thing that feels,—"But they don't feel," Jack retorted, when I pointed the passage out to him on our way back, "they rather like it,"—"And they ain't mean," Jim added); and became so engrossed in its perusal that the outside world faded from my vision, and I was only recalled from a delightful dream of an enchanted palace, and an emaciated Princess, by hearing voices close at hand. "I believe the Professor has fallen asleep again,—by Jove! what a guy the midges have made him!" It was too true. As the afternoon waned, the infernal—I beg pardon—the infamous mosquitoes had waxed lively and mischievous; and for some days thereafter I could not look at myself in the glass without a shudder.

All the way home—and we had a long pull to the pier, and a three-mile drive after leaving the loch—they talked of nothing but fish. "Will you believe it, sir?" said Jim. "I caught a three-pounder with a whole cast of flies in its

mouth that Jack lost last week!" "But the strangest thing happened that ever I heard of," Jack interrupted; "when we were trolling back, a small trout, not much more than a minnow, took my tail-fly, and I was reeling in the line leisurely, when—slap—a big fish went at him. The beggar held on like grim death—it wasn't hooked, you understand—till we had him in the landing-net. His teeth were fast in the little beggar's belly, and we had to knock him on the head before he'd let go. Did you ever hear of such a thing, Donald?" "I do not myself remember," Donald replied deliberately, resting on his oar, and translating out of the Gaelic as he went along; "but Ronald here would be telling me that when he was with Lord Lovat—the late Lord it would be—as a gillie at Ach-na-Cloich—that is at the back of Ben More, in Assynt—half-way up Glen Feochan—where Angus Mackechan's grandfather had a fine croft—but the oats were always eaten by the deer—it would be five-and-twenty years now—perhaps thirty—ay, even more—there was a big f*u*sh"—and so the story, the point of which was never reached, so far as I know, meandered along till we got home.

When the trout were laid out at the front door they made a grand show, and the boys were kind enough to insinuate—they are good lads—that the capture of the biggest—a magnificent three-pounder—was more or less due to my skill. "That's the Professor's," they insisted. I did not feel called upon to contradict them,—it would have been bad taste indeed to tell their mother that they had been—fibbing. There were thirty-two trout in all, and they weighed eighteen pounds. I ate two of them at supper—as crisp and pink as salmon; and before going to bed, I was constrained to admit that Wordsworth was perhaps a trifle too particular, and that even Virtue may become pedantic. It was possible besides, I reflected, that English fresh-water fish are not so succulent as Scotch. Or was it rather perhaps that the Lake poet had as little taste for Lake-trout as Lachlan Maclachlan had for the forbidden fruit? "For my own part," the worthy piper is reported to have said during his last illness, incensed at the thoughtless

and indeed unaccountable conduct of the pair who brought death into this world and all our woe, and with a profound sense of the unfairness of the punishment in his own case,—"For my own part, minister, I do not care a tamn for apples!"[1]

"Poor old Wordsworth!" said the Chief, as he lighted his candle; "what a nightmare he must find Professor Knight!"[2]

VII.

ANOTHER day we went to meet the steamer at Rhubana. John was waiting for us with the boat at the Boat-house Bay,—one of those splendid sandy bays—like a bow half-bent —of which we have more than one at Cairnbana. The sun was newly risen, and the phantom islands were repeated in the unrippled water. A light land breeze, however, rose as we embarked, and we glided silently before it. Outside the jagged range of reef, the long Atlantic swell broke now and again with a hoarse murmur; but, inside, the peace and calm and silence were absolute. Only the white gannets were falling like bullets into the water. Near the Rhu there are a hundred islands—a perfect network—haunted by seals and ducks and gulls and mergansers; and here we waited for the steamer. We had a long time to wait. John, who has no belief in the authenticity of Mr MacBrayne's printed time-tables, was apt to bring us off hours before the boat was due. "Sometimes she comes sooner, and sometimes she comes earlier, and sometimes even before that," he would reply oracularly, when closely cross-examined on the subject. We lighted a fire with bits of drift-wood that Atlantic storms had left among the rocks; we boiled our tea and our eggs; and with tea and eggs and sardines and potted tongue and oatmeal cakes, we breakfasted royally. It was speedily discovered that rats abounded; and Maco, the most sagacious of

[1] Lachlan was Maclachlan of Maclachlan's piper, and well known in the Maclachlan country about Ardgour and Ardnamurchan.—S.

[2] But, Scotch joking apart, the Lake poet is the Professor's debtor.

Scotch fox-terriers, had a good time. By-and-bye the boys had a dip in the cool sparkling water; the round black faces of the seals began to bob up when they found we meant them no harm; then we took a stroll through the island, and found a merganser's nest in the thick coarse grass, with thirteen eggs, and caught the bird herself before she had time to rise. (We left her to look after her eggs, and next week I hope we shall see her again, paddling along the shore, with a dozen little sawbills in her wake.) The splendid Fusilier was up to time, and we had taken the Parson on board (the Parson had come all the way from the Midlands), and were drifting away, when another boat, rowed by a crew of lightly clad, sun-burnt girls, who sent it scudding through the water, came alongside. A handkerchief was waved from the steamer's deck; a confused mass of rods and rugs and Gladstone bags was thrown into the bow; and a trig damsel in deer-stalker hat and brilliant petticoat, escorted by a polite mate, ran down the gangway. Our boat was already on the move; the others were busy with the sail; but I could not be mistaken. *I would have known these boots anywhere.* My heart gave a tremendous thud. It was Polly herself.

VIII.

The Parson was the best of company, and during his stay the children nearly died of laughing. His stories of parsons, in and out of the pulpit, were better than Dean Ramsay's; and his humorous expostulations with the Universe in general, and his own ill-luck in particular, vastly amusing. His main grievance, on which the changes were rung with infinite zest, was closely connected with the man he had been appointed to succeed. Our friend was the assistant and successor, and did all the work; but the bulk of the tithes went in the meantime to the previous incumbent. There was an honourable understanding, he said, though it had not been reduced to writing, that the old gentleman (who was over eighty) would not live six months. But whenever the legal arrange-

ments had been completed, the octogenarian renewed his youth. It was his clear duty to die; but, though in Holy Orders, he persisted in living on with a pertinacity that even in a layman would have been unbecoming. The contract, if not express, was implied, but he had apparently taken advantage of a technical informality. He was immortal—perennial—like the Wandering Jew or the discoverer of the *elixir vitæ*. The question had occurred to our friend, and he now submitted it for our consideration,—Would he be justified, in the circumstances, in putting him to death? A man who notoriously disregards the etiquette of his profession is looked upon as a black sheep; and black sheep commonly come to a bad end. Had he manifested any true remorse or sincere repentance, it might have been proper to remit the penalty; but, though in his dotage, he was as hearty as ever, and even enjoyed, it was believed, the annoyance and inconvenience of which he was the cause. His appetite was good, his digestion perfect, and whenever he met his infuriated successor he thanked God ostentatiously that, though eighty-eight years old, he had never felt in better health. His whole conduct, in short, was reprehensible in the extreme, and the Chief did not hesitate to assure his friend that if the miserable old impostor was suddenly removed, however suspicious the circumstances might be, he would refrain from communicating with the Public Prosecutor.

We took the boat up to Bracora next Sunday and went to the Catholic chapel.[1] Maco went with us, and behaved him-

[1] We had intended to go to Stornoway (if you wish to become a genuine humourist, see that you pronounce it Sty-or-no-way) about this time; but the yacht was not ready. Day and night (and especially at night, when, though more than fifty miles distant as the crow flies, they stood out with magical distinctness) I had dreamt of these phantom Islands in the west. If supernatural beings, fairer than dreams, haunted the shore of the mainland, what might not be expected in the farthest Hebrides? The Chief's yacht had been riding at anchor in the bay; a score of kilted savages had been engaged in overhauling her for months; but, so far as we could discover, absolutely no progress had been made. The policy of "masterly inactivity" is practised by the Celts with entire success. They take to it as they take to whisky,—the taste for alcohol and obstruction (Parliamentary or other) being born with

self like an enlightened Christian,—in spite of the shepherds' collies who hung about the open door, and interrupted the service by dismal howls and an occasional free fight. Like their masters, it is only on Sundays they have a chance of meeting; the rest of the week they are looking after the sheep on misty hillsides and among gloomy corries, where the croak of a raven or the scream of an eagle serves only to intensify the sense of absolute solitude. Catholicism abroad always seems to me to be tawdry; here it is as severely simple as Calvinism; and you can say your prayers before the homely altar, as the Parson liberally remarked, without an uneasy suspicion of being at a play. It is curious how tenaciously the Celt has clung to the ancient faith,—John Knox's Reformation did not cross the Great Glen for generations, and even yet whole districts are Catholic. Some of us walked back after service, and the talk—as we had the Priest and the Parson with us—assumed, as was natural, a theological hue. Here (as elsewhere among a pastoral people) it appeared, from what the Chief told us, that the notions of a Divine government were closely associated with, if not largely modified by, the weather. Orthodoxy was rampant during a dry summer; a long and hard winter, with a touch of east wind, was favourable to the growth of heresy. The farmer who rails at "that there Old Providence" who has taken his "missus," is not, indeed, far removed from the Savage who bangs his god about when rain does not come. Our Parson admitted that among the Midland agricultural labourers, who formed the bulk of his flock, similar feelings prevailed; but then, too, among them, as among Dr Jessop's people, there was a firm belief in the fair dealing of a higher power. "There ain't no use a-gainsayin' on it; but somehow that there Old Providence

them. They scold now as the Homeric warriors scolded. They harangue each other as their Ossianic ancestors harangued. We could hear them at it from the shore. No nail could be driven, no rope could be spliced, no patch of paint applied, without prolonged discussion. Saw or hammer in hand, the rest would gather round the rival orators—the Gladstone and Salisbury of the fray—and weigh gravely and with the utmost deliberation the arguments adduced on either side. Meantime, of course, all work was suspended; and the run to Stornoway had to be postponed—*sine die*.

hev been agen me all along, he hev! Whoi, last year he mos' spoilt my taters, and the year before that he kinder did for my turnips, and now he's been and got hold of my missus. But, I reckon, as there's *One abev* as'll put a stopper on ha if 'a go too fur." They all allowed that this was excellent; (I thought of Keats's—

> "He might not;—No, though a primeval God,
> The Sacred Seasons might not be disturbed;")

and it was followed by half-a-dozen others just as good. There was, for instance, one of a factor in the low country who had an evil reputation among the poorer tenants. "If the deil disna get Jimmy Wabster," one of them exclaimed with humorous vehemence, "there's nae use of a deil ava." The story of the two little lads who were overheard discussing some of the intricate and far-reaching conundrums which philosophy has failed to solve, was also excellent. "What did God make people for?" the smallest of the two theologians inquired. "God made people to be good," his six-year-old brother replied authoritatively; "*but He know'd they wouldn't be.*"

I did not think it worth while to join in the discussion. Divinity has always appeared to me to be a barren science; so long as we devote ourselves to the contemplation of the Beautiful—to Oriental pottery, to Sèvres, Wedgwood, and Derby, to Aldines and Elzevirs, to lovely old bindings from the libraries of Diane de Poictiers and Madame du Barry, to first editions of Shelley, to Burton's *Arabian Nights* and Villon's *Ballades*, to engravings of Boucher's nymphs and etchings from Greuze, to the glass of Murano and the wall-papers of Mr Morris—we are on firm ground; but theology! politics! morals! metaphysics!—bah!—I would as soon think of following a Will-o'-the-wisp into the Serbonian bog.

IX.

THAT night (or was it the night after?) we had a long talk in the verandah while we watched the sunset. The sunsets last summer came off punctually every evening after tea. We took seats for them as we would have taken seats for the play. "Now, ladies and gentlemen," the Chief would say, disrespectfully, "the performance is about to begin." We came at last to be critical. We knew exactly how the amber sea and the daffodil sky and the purple mountains of Rum and the golden blaze of glory behind Scur-na-Gillean should look at their best. Yet we were forced to own that the Great Scene-Shifter was equal and more than equal to the occasion. There were subtleties of colour,—elusive, intangible, evanescent as the Iris, — which the most daring and dashing painter would have failed to capture. Old Mother Earth was in one of her incalculable moods; brimful of surprises; as whimsical as a girl in her teens. Custom could not stale her variety, age could not quench her vivacity. We had sometimes, indeed, a lurking suspicion that she was laughing at us in her sleeve. The cloud-battalions would come up arrayed for battle; there would be a general scamper inside: before we had time to get to the fireside the sun was out again, and shining furiously in all directions, as we see him on old sign-boards. One day the mercury would be at 80° in the shade; next day, when we had donned our lightest summer jackets, it would fall to zero. Was it possible that this extremely old lady could be poking fun at us? It was of an evening, perhaps, that her caprices were most marked. The light, which had been playing wonderful tricks for an hour or two, would fade away about eleven o'clock, and leave us, as it seemed (save for stealthy flight of owl or rustling wing of humming-bird moth in the veronica), with stillest night; and then, on a sudden, the whole heaven, the whole sky to the zenith, would grow luminous again. There was indeed no darkness to speak of. The twilight of sunset faded insensibly into the twilight of sunrise. In that rare air—in

the radiance of perpetual day—we had out-soared, with Keats, the shadow of our night. And then, as the music of Shelley's words came back to us we had a glorified glimpse of Adonais himself—his head resting upon his hand, his arm resting upon his knee—gazing into the unfathomable sunset of an Atlantic beyond our ken.

The Mount of Vision, however, is too high for permanent occupation; its air is too rare for mortals; and we used to come down to the common earth with a thud. "Please, sir, here's black John" (or was it white John?—Ion baun, she said) "asking if you will be for going to the Loch to-morrow?" Surely, surely: the ayes have it; it is carried without a division; and the boys set about busking a new worm-fly which they had found killing.

So we had no time for the discussion on which I invited them to enter,—Mr Andrew Lang as Poet and Collector. I ventured to observe—"Andrew has a very pretty knack of saying pretty things prettily—but what does he know of Blue China?"—but nobody listened; and indeed I find that there is no opening for any really urbane criticism in a society which has been demoralised by the cruel frankness of Professor Huxley and the indelicate incisiveness of Mr Arthur Balfour.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" said the Parson, looking kindly at the lads, "what a splendid heritage is youth! Lord Beaconsfield was right after all—there is nothing like it. But the mischief is, we never know how good it is till it is gone."

"And indeed," added the Chief, "considering how short the whole thing is—from beginning to end, and what a muddle at best—it is hardly worth the trouble of being born. But as we have got into the scrape, Dobbs, don't you think we had better go to bed?"

X.

I HAVE had a natural delicacy in speaking to the Chief about Polly (much as I like him when serious, his broad banter—the playful gambols of a great St Bernard who

thinks nothing of rolling you over just for fun—is wanting in true refinement;—you can see his big jokes a mile off); but I made a shy approach to the subject with Mrs Mac. She is one of the kindest of women, and, except that she holds that no one is good enough for Polly, was quite willing to befriend me.

"You really think it was Polly? And you confess you have been an incorrigible and unspeakable Donkey? Well, there are some English people over Loch Arkaig way—only a mile off—but, as it happens, we do not happen to know them. They are far too grand for simple natives like ourselves. Madam turns up her nose whenever we meet, and takes the other side of the road. They came down last week, and it is possible that Polly may be with them, but I don't see how you are to get at her."

Fortune, however, on this occasion was willing to forgive me.

We had gone to Cuddy Island to gather terns' eggs. They are very good for those who like them—I don't. The rock rises sheer from the sea; and—rounding a sharp corner—on the topmost pinnacle where the cormorants sit in permanent session—I beheld Polly. I had been constantly watching for her; yet was I as much taken aback as Heine was on a like occasion by a similar apparition. "I saw the young Spring God, large as life, standing on the summit of an alp." The young Spring God! But what was the young Spring God to Polly? The wind was among her hair—her eyes were sparkling with animation—she was ruddier and rosier than ever; yet I hesitated no longer. I knew that my mind was made up. This was a prize for which no sacrifice could be too great. The fresh Highland air had blown a lot of nonsense out of my head, and I felt that Polly was worth all the Nankin Blue in China—and a deal more.

Was it too late?

She was quite gracious,—almost too urbane, I fancied. I have seen a good deal of her since; but I don't seem to make much way. Mrs Tudor Plantagenet has condescended to give me a distant nod; but I am unaffectedly conscious

that she looks upon me as—dirt. I am willing, however, to stand a good deal for Polly, and if I don't grovel it is simply because I don't think Polly would approve. My best chance is when she comes down to the beach to duck the little Plantagenets, and gather cowries and clams. There is a vast variety of brilliant shells in our bay; and I have developed (with alarming rapidity, I fear) an ardent passion for conchology. Shells are a good medium, I find; one can ring the changes on a shell-like ear (and Polly's is perfect), its shapeliness, its transparent delicacy, its inimitable curves, and so on; and the transition from shells to Shelley, and from Shelley to the most impassioned of his lyrics, is obvious. Then we search for white heather on our way back (and to find a bunch is luck, you know); and one can look, or try to look, unutterable things while she pins it into her collar. The Colonsay mermaid, to whom I had incautiously addressed a little ballade or rondeau (I forget which), was rather a sore subject at first—a bone of contention. Polly professed to be certain (most unreasonably) that I would have run away with the siren, if I had not been stopped; but we have mutually agreed to drop her. There is, however, a great big fellow in rough tweed knickerbockers at the Castle, about whom I am not comfortable. He is out deerstalking all day, so I don't see much of him; but he came down last Sunday; and he was introduced to me as Tom Something or other,—"Cousin Tom," she calls him. He is very free and easy with her, and never shows the least inclination to go down on his knees, or to treat her as Divinities ought to be treated. He calls her Polly with the most disrespectful familiarity, and she actually seems to like it. But he is her cousin, you see (only by marriage, it turns out), and she knew him when he was a boy at school. We had arranged to sail across to Sleat one day (to see another of the Macs), and he came with us. It was a little rough outside the reef, and the boat went up and down in the tideway, and shipped a good deal of water. I was the oldest on board, and insisted that it would be folly to go on. Polly made a little mouth at the suggestion, and Cousin Tom laughed in my face. Then he

offered to pull an oar against me (in a really offensive tone, as I thought—though everybody says he is so good-natured), and then something happened to my knickerbockers (for I was roused at last, and pulled madly and recklessly) which imposed a certain restraint upon my movements for the rest of the afternoon.

But the crowning disaster happened some days afterwards. We were coming down the hillside where the farmer's herd of black cattle were feeding. I have never liked cattle of any kind,—one can never be sure even of a milk-cow if she has horns. But there was in this herd a dun-coloured Bull of immense size, whose expression was simply diabolical. He had a wicked and malignant eye, and he had more than once fixed it upon me as I was passing. I did not so much mind this when he was on the other side of the fence; and I had, in fact, on these occasions, if the ladies were with me, ventured to assume an air of nonchalance, which I was very far from feeling. (His look said as plainly as possible,—I'll know you again, my lad; and the brute, I felt sure, had taken a mental note of the sky-blue Tam-o'-Shanter, dashed with pea-green, that a fair hand had braided, and of its wearer.) The herd were feeding, I have said; and I devoutly hoped that we might pass them without being observed; but a Bull never feeds, and is always on the look-out for mischief. It was clear that he saw us; for he began to paw the earth with his fore-feet and to bellow frightfully. "Don't look at him," said Polly, as cool as a cucumber, "and walk slowly, as if you didn't mind." (The brave girl had heard somehow that *that* was the proper way to treat a bull who was about to charge; but I didn't see it.) I gave a squint behind. He was certainly coming. In that supreme moment the conventionalities were suspended. "Run, Polly, run!" I exclaimed, with my heart in my mouth, so that I was barely intelligible, I daresay,—"run, Polly, and—in this supreme moment—I shall await the shock." I knew that in a supreme moment this was the right thing to say, and I really fancy I said it. But I have no clear recollection of what followed,—like the blameless Arthur, all my mind is clouded with a

doubt. A poignant sense of what the world would lose, if the essay On the Artistic Repression of the Domestic Affections remained unfinished, suddenly took possession of me. If Evadne was safe (as I trusted she was), where was the good of waiting, and (should a catastrophe occur) leaving the world so much the poorer? I had a duty to the public as well as to the individual. So we both made for the dike, in double-quick time, as they say,—at least I know I did. When I recovered my senses, I found Polly in a passion of tears (or was it laughter?); and a little ragamuffin—a six-year-old brat of a boy who had been lying in the ditch —was calling the Bull bad names in Gaelic, and hitting him with a stick.

We did not meet till next day, and then she was walking with Cousin Tom.

"I hope you are none the worse for the Bull," she said with angelic sweetness. "I was so sorry about it, Mr Gabriel; but Tom says it is really a cowardly creature, and that it only pretends to be furious." (It was an admirable piece of acting, I was tempted to remark; but I held my peace, for I divined what was coming.) "And—Mr Gabriel —Mr Dante—Mr Dob——" here she hesitated and paused, and then added in a rapid aside, looking up into his face with the blush of an angel,—"Tom, Tom, please would you tell him, Tom?"

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The essay On the Artistic Repression of the Domestic Affections was finished some time ago. It was fortunate that I was spared to complete it; for it has been considered by very competent judges (need I mention Brown-Jones and Mrs Major Higgins—Amélie Something that was) to contribute much original material to the elucidation of a difficult but increasingly interesting problem. On the whole, I incline to agree with the more advanced wing of the great army of Culture, and to hold with the experienced Mrs Mona

Caird, who, like the wise Ulysses, has seen many men and cities, that, looked at all round,—MARRIAGE IS A MISTAKE.

P.S. by the Chief.—Poor Dobbs! He was a good creature. We could have better spared a better man. For Dobbs is gone. He caught cold on the voyage to Stornoway, and he was very sick on the way back across the Minch. He was rather depressed, too, by finding that, instead of the pale pensive poetic Princess of Thule he had been led to expect, we were waited upon at Garynahine by a decidedly buxom wench. But he made a good end at the last. He renounced Swinburne and all his works. He forgave Polly and the Professor. (Plackie had written some complimentary stanzas on Dobbs, in which he compared him to John Knox and Julius Cæsar.) We buried him in the kirkyard of his native village. It may have been the delirium of the fever; it may have been a pathetic revival of early associations; but he particularly requested—they were his last words—that on the modest monument, which we delicately led him to understand would be erected to his memory, the baptismal "Samuel Ebenezer" should be inscribed in full.

VII.

THE ISLAND OF THE EIDER DUCK.

THE Island of the Eider Duck lies well out in the Atlantic; and except the Dhu Heartach lighthouse, there is nothing, so far as I know, between it and Newfoundland. A boat comes off to the steamer; our traps are hoisted over; and we let go the rope, figurative and literal, that binds us to the mainland. For another week we might as well be in another planet. It is upon the whole an invigorating experience. It does us good to learn that we can live without the *Times* and even the *Tomahawk*, and that civilisation, after all, is only a bad habit which we may expect to outgrow. We have managed somehow to get into the rut, and anything like intellectual independence is unknown among us. Everybody talks, for instance, as if the descent down the easy incline that leads to democracy were irresistible and inevitable; and yet we have only to shake ourselves free of the busybodies of the streets to discover that it is a passing fashion only, and that there is no absolute necessity in the matter. We babble just now about the county franchise, electoral districts, and the ballot-box—as if these fads were somehow bound up with the immutable laws of the universe; yet to another age they will be mere empty words, without vitality or significance—like the theological phrases of the middle ages, which, having once deluged Europe with blood, are as dead to us as the politics of the Pharaohs and the shibboleths of the Pharisees. There is nothing like cutting ourselves adrift from the main-

land for a week or two, if we wish to learn how little in our intellectual environment and social standards is essential—how easily we can dispense with the niceties and refinements and dexterities which are mainly distinctive of modern life—how the daily newspaper, and the telegraph, and the railway, and the parliamentary debate, and the caucus, are mere excrescences which have not added anything to the true happiness and virtue of mankind, and might be swept away again without reducing their sum. So, when my gloomy friends assure me that the Monarchy is on its last legs, I am content to reply—The whole horizon may change to-morrow. Democracy is as much a caprice as Mormonism, and Joseph Hume has as much to do with the appointed seasons of the universe as Joe Smith. You are bewitched by the spell of custom and familiarity; but open your eyes, stretch out your arms, break your bonds, and the enchantment will vanish with the mist.

The eider duck, after the wild swan, is probably the finest bird that frequents the Atlantic sea-board. They nest all about the island, especially among the long heather and reedy inlets of the eastern coast. The great precipices on which the Atlantic breaks are too steep and perilous, and the young birds, new from the nest, could hardly weather that tempestuous sea. From their earliest days, it is true, they are splendid sailors. When they grow older they grow somewhat unwieldy, and are not difficult to shoot on the water; but the half-fledged bird is splendidly supple, and seems to dive with the flash. In clear shallow bays we can see the little downy morsels oaring themselves swiftly a foot or two under water, and when forced to the surface, showing only the tips of their bills. At this season the family is under the maternal wing,—the drake, till well on in autumn, leaving his consort to her own resources. Meantime the male birds keep together, and are found quite on the other side of the island, in parties of a dozen or a score. Why they should manifest such selfish unconcern for their offspring, at a season when one would fancy that their services were most required, I do not know, but the fact is undoubted.

We hunted about the bays of the eastern coast; and though they were dotted all over with little family groups in brown, the brilliant white of the drake was conspicuous by its absence. A day or two later the anomaly was explained: running round to Eilan-a-Rhoan, before a sharp breeze, we surprised a company of a dozen drakes fully a mile from the shore, and well out of the way of the "blind rollers," which even on the stillest day of summer thunder whitely along the Atlantic shore. These "blind rollers" are rather unaccountable: the sea may be smooth as glass, unruffled by wind or tide, when on a sudden a monstrous wave, rising up in the middle of the bay, breaks with mist of foam and cataract roar on the frail coble of the unwary fisher. Some hidden energy that has been generated by the Gulf Stream in its long Atlantic voyage may thus unpleasantly and unexpectedly disclose itself; but whatever its cause, the phenomenon is exceptionally striking and impressive—reminding us of the thunder in a cloudless sky which Lord Herbert of Cherbury took for a sign.

The ragged reefs that lie to the south form an archipelago which bears a curious resemblance to the Venetian lagoon. This group of islands, on the largest of which the shrubby vegetation serves to support a few scraggy sheep—most of them, however, being bare rock on which no blade of grass can grow—are separated by deep and narrow channels—the canals of Venice?—through which twice a-day the Atlantic ebbs and flows. They can hardly, indeed, be more desolate or lonely than the dreary mud-banks on which the fugitives from the Italian mainland found shelter, and from which their wonderful city rose like an exhalation. Here, too, relics of an ancient civilisation are to be found—Gothic arches, crosses of exquisite finish and design; for the missionary genius of the Church had invaded these perilous seas, and held its own against Scandinavian reiver and native cateran. But to-day the solitude is unbroken—only some black bullet-heads rise and sink noiselessly as the boat threads the channel from one land-locked bay to another.

The owners of the black heads belong to the smaller variety

of Phoca—the *Phoca vitulina*. The great seals congregate about the outermost reef—Cann-riva—which is still a mile ahead, separated from us by what may be called the Grand Canal—a spacious inland sea. The field-glass is taken out; and sure enough, the unshapely grey objects that lie prone upon the brown tangle prove to be the game of which we are in search—a creature about as big and strong as a sea-horse. The Tapists are comparatively rare: this is one of their favourite haunts, and all told, they do not number a dozen, whereas the common seals are to be reckoned by hundreds. A plan of operations is agreed upon: we land one of our party on the other side of the reef, shove the boat into a narrow inlet, and await the result of the stalk. The sportsman steals across the rocks till well within shot. Then there is a puff of smoke and a sharp report, and the great beasts scuttle with marvellous rapidity into the water. When we arrive at the scene of action, we find the water round the place where they had dived red with blood, which continues to rise in copious streams from the bottom—a sure sign that the express-rifle and the explosive bullet had done their work. But it is long before we can hook up the enormous brute. Again and again he slips back into the deep water. At last by a united effort he is hauled on board, and we get a fair look at him. A fierce and villanous-looking customer indeed,—his great tusks being worn white and sharp with age and hard fighting and the vicissitudes of amphibious life in these stormy northern seas.

Another day we drive across sandy bents to Ardskinish—a long yellow beach, bent like a bow, with granite rocks outside and blue water between. A lovely bay!—facing the Atlantic, but sheltered from its billows by the intervening reefs. This is the favourite resort of the common seal; and when we reach the summit of the vast sandhills by which it is enclosed, we see them lying thickly about in all directions—on black rock and yellow sand. For half an hour or so we watch them through the glass, and so pretty a sight it would be hard to match. There is a sort of clumsy playfulness about the simple-looking creatures when they take to the land which is irresistibly comic. Murdoch engages to convey us within

shot. But somehow we would rather leave them undisturbed; for after watching them at their elephantine gambols it is impossible not to feel friendly. They look indeed so much nicer and cleaner and happier than most of our fellow-mortals! As it turns out, we find less cover than Murdoch had expected, and before we are fairly within shot they are all under water. The seal, however, is as inquisitive as a woman, and Murdoch opines that they will have another squint at us before they finally retire. So we are stowed away among the big stones which the tide has left bare; and sure enough—though at first well out of shot—the bullet-heads begin to show upon the surface, and with keen inquisition follow the keeper in his Parthian retreat from the shore. Soon they grow bolder, and at length one bolder than the rest rises well within shot—gazing about him with an expression of deprecative appeal in his brown eyes which is like to disarm us. But Murdoch, we know, would scorn our weakness; and we console ourselves with the reflection that it is a hundred to one against the bullet in this case finding its billet,—an "outer" or even a "centre" here being of no use whatever. Alas! it goes straight to the mark with altogether unaccountable directness, and the red circle upon the water widens and widens, until it is too plainly evident that the pretty innocent victim must be stretched, dead as Julius Cæsar, along the bottom. How and by what means (there being no boat at hand) the body was recovered need not here be told; but we suspect that among the lone shielings of the misty island the legend of the wild huntsman who in a state of quite primitive nudity dragged the monster ashore, still lingers.

VIII.

THE ISLAND OF THE SEA-TROUT.

OUR week in the Island of the Eider Duck is over, and the steamer is again in the offing. Over a placid moonlight sea we are carried smoothly in the course of a few hours to the Island of the Sea-trout; and for the past ten days our clever landlady has made us as comfortable as possible in the homely little tavern, which lies so close to the sea that during high tides the salt water comes up to the hall-door. But alas! for the first forty-eight hours the rain it rained every day, and every minute of every day. Such a wild burst of rain and wind as followed our peaceful voyage has seldom been known during early autumn, even in the Island of the Sea-trout—which is proverbially wet and windy. Four times a-day before dinner did we retire to the stable to smoke a meditative pipe; twenty times a-day did we open the front door and gaze helplessly upon the heavy-laden clouds that drifted up from Ben More in endless procession. Even the low-country shepherd was at last forced to admit that there was something more than "a bit mist" on the hill. It was "weet—weet." So hopeless, indeed, did the prospect become, that ultimately we were driven to—read.

There has been much discussion about the kind of literature we should take with us to the country. All the books without which no gentleman's library is complete must of course be scrupulously avoided. It is physically impossible to convey your copy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica;* and many

a novel in three volumes is just as heavy. A good deal may be said for the cheap translations of Gaboriau's romances, which, as we know from the publisher's advertisement, form Prince Bismarck's favourite reading; but the type is trying to the strongest eyes. A few hours may be profitably devoted to *The Sportsman's Guide;* but, unlike the witch of old Nile, even *The Sportsman's Guide* is not inexhaustible: besides, there was only one copy in the inn, and the competition after breakfast for the favourite manual was so excessive, that sometimes it was not available till well on in the afternoon. (It was rumoured in the coffee-room that one of our companions in adversity took it with him to bed—an unfair advantage that would have been resented if the weather had not cleared.) A friend had recommended us to try tentatively one or other of the Books of Extracts from our great writers — Thackeray, Ruskin, Landor, Browning, George Eliot—which are now so common, and which are easily packed and easily carried. We can hardly say that the experiment was successful. An author must indeed be a tremendously big fellow who can stand this iconoclastic treatment without suffering injury — internal or external. The maxims of Joubert are inimitable. They are as clean cut as cameos. But there is only one Joubert, and he was a Frenchman. Our English writers have not the art of compression. They cannot condense. The "extractor" who looks for a fitting pause in the "spate" of Mr Ruskin's eloquence may be compared to the rustic who stood on the bank of the river, and who is probably standing there still. Even the mellow wisdom of Thackeray loses something of its *curiosa felicitas* when divorced from the context. Thackeray was a true artist; and it is wonderful how the little bit of humorous cynicism, of sudden pathos, fits into and illustrates the narrative. But when the delicate morsel is cut out, and stuck, as a butterfly is stuck, on a pin, to be coldly regarded by critics who have not been warmed by the fire of the story, a certain thinness and poverty appear which had not struck us before. Let us not be misunderstood. *Vanity Fair* is not the less a great book because the separate bricks of which it is composed do not admit of displacement; on the contrary,

it may be said quite truly that the less quotable a book is, the higher must have been the art of the author. The perfect manner of Thackeray, its high-bred ease and familiarity, is not his least charm; and, after all, it was more his way of saying a thing than the thing said that was memorable. Landor and Matthew Arnold fare better—they polish their epigrams, and their speculation has a distinctive flavour: yet we say again —There is but one Joubert; and whoever assures you that Thackeray or Ruskin or Arnold taken in thin slices or homœopathic globules will stay the intellectual appetite, and carry you victoriously through a wet day in the Highlands,—trust him not—he is fooling thee.

At last—at last—there is a break in the clouds,—Ben More and the Ardnamurchan peaks have been fitfully visible since daybreak; the flooded river is unworkable, indeed, but the lochs must be in fine trim. To-day Loch Tanna is our destination—to-morrow Loch Dhu. As we climb the hillside the rain-clouds roll away, and John assures us that we are in for a spell of fine weather. The fisherman's "fine day" is not indeed the "fine day" of the ordinary mortal; but a light breeze and an occasional cloud are all that he needs on Loch Tanna, where, after rain, the trout are in high spirits and greedy as gleds. Your "cast" has been exhaustively studied during these days of enforced idleness—drake's-wing with claret body, a Zulu, and a worm-fly—and you are ready for action the moment the boat throws off.

The trout rise well for an hour or two, and it is clear they mean work. No dallying or coquetting, but a clean, swift run at the fly, and it is your own fault if they don't hook. The first "rise" of the season, especially if the trout be of fair size, is always an event. The little ripple on the water, the gentle pressure on the line, until you give the artistic turn of the wrist (mostly overdone, we fancy), and a good half-pounder is bending your light trout-rod, in a frantic effort to outwit you. On Loch Tanna, leisurely drifting before the wind, not far from the shore—for they lie upon the shingly bottoms, close to the reeds—you may easily kill your three dozen of choice trout,—game little fellows, who run till they

are dead-beat, and who are red as Lochleveners when placed on the table. Get your landlady to give you half-a-dozen at supper—split open, and done hastily with pepper and salt in the frying-pan—for next morning they are comparatively dry and tasteless. No one knows what a Loch Tanna trout is unless it be cooked within a few hours of its capture. Full of juice, the pink flesh comes away from the bone in creamy flakes—a toothsome morsel. The wind dies away towards evening, and we put up our rods, with six dozen in the boat, —fair trout all, though none are up to the pound. The Loch Tanna trout, as a rule, run two or three to the pound; and though there are sea-trout in the loch, they are seldom taken —the only one we hooked to-day throwing himself cleverly off the hook, after a smart run. The light rod and the small flies are hardly a match for this rapid and dashing fish.

The walk home in the still twilight through the upland moors—with the Ben More peaks reflecting from across the valley the Atlantic sunset—is full of charm.

Loch Dhu is an ideal loch. It is only a mile from the sea, and swarms with salmon and sea-trout; but it winds among the deep valleys of Ben More, and on a blustering day the gusts from the mountains sweep it from end to end. For sea-trout and salmon, so long as the boat can live, you cannot choose too wild a day. It is blowing half a gale as we push off, and the men have hard work to round the headlands. We pick up a few white trout the size of large herrings on our way; but the big fish lie farther up. Off Salmon Point a monster throws himself bodily out of the water. A hungry fish, we are told, and the boat is allowed to drift before the wind to the spot where he rose. At the first cast he goes straight at the fly, and before we know that he is fast, the line is spinning off the reel, and he is making for the middle of the loch. After the first wild burst the pace slackens, and we are able to get him in hand. We are landed at the point, and slowly and carefully we force him into the sandy shallows. There Alister watches his chance, and a five-pound trout is safely in the landing-net. The sea-trout is, to our mind, the king of fishes: brisk and dashing by nature, he never sulks

like the salmon, but fights with undaunted spirit—now at the bottom, now on the surface—till the game is up, and the gaff in his gills. The small shapely head—the lithe body—the powerful tail—the silvery mail with its delicate reflections of pink and emerald—are characteristic of the thorough-bred races who in the struggle for existence are sure to come to the top.

Man never is but always to be blest. We should have been content with our success, and gone home. The wind by this time had risen to a gale, so we drew the boat ashore, and lunched in a thicket of ancient birches, whose weird and fantastic arms were being tossed by the hurricane—like those of the damned spirits in Gustave Doré's Dante. By-and-by the wind moderated a bit, and we ventured out. We caught two or three more of the silvery herring-like half-pounders, and then the big fish of the day dashed at the fly. We saw him before he touched the hook, for he sprang almost out of the water as he went at it. Callum and Alister declared that he was a ten-pounder at the least. And he ran as few ten-pounders run, with a dead steady pull on the line which we were powerless to check. The men had to keep the boat's head to the wind, for the waves were like to swamp us, and we were too far out to land. We played him very carefully and craftily, for his uncanny and unaccountable proceedings had indicated from the first that something was wrong. At last he began to tire, his black back came to the surface, and the mysterious movements were explained. *He was hooked by the dorsal fin!* He had missed the fly in his headlong leap, but it had caught him by the back as he passed. We kept him steadily to the surface of the water till he was quite spent, but we never could bring him—try as we could—quite within reach of the landing-net. He had got to windward of us, and Callum, who was now alone at the oar (Alister being ready with the net), was nearly powerless against the gale. The heavy coble made no way, the waves broke viciously over us, and then—without any warning—the line suddenly slackened, and the bare hook was flying overhead. It had cut its way through the fin, and the fish was loose. Even after the hook

had come away, the big fellow lay flat on the surface, too exhausted to move. Then sinking leisurely into the invisible depths, he passed away from our gaze, and we saw him no more. Over the misery of that moment we must draw a veil. It comes back to us even yet in an occasional nightmare.

We have said little or nothing about the green and gold and azure, and purple and crimson, and lilac and orange, of our Atlantic sunsets. Are they not written in the Chronicles of Sheila of Styornoway and her sisters? But in justice to one exceptional night, we really cannot be quite silent. The sunset had been nearly as gorgeous as Mr Black could have made it; and now it was dark, and we were brewing a tumbler of extremely weak whisky and very boiling water before going to bed. Then the landlord came in—it was about eleven o'clock, the last day of June or the first of July—and told us that the sky was "just remarkable." We all sallied out to the pier at the back of the house. The picture was indeed perfect. The whole of the western sky was aflame with brilliant orange. Heaven and earth were luminous with the light. Most luminous above the horizon, it faded away at the zenith into lilac mist. The sea was brilliant as the sky, and between the two lay a belt of deepest purple — the Ardnamurchan range. Without this imperial cincture the picture would have been fine,—the dark dividing line gave it the finishing touch of excellence. One sees the "after-glow" in Switzerland and elsewhere, but as a rule it comes directly after sunset: here it was long past midnight before the glory waned.

IX.

A NIGHT AT SEA.

SOMETIMES of an evening when running noiselessly through the channels that separate the low sandy islands of the Orcadian group, I could have fancied that I was on the Lagoon. And the approach to the Capital by Scapa Flow is not unlike the approach to Venice. After the turmoil of the Pentland Firth, after the breathless struggle with the wild tides that meet at Dunnet Head, we have reached, as it seems, an inland lake, "where never wind blows loudly"; clusters of sad secluded islands lie about us; while, across the belt of sandy bent straight ahead, the sunset strikes on tower and steeple. And the impression deepens when, landing in the magical twilight of the North, we wander through curiously narrow and crooked lanes till we enter the vast cathedral, where solid pillars that almost rival St Mark's rise solemnly into the darkness overhead.

What is the meaning of it all? we ask ourselves later on. Might not these ocean-bound and wind-beaten rocks have been fitly left to seal and sea-gull? Why should sane men, who had heard no doubt of happier climes, have elected to pass their lives upon barren islands, where no tree will grow, where the sun is rarely visible through the Atlantic fogs, where the sea is bleak and inhospitable? It was a hard and strenuous life they were forced to lead to keep the breath in their bodies, and their scanty harvests were won by ceaseless toil. And yet they found leisure to raise a mighty minster, to pile

vast mounds over the chambers where their dead were laid, to drag huge boulders from hillside and valley, and plant them in stately circles for worship or sacrifice. In such a race there must have been a good deal, not only of the heroic element in general, but of the dogged obstinacy that will not admit that it can be beaten. Nay, indeed, of something more.

> "They dreamt not of a perishable home
> Who thus could build."

Thus it is that the true lover of Orcadia lives, if I may use the phrase, a double life.

The sportsman, if he be a naturalist to boot, discovers enough, and more than enough, to interest him. The ornithologist especially will find the summer day too short. The "plaintive creatures who pity themselves on moorlands" (thank you, Mr Butler!) are never far off. Morning and evening, through the open window which looks out upon the bay, he hears wail of curlew and pipe of plover. While he is smoking his pipe in the twilight, the snipe high overhead are winging their way to fresh springs and pastures new. (Why they thus suddenly change their feeding-grounds no man can tell; it has something to do with the wind possibly, something with coming storm.) What with ducks and geese in the mosses; what with wading-birds, dunlin and whimbrel and greenshank, on the shore; what with the gannet and the skua and the Manx shearwater on the open sea; what with grouse on the moors; what with trout in the lochs; what with such rare plants as the adder's-tongue, and the horned pond-weed, and the Primula scotica, and the Carex fulva,—the sportsman who is not intent on killing only need never pass an idle hour.

And for the artist there are the vast spaces of sea and sky; the shining sands; the glories of the sunset; and above and beyond all, the pageantry of the storm. For each day a fresh drama is transacted upon the heavens. The morning hours are often brilliantly bright; but ere mid-day the sun is suddenly obscured; the storm-cloud rises out of the Atlantic; sometimes the wind and rain lash the panes for hours;

sometimes the cloud breaks upon the hills of Hoy, and passes away like a dream. The *dénoûment* of the drama is always obscure; you cannot predict what the end will be; and so the interest never flags.

And among the landlocked bays and through the narrow channels there is excellent boating for those who can circumvent the tides. Unless, indeed, you know something of the obscure laws which govern the ebb and flow of the ocean in this network of islands, you are pretty sure to come to grief. For round many of them it runs like a mill-race. Between Hoy and Stennis, for instance, the ebb is simply a foaming and swirling torrent, against which sail and even steam are powerless. That vast body of water pouring into the Atlantic is as irresistible as a Canadian rapid. But if you study the tides, you can seek out secluded nooks where the seals are basking on the tangle, and the wild duck are wheeling round the bay, and the blue-rocks are darting out of the caves, and the grouse are crowing among the heather, and where for ten months out of the twelve the peace is absolute, and silence unbroken save by the shepherd's dog.

This is Orcadia from the outside, so to speak; but beneath a thin layer of turf or peat there is the historic or prehistoric Orcadia. It is a history of immense antiquity,—a history, in the stately words of an old writer, "not to be computed by years of annual magistrates, but by great conjunctions and the fatal periods of kingdoms." Maeshowe and the Stones of Stennis stood where they stand before the Vikings came; and older than Stennis or Maeshowe are the weapons and implements in flint and bronze and iron which are dug up every day in bog and moss, and forwarded to the indefatigable Mr Cursiter. The ghost of many a primeval Orcadian, whose long sleep has been rudely disturbed by spade or plough, must haunt the pleasant and hospitable dwelling where all that remains of him and his tempestuous life has been safely put away under lock and key—each restless Spirit of the Storm on his own shelf.

We had seen the Stones of Stennis, and the Brochs, and Maeshowe, and the Church of St Magnus, and the castles of

Bishop and Earl; and when at length we went in our friend's yacht to visit the Old Man of Hoy, imagination was still busy with the pale ghosts of the buried and unburied dead whose rest we had dared to break. The tumultuous rush of the ebb had carried us through the narrow Sound into the wide Western Ocean; and before the wind went down we had passed the Kaim of Hoy, and St John's Head, and the long buttress of cliff which was raised no doubt to prevent the islands from being swept bodily away by the Atlantic rollers. We had not counted, however, upon an absolute calm, and had meant to return with the tide. But when we were told after our evening meal that we must wait where we were for the morning breeze, it did not occur to us to complain. The night was too exquisite for sleep—for sleep at least under a slated roof. The balmy air of the Gulf Stream was about us. Wrapped in our rugs, we could scan the mighty crags and watch for the moon to rise. Too exquisite for sleep; and yet I must have dozed; for when I looked again the moon was high in heaven.

* * *

There was not a breath of air in the sky or on the water. The ocean was flooded with pallid moonlight; the heat of the day had been converted into a transparent mist—a mist of ghostly transfiguration — through which, as in a dream or through a veil, we saw the solid earth. There was no sound save that of the moving waters "at their priest-like task,"—the tide that softly lapped the iron bases of the hills. At times, indeed, a murmur came from the rocks where in solid ranks thousands of parrots and marrots sat beside their nests. It was the first watch of night; but midnight was at hand. All on board were asleep except myself, and one seaman at the stern who idly handled the tiller. We were drifting slowly with the tide, no doubt; but the progress was inappreciable. A phantom ship upon a phantom ocean! Mighty precipices hundreds of feet in height rose out of the water —a bow-shot from us on our right. The moonlight did not

touch them—did not at least pierce the gloom of the dark fissures and caverns into which the seals stole noiselessly as we passed. Only the Old Man of Hoy stood out clear against the sky—clean-cut as by a knife. But even while wrapped in my rugs I lazily regarded this titanic pile of weather-beaten stone, I was aware of a mystic change. Like the smoke that issued from the vase when Solomon's seal was broken, the gigantic pillar at our side slowly assumed the semblance—nor yet the semblance only—of a human form. I was not surprised; it seemed only right and fitting that the Titan who, during the primeval conflict of elemental forces, had been turned into stone, should be permitted to converse with the representative of a later race. In that illusive light, indeed, nothing was incredible,—nothing too weird and extravagant for belief. *Certum est quia impossibile est*, I said to myself, as Sir Thomas Browne had said before me, and Tertullian before Sir Thomas Browne. The voice was low and placid and passionless,—serene with the serenity of an immeasurable past. I did not dare at first to interrupt the monologue, which began in a speech as unknown to me as the gurgle of the guillemots. For he did not notice us for a time; he was looking across the sea, straight across to Newfoundland, whence the sunset had struck age after age upon his upturned face; and "the large utterance of the early gods," which had grown quite archaic before Homer was born, was doubtless his native tongue. The Gaelic of the Garden of Eden, the Norse of Odin's Walhalla, can still be construed by scholars; but Thea and Saturn are dumb. It could not well be otherwise, perhaps; for—to judge from what I heard that night—the language they used must have had more affinity with the sough of the wind and the ripple of the stream than with articulate words.

But after a while he appeared to become conscious that he was no longer alone, and that a monologue in a dead language was out of place, and indeed barely civil. It may be true that Titans are not naturally communicative; but for ten or twelve thousand years he had led a life of extreme seclusion; and the sociable instinct is deeply seated. How it

came about I cannot exactly undertake to explain; but ere many minutes had passed I found myself, as matter of fact, engaged in amicable conversation with my gigantic neighbour,—a conversation devoted mainly to the more striking incidents of his long, if not varied, career. Much of the conversation is lost—irrevocably lost; but a few fragments cling to the memory.

The interchange of the customary civilities was followed by the usual remarks upon the inclemency of the weather. By mutual consent, implied rather than expressed, anything in the nature of political controversy was avoided, and Mr Gladstone's name was not even mentioned. The conversation might consequently have flagged had we not accidentally discovered a topic of common interest. We were both naturalists; and the sea-birds with whom he had cultivated friendly relations, and who treated him with the most absolute confidence, had been my special study. He had known the Great Auk intimately and regretted his untimely end. (I promised, by the way, to let him have Harvie-Brown's monograph.) But the King was never, he said, the same bird after his wife's death, and had told him, indeed, that he did not care to live. He could not honestly say that he missed the white-tailed eagle (who had deserted his eyrie a year ago); for, though a gentlemanly bird of good family, he was a bit of a glutton, and his relations with the lesser gulls were strained, and led to constant unpleasantness.

"What amazes me most," he went on, "is the freshness of interest which the numberless generations of marrots and parrots I have known contrive to maintain. My brisk little neighbours never lose heart. They continue to lay their eggs summer after summer with an intrepid faith in the future that never fails them. One would have fancied that by this time they might have come to see that the game was not worth the candle. The father and mother birds have seldom opportunity to hatch more than a brood or two before they are cut off; and how many of the chicks survive? The perils of the deep are incalculable; and yet no experience will convince the overwhelming majority that the life of storm and stress on

which they have entered, and from which they cannot escape, is not worth living. Whence comes that seed of day which forces them to persevere, and which the most bitter frost cannot kill?"

I looked at him anxiously; I was afraid that his observations, ostensibly confined though they were to the parrots and marrots, might have a wider application. But there was no irony in his tone, no cynicism on his lip; and I ventured to remark that when the breeding season was over, and the birds had scattered, he had possibly had leisure to observe what his fellow-creatures (if I might without impropriety use the word) were about.

"Yes," he continued, thoughtfully, "I have seen something of them. The races of men that make haste to destruction! But they do not interest me much—as little indeed as the monotonous procession of the Seasons. I have, however, more than once talked over their prospects with my good friend and neighbour, the Dragon of Maeshowe, who is a shrewd judge of character, though his field of observation, no doubt, has been comparatively limited. When I first came here," he went on, "some æons ago, the scrath and the phoca had the islands pretty much to themselves. They led an easy life,—fish were plentiful and the weather was fine. We have no such summers now as we had then, and salmon and sea-trout have become comparatively scarce. Indeed the salmon, I hear, has left us for good. That Golden Age of peace and plenty came to an end when the first boat-load of bearded rovers was driven by stress of weather upon our shores. These sailed away and brought back others,—men and women who bred and multiplied—yea, multiplied exceedingly. That," he concluded, "is the whole story—a story as tedious as it is trivial."

"But," I interrupted, "consider the Progress that has been made!"

"What is Progress?" he responded. "As it does not occur in the vocabularies I have consulted, it is a word, I presume, that has been only recently coined. May I ask you to be good enough to define what it embraces?"

"Oh—progress—progress—why, my dear sir, every one knows what Progress means. Progress is the telegraph, the telephone, the half-penny paper, the right to vote as you please, sixty miles an hour by express——"

"That will do," he replied, gravely; "I shall not trouble you further. I find that in effect the phrase must have been in use ever since I can remember anything. Even in these remote islands it is a household word. You have seen my friend Cursiter's museum of Orcadian antiquities? So you know something of our history. We have had the flint age, and the bronze age, and the age of Maeshowe and the Stones of Stennis, and the devout medieval age which built the great church at St Olaf, and the modern secular age which built the squalid little barn in which, if I am not mistaken, you sat last Sunday. But what has come of it all? Do you mean to tell me that you are happier or handier or wiser all round than the men who shaped the flints and hammered the bronze? Only consider what invention and ingenuity were required to light the first fire, to wing the first arrow, to fashion the first frying-pan, to boil the first leg of mutton. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte;* when the initial difficulty has been overcome, you are within measurable distance of the printing-press and the spinning-jenny."

"True," I answered; "but on the ethical side you must surely admit (if you are not an absolute pagan)"—I could see that he winced at the implication—"that we have outstripped our fathers. The rapacious instinct has been subdued. The wolf who worried the sheep has been tamed into the sheep-dog. That is what Professor Huxley maintains."

"That, too, was the contention of Zeus and the younger gods when they turned us out of heaven. But you know how Zeus behaved himself, and what kind of place Olympus became? Be sure that the sheep-dog is still a wolf at heart. With the least encouragement the native savageness will assert itself. Paris, they tell me, is the centre of your civilisation, and yet you will hardly deny that the Parisian petroleuse is just the wild-cat over again. The puzzle, my ingenuous young friend, is as old as the hills. Evolution can only evolve; it does not create. How are you to get out of your-

self? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? What you call Progress is merely the change of manners—due to bit and bridle, to the scavenger and the policeman; the essential element, the dominant and determining factor, remains the same. The tide of mortal affairs is like the tide of the ocean; by an invariable law the flood is followed by the ebb. Huxley—if it be the Huxley I knew when speech was pellucid as the mountain spring, and logic cut like a sword—will tell you as much; for Huxley, like myself, is a survival. Has he not confessed indeed that you have reached the stage—the fatal stage in national life—when the duties of the individual to the State are forgotten, and his tendencies to self-assertion are dignified by the name of rights?"

"But Mr Huxley admits that the ethical force will prove superior to the cosmic, and that the return to the ruthless and unscrupulous struggle for existence which we call barbarism——"

He shrugged his shoulders (or was it only an optical delusion?), and I fancied that I heard a contemptuous whistle, which, however, may have come from a half-awakened curlew, —for the dawn was at hand.

"Even your most lucid thinker cannot escape from his environment," he answered; and then he added—"Neither you nor he, indeed, can be expected to recognise and appreciate as I do the essential truth of what one of your own poets has said:—

> "He might not:—No, though a primeval God;
> The Sacred Seasons might not be disturbed."[1]

He was exasperatingly cool, and I was rather nettled; so I said slowly, looking him straight in the face, "Do you mean

[1] Mr Huxley's reply will be found on page 300 of the First Series of 'Table-Talk': "I must have done with such escapades as that at Oxford. Imagine having to talk about Ethics when 'Religion and Politics' are forbidden by the terms of the endowment!—and to talk about Evolution when good manners obliged one to abstain from dotting one's i's and crossing one's t's. Ask your Old Man of Hoy to be so good as to suspend judgment until the Lecture appears again with an appendix in that collection of volumes the bulk of which appals me."

to assure me, my venerable friend, on your word of honour, as a Titan and a philosopher, that there is nothing new under the sun?"

"Well," said the Old Man, after a prolonged pause (it may be that he was wearied by my pertinacity), "it is possible that I am doing you less than justice. I beg your pardon. But it is only of late years—only the other day, indeed—that my attention has been directed to a practice for which in my experience no precedent can be found. The art is distinctively modern, if not characteristically English. In this respect I am ready to admit that you have not been anticipated. Look there!" he exclaimed, pointing to the opposite bluff, on which in monstrous characters a facile but audacious brush had inscribed such words as these:—PRATT'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS—TRY OUR CASTOR OIL—THOMS' SOFT SOAP IS THE BEST—BUNCOMBE'S POWDER FOR BUGS, and so on.

The day was breaking ere I had spelt out the last word, and when I turned to the Old Man,—

"There is a breeze in the offing," said the skipper, touching his cap. "We shall have it directly. We did not care to waken you, Mr Holdfast; but, now that the tide has turned, we shall be at Stromness in an hour."

That Sabbath-day was long memorable to us. The breeze that wafted us slowly along the coast had come with the Gulf Stream from tropical islands, and was soft and mellow. Stromness was only half-awake when we passed into Scapa Flow; a purple haze rested on the hills of Hoy; and though now and again we saw a group of country people on their way to church, and though far off there was a glamour of sea-gulls, the peace was absolute and unbroken. The beatific hush of the seventh day had fallen upon us. Nature, like man, was at rest from her labours. Even the shy wild birds knew that they were safe—safe while the brief truce lasted. Eider-duck and black guillemot, too lazy to fly, too confident to dive, looked the "auld enemy" fearlessly in the face. It was growing dark before we dropped our anchor beside the Chapel of the Rock. The service was closing; they were singing their evening hymn. It is a hymn made solely for pastoral and seafaring people who are sorely tried by wind

and evil weather, and has no place in the authorised mainland version. *The E'en brings a' Hame*, they call it (after the beautiful old proverb), and it is set to Mendelssohn's music :[1]—

"Upon the hills the wind is sharp and cold,
The sweet young grasses wither on the wold,
And we, O Lord, have wandered from Thy fold ;
But evening brings us home.

Among the mists we stumbled, and the rocks
Where the brown lichen whitens, and the fox
Watches the straggler from the scattered flocks ;
But evening brings us home.

The sharp thorns prick us, and our tender feet
Are cut and bleeding, and the lambs repeat
Their pitiful complaints,—oh, rest is sweet,
When evening brings us home.

We have been wounded by the hunter's darts.
Our eyes are very heavy, and our hearts
Search for Thy coming,—when the light departs
At evening, bring us home.

The darkness gathers. Through the gloom no star
Rises to guide us. We have wandered far.
Without Thy lamp we know not where we are.
At evening bring us home.

The clouds are round us, and the snow-drifts thicken.
O Thou dear Shepherd, leave us not to sicken
In the waste night,—our tardy footsteps quicken ;
At evening bring us home."

It was only a coincidence, no doubt ; but I said to myself, as we pulled the dingy ashore, that I had somehow found an answer to the gloomy vaticinations of the Titan.

[1] Adagio non troppo in E major, from the "Lieder ohne Worte."

BOOK THREE

ALPINE RESTING-PLACES

THE GROSS GLOCKNER.

ALPINE RESTING-PLACES.

DAVID HUME has failed to explain away the miraculous rapidity with which young animals grow up; and thus it came about that Madge Holdfast was eighteen years old before any of us—her father least of all—had realised that she was out of the nursery. Madge was the bosom friend of my niece, Isabel Lee—who has come to live with me latterly; and Isabel would probably have gone abroad with the Holdfasts that summer when Mark was out of sorts and had been ordered away by Dr Muffin (who succeeded Dr Jackson), had it not been that she was paying a visit in Connemara to one of our Irish cousins. (Tom Graham, my partner, a cousin of the Holdfasts, went in her place, and Tom is a host in himself.) It was as well for me perhaps; for the letters that Madge wrote to her friend, and which I was privileged to peruse, were as good as a play. Madge Holdfast—Madge

Holdfast that was—is a monstrously clever girl (and as a rule I don't think that I like clever girls); but Madge, I am ready to admit, is as nice as she is clever; and if of late she has taken to calling me "Old Cross-patch," she does it as Lilian's parrot with his lady's finger,—

"And bites it for true heart and not for harm"—

and I forgive her.

MADGE HOLDFAST TO ISABEL LEE.

I.

FROM THE RIFFEL HAUS.

THERE never was such luck, my dearest Bell. You know how much I wanted to see the Alps that Tom raves about. Tom is a terrible flirt with you girls, my dear, but he is constancy itself to Monte Rosa and the Jungfrau. It all came about through papa. He had been terribly worried with his plea for Lucrezia Borgia; the *Spectator* didn't half like its "ethical departure"; the *Saturday Review* said that even Charles Kingsley or Froude couldn't have made a greater mess of it; and the penny-a-liners—but I needn't bother you, dear, with the outs and ins, only papa was abused right and left as a perfect pickpocket—poor dear papa, who wouldn't hurt a fly. So he was out of sorts, and La Beata insisted that he should see Dr Muffin and be patched up there and then. Tom brought Dr Muffin down next day in the boat, and it was all arranged after dinner when we were sitting out on the shore looking at Cuilmore through the twilight. Well, Tom may say what he likes about the Swiss mountains, but there never was such a purple as we had that evening, except perhaps in one of Mr Waller Paton's pictures. I rather suspect that Tom was at the bottom of the prescription—only to be sure it's quite the fashion now with the faculty; and I do think it's a vast improvement on the horrid pills and

powders they used to give us in the nursery—I don't expect I shall get the taste of the currant jelly out of my mouth as long as I live. It was just this:—papa was to give up his books and his boating and go and live for six months seven thousand feet above the sea. But he couldn't afford to keep a balloon, papa said, rather grimly at first. The doctor and Tom, however, were resolved that he should go. There were no end of famous hotels in Switzerland and the Tyrol, where you could live for months above the clouds, and feel exactly like a lark when it is up in the sky. But for the removal of pressure from the lungs, Tom remarked with perfect gravity, the lark could never manage to sing as he does; and Dr Muffin added that it had the same effect on the liver. "And the heart, too, I hope?" papa asked rather drearily, indicating that it was there or thereabouts that the pressure in his case was sorest. "Certainly," said Dr Muffin; "only in the pharmacopœia we call it the stomach"—O Bell, Bell, I do hate these men of science who can play with our tenderest feelings in this cruel way. Tom did not seem to see it, and only pressed his hand over his waistcoat with an air of quizzical adoration as he looked at me. And this from Tom, who I had thought,—but men are monsters, my dear, and only nice, really nice, in a novel.

Tom was appointed Commander-in-Chief. "Don't, for goodness' sake, bring a lot of fal-de-lals with you," he said to me. "Just suppose you are a private in a marching regiment and that all you have in the world must go in your kit. I hate dragging a whole lot of trunks and trash up a mountain road on the back of a wretched mule. So take only what you need for a change—some clean cuffs and collars and one or two pink and sky-blue ties to make you look nice at *table d'hôte*." (Nice, indeed, Master Tom!) "And you must have nails in your boots and a tuck or two in your petticoat, and a pair of blue spectacles, and an opera-glass slung across your shoulder like Diana's quiver. Man needs but little here below in the way of dress, and woman too if she only knew it. A tight and tidy little lass never looks better than when she is scrambling over the glacier with all her 'things' in a knapsack.

Why, there was a charming girl at the Bel Alp last summer who lived for a month on a clean collar and a 'change' of dry stockings. The father was an English earl, and the daughter was as thoroughbred as a Derby winner. The famous Boston beauty, Lily Vanderloo, who had two mules to carry her trunks, looked dowdy beside her. They are hothouse plants, to be sure, these Yankee dolls, and can't stand the cold water and the keen air which make you English girls, Madge, so nice and bracing." Tom is simply aggravating at times. He knows I hate his patronising airs, but that of course only makes him worse. To hear him talk, you would fancy that he was the Sultan of Turkey or the Khan of Tartary, and that we were all ready to go down on our knees to the men—detestable creatures! What a pity it is, Bell, that there are no Amazons now; it would have been so jolly to get away quite by ourselves, like Mr Tennyson's princess. But after all, to be sure, *she* wasn't good for much.

Then the question of how and where we were to go was hotly debated. Tom had it all cut and dry, and he had his way of course. Tom is like a benevolent hurricane, and though I make a show of opposition, it is a mere matter of form, for he carries all before him. It was no good going to the Pyrenees; the mountains there were all carefully labelled and packed away out of sight; our rough tweeds and serges would be utterly ludicrous at Eaux Chaudes or Eaux Bonnes; a Frenchman drinking the waters was little better than an over-dressed monkey, being in fact the missing link for which Mr Darwin had been seeking so long. Then the Bernese Oberland was eaten up by countless herds of Cockneys, and the Engadine was as dull as a ditch—in short it was just a big ditch, a trench driven by some Titanic plough, cried Tom, carried away on a wave of tempestuous scorn. No, no —the Alps of the Valais, the Alps of the Tyrol, the Alps of Italy—these were the happy hunting-grounds where living was cheap and the people frank and friendly and free-spoken, where we could listen to the marmot and watch the lämmergeier, where bears and chamois and ibex still gave local colour to the landscape.

Then Tom knew by heart all the delightful old towns, with their steep roofs and quaint gables, which we must take by the way. He gave us quite graciously the choice of three routes. We might go by Rouen, or by Trèves, or by Nuremberg. If we went through France, there was Dieppe, with its shelly beach and white cliffs against a background of bluest sky, and Norman crosses and Norman ponies, and queer fishermen with wide-spreading picturesque nets, and queerer fisherwomen with high caps and sharp sand-eel spades; and marvels of Gothic architecture at Rouen, lovely old windows and delicate lacework in stone and lime, and imps and satyrs and saints and martyrs playing hide-and-seek among the carvings on the church doors; and the Cathedral of Sens, and the towers of Tonnerre and Dru and Maçon, and old Burgundian houses and old Burgundian shrines at Dijon, to say nothing of the Gloire de Dijon itself in its glory. (And, O Bell, looking through a gateway of the cloister, into a neglected garden, we saw such a thicket of roses, such a blaze of light, as Dante Rossetti—Dante, is it not?—puts about his bewitching Venus of the Flowers.) Or we might go through Belgium and Luxemburg to Trèves, with its Roman pillars and arches and baths, and to Strasburg, where the storks build their nests among the brown chimneys and stand like sentinels upon the house-tops, and so on through the rustic old-world towns of the Black Forest to Constance or Schaffhausen. And then there was the last and the best,—the road by Cologne and Andernach and Aschaffenburg and Nuremberg and Ratisbon —the fair fertile country of the Rhine and the Danube— which would bring us down at last upon queenly Salzburg, the gateway of the Austrian Tyrol. And to think, Bell, that all this was only the prelude to the play! It was too delightful, and I could have danced from morning till night from sheer intoxication of spirits, only *that* would have been rather undignified for a young lady fresh from Girton.

I really cannot tell you how we got here. I know we came through France, amid a blaze of poppies and corn-flowers; and I have a dim vision of windmills and straight canals and peat-boats and prim rows of stunted poplars; and the dark

fir-clad hills of the Jura began to rise before us while we were yet far off in the great plain of Burgundy; and then in the afternoon we began to crawl up the mountain-side through wood and rock and wide parklike spaces of emerald lawn; and the air was sweet with the fragrance of millions and millions and millions of white lilies—the pale Narcissus; and through open glades in the pine-woods we could look down into the deep glens at our feet where picturesque steeples and high-roofed houses of a deep sun-burnt red were dotted about among the fields. But it was after we had crossed the high tableland of the Jura—somewhere between Pontarlier and Cossonay, I think—it was getting late and the shadows were deepening in the hollows and creeping up the pine-slopes, when we beheld what papa called a beatific vision. It might be fifty miles, it might be a thousand, but far away over the blue haze of the plain, over purple peak and storm-piled cloud, we saw along the southern sky a phantom outline, softly dimpled as a baby's arm yet strong as adamant, spectral and remote in heavenly inaccessibility, yet with such a faint blush of delicate rose as may touch the cheek of a new-born spirit, all unused as yet to the slight and diaphanous vestments of the blest. "Mont Blanc!" said Tom, lifting his hat as if we had gone into church. It was almost too lovely: do you know, Bell, I felt half-inclined to cry (only Tom would have chaffed me so), and I noticed that papa was wiping his spectacles. The great mountain so mighty in its immutable repose, the flush so fragile and perishable—it had died away as we gazed—what is there in such supreme beauty that makes us sad? Papa said something in a low tone to La Beata—that's mother, you know—about time and eternity, the things seen and the things unseen, those which pass away and those which cannot be shaken; and La Beata (Tom, who is always saying things, declares that she is just half my age, but then there was no Girton, he adds, when she was a girl) laid her hand softly upon his arm and gazed wistfully into the darkness. But Tom and I, at the other end of the carriage, were now engaged in a mild, a very mild flirtation, and I could not hear exactly what passed between them.

II.

FROM THE RIFFEL HAUS.

DEAREST BELL,—We are having a lovely time of it. There has not been a cloud in the sky or a speck of mist on the mountains since we came here; and yet the grumblers complain that it is always wet in Switzerland. The fact is that English people come too late; after a long spell of dry weather it often breaks about the middle of August, and rains right on till October. In our own Highlands it is never quite dry, and because we have some big trees round about the house to shelter us from that pitiless inquisitor the east wind, our friends make a point of inquiring, "Don't you find it Damp?" (I wonder what they would think if I asked them whether, being such awful stupids, they didn't find themselves Dull and Dreary and Dismal?) But in Switzerland, if you are in luck, you get well heated through before the summer is over, and Tom says that we will carry enough of sunshine home with us to last us till spring. Now, Bell, where was I when I left off? Just outside Lausanne, was it not?

The terrace at the Hotel Gibbon is far nicer than anything at Ouchy. You have no idea how nice it is to sit there in the cool of the evening under the trees and watch the moonlight on the lake at your feet, and fancy that you are Gibbon finishing his *Decline and Fall*,—for it was here, just on such a night, that he wrote the last words of that overwhelming history. (It overwhelmed us at least, dear, did it not?) I

am not going to tell you anything about our visit to Chamonix; for, though they have built a great new hotel at Montanvert above the Mer de Glace, we did not care much about it—it ought to be on the other side of the valley, from whence the whole range of the Mont Blanc Aiguilles are seen in one stately group holding royal court around their king. We went across the Tête Noir to the Rhone Valley, and, though the Rhone Valley, with its flies and its frogs, is quite detestable, the valleys that run into it from the south are awfully nice. Evolina and Zinal and the Arpitetta Alp and St Luc and the Bella Tola and the Meiden Pass and the lonely Turtman Thal and the little inn at Gruben under the glaciers of the Weisshorn, are places to dream about. It is such fun wading through the snow. If you had seen La Beata and me, with our gaiters on and our skirts kilted up, scrambling up the Bella Tola, or holding on like grim death to the guide as we glissaded down the steep snow-slope on the other side of the Meiden into the Turtman Valley, what would you have thought of us, I wonder? I have lost my heart to the Weisshorn—from the Bella Tola it is faultless—it dazzles one with its perfect symmetry and absolute grace—it is, papa says, the queen among mountains, as the Venus of Milo (which we saw in the Louvre) is queen among women. And now, Bell, you must understand that after one more terrific scramble across the Augstbord Pass we came down upon St Niklaus (where there are such nice people at the inn), and then up the Nicolai Thal to Zermatt and the Riffel, the special country of that benevolent despot, Monsieur Seiler. The Riffel is the first of our Alpine resting-places.

III.

FROM THE RIFFEL HAUS.

MR MOWBRAY is the greatest positive contrast to Tom. He draws a little, and he writes a little, and he smokes a little, and he walks a little, and he talks a little, and he lies about on the grass in the sunshine the rest of the day. The Riffel is the most eligible place in the world for lying on the grass. So Mr Mowbray—Raphael Mowbray—stays a good deal at the Riffel. He has driven Tom nearly frantic by his incurable indolence, and by—but you shall hear all about it by-and-bye. I wish you were here, my dear: to have two young men on one's hand, the one as lazy as the day is long, the other boiling over with morbid activity, is too much for one girl. We could manage them so nicely between us, Bell; as it is, the situation is a little mixed.

I really cannot say how (I mean under what conditions) I like the Riffel best. It is very delightful when La Beata and I seat ourselves on the terrace, round which the Matterhorn, the Dent Blanche, and the Weisshorn, and ever so many sharp-cutting peaks, draw a wonderful semicircle, with our work after breakfast; still more so after *table d'hôte*, when, wrapped up to the ears in our sealskins—for the air grows chilly the moment the sun is hidden—we come out to have a chat with the guides, and to see the mist surging up the valley, and the lights of Zermatt twinkling through the gloom. I love the twilight always and everywhere; but here it adds mystery to mystery—one cannot tell which is solid land and

which is cloud-land: as I look over the terrace into that cloudy deep, I remember how the Blessed Damozel in Rossetti's poem looked over the battlements of heaven.

"Is that you, Miss Holdfast?" and a dim figure begins to make itself palpable through the gloom, until it seats itself on the wall beside me. "You looked like a spirit in the darkness. I could have fancied that you were just a wave of the mist that would float away as I approached."

I said something about being far too solid and prosaic for a spirit; whereupon he replied that he was quite happy to hear me say so, for the solid and prosaic just suited him, and as a rule he didn't much care for spirits. And then we had a long talk about ghosts—do you know, Bell, he has one in his family?—not a ghost that frightens you out of your wits, but a picturesque and attractive apparition, with long black hair and *such* eyes, "not unlike yours, Miss Holdfast, if you will permit me to say so."

This was pretty well for the first week, Bell? and I must say for a young gentleman who lounges about the grass or the sofa all day he brightens up wonderfully after dark. I told him that he reminded me of the great big moths, which get quite lively when we are going to bed. But he didn't mind in the least. "Splendid fellows!" he said. "Wouldn't you like to get one saddled and bridled and ride away on his back through the gloaming, like Ariel, or Puck, or Heinrich Heine?"

Meantime Tom and I and papa, and once or twice La Beata, had grand excursions. It is very unpardonable, but I really do not care for the Matterhorn. Here he is always before us, hard, angular, unsuggestive—a huge unattractive creature that should be put into a caravan by Mr Barnum and taken about the country. He quite wearied me after a day or two. There is nothing of the infinite about him, as there is in our northern sea, or even in Monte Rosa. The long billowy snowfields of the Lyskamm are the delicatest of poetry in comparison. We see only a scrap of the Breithorn from our bedroom window; but in half an hour from the inn door we can reach the Rothekumm (don't go

to the Görner Grat—it spoils all), and there the revelation is complete. We are done with the grosser forms of stone and lime; there is no greenness of grass or purple of gentian or crimson of clover; no bleating of sheep or tinkling of cattle-bells; but a silent world of ineffable purity, which might have been let down, like the New Jerusalem, out of heaven from God, without any taint of earth. Papa says that we have to go to the vision of St John for fit words for such a shrine. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;" "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire;" and then he read us—we were alone with La Beata, and it was our evening service—the beautiful verses about the white robes of the redeemed. "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

It was quite dark before we got back to the inn, and found Tom waiting for us at the door. "You should have been in bed an hour ago," he said to me. "They are to call you at one. Zimmermatter says it is to be a lovely day; so we are going to the Cima de Jazi."

IV.

FROM THE RIFFEL HAUS.

IT is so funny, Bell, to get up about the time you are going to bed. I was wakened from a dream, in which Tom and Mr Mowbray were riding a steeplechase on the back of an avalanche, by a sound like thunder, which turned out on closer reflection to be the night porter knocking at my door. It was 1.30 A.M. I jumped out of bed, dressed, and had found my way through the dark passages to the *salle-à-manger* before I was well awake. Even at that dismal hour the house was astir. One party had just left for Monte Rosa; another was leaving for the Breithorn; two or three sleepy-looking mountaineers were seated round the table. Tom made me swallow a cup of steaming *café au lait*, eat a morsel of bread, and then we went out into the starlight. It was terribly chilly for the first half-hour, but we soon warmed to our work The lantern which Zimmermatter carried helped us to keep the path till we came to the Rothekumm—the narrow ledge that has been scraped along the tremendous slope that goes straight down to the glacier. By this time there was a faint light in the sky; but the glacier underneath was dim and ghostly. I fancied that I could see a dark shape moving along its surface, some ravenous nocturnal creature prowling about the ice, but it vanished into thin air as the light grew stronger. A brilliant planet still burned over Monte Rosa, and I thought of Coleridge's "Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star?" And then—then, Bell—but what words

can describe what we saw when the sun first touched the snow-peaks? The pearly sheen of a sea-shell? The blush of an immortal? A spray of apple-blossom on the day of its birth? At last we got down to the glacier, and we had such fun on the ice. Tom insisted that I was a born mountaineer —I jumped so pluckily, and kept my feet like a goat. But all the same, Bell, I was in a mortal fright, especially when I had to steady myself on a narrow ridge with a blue yawning gulf on either hand. Only one got used to it after a little, and Zimmermatter made steps in the ice with his axe whenever we came to a specially nasty place. Then we came to the vast snow-fields that stretched away for miles, like an American prairie, in long, gentle undulations, to the foot of the Monte Rosa crags. That silent upper world of pure snow, Bell, is most impressive; I never saw anything to compare with it. Zimmermatter pointed out to me the footprints of some chamois that must have crossed our line of march during the night. That was the only sign of life, and we felt somehow—at least I did—that we were intruding into an alien realm that belonged to another race. On these smooth Olympian lawns Odin and Old King Christmas may hold their wintry revels. We were all tied to the rope by this time, and now came the tug of war—they fairly dragged me up the steep slopes of the Cima. The summit of the Cima is only a cornice of ice, which sometimes breaks away and falls with a crash into the Val Anzasca. So we had to tread gingerly, and Zimmermatter, anchoring himself well back, tied the rope fast round me before he would let me look over the edge. We spread the rugs we had brought with us on the snow, and we had such a breakfast,—though M. Seiler's cold mutton—but Tom says it is tough on purpose to keep us warm by the exercise it gives the teeth; and the wine and the cheese were certainly very nice. And then, Bell, what a view! We are more than a mile above the plain, and Italy lies at our feet. Out of its soft warm haze, beyond the purple mist that floats over Como and Maggiore, rise the peaks of the Tyrol. Macugnaga, in the Val Anzasca, is 7000 feet below us, its houses no bigger than beehives. On the other hand the mighty mass

of Mont Blanc, standing four-square to all the winds that blow, is clearly visible above the long ridge of rock that culminates in the Matterhorn.

I went to bed the moment we got back, and didn't open my eyes till they were ringing the bell for *table d'hôte*. Do you know, Bell, I am coming to think that life is only worth living at 13,000 feet above the sea.

V.

FROM THE RIFFEL.

THIS was an off-day with me, as they say in the Shires, for Tom was at the Gabelhorn. So I left La Beata writing letters in the *salon*, and took my book—it was a volume of Heine—to the rocks above the hotel

By-and-bye Mr Mowbray sauntered up to the place where I was sitting.

"With the big glass at the inn I saw your cousin over yonder," he said, pointing to the great wall of rock that encloses the Trift glacier. "Even up there it must be hot to-day," he added, throwing himself back languidly on the turf, where the shadow of my umbrella made a coolness on the grass.

I asked him if he thought that Alpine climbing was really so risky as it was held to be by some. It was a silly commonplace question, Bell, but I was eager to get on ordinary topics; for last night we had been growing perilously confidential, and Tom had been as savage as a wild cat. So I wished to show him at once that he was not to presume. He gave me a lazy comical look out of his half-closed eyes, but took the cue directly.

There was no risk whatever, he said. The beaten tracks up Monte Rosa and the Weisshorn were as safe as the Strand, and safer. The whole Alpine business — ropes, ice-axes, huts, guides—was so thoroughly organised that it was next door to impossible to break your neck. He had done some

Swiss climbing when he was young and foolish, but he had never been once in real danger. The truth is, he went on, that it is only when one is quite alone among the mountains that the imagination sometimes gets the better of the judgment. The sense of human society allays apprehension and keeps one cool. But when you are quite by yourself and you come to a wide crevasse, or an ugly gap on the rocky ledge, you have to pull yourself together for the leap, and sometimes you refuse it altogether. He had only, so far as he remembered, been in actual peril twice in his life, and on both occasions it was, not upon the high Alps, but among the scrubby little hills of Scotland——

"Scrubby little hills!" I exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon. I only meant that they did not look *quite* so big as the Alps. And I like yours ever so much, though the two are curiously dissimilar. Between your Arran mountains with their purple heather, and birken glades, and whimpering burns, between them and these phantom presences there is all the difference that there is between the robust life of Walter Scott and the gossamer dream-work of Shelley or De Quincey. But I bore you," he added with a yawn.

"No indeed, Mr Mowbray. But tell me how you came to be in danger."

"Once it was in Skye. I had taken the steamer from Kyleakin to Scavaig, and it had left me there alone—to make my way back to Broadford over the hills as I best could. It was a lovely summer afternoon, and Coruisk and its semicircle of great peaks looked splendid. There was not a creature left behind but myself, and I sat and smoked and sketched to my heart's content. At last the sun got low in the sky, and it was time to move. I knew there was a track across the hills to Camasunary, and I climbed leisurely through ferns and bracken till I was well up the cliff. The view here was so lovely—the sharp peaks of Rum standing out purple against an orange sunset, and reflected in the motionless plain of water—that I stopped to make a note of the colours in my sketch-book. Then I went on again, and followed what appeared to me a quite definite track along the face of

the precipice. But after a bit it thinned away, and I had to go up and try another. This I did several times, till at last I was forced up to quite a giddy height above the sea. I had rather lost patience, and now resolved that at any cost I would keep straight on. The ledge by this time had got so narrow that I was forced to cling to the rock with my hands, and under my feet it fell sheer down to the sea three hundred feet below. Still I went on till I came to a projection of the cliff, beyond which I could not see. Very cautiously I twisted myself round, and then I learnt that I was on the very last foot of my ledge—nothing but smooth polished rock before me. I tried to turn, but my hands shook, and I felt vertigo coming on. I knew that if I gave way I was gone, and by a last effort of the will I steadied my nerves. How long I clung there I cannot tell. The sea-gulls came sweeping along far below; once a covey of grouse shot past, and I heard the wail of the curlew; there were two fisher-boats at their nets half a mile away; all over the wide sea was the hush of the gathering night. Somehow or other I managed ultimately to creep back to the point; but it was dark before I reached the farmhouse."

"Oh! Mr Mowbray, it makes me giddy to think of it. Where were you the other time?"

"In the Border country, which, though it is not lovely, has an unaccountable fascination for me. It is haunted, I suppose; that must be the reason. Round about Loch Skene, however, it is really fine. I had been at Loch Skene one day in spring, and thought I would make a short cut by the Grey Mare's Tail. The descent is very steep, but it does not look in any way impracticable—till you try it. I followed a sheep-track, which gradually lost itself, and left me on a long, steep slope of slippery grass, at a great height above the gloomy chasm where the water was boiling furiously. I could distinctly hear the roar of the torrent in the abyss, from which the spray rose in a cloud. There were some half-dozen Cheviot sheep sprinkled about—one ewe, I remember, was sniffing in a helpless, pitiful way at her dead lamb—and I saw a peregrine high in air, which had followed me from the

loch. I crept cautiously along the grass for some time, but I made some ugly slips, and once, my feet shooting from under me, it was only by the merest chance that I was able to stop myself, my coat torn and my hands bleeding. Such a bank is really worse than any ice-slope, for you can always make a track on the ice with your axe, but on a grassy slope over a certain angle you are fairly helpless. I did get back, of course. Taking off my boots and slinging them round my neck, I was able to creep along on my knees and my stocking-soles, till I got to some tufts of rushes and coarse grass, by which I pulled myself up to the track. As an old mountaineer I was rather ashamed of my escapade, till that evening at Tibbie Shiel's I heard that a shepherd, only a month or two before, had gone clean over the precipice from that very spot."

Don't suppose, dearest Bell, that I am losing my heart to Mr Mowbray (Raphael Mowbray—isn't it a pretty name?); but he is really quite nice. Of that I am sure. Who could fancy from his lazy, drawling manner that he was such a delightful talker? It is the fashion, I suppose, among the young men of his set—only he says he is not a young man, and I really can't fancy how old he is. La Beata is sure he is over thirty; but he doesn't look near so venerable. *Tom doesn't like him.*

Then in the afternoon, Bell, I had another delightful surprise. I had taken up his felt hat, and was admiring a great bunch of edelweiss which he had stuck in it. "Are you crazy about edelweiss, Miss Holdfast?" he asked. I told him I *was* crazy about it, but that I had never had a chance of gathering it, and didn't suppose there was any hereabouts to gather. Then he put on a very solemn face, and said that if I made a great vow to tell nobody, and had nothing better to do that afternoon, *he would take me to the place where the edelweiss grows!*

So after lunch we started along the path that leads to the Theodule—La Beata and papa going with us a bit of the way. I mustn't break my vow; but we had such a clamber, and when I saw at last the crisp, delicate, grey flowers showing thinly along the dark, discoloured face of the rocks, I was

fairly wild with delight. The largest plants were often far down the precipice; but I got lots without difficulty, and Mr Mowbray brought me some I could not reach; so that I had soon a splendid bouquet. By this time we were only a little way above the glacier, and he said, "If you are not afraid to trust yourself to me"—I see you are opening your eyes very wide, Bell, but there is nothing coming—"I can show you in half an hour what is, out of sight, the great view of Monte Rosa. Will you come?" We scrambled down by a steep path to the ice-fall, and he took me very cleverly a little way on to the glacier. O Bell, how grand these great waves are! Fancy our great Atlantic rollers, just before they break, frozen into solid ice, and that you have to walk along the broken ridges—that's what we mountaineers do, dear, without going quite out of our senses. It is a fearful joy; but it takes hold of one somehow, and day after day I become more devoted to *séracs* and *moulins* and *bergshrunds;* and what I am to do with myself when I get home, and have no more crevasses to jump, I don't know. The view, when I was allowed to look up, is certainly wonderful. We were upon the lower ice-fall; but half a mile off there is another, and that lies right between us and Monte Rosa. It is a great staircase of pale blue turquoise (or sapphire) leading up step by step to a temple of whitest marble! That's nonsense of course, Bell, but I must let it stand, for there is the bell for *table d'hôte*, and Marguerite (the pretty little laundress, who has taken quite a fancy to me) is waiting for my "things," as Tom calls them. Poor dear Tom, I wonder what he will say when he hears of the edelweiss? But I have kept a bunch for his hat.

VI.

FROM THE BEL ALP.

WE couldn't prevail upon Tom to go to church next day. He was stiff and sore indeed; and then the man who was to preach is certainly very dry. It is a thousand pities; but certainly the High Church curates they send to Switzerland are what our old Calvinistic nurse (you remember Chirsty?) calls "sapless twigs." Papa was angry with Tom when he said that he preferred sermons from stones to sermons from sticks; but Mr Mowbray was quite good, and promised to go with us. *That* was on Saturday night, however, and next morning he wasn't down when we started. I felt just a little bit sore about it, and ran back for my prayer-book, but only met Marguerite with a tray in the passage. "It's the Herr's coffee," she said with a smile, standing back on the stair to let me pass.

Certainly of all the bad roads in Switzerland that to the Bel Alp is the worst. How the mules contrive to mount this mountain ladder puzzles one; and how the girls on their backs (especially the fat old dowagers) are not shaken to little bits is still more surprising. However, I walked most of the way with papa and Tom, and it wasn't till we had reached the more level path along the high alp that I mounted.

The Bel Alp is quite an English place, and there were lots of nice English people at the inn; but I rather think the nicest had left; for we passed the most lovely little creature on the road—fair, simple, eager-eyed, and with a smile that

haunts me to this day. I never wonder at men falling in love with pretty girls. I could fall in love with them myself. They are such darlings.

The great Professor of the Aletsch was an old college chum of papa—they had been in Germany together—and now they were quite happy to meet again. The Professor may be an Agnostic (whatever that is), but I am sure he is as hospitable as any bishop could be. The curates are rather afraid of him, and perhaps with reason; for when we went up to see him first, he was placing a lot of bottles filled with hay and water in the sun (to see if anything would come of it, you know, Bell), and he told us that this washy decoction had the same taste in the mouth as Mr Chasuble's sermons. "Ex nihilo nihil fit" (I am so glad they taught us Latin at Girton) was as true of curates in particular as of creation in general. Of course this was intended to rouse papa, and they had a little sparring about evolution and protoplasm and the scientific relation between man and the jelly-fish; but it was all in good form—Tom said—and nobody was hurt. That is the best of our Professor; he is always in good form, and behaves like a gentleman, even when hit by a rough.[1]

The President of the Alpine Club ("Such sweet and courteous manners, my dear!" old Mrs MacAlpine said to me, in her effusive way——But indeed he might be a Knight of the Garter for that matter, if only he hadn't such a taste for picking up big stones, and lugging them about in his wallet) was at the inn when we were there; and between President and Professor we saw everything that was to be seen. We climbed up the Horns and dived into the crevasses, and one day we walked to the meeting-place of the great glaciers that sweep round the Aletschhorn and the Nesthorn. The Ober Aletsch is like a skating-pond, the most lovely level ice, and covered all over with grotesque figures in frosted silver, and not a crack into which a mouse could creep. The ice-tables—prodigious blocks of granite supported on slender pillars of ice—are tables

[1] There is no harm in saying now that "the Professor" was the late Professor Tyndall. See his commentary in the first series of 'Table-Talk,' page 102.

at which giants might dine—as perhaps they do. Those on the Ober Aletsch are, they say, the biggest in Switzerland. They are very strange, but not so grand as the blue chasms on the Görner, into which the snow-torrents fall with a noise like thunder. We ate our lunch at the foot of the Aletschhorn, in a vast amphitheatre to which the Colosseum is a mere cockle-shell; but the sunshine was so bright, and we were such a merry party, that I could not feel solemn enough for the place. I should like to see it of a starry night, quite alone, or with only one big snowy owl sailing through the moonlight or too-whooing from a crag, to keep me company. But alas! Bell, I am merely a girl (a charming creature, no doubt), and I shall never be permitted to pass a night on a glacier. On our way back we had a little taste of the amenities of the Alps, for just as we had crossed our last patch of snow we heard a terrific cannonade overhead, and a ton or two of rock came thundering past us.

Klingele's Inn is very well in its way, and the long procession of the Pennine Alps at sunset is a picture one never forgets; but that wooden paling which the Professor is painting with his own hands encloses an acre or two of enchanted ground; only the enchantment is due to the natural magic of genius, and the spell of genuine friendliness. I am quoting papa; but say it for myself too.

P.S.—Mr Mowbray made a sort of promise that he would meet us here; but as the dear little girl says in one of Mr Butler's books, "Mans is all alike."

VII.

FROM THE EGGISCHHORN.

IT is the impossible that always happens. Wasn't it dear Lord Beaconsfield who said so? and Lord Beaconsfield was always in the right, except when he was delightfully in the wrong. Somebody had said it before him, very likely; but what does it matter? It would never do to allow all the good things to be appropriated by people merely because they had the luck to be born before us. That would be simple selfishness, and I hate selfish people. To cut a long story short, Bell, Mr Mowbray is with us again, and I have slept on a glacier—at least, in a glacier hut. And the little girl with the dove-like eyes and the radiant smile is writing at the little table beside me, and her name, Mabel Gray, is as sweet as herself.

I am not much good at geography; but I must try and tell you about the great Aletsch glacier, so that you may understand what we are doing. The Aletsch is a huge ice-stream nearly twenty miles long, and broader than any river I know. It rises among the great snow-fields of the Oberland peaks, the Mönch, the Jungfrau, and the Eiger; it flows down between the Aletschhorn and the Eggischhorn; and it falls at last in an ice-torrent into the gorge of the Massa, just below the Bel Alp. The Bel Alp Hotel is built on one side of the glacier, the Eggischhorn on the other. The Bel Alp is 6732 feet high, the Eggischhorn 7150; so that there is not much difference between them. But to go from one to the other

you must descend to the glacier, and when you have crossed to the nice little inn at Ried, you have a long ride along the ridge till you reach the Eggischhorn. But the view all the way is lovely. Every peak of the Southern Alps, from Monte Leone to the Weisshorn, is visible, and we were always stopping to look back. I walked the whole way with Tom; papa and La Beata had mules, which picked their steps across the ice so cleverly. I wonder if mules have immortal souls, Bell? I am sure they are clever enough—and wicked enough, too, sometimes; though it is wonderful how good they are as a rule, considering what they have come through. But I like the Bernese ponies best—they are as sure-footed as chamois, and they never sulk and try to bite you, as the mules do.

The first person we saw at the Eggischhorn was Mr Mowbray, lying fast asleep with his hat over his eyes on the broad wall in front of the hotel. What a place to choose for a siesta! If he had wakened with a start—as I often do—and turned round the wrong way, he would have fallen ever so many hundred feet! He had heard we were coming, and had kept places for us beside him at *table d'hôte*, on the plea that we were old friends, and that papa was a bishop. Of all these mountain hotels, the Eggischhorn is far the cosiest. The bedrooms are large and airy, and not little wooden sheds like those at the Riffel; the *salle-à-manger* is quite a grand hall, and the mutton is positively tender. You would never fancy, indeed, when inside, that you were living above the clouds. For in sober truth, Bell, it is often quite bright here when great white clouds are sweeping along the valley and drifting through the pine-woods far below.

There is not much view from the hotel, so we generally take our books and eatables with us, climb to some coign of vantage, and lie about on the grass the rest of the afternoon. We have been up the Eggischhorn, and seen the whole magnificent stream of the glacier as it sweeps round the grim bastions of the Aletschhorn. Tom said it was about as pretty a little bit of climbing as I could wish to try, and he was quite right. There were some great snow-drifts into which I sank to the middle, and when I got to the enormous masses

of rock near the summit ("confusedly hurled, the fragments of an earlier world,"—isn't that Wordsworth?), I was fairly finished. These huge slabs had obviously been piled together without any prospective regard to the newest fashions of ladies' dress; and in fact, Bell, it would be an immense relief if we could lay aside our petticoats altogether when we come to the Alps, and try something handier (or leg-ier should I say?) But the men are so selfish, and keep us like babies in long skirts! Still the view is so exquisite (when we get it) that the miseries of the ascent are quickly forgotten. It is said to be the finest view in Switzerland, and perhaps it is. For everywhere round about us, far and near, are the noblest peaks of the Alps: over above Zermatt, the Mischabelhörner, the Weisshorn, the Matterhorn; in the dim distance the mighty mass of Mont Blanc; while close at hand, rising out of the glacier, we have the Jungfrau and her giant sisters, with the lovely Aletschhorn in the van. One day there was not a cloud in the sky; the next an ocean of mist was surging tempestuously all about the Rhone Valley, and we could not see an inch before our noses till we came to the very summit, when we found ourselves on a sudden in brilliant sunshine, and every peak to the north standing out whitely against the cloudless blue. It was like magic; the division between the two worlds—the world of sunshine and the world of fog—was as sharp as if cut by a knife. We had had a similar experience on the Sparrenhorn the week before. Tom says it has something to do with the air-currents of the glacier, and I suppose he is right, for though the enemy made many attempts to break through our line, and a wave occasionally rolled up to where we sat, it could never penetrate the charmed circle, but was sooner or later driven back. The sublimity of the aerial contest was indescribable; it might have been such a struggle in the heavens between the powers of light and darkness as Milton has imagined in *Paradise Lost.*

But the Merjelin See—the Arctic Lake, with its stranded and floating icebergs—is our favourite meeting-place. It is rather far for a stroll indeed; and we generally leave La Beata behind us on the summit of the ridge—within easy reach of

the hotel; but for the rest of us, in spite of the distance, its attractions are irresistible. We skirt the northern shore till we come close to the glacier. There are some smooth blocks of granite about a hundred feet above the track, and among these we establish our camp. It commands a noble view—the glacier, the lake, the grand peaks of the Saas Grat. There are Alpine flowers and Alpine butterflies in marvellous variety. The colour of the butterflies is as gorgeous as the colour of the flowers: there is not one subdued or neutral tint among them—not one colour that your mamma would admit into her London drawing-room. The barbarous blaze of blue gentian and scarlet lily and red auricula and purple anemone and yellow crocus is of course in the worst possible taste; but somehow we rather like it. One gets savage and natural, my dear, in these Alpine solitudes. We forget all that we have learnt about Bordone and Botticelli; and the only scrap of æstheticism that we have left among us is Mr Mowbray's felt hat with its bunch of edelweiss—which he borrowed of an Italian brigand, he says, and forgot to return.

He and I were waiting for Tom and Mabel at the "camp" when he told me this "story." I took the opportunity to give him a little lecture on his levity and want of earnestness; indeed I went the length of flatly assuring him that the Italian brigand was a myth.

"I cannot stand your earnest people, Miss Holdfast," he answered evasively. "The only radically earnest man I know is the Grand Inquisitor, and he is far from being an agreeable acquaintance. The evil that has been done to us through Ruskins and Kingsleys and Tom Browns and Arnolds is incalculable. What a man likes, that only can he admire; and when he admires what he doesn't like, he is a scamp and an impostor. Lots of the men here are as sick of climbing as I am, and would much rather stay with any nice girls who happen to be about; but they haven't the courage to say so. They are the victims of earnest mountaineering. Believe me, Miss Holdfast (or don't believe me, if you would rather not), that earnestness really means narrowness and bigotry, the incapacity to get out of the rut which you have worn, to move about

easily and with freedom, to give all your faculties fair play and equal balance. My ideal heroine is the girl in that book of Heine's you were reading at the Riffel—*great free eyes calmly looking down into the great free world.* By-the-way, what do you think of your new friend Miss Gray?"

"Mabel is the dearest girl in the world."

"She is very lovely indeed," he went on. She and Tom were coming to us across the glacier, and her red petticoat supplied a bit of colour that told brilliantly against the ice. "I admire her as I admire a shell or a water-lily. They show us what pretty things Nature can make when she chooses. In one sense immense beauty like hers *is* a revelation. A very lovely creature must come direct from the very heart of Nature, —it needs a good many generations of blundering mortals to turn out anything very ugly. Can you think of anything very ugly, Miss Holdfast, that has not been made so by man?"

"Rats and snails and puppy-dogs' tails," I answered flippantly. But he only smiled languidly down upon me.

"That is right. That is what Heine's heroine would have said if he had opened her lips. It is a pity he did not. But when I hear my good friend, Mat Arnold, making such a furious fuss about the free play of the intellect (as though it were an invention of his own, and not as old as the hills), he reminds me somehow of the Moosehead guide in Mr Russell Lowell's delightful sketch of the American forest. You remember Uncle Zeb and the 'free play' of his feet in his big boots? 'Kind o' get your foot into 'em,' and it was all right. 'Wahl, my foot can play in 'em like a young hedgehog.' Uncle Zeb is an invaluable character."

Yes—Tom and Mabel were on the glacier—not for the first time. In fact they are constantly together now. What does it mean? Well, I am sure he is quite welcome to take up with her if he chooses; but indeed, Bell, I didn't think he was such a flirt. And after what he said at—— Of course, Bell, he didn't say anything, and of course I am a little goose. And, indeed, I don't wonder at his losing his head about Mabel; if I were a man I know I should be over head and ears in love with her. But then, you see, my feeling has

always been that the girls are ever so much nicer than the men; and Mabel is a darling of darlings. Yet, after all, Bell, when poor Mr Mowbray comes up and assures me that if we take him to Tyrol with us I will find him wonderfully little in the way—*for a man*, I am half inclined to accept a more lenient view of the sex.

VIII.

FROM THE EGGISCHHORN.

DID I tell you, Bell, about our night on the ice? Why, it has made us famous; our adventure has been the sensation of the season at the Eggischhorn. Somebody coming over the Furca was asked if he had heard of the two *pretty* English girls who had been lost on the glacier. There, Bell!

It came about in the simplest way. We had often taken a run across the ice from our camp on the lake; and Tom had pointed out to us the long undulating ridge against the skyline, between the Mönch and the Jungfrau. "That's the Joch," he said, "a level road all the way, and the finest walking in the world—if we start in time." ("In time," Bell, means a little after midnight.) "Girls who have had a week's practice can do it easily. There's a grand view from the top —you see Switzerland from end to end. It's eight thousand feet above Grindelwald."

Tom and Mr Mowbray have patched up a provisional truce. So we made up a party of five—old Colonel Gray let Mabel come, and we had Zimmermatter, with his rope and his axe, to carry our "things." By good luck we took a lot of wraps.

I feel like Mabel's mother (who can't leave their little Yorkshire place for rheumatism). I am only a year older, to be sure, but she is *so* young. She enjoys everything with almost childish eagerness; her divine curiosity, as papa calls it, is never satisfied—her blue eyes are always saying, "Oh, what a

lovely world!" Everybody is kind to this delightful child (do you know, Bell, she reminds me of your little Alice, at once so eager and so sedate?), and the grim Colonel positively worships her. So I promised to look after her faithfully, and she was allowed to come with us.

Tom's "in time" meant a little after midnight; but I needn't tell you about the start—it was much the same as when we went to the Cima. (I don't think Mr Mowbray went to bed at all, but fell asleep on the sofa in the *salon* after tea.) Only the walk up the Aletsch is even grander than the walk up the Görner, and the Place de la Concorde (as it is called rather Frenchly) is the finest "place" in the world. Then we were pulled up the steep slope to the rocky wall, which goes down sheer to Grindelwald. For hours we had seen nothing but the everlasting snow; on a sudden a lovely green plain, dotted over with villages and forests and fields and lakes, and melting in the far distance into purple muirland, lay at our feet. These are the sort of contrasts that make one in love with the Alps; we have nothing like them at home. But even in Switzerland the high sanctuaries are few and far between, whereas our Scotland, Bell, is lovely all over.

But to come to our adventure. We had finished our luncheon at some rocks—the only rocks to be seen thereabouts—not very far from the Joch; and we were making our way rapidly back along the glacier, so that we might be home before it got dark. We had heard the sound of thunder in the distance, and a slate-blue cloud was hanging over the Bel Alp. I noticed that Zimmermatter had been looking anxiously at the sky in that direction, and now—on turning a projecting corner—he held up his hands and spoke hurriedly to Tom, who was beside him. They halted until we came up to them. Then Tom pointed out to us a heavy bank of fog that was advancing up the glacier—not more than a mile from us. "Zimmermatter was afraid of this when he heard the thunder—a storm on the Bel Alp often brings a bank of fog up the glacier. We are not very far from the Concordia hut, and now we must make a run for it." We did make a run for it. I clung to Zimmermatter's arm, Mabel to Tom's. As we

scudded along I heard Mr Mowbray speaking to Zimmermatter in German quite coolly. "There is my compass," he said; "put it in your pocket. The wind is coming from the east; it will blow right in our faces so long as we keep straight for the hut. You know that bit of black rock on the neck of the Schönbühlhorn; if the fog lights a bit we may chance to see it. The hut is about a hundred yards due north." The mist was now close at hand; in another moment it was drifting round us; in another we were in thick darkness —darkness that might be felt. "For Heaven's sake!" Tom exclaimed, "keep close together."

Zimmermatter had positively to grope his way—guided solely by wind and compass—for every landmark had been blotted out. It did not seem more than a quarter of an hour after we were tied together (we had got the rope out again as the darkness fell upon us), when we heard a joyful shout from the extreme end where the guide was leading. By some extraordinary chance we had gone straight to the hut! There it was, like a reef of black rock looming through the mist—a wretched little cabin, to be sure; but we were much too happy to be critical. To us it was like the lifeboat to a shipwrecked crew, which means safety at least.

Some bits of wood had been left by the party who had bivouacked before us, and we had soon a blaze on the hearth. Then the provisions were examined—a pot of Liebig, meat lozenges, tea, wine, and bread—surely they would last us till the fog lifted. But when was it to lift? As the evening fell it grew momently darker and darker, and long before sundown we had abandoned any hope of getting away that night. What could we do, Bell? There was a trackless and boundless sea of darkness outside; here, at least, was one little spot of light and warmth. The inner room was given to Mabel and me, and with our wraps we made ourselves tolerably comfortable, though neither of us slept a wink; it was altogether too strange. The men sat round the fire, and smoked their pipes and waited for the dawn. But I am anticipating.

"The resources of civilisation are not exhausted," Tom remarked, as we gathered round our primitive tea-table,

"though this is rather different from five-o'clock tea at Kensington."

The fact is, Bell, we were just in wild spirits. Mabel said she had never been happier in her life. I have not laughed so much since I was at school, and the men were as good as gold. It was the reaction, I suppose, from our fright; but we all enjoyed the evening immensely.

I had a little private talk with Zimmermatter outside, as we were looking at the stars—for, strange to say, though the mist still lay heavy round about the cabin we could sometimes see a star overhead—when I learned for the first time that Mr Mowbray, who is laziness incarnate, had been, and still is on occasion, one of the most daring climbers of the Alps. Zimmermatter waxed quite eloquent on the subject. He had known the Herr ever since he was a lad, and some of their most perilous snow-feats had been made together. Mr Mowbray has some Italian blood in his veins—that is why he is called Raphael, I suppose—and it was in Italy they first met. He was shooting chamois with an Italian nobleman in the upper part of the Val de Lys, when, one night, a political refugee, closely followed by the gendarmerie, appeared at the château. The poor man had been run into a regular *cul-de-sac*. His capture was certain, unless he could be taken across the great Monte Rosa chain to Zermatt. But no pass had yet been made over these pathless wastes; the Lys Joch was unknown: the nearest place of refuge was the châlet on the Riffel. But the two of them had somehow managed to get the fugitive across—an old man, a Venetian republican, a friend of Mazzini, quite unused to the snow—up perilous ice-slopes, through endless *séracs*, down awful precipices. Wasn't it fine, Bell? I wonder what the police thought when they came and found that the bird was flown?

Mabel and I lay down on the rough beds; but we could not sleep. She told me all about their simple Yorkshire home, and the rough, kindly people among whom they live, as we lay side by side. Neither of us, I daresay, will ever forget that night—the murmur of talk in the other room, the mysterious sounds of the glacier, the sough of the wind, the

absolute isolation. After midnight the wind rose to a gale, clearing the fog; but it soon moderated, and just as the stars were growing pale in the dawn, we heard—at least I did, for Mabel had begun to doze—a distant shout from the glacier; the outer door opened, admitting a cold air of morning wind, and Zimmermatter cooed back a reply. It was, of course, the people from the inn who had been sent to meet us; but do you know, Bell, I felt almost sorry? Our little adventure—and girls have so few—was at an end.

IX.

FROM THE BATHS OF STACHELBERG.

DEAREST BELL,—We are on our way to the Tyrol, and only came here by chance for a night or two. But it is such a nice place, and there is not an Englishman in the valley except ourselves, that I should not wonder if we stayed on for the rest of the week. We are still in Switzerland; but with its baths and its beer, and its one-o'clock *table d'hôte* and its seven o'clock supper, and its cheapness and its homeliness, and the plumpness and easy good-nature of the men and the fervid "Ochs" and "Achs" of the girls, Tom says that Stachelberg is as little English and as near Tyrolese as anything Swiss can be. We came by the Furca and the St Gothard all together as far as Amsteg — where Tom and Zimmermatter left us to get into the Linth Thal (that's our Stachelberg valley) by the Clariden Grat,—the rest of us going on to Sonnenberg, on the Lake of Lucerne (2000 feet above the Bay of Uri, and a lovely moonlight—so that every jagged peak was as sharp in the water as in the sky—think of that, Bell!), and then we got next morning to Schwys, and so over the Pragel Pass to Vorauen, Glarus, and Stachelberg. Tom met us at Vorauen, where we stayed the night—a nice little inn at the upper end of the Klön See, and the Klön See is as perfect a little lake as one can imagine; for while the great Alpine wall of the Glärnisch rises precipitously from its southern shore, along the northern bank there is just such a lovely confusion of green pasture and grey rock and purple

heather and feathery birch as you may see any day upon a Highland loch. The morning was so still that every scar in the mountain-side—a stupendous cliff 7000 feet high—was repeated in the water as in a glass; and the glacier snows on the summit shone brilliantly under our feet.

Mabel is with us, and so is Mr. Mowbray. Old Colonel Gray had visions of the Twelfth upon his Yorkshire moors,—the Tyrol wouldn't tempt him; but we made him leave Mabel, and we are to visit them in Yorkshire on our way home. And Mr Mowbray? Well, Mr Mowbray was going to the Tyrol at any rate, and thought we might as well go together. Tom fumed a little, but really Tom is unreasonable; for if he is to flirt with Mabel all day (only Mabel is not a bit of a flirt, but as—as—innocent as a round-eyed Madonna), what on earth is Miss Holdfast to do with herself in the meantime? I don't care a bit for the men, you know; but for some reason which we cannot fathom they have been included in the inscrutable arrangements of the universe, and it is our *duty* to put up with them.

You can hardly call Stachelberg an Alpine resting-place—for it is only 2000 or 3000 feet up—so we have to go on the mountains every day. And the pine-woods and the châlets on the higher pastures are so exactly what pine-woods and châlets are in pictures, and there is such a sweet aromatic air, such scents of spring flowers and fir cones and new milk, that one never tires. The blue carpet of violets on the upper "alps" is just wonderful. Yesterday we went into a châlet where they were making cheese. There were milk-pails *full of pansies* standing at the door. Think of that! The men who were working about told us that it is the pansy which gives its curious colour and flavour to the green cheese of the district. They mix them up with the curd, and the cheese has to stand for a year. There, Bell, don't go and say that I never give you any useful information,—they don't think so here, I can tell you. Mr Mowbray says that I am the only Universal Gazetteer that he knows, and Tom has set me to tabulate the hotel bills under three heads—Greed, Rapacity, and Fraud. But fancy—a pailful of pansies!

We were sitting out in front of the Bad, watching the afterglow on the Tödi and the other great peaks at the head of the Thal. Soft meditative shadows lay all about the lower valley. There was the occasional tinkle of cattle-bells from the cows waiting about the châlets to be milked—a snatch of song or a *jodel* from some cowherd high among the pine-woods.

"And I believe that every flower enjoys the air it breathes," Mabel said softly.

"That's the pathetic fallacy, as Mr Ruskin will tell you," Mr Mowbray replied. "But I rather hold with Wordsworth. You come from Yorkshire, Miss Gray, and they still think a deal of Wordsworth in the country. Why shouldn't we communicate our own feelings and thoughts to woods and flowers and streams——?"

"They have much better of their own," I interposed.

"That's true. Heine says that perfumes are the feelings of flowers. But the perfume is only the coarse outward expression—the feeling itself is doubtless far too subtle to be apprehended by gross creatures like men. Still we ought to be thankful that we have any means of communication, and it can't be denied that the smell of a violet is even finer than—what shall I say?—the finest bits of Keats.

'The foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn,'

is possibly as good as a Narcissus or a cabbage rose."

"But what of the poor cabbage itself?" papa asked.

"The cabbage is the village Hampden, the mute inglorious Milton, the Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. He has lost the power of speech, and there is something sad in their great round helpless faces—a dumb vegetable in distress is really as pathetic as a dumb animal. So that if Mr Ruskin meant to say that we have no right to attribute our own transitory moods and dyspeptic sensations—for that, I take it, is what we call poetry—to those whose feelings are natural and inevitable, why, I am with him so far. But I doubt whether he meant it—it needs a divine trifler like Heine to enter into the heart of a cabbage, and Mr Ruskin is terribly in earnest. Oh,

Miss Holdfast, what a world of mischief these earnest men work!"

I never can tell whether Mr Mowbray himself is in earnest or not. He has a habit of lying back on the sofa and letting the words drop lazily out of his mouth, that simply exasperates me. Still I like him, for he is certainly out of the common, and he and papa get on beautifully. But dear papa is a jewel; that quaint, quiet simplicity of his is so racy; and Mr Mowbray never wearies of drawing it out.

"Mr Ruskin," papa said, "has possibly expected Art to do more for our morals than it is able to do. These passionate jeremiads against bad painting, as if bad painting were a deadly sin and a bad painter a great criminal, are possibly at the root of many of the exaggerations which have been so often ridiculed. For if true Art is such a vital matter to us all, there may be nothing absurd in trying to live up to a lily or a chintz or a Japanese screen or a flower-pot. But I doubt if Art has much to do with making us live better."

"Not a bit of it, sir, you may be sure, neither Art nor Nature. A friend of mine says that the only thing that can have a permanent influence on a man's character is to have come of good ancestors and to live among nice people. It's because I've been going about with you, Miss Holdfast, that I'm so good, and not because I've seen Titian's Venus, and been up the Finster-aar-horn."

"But don't you think," Mabel struck in, "that the place where you live, where you were born, does something? I don't think I would have been the same girl if I had been bred in London. I am afraid there is a good deal of Yorkshire muirland about my mind."

"That is quite true, Mabel," I exclaimed, "and we love you better, my dear, because you have a taste of the heather —like the grouse. But oh, Mr Mowbray, don't abuse Mr Ruskin. There is a little German book of translations from English writers in the *salon*, and the piece they give from Ruskin is the passage on the Unterwalden pines. It was *that* more than anything else, except perhaps the bit in Emerson about Arnold Winkelried gathering in his side the sheaf of

Austrian spears to break the line for his comrades, that made me long to come to Switzerland. Papa will read it to us when we go in—it sounds quite nicely in the German."

"I know it," said Mr Mowbray, as we rose; "but mind you, I didn't say that Mr Ruskin at his best wasn't better than either Art or Nature, Words are, after all, the most effective weapons that human beings can use (what is your Phidias and your Vandyck to our Sophocles and our Shakespeare?), and Nature herself is at her finest when her barbaric pearl and gold have been passed through the alembic of the imagination—in an inspired book like *Modern Painters*. You didn't think half as much of the Unterwalden pines when you came to see them,—did you now, Miss Holdfast?"

Papa laughed a little, and, taking hold of Mr Mowbray's arm, repeated one of his favourite bits from *The Winter's Tale*:—

> "'Nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean; so o'er that art
> Which you say adds to nature is an art
> That nature makes.'"

We had only one other day in Switzerland, and Tom had reserved a great display of fireworks for the occasion. I don't mean actual rockets and Roman candles; but we were to take what upon the whole, he declared, to be the finest walk that can be made by moderate walkers among the Swiss Alps (with Tom, to be sure, the last is always the best). It was to the Ober Sand Châlets.

X.

FROM TRIBERG, IN THE BLACK FOREST.

I HAD to break off, before I could tell about our walk to the Ober Sand Alp.

The whole day was delightful; but looking back, Bell, there are two or three exquisite little bits that give a unique character to the rest, and keep their place in the memory with peculiar vividness. The Pantenbrücke, which spans at one leap a bottomless abyss, is the sort of unaccountable bridge one sees in *Der Freischutz*. I had left the rest at the Hotel Tödi below (there was some difficulty about the mules for papa and La Beata), and had climbed up the steep path alone. It was the early morning, and there was a dewy freshness in the air. Isn't it wonderful how young and innocent this weary wicked old world feels of a morning? She seems to renew her youth with every dawn. Do you remember what Heine saw that spring morning when he had taken a short cut across the Hartz and lost his way? "The mountains stood in their white night gear, the fir-trees were shaking sleep out of their branching limbs, the fresh morning air curled their drooping locks, the birds were at morning prayers, the meadow vale flashed like gold strewed with diamonds, and the shepherd passed over it with his bleating flock." That was just what the trees were doing this morning—shaking sleep out of their branching limbs. I said as much to Mr Mowbray when he joined me, but he told me I was a victim of the pathetic fallacy. "But isn't it amazing," he went on, "what genius

can do? That spring morning was exactly like ever so many other spring mornings that we have had before and since; but just because a poet happened to go astray, it will be remembered when the morning of Jena or Austerlitz is forgotten. And the Emperor himself! He was as mean and tricky a little scamp as ever lived; but just because the face of that young Augustus fascinated Heine, he may be accepted by posterity as something solemn and divine. Monsieur le Grand and his drum will be admitted as unimpeachable testimony when the terrible indictment of Monsieur Lanfrey is laid away on the shelf where so many unpleasant truths are being consumed by the moths. The Old Guard will march down the ages to the sound of Heine's words and the music of the Marseillaise." And then he hummed a snatch from Schumann—

"So will ich liegen und horchen still,
Wie eine Schildwach' im Grabe,
Bis einst ich höre Kanonen Gebrüll
Und wiehernder Rosse Getrabe:
Dann reitet mein Kaiser wohl über mein Grab,
Viel Schwerter klirren und blitzen;
Dann steig' ich gewaffnet hervor aus dem Grab,
Den Kaiser, den Kaiser zu schützen."

The path meanders by wood and meadow and moorland, till it reaches the bare hillside above which towers the mighty wall of the Selbsanft. It rises more than a mile over our heads, as sheer as the towers of Notre Dame. And yet, Bell, I am not doing justice to its miraculous steepness, for at places it actually *overhangs*. "A piece of Cyclopean masonry," Mr Mowbray said, "which shows us how the Titans built." But by some subtlety of association papa's thoughts were busy with that poem by Blake in which we are confronted with the questions which the sinister-fire in the eyes of the tiger, as representing the malign forces of nature, are apt to provoke at times—

"What the hammer, what the chain,
Knit thy strength and forged thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dared thy deadly talons clasp?"

I think we were all rather glad when we got out of the shadow of these terrific rocks into the sunshine again. We soon reached the châlets of the Lower Sand Alp; but Tom rather alarmed us by pointing to a sheet of water that was coming down in a white mist from the high tableland overhead. "The Ober Sand Alp is up there," he said, "and I don't think we can take the mules much farther."

Well, Bell, we were pulled up at last, though I shouldn't care to do it again. But when we got to the châlets it was worth all we had gone through, and a great deal more. We were in the centre of a vast amphitheatre. There was a little grass and greenness round the châlets; everywhere else bare rock, sweeping glacier, eternal snow-fields. The Tödi rises like a square feudal keep out of the ice; then come the Klein Tödi and the Sand Glacier, and then, with one long noble sweep, like the line drawn with swift masterfulness by the hand of a great painter, the gently undulating snow-fields of the Clariden Grat. (Is there anything more tender and delicate than the swell of the snow, except, perhaps, the swell of the sea?) It is an unbroken circle; for behind the narrow gap by which we had entered tower the splintered pinnacles of the Selbsanft.

The people at the châlets were inclined to be sulky and surly, but after some coaxing from Zimmermatter they let us have a flagon of milk, and we dined royally among the wild flowers, with the shy game-like cattle looking on.

Mr Mowbray walked home with me. We were a good deal ahead of the main party, and Tom and Mabel loitered behind. He was telling her (so she told me afterwards) how he went up the Weisshorn. The narrative must have lasted a good while, for, even before we were out of earshot, we heard him begin—

"If you had been at Zermatt, Miss Gray, you might have come with us as far as the Trift Glacier. The gorge of the Triftbach has some nasty places, to be sure, but we would have got you past them; and then, when you get well up, the view of Monte Rosa and the Saas Grat is just superb. And you

could have gathered hatfuls of edelweiss, and had it all to yourself up there——"

"I shall be so sorry to leave Switzerland," I said to Mr Mowbray after a pause.

"Ah, but we are going to the Tyrol, and the Tyrol is ever so much nicer, especially for lazy people like you and me."

"Mr Mowbray!" I said indignantly—"I am not lazy, and you know I am not."

"I know you are perfection."

"That's nonsense. But I daresay the Tyrol will be delicious. They say that every glen has its romance. You must tell me all about them. I daresay you know them by heart."

"There is one I know by heart very well, and I'll tell you all about it when we get there."

I wonder, Bell, if he meant anything? somehow he looked as if he did. And now, on a separate slip, so that no one may read it except yourself, you will find the

P.S. Most private and confidential.—Things are getting rather mixed, Bell. I don't know whether I like Tom or Mr Mowbray best. Tom doesn't know whether he likes me or Mabel best. And Mr Mowbray? Mr Mowbray raves about Mabel, but then he makes me his confidante. And Mabel? Why, Mabel, at least, is blithe and unconscious, and knows no more of what is going on under her nose than the lark overhead, which just now is trying to sing a second to her new song—the Meermadchen's Song in *Oberon*.

XI.

FROM THE GOSAU SMITHY.

INDEED, Bell, it is too true. I cry *peccavi* at once, so don't scold me. But you don't mean to say it is actually three weeks since I wrote you? It doesn't look like three days. We have been having such a good time of it. First among the nice moss-grown, middle-aged towns of Germany—Ulm, and Aschaffenburg, and Augsburg, and Nürnberg, and Regensberg; and then in this lovely Salzkammergut country among the Austrian lakes; and I don't think, Bell, more exquisite bits of water are to be found anywhere—even in Scotland. Alt-Aussee and Halstadt and the Gosau See are gems of the first water. I have lost my heart to each in turn, and don't know which I love best. You would say that the white snows of the Dachstein rising over the blue water and dark greenery of the Aussee could not be beat—till you come to Halstadt; and then you are sure that that severe and monumental mountain tarn is unrivalled; only when you see the Hinter Gosau See, with the glaciers impending over its gloomy pines and shattered rocks, you are not quite so sure, and, in fact, begin to get just a little muddled by all this marvel of beauty. So we have come to anchor here, in a sort of châlet-inn, with the smithy on one hand (where they are shoeing their wiry little horses all day long, and sometimes far into the night, making Rembrandt-like bits of light and darkness), the pine-woods on the other, and the Donnerkögl overhead.

There is nothing like limestone, my dear—that is what Mr Mowbray says (only of course *he* doesn't say "my dear," it's *you*, my dear, I mean). It is the stone of which Nature builds her spires, and towers, and minarets. Working with it she is capable of the most astonishing "ootbraks." These incredible peaks and impossible precipices are the crazy pranks of an architect who doesn't mind in the least what people say. The Donnerkögl in this line of business is simply superb, though we are to see finer at Berchtesgaden by-and-bye.

"Nature as a rule is so staid, and steady, and respectable, Miss Holdfast," he went on, "that I don't wonder she gets tired of the monotonous jog-trot, and likes to break into a brisk canter at times. This is one of the few places where she indulges in a little healthy riot. She turns out a Donnerkögl as she turns out a Heine, in a mood half sportive and half impish, just to show us that there is a touch of the Bohemian about her, and that the Philistines are not victorious along the whole line. They have a story here of a girl wandering on the Alp who came to a door or window on the mountain-side and looked in. There was a great fire burning inside tended by little men or goblins, who grinned at her. Perhaps they were making the Donnerkögl."

We were sitting in the pine-wood, waiting for Tom and Mabel, who have latterly taken to scientific pursuits, and were at the moment closely engaged in considering a bank of ferns. The ferns here *are* worth looking at, I admit; but Mabel would see them all the better, Master Tom, if you weren't always—however, it is no business of mine, Bell, and if Mabel likes it, I don't mind. And Mr Mowbray is—oh, *so* nice! That is a discovery I have made for about a week now. But don't breathe a whisper of it, for I am sure he doesn't like me a bit, and people *will* talk without rhyme or reason.

We had been up to the Zwiesel Alp, which is one of the great places of the Tyrol. The track is all uphill, but till you come to the highest "alp" you are in the cool shadow of the wood. Such pines! with deep cool brown shadows, and then the high sweet flowery mountain pasture on which you emerge into the sunlight is like the grass of Paradise—emeralds

newly broken (that's Dante, you know). I won't say a word about the view from the top, except that the Dachstein looked very white, and the Donnerkögl very black, and that among a wilderness of jagged peaks—so wide it was that in spite of the glimmer of sunshine everywhere we counted half-a-dozen separate thunder-clouds trailing against the wind—we saw for the first time the delicate cone of the Gross Glockner,—a slender pyramid of purest ice. "Let us go to the Gross Glockner!" we all exclaimed there and then, and Mr Mowbray has promised to take us across the central range by the track which runs up the Fuscher Thal, over the Pfandlscharte Glacier—quite a grand "ascension," as Zimmermatter declares.

We got Mabel to sing us a snatch or two of her German songs as we sat about after lunch, lazily enjoying the cool of the afternoon on those breezy heights—Heine and Schumann and the Meermadchen of Weber all mixed up in a delicious tangle. She had taken off her hat, and, with her brown hair blown about her face, looked the mountain nymph to perfection. I don't wonder at Tom, and it is very good of Mr Mowbray to flirt a little with me—poor me—but then Tom fairly appropriates her, and nobody else can get a word in.

It was nearly dark before we got back, and we found all the people of the homestead sitting about the road, and chatting contentedly in the mellow twilight. There was still a fiery glow from the forge; but the smith was resting outside the smithy, with his sleeves tucked up to his elbows; and the boys were blowing it for sport. There is something delightfully homely and sociable in this Austrian mountain life. The cows stand about to be milked; from the high Alpine pastures comes the sound of cattle-bells and *jodels;* the *kellnerinn* looks over the carved balcony to tell us that the "baked cock" and the *mehlspeise* are just ready. The landlord himself is smoking a great china pipe on the bench before his house, peacefully contemplating his cows and his boys, the evening sky and the returning guests and the legend scrawled all over the front of the Wirthshaus, which, besides commending the inmates to

the care of God, remarks that the beer is good. Everybody knows everybody in the valley, and they are as friendly with us as if they had known us all their lives. After the "baked cock" had been disposed of, and the last flagon of light Austrian beer drawn for the night, and the men had gone to smoke their pipes, the *kellnerinn* comes out with her knitting, and seats herself beside me. Mahley is a comely, sonsy, good-natured soul, and very curious about the world beyond the Halstader See.

Mahley. When I am married in spring, Fritz will take me to Ischl. It must be very nice to go with one's sweetheart. Is the little one to be married to the Herr—the Herr with the brown curly hair? And the dark Herr, who speaks the good Deutsche, is he (with significance) to be married too?

Miss Holdfast (*blushing the least little bit*). Oh, Mahley, the gentlemen are papa's friends, and come with us, not because they care for Mabel and me, but because they like to travel and see everything that is to be seen.

Mahley (*reflectively*). What is the good of seeing things, I wonder? I think I see everything here that I want to see. There are the woods, and the Alps, and father, and mother, and the children, and Fritz; and the sleighing, and the skating, and the dance in winter; and the hay-making, and the flowers for the hat when the year gets green again; and then in summer one is busy all day long—running up-stairs and down-stairs to watch that the beer is brisk and the milk cool. Why do you come so far, mein liebes fräulein? for England is a long way off, they say. Are you not happy at home?

Miss Holdfast. I have a lovely home, Mahley, and am as happy as the day is long. But then you see that—that—yes, to be sure—the doctors say that it is good to move about, that change of air is the best cure, that we get musty and fusty if we stay in one place, that——

Mahley (*sympathetically*). Is it the bad weather in your country, my lady? With us of Tyrol it is only when we go from home that we are sick. It was going to Salzburg that Max and Moidl fell through the ice and were drowned. And

Ambrose, who went away in spring, has never been heard of again. But Fritz is to take me to Ischl when we are married, and then I will know better.

Some one calling "Mahley" interrupted our conversation. I like Mahley; in spite of her rustic ingenuousness she is a sharp, clever girl, and not a bit dull, though she has never been farther than Gosau Muhle. Fritz, her betrothed, is a splendid specimen of the Austrian mountaineer—far more of a gentleman than half the people you meet at a big dinner-party in town—and when *our* cavaliers are on the Dachstein, he sometimes comes to look after "*the girls*," as Tom calls the rest of us. Mabel is convinced that he is a prince in disguise; and certainly the disguise is as picturesque as any prince could wish.

XII.

FROM ST WOLFGANG, IN THE FUSCHERTHAL.

DID I write you from Berchtesgaden, Bell? I forget; but at any rate, Berchtesgaden, and the hotel of the four seasons, and the fire-flies, and the glow-worms, and the crescented Watzmann, and the solemn König See, were all delightful. And to make our happiness complete we had a splendid adventure, a real, genuine, unquestionable adventure, such as you read of in books.

You must understand, my dear, that the two best things near Berchtesgaden are the König See and the Wimbach Thal. The Wimbach Thal is a wild, sequestered glen, where you are certain to see a good many chamois on the upper rocks, and where the limestone is even more incredible than usual, one whole side of the Thal indeed presenting for many miles an outline like this—

It is on the other side, the Watzmann side, that the chamois are mostly found,—we saw with our glasses a party of them, walking leisurely along an invisible ledge, two or three thousand feet overhead; how they do it, with their great clumsy feet, I cannot understand. The König See is the most famous lake in Europe; and though I don't love it as I love the Aussee or the Gosau See, it is certainly a noble bit of rock and water; and the tablets along its cliffs, which testify to its cruel vindictiveness when roused, prevent us from cultivating a too-perilous and playful familiarity. Now Mr Mowbray and Tom had planned a little expedition that would show us both the König See and Wimbach Thal at their best; and it was during this expedition that we met with our "adventure," our precious and invaluable adventure. Mabel and I have got to walk beautifully by this time, and even the male creatures who accompany us are pleased to admit that we are good for anything under the Gross Glockner or the Ortler. And this was certainly as stiff a piece of work as we have attempted; had it not been for the excitement of the exploit we might possibly have broken down.

Sleeping at the little inn at König See, we were at the upper reaches of the lake soon after daybreak. A weird and solemn sail it was, Bell, in the dim light of the dawn with just a scrap of waning moon (like that of the Queens when they took Arthur away from his last battle), during which hardly one of us spoke a word. We landed at the low shore which separates the König See from the Ober See; and there, with breakfast, the spell was broken. Zimmermatter is really a good cook, and his coffee and his omelet and his fried trout would have done credit to our host at the Vier Jahreszeiten. Then we sent the boat away, and began the long climb up the cliff to the "alp" above. I don't think there can be anything more exquisite in this world than a morning walk up such a steep stair of rock as that we mounted; a natural ladder, now hidden among the trees, now hanging over the water, now opening boldly upon the mountains and the sky. Of the flowers, and the freshness of the air, and the blueness of the heaven, and the noble sweep of valley and lake and mountain when we

got to the upper alp, I need not tell you; it would only be to repeat what I have tried to say a hundred times. The scent of a rose, the tint of the earliest apple-blossom, how can we translate their subtle and delicate exquisiteness into words?

After a hard pull of three or four hours, we came to a deserted châlet where we resolved to lunch. We were still in Bavaria, but close to the Austrian frontier. Mabel and I had seated ourselves on a thick bank of heather outside, the men were wandering about, Zimmermatter had lighted a fire of twigs in the châlet and was busy heating a panful of Liebig. All at once Mabel gave a little shriek and pointed to the bank close behind us. Oh, Bell, a pair of wild, wolfish eyes were gleaming out at us from the thick growth, not a yard away. We had started up, when a low, soft voice arrested us. "For Our Lady's sake, my lady, do not move. The Jäger is watching over there. He fired at me in the dark this morning; he knows that I am somewhere about. Ah! there he comes." I was terribly frightened, Mabel was pale as death. We had recognised the voice at once—it was that of Fritz, Mahley's lover, who had been our escort more than once at Gosau—a brave, handsome lad. But to these Tyrolese marksmen the Bavarian chamois are irresistible. Fritz was a noted poacher.

What was to be done? Fritz had not been mistaken; a few hundred yards away one of the royal gamekeepers, with his rifle laid across his arm, and his finger on the trigger, was leisurely approaching us. Oh, Bell, the misery of that moment! But Mabel is a miracle of ready wit—though trembling all over, her stout Yorkshire spirit asserted itself—she moved slightly, in an easy, unembarrassed fashion, till she was close to Fritz (who had been a prime favourite with her), and then stooping and gathering a sprig of heather, she held it up to me. "Isn't it lovely?" she said, loud enough to be heard by the Jäger, who was now close at hand. Of course I had to move after her, and then—then—(oh, Bell, how can I write it?)—*we both sat down upon him*—at least upon the long heather under which he had crawled. It was not a moment to stick at trifles.

I have a very indistinct recollection of what followed. The

man did not stay long: but it seemed like hours. He spoke a word or two; asked if we had seen any one about; looked into the châlet; was keen, vigilant, on the alert—not a man to be hoodwinked by a pair of girls, one would have fancied. Then Tom and Mr Mowbray came back; the flask was produced, healths were drunk, and all the time we two wretched beings were sitting on—Fritz.

We were awfully glad when at last the Jäger moved away and disappeared over the brow of the hill. You may conceive how astonished the others were when they learned what we had done. Then we got Fritz smuggled somehow into the *sennhütte* (for he felt sure that his enemy was still watching for him) and stowed away among the rafters. His rifle and (I fear) a chamois were hidden somewhere in the heather; but it was too dangerous to attempt to remove them in the daylight. For—do you know, Bell?—the poachers and the gamekeepers here think nothing of killing each other, not in the thick of fight, as they might do at home, but by what Tom calls "a cool pot-shot." Isn't it frightful, my dear? and to think that poor Fritz was within an inch or two of such a fate. He heard the bullet whistle close past his ears; but it was almost dark—a mere glimmer of dawn—and he escaped somehow. What would Mahley have done? His brother was shot on the other side of the Steinerne Meer a few years ago,—at least he went out one night with his rifle and never came back.

We couldn't stay long; but we left him some food; and we knew that he made good his escape—how do you think, Bell? A day or two afterwards a splendid chamois-head, wrapt up in packsheet, was left for Mabel at the Vier Jahreszeiten by a passing countryman. Wasn't it nice of him? For of course it came from Fritz.

We had a long, long walk across the high tableland till we got down at last into the Wimbach Thal. A lonelier or more solitary corner of creation I never saw, nor would wish to see. It was not a bare desolation like the Steinerne Meer—that sea of stone, that Todte Gebirge, which stretched away behind us to the sky-line. The "alps" were green and flower-bespangled—but oh, so lonely; one had come to the end of the world,

and the solitariness was more than pathetic—it was savage. Once and again we saw chamois on the rocks above us; but they were in the Wimbach Thal, to be sure; and the Wimbach Thal, in spite of its terrific rockwork, is homely and domestic in comparison.

This St Wolfgang is a funny little Austrian watering-place high up in a lateral glen of the Fuscherthal, where the people and the prices are delightfully primitive, and you can live for about sixpence a-day. We have had some glorious walks: once up to the Trauner Alp, into the very heart of the mountains where the great Weissbachhorn towers over everything; once up to the Schwarzkoft, from whence the Gross Glockner is within speaking distance as it seems. We dream about the Gross Glockner, Bell; the nearer we get to him the more we like him—that slender spire is so heavenly; but alas! it begins to be doubtful whether papa will let us cross the Pfandlscharte after all. The season is late; the country-people say there is a lot of snow; and even Mr Mowbray shakes his head. Well, Bell, you shall hear all about it in my next, and I must go now. We are off for a scramble after ferns and edelweiss. Oh, these happy hunting-grounds! Though I live to be an old woman I shall never forget the good time we are having; and between ourselves, my dear, it becomes daily more apparent that Mr Mowbray (why, oh why, did they call him Raphael?) is the bright particular star in the brilliant constellation which in *einspänner* and *zweispänner* and *dreispänner*, on mule and donkey and solid English leather, is now passing over North-Eastern Tyrol.

XIII.

FROM ZELL IN THE ZILLER THAL.

YOU must fancy us driving up and down the loveliest valleys in the world—Ziller Thals, Inn Thals, Fuscher Thals—in a wonderful old shandrydan, which holds five easily, and six on a pinch. The postilions are got up regardless of expense in the funniest possible way,—the sort of gaudy butterfly creatures one sees in a circus. There is great competition among us for the vacant seats on the "dickey"; one of us, either Mabel or I, is generally there. When Mabel is outside Tom is outside; when Mabel goes in Tom follows her. The result is that Mr Mowbray is thrown a good deal on my hands, and as he has lived for months in these valleys, shooting chamois, and eagles, and bears, and what not, he knows lots of the people, and all about the old castles and churches which are perched on every height we pass. It is delightful driving leisurely about in the sunshine, dozing a little now and then, and waking up with a start when we stop to adjust the slipper-drag before rushing full speed down a break-neck precipice. I wonder if I could photograph for you a little of the talk that goes on between us as we jog along, papa putting in a word occasionally from behind.

Mr Mowbray. I like the Tyrolese; they are a fine people. Their popular legends and superstitions, to be sure, are mostly ecclesiastical,—marvels of medieval Catholicism, but with a touch of paganism and patriotism which improves them. What pretty names, too, they give their churches—Our Lady

of the Snow! Our Lady of the Fern! And the places they built them—how wonderfully picturesque!—clinging to the face of the cliff, high on the brink of the precipice, deep in the primeval forest. They say that the passion for mountains is a modern growth; when I see these old churches perched upon their giddy pinnacles I begin to doubt it. Mr Ruskin declares that Dante had no feeling for mountains, and was a bad climber. But then, you see, Miss Holdfast, Douglas Freshfield, who knows a deal more about mountains than Mr Ruskin, thinks that Dante was an expert at climbing, —so deft a cragsman, indeed, that he would have been a member of the Alpine Club had he lived at the proper time. The Club Alpino Trentino it would have been; for Dante's mountains, like Titian's, are limestone and dolomite, such as you see about Val Lagurina. Titian and Dante!—it is a great compliment to the Dolomites; and to think that none of us knew anything about them till Gilbert and Churchill went there in '65.

Miss Holdfast. Tell me some of the legends, Mr Mowbray.

Mr Mowbray. Oh, they are all about saints and martyrs and witches and the devil. The Teufel plays a great part in Tyrolese mythology—though he and his friends, the witches, generally come to grief in the end. The witch high in the air on her devil's saddle hears the Wandlung bell from the church below, and, the saddle losing its charm, she falls and breaks her neck. Saint Joder leads the evil one about with a chain, like a tame bear. The graceless knight won't get up in the morning in time for chapel; a fearful clap of thunder shakes the castle, and when they go up to his room they find him dead in bed, with the prints of three black and burning claws on his neck. Then he is always on the watch for Lutherans and other heretics. Lutheranism once made some way among the miners in the Innspruck Valley. They had a great discussion one day, and the Lutheran missionary, in the heat of the controversy, exclaimed, "If this is not true may Satan fly away with me." Sure enough Satan took him at his word, and carried him off to the top of the Drei Herren Spitz. This was, of course, conclusive; though had it occurred

farther north the Catholic might possibly have been confuted —the true religion, you see, being so much a matter of geography.

Miss Holdfast. Perhaps Satan flew away with him because it *was* true?

Mr Mowbray. There is really no saying what the father of lies will do; and, now that you mention it, the construction put upon the incident by the orthordox Tyrolese is open to observation. There can be no doubt, however, that the curse or invocation known among them as the *drei-teufels-namen* is one of peculiar force and efficacy. Still, upon the whole, the saints have the best of it. A pagan mower, finding Eusebius asleep among the corn, cuts off his head with his scythe; but the saint, being a saint, is able to take it under his arm and walk home to the monastery to be decently buried. Then there was the bear who at the instigation of the evil one ate up Saint Romedius's horse; but the saint immediately got his man to bridle and saddle Bruin, and so rode victoriously into Trent. Saint Fridolin was even more successful. Ursus, a friend of his, died and left his patrimony by word of mouth to the Church. An unbelieving brother, however, disputed the succession, and it was ultimately held that Fridolin must surrender the legacy unless he could produce the testimony of the donor. This was attended with difficulty, as Ursus by this time had been dead two years; but Fridolin, nothing doubting, went to the graveyard, where at his call Ursus got up, and, pushing back the tombstone, walked back with the saint arm-in-arm to the Stadthaus. The wicked litigant was so much taken aback that he not only gave up his brother's estate to the saint, but made him a gift of his own.

Miss Holdfast. Oh, Mr Mowbray, these are as good as fairy tales!

Mr Mowbray. I suppose they were fairy tales somewhere. When I meet our old friends in new faces I am reminded of Miss Busk's charming little girl, who on being asked what David was before he was made King of Israel, at once replied, "Jack the Giant-Killer"!

Miss Holdfast. How delicious! I must tell Dr John, who

writes, you know, those delightful stories about children and dogs. It will charm him.[1]

Mr Mowbray. Who doesn't know *Rab and his Friends?* Now, Miss Holdfast, have you any notion why the bramble creeps?

Miss Holdfast. Not the slightest.

Mr Mowbray. Once it caught the Virgin Mary's gown and tore it; so, instead of growing straight up, like other plants, it is condemned to crawl along the ground in this serpentine fashion. Isn't that a reminiscence of the Wandering Jew?

Miss Holdfast. But you say they are all reminiscences.

Mr Mowbray. Most of them are, though some may be indigenous. There is undoubtedly a change in the popular mythology when you pass from Northern to Southern Tyrol, as there is in the flora. Instead of the Vierzehn Nothhelfer—the fourteen helpers in need, all of whom are saints or angels—of North Tyrol, you have in the Guidicaria and the Dolomites quite a different race of beings. They are more impish, but more picturesque. There is Orso who, in the form of an ass, plays the most fantastic tricks. There are the stories of the Gian dall' Orso—Bear Johnny, as we would say. There are the Salvans, whose shrill laughter is heard from the summits of the Dolomite peaks. And then there are the Enguanes, who, as lovely maidens, steal men's hearts away from their lawful sweethearts.

Miss Holdfast. Do the Enguanes keep to the Dolomites, Mr Mowbray?

Mr Mowbray. They don't get so far as England, let us hope. But the serpent of old Nile, I daresay, may have been one of them. Cleopatra was a bit of a witch at any rate, and Octavia must have felt very much as Maddalena did when she saw her betrothed marry an Enguane in the parish church. You see that mass of ruins up there, Miss Holdfast?

Miss Holdfast. On the rock behind the pine-wood?

[1] Eheu! eheu! The much-beloved "Dr John" has gone over to the majority since this was written. But it was one of the last stories I told him, and how he enjoyed it!—S.

Mr Mowbray. Yes. It was there the pedlar played bowls with the imprisoned ghosts. He fell asleep in the courtyard of the castle. When he woke at midnight, twelve figures in medieval armour were playing a game with skulls in the moonlight. The pedlar was a crack player, and challenged them one by one. He beat them all. This broke the enchantment, and the ghosts were liberated. I forget the rest of the story. Then there are some strange weird creatures known as Berchtls, who haunt the forest hereabouts. The Berchtl is clothed in white, carries a broken ploughshare, and is followed by a train of little people—the souls of children who have died before they were baptised. A charcoal-burner, benighted in the wood, once saw her pass with her little ones. The last of them was a poor mite of a thing, whose little bare feet were always catching in the long skirt it wore. The kindly peasant could not bear to see the little creature tripping and stumbling; he took off his garter and tied the skirt well round its waist. The Berchtl, seeing what he had done, undertook, in requital of his piety, that neither he nor his children should ever come to want.

Miss Holdfast. How pretty! And what a pretty village we are coming to!

Mr Mowbray. Why, we are at our journey's end. That's Zell. There's a good old-fashioned inn where they make famous pancakes. After dinner we can walk up to the Castle. The ghosts are gone, but perhaps we may see the pedlar.

That night the rain came down in torrents, and lasted for two whole days. So we were imprisoned in the little inn with only one climbing German to keep us company. But in spite of the rain we have enjoyed ourselves amazingly.

Good night, dearest.—I am so sleepy.

XIV.

FROM SAN MARTINO DI CASTROZZA.

THE Gross Glockner surpassed our expectations; but the Dolomites disappoint me, just a little bit. In the old controversy, Snow or Rock? I am all on the side of our Lady of the Snow. And yet our Lady of the Fern is in her own way inimitable.

Did I tell you, Bell, that we went over the Pfandlscharte after all? We had been driving about the valleys for a week or two after leaving Fuscherbad, and had got as far as Innspruck (where the wolves look down into the streets, you know —*we* didn't see any), when a note from a Heiligenblut guide came to Mr Mowbray, saying that the snow was all right, and that he was to be at Bruck-Fusch with a party on Friday, and would go back with us next day or any day we liked. We got the note on Thursday; Mabel and I went down on our knees to papa; and the upshot was that we were permitted to return next morning by the train that goes by Worgl and Saalfelden and St Johann to Bruck, where the Heiligenblut man was waiting for us at the Krönprinz—such a nice new hotel and such civil people! The country about Saalfelden—especially the great mountain-range that stretches between it and the Königsee—is very fine; but we only got a glimpse of it in passing; and our dear Königsee was of course invisible. (Mr Mowbray, however, has given me a capital sketch of the charmingly old-fashioned Bavarian village for my note-book: and I had just time to take a rapid jotting of the huge

rampart-like wall of the Steinerne Meer before the train started again.) Papa and La Beata went over the Brenner and by the Pustherthal line to Landro, where we met them two days afterwards.

We had a grand day—never to be forgotten—and when we reached the watershed and dropped down to the Franz Josephs Höhe, above the Pasterze (the snowy cone of the Gross Glockner rising sheer out of the glacier), I felt that this was the finest moment of my life, and that nothing better could be in reserve—however long it lasted. We found papa and La Beata at Landro—a delightfully primitive old inn in the deep gorge of the Hohlensteiner Thal—and since then we have been wandering here, there, and everywhere among the Dolomites. The Dolomites, they say, are coral mountains, reared by the same little architects who build the coral islands; and I can quite believe it; for they are really too unscrupulously eccentric to have been built up by any graver or more responsible machinery, such as ice, or water, or fire. This Martino di Castrozza is a really grand Alpine resting-place, 6000 feet high; among lovely honey-laden pastures and the noble pine-woods of the Austrian Tyrol, and face to face with the marvellous wall of the Saas Maor; but, for real enjoyment, give me the country round about Cortina—the Dolomites of the Ampezzo; which after all, to be sure, are not true Dolomites, but only a new freak of our old friend, the irrepressible limestone. There you have a wide sweep, and the mountains (except at Landro) do not come too close to you—do not frighten you by their cold shadows and startling pallor. For the Dolomites, as a Scotchman would say, are "uncanny"; and I would as soon go to a Witches' Sabbath on the Brocken as lie out all night on the Pelmo or the Tofana. Take it all in all, the Ampezzo Thal, with its weird procession of bleached and splintered peaks, from the Drei Zinnen to the Antelao, is probably the most fantastic valley in the world, and is wonderfully suggestive of old anarchic forces laid to sleep—shadowy forms of uncrowned gods who troop past in the twilight. If Keats—poor fellow—had gone there on his way to Rome, after parting with that detestable Fanny Brawn

he would have found the very place where the afflicted Titans hid themselves out of sight.

La Beata, as you know, Bell, is the sweetest and dearest of old ladies (only she isn't a bit old, not nearly so old as her daughter, Tom says); but she is apt to get fussy when put out by anything; and last night we had a little conversation in her room, she and I, by ourselves.

Mamma. It seems, Madge, that you and Mr Mowbray have a great deal to say to each other.

Miss Holdfast. Mamma dear, you know I am such a rattle, and Mr Mowbray——

Mamma. And Mr Mowbray?

Miss Holdfast. Has read everything and seen everybody. I do so like these cultivated, unconventional, out-of-the-way people—to know them is a liberal education, as somebody said of Lady——; who was it, mamma?

Mamma. But it is not wise to let your liking carry you too far, my dear, and it is unbecoming for girls——

Miss Holdfast (*with tears in her eyes*). Unbecoming, mamma? Oh, don't say I am doing anything wrong, behaving badly——

Mamma. No, my darling; but you are a little flighty, a little flippant, and rather inclined to—flirt.

Miss Holdfast. Dear mamma, don't say so. I know I am half crazy with happiness, and Tom and Mr Mowbray are such good fellows that I say whatever comes first; and Mabel is such a darling that she doesn't mind a bit——

Mamma (*retrospectively*). You and Tom used to be great friends. What has come over you both that he——

Miss Holdfast (*demurely*). You had best ask Mabel, mamma.

Mamma. Oh, Mabel is only a child. Tom would never think——

Miss Holdfast (*serenely*). He doesn't think much, I admit——

Mamma (*severely*). Madge, you are incorrigible. But when a girl makes up to a young man——

Miss Holdfast (*indignantly*). Makes up to a young man! Can you really fancy, mamma, that I am actually trying to

marry Mr Mowbray? Mr Mowbray! I would never dream of marrying Mr Mowbray. In the first place he is too old——

Mamma. A man is never too old to marry.

Miss Holdfast. That's the horrid injustice of it. Why, they make a girl an old maid before she is five-and-twenty. And Mr Mowbray is five-and-thirty—he told me so himself. Then, mamma dear, I could *never*—marry—a man—who is called—Raphael! That's the real objection.

Mamma (*who is coming round to Mr Mowbray*). How silly you are, Madge!

Miss Holdfast. Silly! Don't you see it would never do, mamma? I might as well engage an archangel at once to button my boots! How could I ever venture to say to him—"Raphael, pull the bell! Where's my umbrella, Raphael? Please, Raphael, hold the baby!"—Oh, mamma, what have I said?

Mamma. Madge, that busy tongue of yours will get you into a real scrape some day. But you will promise to be a good girl, and not let it run away with you more than you can help.

So we kissed and said good night, and I am going to be as discreet as the Sphinx, and get into no more scrapes—real or possible.

XV.

FROM KLOBENSTEIN, ABOVE BOTZEN.

I DON'T like the climbing Germans as a rule; but the one who sits next mamma at *table d'hôte* is quite tolerable, and the contrast between his love of beer and tobacco and his abnormal and almost impossible ugliness, the contrast between the grossness of the man's habits and looks and the high and sublime raptures with which the mountains inspire him, is distinctly comical. "Ach, meine liebe Frau," he will say to La Beata through the cloud of smoke, in which like a heathen deity he envelops himself, "I know your country for long; I have been in Glasgow; I have sailed on the Broomielaw; I have seen the mountains of Nevis and Macdhui. They are magnificent—green, blue, purple, orange—*there* is colour for you. But the snow mountains—ach, it is different; the paint is gone; it is the palpable and familiar no more; it is death—it is infinity. I rise above the earth, I am translated, I stand, as your Thomas Carlyle writes, at the confluence of two eternities. There is the Glockner. You have been on the Glockner, mein guter freund? Nein? Ach, that is a mountain. I have been on his head. If it were not the cold I would be on him now. When you see the Glockner, you will know how you feel."

It was a shame to laugh at the good man, and his knowledge of Shakespeare and English poetry was wonderful; but his monologues—which I give you as recorded by Mr Mowbray, not vouching for the verbal accuracy of the version—

were too much for our gravity; only La Beata sat beside him with her knitting on her knees like the Fräulein at home, and tried to cover our naughtiness by her own adorable sweetness and patience and sympathy. Isn't she a jewel? But indeed, Bell, I was ashamed of myself, and tried to make it up to him afterwards.

We are now in the very midst of the land where a handful of untrained peasants, by prodigies of daring valour, earned immortal glory. *That* is the Joch which they held for days against the famous riflemen of Bavaria. Across *that* bridge the victorious soldiers of the Republic could not force their way. *That* is the house where Joseph Speckbacker died. *That* is the house where Andreas Hofer was born. These are the stories which we hear at every turn, and somehow (O Bell! I am ashamed of myself)—somehow they bring the tears into my eyes. Something comes into my throat when I think of the constant heroism of these simple men. Papa feels it too, I know; and our greasy German friend is more enthusiastic than any of us; whereas Tom and Mr Mowbray, after the fashion of their countrymen, are rather inclined to throw cold water on the whole affair.

"It is the mountain that makes them so brave," says the German. "There is no patriotism like the mountaineers'. The higher it flies the hotter it burns. That is why they cling so to their barren rocks—that is why they fight like wild cats" ("ze vild cat," he called it) "for their mountain nests."

"What about the Dutch?" Mr Mowbray asks. "They fought among dikes and ditches and swampy flats as well as Swiss or Tyrolese, did they not? The magnanimity with which fat burghers died upon their rotten walls makes one of the great stories which, with the defence of Thermopylæ and the siege of Londonderry and a score of others, I would like to turn into a book for my boys—had I any."

"Ah, that is different," said the German. "That is the enthusiasm of piety—that is religion. It was the great moral force of our Reformation that made William of Orange; but with the mountaineer it is simple emotion—what you call in-

stinct, mein Herr. *That* is the patriotism of the peasant of Tyrol."

Mr Mowbray shrugged his shoulders. "What good did it do them? They shed their blood like water for a house with which they were connected by the slenderest ties, and which was about as crazy and rotten and rat-haunted as any old house could well be. A mile or two farther south, the same family—for no reason, better or worse—was held in undying hate by people who came of the same stock, and who had been bred in neighbouring valleys. From the time of Friedrich mit der leeran Tasche, who being impecunious became a popular hero, their patriotism has been as indiscriminating and irrational."

"It is curious," papa interposed, "how many of the popular heroes are impecunious. But Madge, dear, those lines you quoted to me this morning when we passed Hofer's house—let the Herr hear them."

I was angry with Mr Mowbray, so, by way of protest, I repeated them with perhaps unnecessary emphasis :—

> "They fell devoted and undying,
> The very gale their deeds seemed sighing,
> The waters murmur forth their name,
> The woods are peopled with their fame,
> The silent pillar, lone and gray,
> Claims kindred with their sacred clay."

But Mr Mowbray was in a mocking humour. He lay back on his seat with his eyes half shut, and let the words drop out of his mouth in the fashion I detest. It was a horrid scrap from Arthur Clough that he selected :—

> "Whither depart the souls of the brave who die in the battle?
> Die in the lost, lost fight for the cause that perishes with them?
> Are they upborne from the field on the slumbrous pinions of angels
> Unto a far-off land where the weary rest from their labour,
> And the deep wounds are healed, and the bitter and burning moisture
> Wiped from the generous eyes? Or do they linger, unhappy,
> Pining, and haunting the grave of their bygone hope and endeavour?
> Whither depart the brave?—God knows; I certainly do not."

I did not speak to him again that day. Between ourselves, Bell, I could have boxed his ears, and he would have richly deserved it.

Instead of doing that, however, I went and sat on the grass and looked at the view. I don't wonder that the Botzen people, whenever the heat gets oppressive, move up to the high breezy tableland above their city. With the Rosengarten on one hand, and the Ortler on the other, what more could they wish in the way of mountains? And even during the warmest weather, the freshness of the morning and the evening never fails us. That cool breath of balmy air, coming direct from the not distant snow-fields, is simply intoxicating.

XVI.

FROM LA MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO.

AN Italian valley, somewhere between the Lake of Garda and the Ortler,—O Bell! do you know what that means? Nature sometimes economises her resources; here she throws them all down in a heap. There are snakes and lizards and tiger-lilies; there are hillsides of ferns, beech, holly, and maiden-hair; there are sunflowers and thickets of roses and broad-leaved chestnuts and trellised vines; there are frescoed walls and terraced verandahs and slender and delicate campanili; there are deep dark shadows and waves of opal light and sparkling streamlets and a cool stretch of gleaming snow; where can you see a picture like it anywhere else? And men and women alike are worthy of their choice inheritance—the women refined and stately, pale as Diana, with skins like ivory and eyes like jet; the men lithe and handsome as fauns, black-browed as bandits. And then the inns! —fancy how delightful it is to date your letters from San Martino di Castrozza or La Madonna di Campiglio, and to have Maddalenas and Veronicas and Ottilias to answer the bell and bring you hot water.

After our little tiff at Ober-Botzen Mr Mowbray had been particularly nice. I am not going to let you into all the secrets of the prison-house,—every girl must find them out for herself; but it had come, I think, to be tacitly understood between us somehow that we were on the brink of (what shall I say?) falling in love, and that the least little push would

send us over. Do you like being in love, Bell? I am not sure that I do; it takes away our freedom, it takes away our independence; we become so sensitively tremulous to every mood of the lover. Indeed, my dear, if it wasn't so deliciously nice I think I would hate it. It was in just such an Italian valley, opening on the Lake of Garda, as I have sketched, that I was finally forced to confess that I was worsted, beaten, made mince-meat of, chopped into little pieces, whatever you like. I had met Mr Mowbray quite accidentally on the hillside above the inn before breakfast, and he had helped me to gather a bouquet of flowers for the table in our room. No, Bell, I am not going to prate; and indeed there is nothing at all that can be told; but I knew before we got back, though no words were spoken, that it was as good as settled. There is a Tyrolese rhyme we picked up somewhere; we had been tossing it about constantly among us, for it was fanciful and pretty; but do you know, Bell, when he repeated it that morning it took quite a new significance? I cannot recollect exactly the words of the *patois;* but in English it would run something like this:—

> "Thou art mine; I am thine;
> Thou art locked in this heart of mine;
> Whereof is lost the little key,
> So there for ever must thou be."

Ah! Bell, I wonder if the lover ever found the little key again after all?

When we came down after breakfast Mr Mowbray was away. We waited for him; but as he did not return we started for a scramble among the higher woods. The views were lovely; the path kept along the margin of a brawling torrent, and brought us quickly to the upper world. Châlets were dotted about, not the châlets of the country people only, but *châlets de luxe* built for the wealthier citizens of Botzen and Trent, who come up here to escape the summer heat of their valleys. We sat down at an opening in the woods, from whence we could see far over the lake and the hazy Italian plain. One of the pretty toy châlets was so immediately beneath our feet that we could have looked down its

chimneys had we tried. Under a grand chestnut on the lawn in front of the house an old man and a girl were seated—unseen ourselves we watched them as on a stage. O, Bell, the girl was lovely! When I wrote a page or two back of the Italian women, "pale as Diana, with skins like ivory, and eyes like jet," I was thinking of this girl. She was just the girl to drive a man into a tempest of love and a woman into a tempest of jealousy. They sat close to each other, but did not speak. The silence was unbroken, except for the chirp of the grasshoppers and the coo of a dove. It was a sort of enchantment.

I am not good at story-telling, and what actually happened is almost too incredible for words. Up the steep lawn to the châlet we saw a figure advancing, clothed in tweed, and wearing a black felt wide-awake. It bore an astonishing resemblance to—Mr Mowbray. The girl did not notice him at first; in fact he was close beside her when we heard him say, softly but quite distinctly—just fancy, Bell!—

"Veronica!"

The girl gave a great start and jumped to her feet. *In another moment her arms were round his neck!*

By this time we had all recognised Mr Mowbray.

"Whew!" said Tom under his breath (Tom has never quite forgiven him)—"By Jove, it's his—wife!"

I had such a headache, Bell, the rest of the day that I got them to leave me to my own devices after dinner. When they were fairly off I took the book I had been pretending to read, and went into the wood behind the inn. I felt that solitude would be an immense boon: and there I could be alone. O Bell! it was hard to have given my heart to such a man. I believe I was actually crying when I heard something stir in the wood, and before I could get the tears out of my eyes Mr Mowbray was beside me. It was too bad—too heartless, and I turned my back upon him. I don't know exactly how it began; but after a little I found myself saying,—well, here is the finish of our talk as nearly as I can remember it.

Miss Holdfast (*loftily*). You have your own friends, Mr Mowbray; we should regret to be in the way.

Mr Mowbray. Friends? Of course I have friends—such as they are—not too many, I fear. But what do you mean, Miss Holdfast?

Miss Holdfast. I beg your pardon, Mr Mowbray. I didn't mean anything.

Mr Mowbray. Come, Miss Holdfast, that's hardly fair. I see I am in your black books, and you must tell me why. I am as innocent as a baby.

Miss Holdfast (*listening intently*). Is that Mabel calling? She is waiting for me, and I must go. Good-bye, Mr Mowbray—*bon voyage.* I am in such a hurry.

Mr Mowbray. Do you wish to drive me crazy? What can you mean? What have I been doing to make you treat me in this fashion? You are frightfully unjust, Miss Holdfast, and to me who——

Miss Holdfast (*icily—going*). I am sorry we have given you so much trouble. Papa will write and thank you (*pausing*). It is a pretty name, Mr Mowbray.

Mr Mowbray. A pretty name? What name?

Miss Holdfast. Veronica!

Mr Mowbray (*after another pause*). Veronica! Oh, I see it now. (*Authoritatively.*) Sit down, Miss Holdfast. You don't go till I have confessed.

Miss Holdfast (*sitting down leisurely*). But I am in such a hurry.

Mr Mowbray. That's right. Now for my story, such as it is. You must understand that ever so long before you were born I was able to lend a helping hand to a Venetian patriot. He was in a scrape, and I managed somehow to get him across the border. It wasn't much I did for him, but I liked the man.

Miss Holdfast (*rather too eagerly*). Not much, indeed! Why, Zimmermatter says——

Mr Mowbray. Ah, Zimmermatter has told you; then you will have got a very romantic version of our moonlight run. Well, the poor man had left his little daughter—his only belonging, for the mother was dead—behind him in Venice, and he was broken-hearted about her. So when we had found him a châlet on the Boden See, I promised to go for

her. She was a charming child, and ever since we have been sworn allies. Now they have got back to the Trentino, for they couldn't stand the amenities of our northern summer; and Veronica, grown into a pretty girl——

Miss Holdfast (*repenting*). A pretty girl! Why, she is lovely. Dear me, how stupid I have been, to be sure! But what a complete romance! When you marry her, Mr Mowbray, you will let me——

Mr Mowbray. When I marry her! Why, I am nearly as old as her father. Veronica is only fifteen, and I am five-and-thirty. No, no, Miss Holdfast, my marrying days are past——

Miss Holdfast. O, Mr Mowbray, you are not so *very* old. I am sure if you liked her you could make a girl—any girl—I mean Veronica—very happy.

Mr Mowbray (*visibly brightening*). Any girl? But there is only one girl I really care to win, one girl only that I am madly, hopelessly, in love with. Do you know her name, Miss Holdfast? It is not Veronica.

[*An interval.*

Miss Holdfast (*blushing and crying*). But I could never venture to call you—Raphael.

Mr Mowbray. That's what they call me in Venice. At home, Madge, they call me—Ralph.

So you see, my dearest Bell, the last difficulty and impediment being unhappily removed, what could I do? I suppose it is very foolish, and Tom will chaff me ever so badly; but Mabel will help me through it, I daresay (she can do anything with *him*); and, Bell, you will be a bridesmaid, promise me, dear, and don't tell a creature till I write again. I am unaccountably happy, and just a little frightened; I don't know why exactly; only it is a strange revelation to a girl when she finds out that she can be so much to *a man.* It makes her proud a bit, to be sure; but she begins—for the first time in her life possibly—to feel doubtful and uncertain about herself, and the charm which has won her lover. It would be so terrible for him to wake one morning and learn that he had been dreaming. That's what I feel, Bell.

XVII. AND LAST.

FROM MACUGNAGA.

WE are now in the Val Anzasca, the loveliest of the Italian glens of Monte Rosa, having crossed the Stelvio (mind you go to Trafoi, Bell: whether you are engaged to be married or not, it is an enchanting spot), and seen Como and Lugano and Maggiore by the way; and a heavenly vision from the Dome of Milan at six o'clock in the morning, when the sky was cloudless and every peak unclouded; and to-morrow we start for England by the Monte Moro. Papa is ever so much better, and walked yesterday to the Belvidere, where Monte Rosa rises 10,000 feet overhead. This must be the last of my letters; but what a summer we have had, and what a changed world it is to more than one of us! For did I tell you about Tom and Mabel? No. One mustn't be selfish and keep all the plums to one's self. Well, Mabel—but Mabel shall tell her own story. Here is one other little scene from our little comedy, the very last, until I meet you in Bond Street for the trousseau; and so—Good-bye.

On the slope above Macugnaga—Miss Holdfast is sketching Monte Rosa—Mabel joins her, a little out of breath.

Mabel. I can never forgive him. What do you think he has been doing?

Madge. My dear child, who is *he?* And how can I tell what he has done till I know who he is?

THE VAL ANZASCA.

Mabel. Oh, you know very well, Madge. But that's just it. I *am* such a child. Papa will never believe it; if anybody tells him, he will pull my ears and say it's a joke. He fancies I am about five.

Madge (*seriously*). Has anybody been rude and tiresome to you, Mabel?

Mabel. Rude and tiresome? Tiresome to a degree, but—no, no—not exactly rude—only very near it. It was Tom—Mr Graham.

Madge. Tom—Mr Graham! My goodness, what has poor Tom been doing?

Mabel. Poor Tom! There again—you are laughing at him as papa will laugh at me. But I don't see it at all in that light. I think him very nice.

Madge. Of course he is charming. And you are never to forgive him?

Mabel. Well—I don't know—perhaps by-and-bye—in ten years or so—if he will wait. Oh, Madge, he has asked me to marry him.

Madge. What a dreadful man! But they are unaccountable creatures at best——

Mabel. Of course it's only a joke—such a baby as I am. Still he mightn't have made such a fuss about it—as if he were really in earnest.

Madge. It will be no joke to Tom if you won't have him, Mabel. Don't you see he has been in grim earnest for ever so long?

Mabel. Oh, he was grim enough. Is that what they are like when they want to marry you? Then the less one has to do with it the better.

Madge. And you told him it was no good, and sent him about his business?

Mabel. Of course I would if he had had any. But he is so idle, you see, that I said (*pausing*)—

Madge. You said——

Mabel (*rising and throwing her arms round Madge's neck*). That I liked him ever so much, and would marry him to-morrow. There now,—the murder's out. And then—O

Madge, it is too dreadful!—when I had said this, what do you think he did?

Madge. I couldn't possibly guess.

Mabel. He—kissed—me.

Madge. Frightful!

Mabel. But there's worse behind.

Madge. Worse—is it possible?

Mabel (*hiding her face*). I—kissed—him.

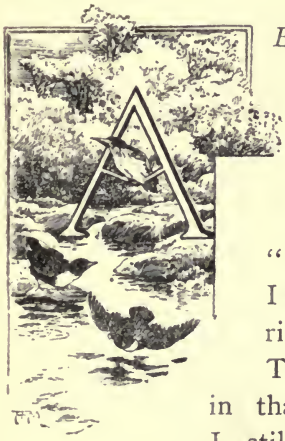
BOOK FOUR

HOME AGAIN!

HOME AGAIN!

I.

A LETTER BY THE WAY.



BAY WINDOW. Mowbray is discovered at the writing-table, adding a few sentences to a letter to Miss Isabel Lee, which his wife had begun.

"Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." Health and a day! This is what Mr Emerson says in that rhapsody on Nature, which I still think his finest work; and certainly the pomp of emperors *is* ridiculous when compared with the view which from our bedroom

window I looked on this morning. With few and cheap elements what a feast does nature provide for us! and how supremely blest is the man who with a light heart, a clear conscience, and a sound liver can seat himself at her bountiful table. Alas! so much depends upon the liver. Real exhilaration has become so rare and difficult in these times that it is like to die out altogether, like the Dodo. Black care sits behind the swiftest horseman,—a cloud of doubt darkens the brightest day,—the fever is in our blood, and we take it with us to the cool summit of Alp or Apennine. The sadness of a moralist like Carlyle, indeed, is not entirely due to dyspepsia. The man who after dining with Sydney Smith must needs write in his journal, "To me through these thin cobwebs"—Thin cobwebs! Alas! poor Yorick!—"Death and Eternity sat glaring," is clearly beyond the reach of any medicine that nature can provide. To the Seer, who apprehends the unseen with an almost morbid vividness, who feels that only a frail and perishable crust separates him from the fathomless abysses, the ministry of sun and moon and stars, of woods and fields and seas and rivers, is not likely to be accompanied with any healing power. The impatience of emaciated saint or stiff-necked Puritan with mere secular joys (as compared with the glory to follow) is not more manifest or intelligible than the inability of the philosopher, to whom this fair world is but a ghostly mask, to take comfort from the picturesque. To such an one there is something

distinctly impertinent in smiling skies, and laughing seas, and prattling brooks; and he says in the bitterness of his heart, as Beddoes said in his singular *Death's Jest-Book*—"The face of the world's a lie."

The moody moralist is wrong—as he finds to his cost. Emerson's immense enjoyment—"the dawn is my Assyria, the sunset and moonrise my Paphos and unimaginable realms of faerie"—indicates a truer and deeper outlook. The inexhaustible loveliness of our world is not altogether a vain show. It may be, as you say, only a frail perch above the bottomless gulf; but, such as it is, it has been fashioned by a divine hand, by an architect who is never at fault. He has made it, as you see, very good, beautiful exceedingly; devised it with matchless skill, adjusted it with incomparable precision. Is it possible that you can think or believe that it has no message for you, and that without hurt or damage to your immortal soul you can turn your back upon the sea and sky, the mountain and meadow and woodland, of this astonishing universe?

Mrs Mowbray (née *Madge Holdfast*) *enters from behind, sees how her letter has been tampered with, inflicts condign punishment, and taking the pen, continues—*

O Bell! what an altogether too delightful place this Vale of Tears is on a day like this, when the shadows are chasing each other round the mountain hollows; and now Ben Ghoil, now Ben Tarsuin, now Keer

Vhor, is struck into sudden glory by the sunlight. Inside, our little cottage is homely enough in all conscience; but outside, it is the palace of a king! Everything hereabouts, you know, belongs to the Duke,—the grouse, the deer, the woods, the mountains—everything except what is best; and *that* belongs to nobody in particular, and the merest beggar may have it for the asking. (What an advantageous arrangement for poor people like ourselves!) And, better still, it *cannot* be bought with money. There is a fearful and wonderful creature across the Sound, who pays three thousand a-year for his forest; but the exclusive enjoyment of the beautiful is not included in his lease, and even if it were, he wouldn't be a bit the richer. For the poor man cares for the picturesque as little as Mr Carlyle cared. Ralph says that I am cribbing from Emerson again. I don't care if I am; but in fact I never saw the passage till he read it to me this moment. Here it is: "The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has, but He whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their land-deeds give them no title."

So you see Ralph and I are poets, and in virtue of that gift the whole lordship of Arran belongs to us in a

much more real way than it does to the Duke. What we see every morning when we look out of our window you will find in Ralph's sketchy pen and ink at the top of our first page (correct so far as it goes)—a semi-circle of giant peaks, with the blue sea all about their feet. We have bathed and boated and flirted (O Bell! people *will* flirt with me, do what I can), and dawdled about to our heart's content; but yesterday a great longing seized me to get to the top of that far-away battlement—sometimes it looks miles away, sometimes close at hand—and Ralph in his good-natured way—for to do him justice he is as a rule delightfully lazy, and just as ready to lie in the sun at my feet as he was before we were *engaged*—promised to give us a hand up if we liked—"us" being me and Mabel, and Mabel's little sister Euphame: for Mabel Graham—Mabel Gray that was, you remember?—is our nearest neighbour, and lives only a couple of fields away. So we see each other ten times a-day, and she is just as simple and round-eyed as when we lost ourselves on the Aletsch glacier, and takes just as much fresh and innocent delight in everything and everybody, as if she were still running wild about her Yorkshire moorland. She was born and bred among the moors, you know, like Charlotte Brontë. And Euphame *is* a beauty. The men are all crazy about her, and poor Mr Stick-in-the-Mud, the lawyer over the way, who is as stiff as a poker, and as stupid as an owl, would kiss the ground she treads, I believe, if there were any case in point.

The wail of an infant is heard from the adjoining apartment; Mrs Mowbray flies to the rescue; Mr Mowbray resumes the narrative.

The short and the long of it is that our expedition was a brilliant success. It was a perfect day; and a perfect day in Arran is as "unspeakable" as the Turk himself. You don't have anything like it anywhere else. There is a certain dinginess and poverty about the fine weather of the East Coast; the sun that professes to shine upon the Calton Hill has, as your poet Campbell once remarked, a "sickly glare" at its best. I have little doubt indeed that on further inquiry Mr Ruskin will find that the mean and disreputable "Storm-cloud of the Nineteenth Century" was born and brought up in the Lothians.[1] But here we don't stick at trifles. Wet or dry, the clerk of our weather has no taste for the compromises that are in fashion at Westminster and elsewhere. The cats and dogs of popular meteorology are a joke to our water-spouts. But when the storm has once spent its passion, there is an end of it. And who indeed can object to an "oot-brak" which is accompanied with such Lear-like sublimities—the thunder-cloud trailing up the bay, the incredible rainbow that arches Ben Ghoil? It doesn't hang about the place, and mutter and sputter, and mizzle and drizzle, and make everything uncomfortable for everybody for days. The clouds roll away to the Atlantic, and the sun shines out—jovially, royally—as

[1] *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century.* By John Ruskin. Allen, 1884.

he used to shine elsewhere when Mr Ruskin's papa lived at Herne Hill, and our eloquent Jeremiah was still a little boy in bib and tucker. "Ach Gott!" as Mr Carlyle says, "it is a queer world. Our Jeremiah in bib and tucker!—indisputable bib and tucker of the Anglo-Saxon race—and cart-loads of æsthetic gabble—barrenest of all gabble in this gabbling universe—still nebulous in chaos. Ach Gott! Ach Gott!" The earth, in short, has had a famous washing, and the hoary old mountains themselves look as clean and fresh as last night's daisy. *Allons, mes enfants!*—a march like the *Marseillaise* is beating in the blood, and we shall carry Keer Vhor at a canter.

This way of putting it is all very well in a letter to your wife's dearest friend; but in point of fact it was an uncommonly stiff pull. You must understand that there are two deep clefts by which the inner circle of storm-beaten crag and corrie which lies behind Ben Ghoil may be approached,—Glen Rosa and Glen Sannox. Except Glen Rosa there is nothing in the way of valleys finer than Glen Sannox, and nothing finer than Glen Rosa except Glen Sannox. There are one or two points in Glen Sannox—where you get Sui Ferghus, and the Carlin's Step, and Keer Vhor, in a bee-line—which it is difficult to beat. But Glen Rosa leads direct to the innermost sanctuary, and so we went up Glen Rosa.

There is a pool on the Rosa beside which we took our first breakfast. The morning, let me say in passing, consisted largely of breakfasts,—the afternoon,

until it gently and imperceptibly declined into five-o'clock tea, being mainly devoted to lunch. But I anticipate. This pool on the Rosa may or may not be historic; we know indeed that Robert the Bruce, and the good Sir James of Douglas, and the rest of the heroic outlaws, hunted the red deer in this identical valley; and I cannot believe for my own part that on a sweltering summer afternoon even the patriot king, gazing longingly into its cool translucent depths, could have resisted the temptation to a dip. It is a noble granite bath fashioned by Nature herself; and from a polished slab that runs right across the stream you dive into twelve feet of water that bubbles like sparkling hock. Well, we breakfasted here, and thereafter the ladies magnanimously suggested that they would wait until our Serene Highness had finished his cigar. The morning mist still clung to the mountain-tops; the great peaks rose silently round about us,—Ben Ghoil, Keer Vhor, Ben Noosh, Ben Tarsuin; the whaups were calling to each other on every side; and a herd of lordly deer grazed leisurely overhead. The proper thing, you know, for these lordly creatures in similar circumstances is to "snuff the tainted gale"; but here, as a rule, they don't take the trouble to lift their heads. They are, in fact, as tame as the black cattle, and you would as soon think of shooting a cow.

We had a stiff tramp through long heather and round scattered boulders, and then a hand-over-hand climb up the side of the precipitous wall that joins A

Keer and Keer Vhor. The girls were not to be beat, and when we gained the summit of the high table-land, from which the great peaks spring, they had got their "second wind" (as the jockeys say), and were nearly as fresh as when they started. After the land is nationalised, and the Duke sent to the right-about, we shall have a big hotel up here, with a patent lift, seven-o'clock *table d'hôte*, and a Church of England chaplain. Meantime it remains a majestic solitude, where, except for the hoarse croak of the raven or the pitiful wail of the whaup, the silence is seldom broken. High up in the ether a peregrine watches us with jealous eyes; a pack of grouse sweep round the boulders and duck into the valley at our feet;—these and such as these are the only natives visible. The inevitable Mr Cook is still conspicuous by his absence.

Fancy to yourself a prolonged battlement, with a square tower at intervals of a mile or so, and you obtain a very fair idea of the great central range from Sui Ferghus to Ben Noosh. The massive wall is never less than two thousand feet in height. The highest of the towers is close upon three thousand. This is "Cyclopean architecture" indeed, and in all Scotland —nay, in all Europe—you will hardly anywhere match these gigantic slabs, piled one upon the other by cunningest masonry into the air!

The outlook over sea and shore from the table-land is very fine; but not of course to be compared with that from the watch-towers overhead. Which of the "Castles" shall we assail? There is Ben Noosh far

to the west, then Ben Tarsuin, then A Keer, then Keer Vhor, then Castail Abhail. A Keer is too difficult, Castail Abhail is too distant; but here is Keer Vhor close at hand, and though on the other side it falls like a riven Dolomite sheer into the Castail Abhail corrie, the ascent from this shoulder is not difficult.

The view from the final slab (for the summit is formed of a single block of granite) is certainly superb. Sheer below, as I have said, lies the Castail Abhail corrie — two thousand feet below. A wilderness of peaks rises on every hand, six or eight first-class peaks at least, and minor pinnacles without number. The valleys at their feet are deep in shadow, but the peaks themselves are brilliantly lighted up, and burn like beacon-fires against the blue of sea and sky. The Atlantic is all aflame. Jura and Islay and Colonsay are the phantom islands that lie along the horizon. Winding fiords, exquisitely blue and dotted with snow-white sails, divide them from each other and from the mainland. Clear to the north rises Cruachan; on the frosty evening sky the Cobbler is delicately pencilled.

Ralph yawns and lays down the pen, which is resumed by Madge.

What a screed he has written, to be sure! And only the tag-end of a page to round off our adventure. But I don't know that there is very much more to add. We had, of course, a lovely time of it at the top, and made lots of sketches. Then we scrambled along a sheep-track that skirts A Keer, and came to "Bealach

an fir bogah," the Archers' Pass. The pass is a true col, as they say in Switzerland, a deep cleft cut in the rock between A Keer and Tarsuin. We raced down the upper valley,—startling some splendid stags as we passed. They bounded up the hillside in royal style; when we saw them last they were standing on the summit, their antlers outlined against the sunset. The sunset! For round our five-o'clock tea in a cosy nook below the pass, the flying minutes had slipped away unnoticed. The day was done before we reached the level of the Rosa at the Garb Alt; and we had to pick our steps warily through Glen Shiant as the shadows grew deeper in its depths. Glen Shiant itself was magical in the enchanted twilight. Out of the darkness from the river-brink came the restless cry of the plover. Mysterious murmurs issued from the pine-wood. A stag bellowed far up on the mountain. And then, to add to the magic, the crescent moon rose from the bay and cast a sad light upon the lonely valley.

In such sadness, however, there is a fine and subtle joy. The mood was upon us — we experienced that elation, that exaltation of soul, which Emerson describes.[1] Even Euphame was touched.

At that moment, through the mystical moonlight, we perceived a solitary figure advancing towards us. The irreproachable propriety of the attire was visible—

[1] "Crossing a bare common in snow-puddles at twilight under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration, almost I fear to think how glad I am."—*Nature: an Essay*, by R. W. Emerson, chap. i.

nay, conspicuous—even in the uncertain light. The spell suddenly snapt; and, with a sigh which was distinctly audible in the supernatural stillness of the night, Nature admitted that the Philistines were too strong for her. We came down to earth with a thud —like the stick of a rocket.

We shall see you at Balmawhapple, shall we not? For, after all our roamings — here, there, and everywhere,—it is two years now, would you believe it, Bell? since we crossed the Monte Moro, — we are going —Home Again!

II.

A SERMON ON THE HILLSIDE.

SUMMER EVENINGS AT BALMAWHAPPLE.

THE Mowbrays came back with the Holdfasts a week ago; the Grahams were expected last night; so we shall have a good time of it after all, ere the leaves begin to fall, and the glory of the autumn is over. Madge ran over to see me before she had changed her travelling dress: she is as direct, as frank—may I hint, as audacious?—as ever, and as a married woman almost more charming than as a girl. They had picked up in Paris a dainty little copy of Joubert's *Pensées;* this was to be mine; "To old Crosspatch, with Madge and Mabel's love," was written on the fly-leaf. I like pretty books as I like pretty women, and Joubert's clean-cut cameos are worthy of the daintiest setting. The work of these French binders is just inimitable.

The experience of a nation is winnowed into its proverbs; and Joubert's proverbs are the consummate expression of the most mature thought and the finest

judgment. Strictly speaking, they are not epigrams: epigrams are of a coarser fibre—more rhetorical, more vulgarly incisive and antithetical, less urbane and reticent. Epigrams are to a certain extent false; they are meant to startle us; and to do so they are forced to sacrifice something to effect. Thus they have the artificial glitter and sparkle of the gems in a goldsmith's shop; whereas Joubert's are lucid and colourless as stars. In such cameo-like work any haziness, any indecision, is fatal. With Joubert perfect lucidity of style is the glass of perfect lucidity of thought.

The "Pensées" of Joubert at a Pagan altar!

It was one of Madge's madcap whims. There is an old Druidical circle at the head of the glen, just under the waterfall. I do not know that the Druids had anything to do with it; but there are unquestionably half-a-dozen huge stones ranged in some sort of order round a central block. The heather and bracken hem them in; but they lie upon grey gravel, which in the wettest weather is dry and crisp under foot. Two giant pines shut out the glare of the sunshine, and are all that are left of the primeval forest. It is a sort of trysting-place where we meet of summer afternoons,—the women with their work, the men with their books or guns or fishing-tackle. Mrs Mowbray has long been of opinion that the sermon in church is a very one-sided arrangement where the men have it all their own way. Some of our party are rather inclined to be hard upon our country parson and his sermons. Madge protests, on the other hand, that

if any layman among us were required to write two discourses every week in the year, he would find it no such easy matter to keep his audience awake. Which, indeed, is quite true. All the same, she maintains that it is utterly unfair that there should be no opportunity for criticism and discussion. *Audi alteram partem;* and the ladies especially should get a chance of showing that male logic is not invulnerable. So at this primeval altar among the everlasting mountains absolute equality is the rule, and the *ex cathedrâ* assumptions of the lords of creation are subjected to severe feminine scrutiny. If every preacher had to undergo such an ordeal, she is disposed to believe that there would be less loose writing and loose thinking in the pulpit; and I daresay she is right in the main.

To-day Joubert is the preacher. Mowbray, seated upon the central column, reads the propositions, one by one, aloud—pausing a little after each, for any comment or criticism that may be forthcoming. But these nicely poised, finely balanced, delicately weighed reflections of a master mind, present hardly a weak point to the most trenchant criticism. A crystal, or a sea-shell, or a maiden-hair fern, is, in one sense, eminently fragile; but in another it has all the strength of consummate completeness. It is marred by no flaw; disfigured by no blot; weakened by no imperfection: and, though the rudest hand may wreck it, it is as indestructible in design and workmanship as Monte Rosa or the Matterhorn. Pascal and John

Keats and Joubert enjoy this rare immunity. *Jewels, five words long, that, on the outstretched forefinger of time, sparkle for ever,* and outlast kingdoms and dynasties. There is a strength in such weakness that is superior, in the long-run, to brute force and the violence of passion. In a very real sense their strength is made perfect in weakness.

How much food for thought there is in such texts as these! which, indeed, Mowbray gathered almost at random :—

"Superstition is the only religion of which base souls are capable."

"Virtue must be asked at any cost, and with importunity; prosperity, timidly and with resignation. To ask is to obtain, when true riches are sought."

"The Bible is to religion what the *Iliad* is to poetry."

"Some men have only their full mental vigour when they are in good spirits; others only when they are sad."

"A hard intellect is a hammer that can do nothing but crush. Hardness of intellect is sometimes no less harmful and hateful than hardness of heart."

"There is about neat and clean clothing a sort of youthfulness in which it is well for old age to envelop itself."

"We may convince others by our arguments, but we can only persuade them by their own."

"Politeness is a sort of guard which covers the rough edges of our character, and prevents them from wounding others. We should never throw it off, even in our conflicts with coarse people."

"What a wonderfully small matter suffices to hinder a verse, a poem, a picture, a feature, a face, an address, a word, an accent, a gesture, from touching the heart!"

"What is true by lamplight is not always true by sunlight."

"Those who never retract their opinions love themselves more than they love truth."

"I imagine reptiles to be the most wary of animals, and that what notions they have are, for the most part, clear and exact — much ignorance and little error."

"It is much harder, I think, to be a modern than an ancient."

"Mathematics make the mind mathematically exact, while literature (*les lettres*) makes it morally exact. Mathematics will teach a man to build a bridge; the humanities will teach him to live."

"All good verses are like impromptus made at leisure."

"With some writers the style grows out of the thoughts; with others the thoughts grow out of the style."

"The style of Rousseau makes an impression upon the soul that may be compared to the touch of a

beautiful woman. There is something of the woman in his style."

"The poetry to which Socrates used to say the gods had warned him to apply himself before he died, is the poetry not of Homer but of Plato—the immaterial, celestial poetry which ravishes the soul and lulls the senses. It should be cultivated in captivity, in infirmity, in old age. It is the joy of the dying."

"Le Dieu de la métaphysique n'est qu'une idée; mais le Dieu des religions, le Créateur du ciel et de la terre, le Juge souverain des actions et des pensées, est une force."

Most of the maxims, as you may well believe, pass unchallenged; though Madge or Mabel occasionally indulges in a note of critical or defiant interrogation. This, you will recollect, is our Ladies' Parliament; and the males are only permitted to listen in silence to the words of wisdom that flow from honeyed lips—a far better arrangement, they maintain, than that which prevails at Westminster.

Joubert. Of the two, I prefer those who render vice lovable to those who degrade virtue.

Madge. That is a mere male quibble. No woman would separate them in this formal way. Whatever makes vice lovable degrades virtue.

Joubert. I am like an Æolian harp, that gives out certain fine tones but executes no air. No constant wind has ever blown over me.

Madge. Why, that is just Tennyson,—only I sup-

pose the Laureate was in a bib at the time it was written :—

> "Like an Æolian harp that wakes
> No certain air, but overtakes
> Far thought with music that it makes."

Joubert. One ought not to choose for a wife a woman whom one would not choose for a friend were she a man.

Madge (*addressing her husband*). What do you say to that, Mr Mowbray?

Mowbray. Why, I say that he is wrong. Friendship has its unique element, and so has love. A woman who has the feminine charm—if I may call it so in this presence—will make a most adorable wife, although, as regards the qualities which are common to both sexes, she may not be above par.

Madge. Is that a compliment or an impertinence? Go on with your reading, sir.

Joubert. Necessity may render a doubtful act innocent, but it cannot make it praiseworthy.

Mowbray (*sotto voce*). Rubbish! Read *Measure for Measure*.

Joubert. The pleasure of comedy lies in laughter; that of tragedy in tears. But the laughter must be agreeable, and the tears comely, if they are to honour the poet. In other words, tragedy and comedy must make us laugh and weep decently. Nothing that forces a laugh or compels a tear is commendable.

Madge. How French that is! There you have the

Academy! We are to laugh and weep by rule. But true tears and laughter are involuntary and untutored.

Joubert. There is no virtue which appears small when transacted on a large stage.

Madge. On the contrary, sir, a small domestic virtue —housewifely prudence or thrift——

Mowbray (*innocently—Madge's housekeeping being a standing joke*). A small domestic virtue——?

Madge. ——is out of place *sur un grand théâtre.* It becomes incongruous, and therefore mean, in presence of the great passions and actions of the tragic stage.

Joubert. Behind the thoughts of Pascal we see the attitude of that firm and passionless intellect. This it is that makes him so imposing.

Madge. Might not that, papa, have been said of Disraeli? All the other big people that we know are so gushing and wanting in self-respect and reticence. He alone had some of the—what shall I call it?

Mr Holdfast. Immobility of the antique?

Madge. Thanks, papa; you have always the right word. But of course *we* have had no practice in public speaking—as yet. Has Joubert, by the bye, anything to say about the emancipation of our sex?

Joubert (*maliciously*). In the uneducated classes the women are more estimable than the men; in the higher classes we find that the men are the superiors.

This is because men more readily grow rich in acquired virtues, and women in native virtues.

Madge. Oh! oh! oh! Does he mean to say that education refines men, but leaves women unrefined? To be sure, we have never had a chance yet of being *really* educated. You men know too well what would happen if you gave us a fair field. So you take refuge in subterfuges and compliments, and talk of our native virtues.

Joubert. For thirty years Petrarch adored not the person but the image of Laura. So much easier is it to preserve our sentiments and ideas than our sensations! Hence the fidelity of the knights of old.

Madge. Shut the book, Ralph. *That* is not fidelity. That is infidelity. Fidelity is to love the woman at your side all her life, and to find her grow nearer and dearer to you every day. I don't believe in your Petrarchs. The *Sonnets* were made for himself, and not for Laura. He was thinking of his public, of his fame, all the time, and poor dead Laura was only a peg.

Mowbray. Madge, at this rate you won't leave the luckless Petrarch a rag of clothing. Suppose we say good-bye to the poets and weigh the politicians?

Madge. No, no, Ralph, please don't. Among the everlasting hills, as you told us yesterday, the fading politics of mortal Rome have no place.

Mowbray. Well, my fair friends, if you won't listen, why—I write to the *Tomahawk.*

And he did. The letter ran thus:—

DEAR MR EDITOR,

The *Pensées* of Joubert have for long been regarded as containing the mature experience of a profound thinker upon nearly all the most important problems of life. Joseph Joubert was undoubtedly a master of language, and it was thought that the substance of his philosophy was as admirable as its style. But unless it be assumed that as a nation we are going not forwards but backwards (an inadmissible assumption, of course), I begin to fear that we must regard Joubert, and the conclusions at which he arrived, as quite out of date. I gather at random some half-dozen of his maxims; from which it will be seen that—as regards many of the most important principles which affect society—the State as well as the individual,—either he was or we are labouring under a profound delusion.

JOUBERT. *I would fain coin wisdom,—mould it, I mean, into maxims, proverbs, sentences, that can be easily retained and transmitted. Would that I could denounce and banish from the language of men—as base money—the words by which they cheat and are cheated!* [1]

THE MODERN APPLICATION. The capacity for saying in many sentences what might better be said in one is much to be commended. Unlimited verbosity is the characteristic of consummate oratory; and to the orator who, besides and beyond verbosity, most skilfully uses the words by which men cheat and are cheated, the civic crown is due.

JOUBERT. *Mental duplicity arises from duplicity of heart; it comes from secretly setting one's own opinion in the place of truth. A false mind is false in everything, just as a cross eye always looks askance.* [2]

[1] Que ne puis-je décrier et bannir du langage des hommes, comme une monnaie altérée, les mots dont ils abusent et qui les trompent!

[2] La fausseté d'esprit vient d'une fausseté de cœur; elle provient de ce qu'on a secrètement pour but son opinion propre, et non l'opinion vraie. L'esprit faux est faux en tout, comme un œil louche regarde toujours de travers.

THE MODERN APPLICATION. When the emotional side of the mind is warmed by enthusiasm or gushes with sympathy, mental duplicity is of no consequence. If "Truth" will not conform to the opinion of the wisest and grandest and oldest men, so much the worse for "Truth."

JOUBERT. *Statesmanship is the art of understanding and leading the masses, or the majority. Its glory is to lead them, not where they want to go, but where they ought to go.*[1]

THE MODERN APPLICATION. Statesmanship is the art of leading the masses by going along with them. The mob, or the majority of the mob, are always right. So that to make a distinction between the way they want to go, and the way they ought to go, is absurd.

JOUBERT. *Forms of government become established of themselves. They shape themselves, they are not created. We may give them strength and consistency, but we cannot call them into being. Let us rest assured that the form of government can never be a matter of choice: it is almost always a matter of necessity.*

THE MODERN APPLICATION. This is nonsense. The forms of government that have grown up and established themselves spontaneously are illogical and unsymmetrical. They should in all cases be swept away, and replaced by pen and ink and paper constitutions, evolved brand-new out of the inner consciousness of virtuous Radicals and democratic philosophers.

JOUBERT. *One of the surest ways of killing a tree is to lay bare its roots. It is the same with institutions. We must not be too ready to disinter the origin of those we wish to preserve. All beginnings are small.*

THE MODERN APPLICATION. On the contrary, the mean, ignoble, and irrational origin of all historic institutions should be constantly exposed and keenly ridiculed.

JOUBERT. *Imitate time. It destroys slowly. It undermines, wears, loosens, separates. It does not uproot.*

[1] La politique est l'art de connaître et de mener la multitude ou la pluralité; sa gloire est de la mener, non pas où elle veut, mais où elle doit aller.

THE MODERN APPLICATION. If we are to take the processes of nature as our guide, we must remember that violent convulsions are part of its machinery. Why not imitate the earthquake and the tornado?

JOUBERT. *In a well-ordered State those only need be anxious about public affairs whose business it is to direct them. A sheltering tree is their emblem. It is truly of the first importance that, if private persons are to be relieved from these anxieties, the government should be efficient,—that is to say, that its parts should be so harmonised that its functions may be easily performed, and its permanence ensured. A people constantly in unrest is always busied in building; its shelter is but a tent,—it is encamped, not established.*[1]

THE MODERN APPLICATION. A nation should never be at rest. A contented people is a people that is moribund; and constant dissatisfaction with the institutions under which they live is the sign of vitality and health.

JOUBERT. *What do the wise and good—those who live under the sway of reason and are the servants of duty—gain by liberty? It may well be that what the wise and good never allow themselves should be conceded to no one.*

THE MODERN APPLICATION. The power to go to the devil, if they choose, is a right of which freemen (and freewomen) cannot be deprived. Moreover, the habitual exercise of this right is the best of education.

JOUBERT. *Justice is truth in action.*

THE MODERN APPLICATION. Occasionally—not always. On the contrary, justice is sometimes, from the necessity of the case, falsehood in action. Thus, "Justice to Ireland" required our most upright statesmen to repudiate for the occasion the truths of political economy, as well as the laws of the Decalogue. [But then, to be sure, the Irish landlords were mostly Tories, and, in the deepest sense, deserved what they got.]

JOUBERT. *If you call effete whatever is ancient; if you wither with a name, which carries with it the notion of decadence and*

[1] Un peuple sans cesse inquiet est un peuple qui bâtit toujours; son abri n'est qu'une tente—il est campé, non établi.

a sense of contempt, whatever has been consecrated and strengthened by time, you profane and weaken it. The decadence is of your own bringing about.[1]

THE MODERN APPLICATION. But that is precisely what we desire. No doubt we apply to the House of Lords every foul epithet that the most copious vocabulary can furnish. But then our object is to abolish the House of Lords. So we are quite logical.

These are a few specimens of that progress of opinion, of that sudden (mushroom-like?) growth of popular insight and wisdom, which have already made Joubert a classic. That there is a vital divergence between the two points of view no one will deny; and perhaps the explanation may be found in one of the maxims which I have not yet quoted: "*You satisfy your minds with words, which, like a kind of paper-money, have a conventional value, but no solidity. This is why there is so little gold in your speeches and in your books.*"—I am, in the meantime at least,

YOUR BEWILDERED CONTRIBUTOR.

* * *

We had many such meetings before the winter came down upon us. Madge was our whimsical Abbot of Unreason. Whenever we desired to be lazily heterodoxical or happily paradoxical, we gathered round the Druids' altar. Sometimes it was a prize competition; sometimes a competitive examination; each folly of the day had its turn. In art and politics and letters,

[1] Si vous appelez vieilli tout ce qui est ancien; si vous flétrissez d'un nom qui porte avec lui une idée de décadence et un sentiment de dédain tout ce qui a été consacré et rendu plus fort par le temps, vous le profanez et l'affaiblissez; la décadence vient de vous.

who was the greatest bore, who the biggest impostor? These and such as these were the questions we had to answer; I am afraid we were seldom serious; once however, when called upon to write out in a legible hand, and enclose in a sealed envelope, the passages —prose and poetry—that we loved best, we could hardly be accused of frivolity. Some of the selections indeed were very pretty and characteristic; could you guess to whom the prize was awarded?

This was Madge's choice:—

> "Those have most power to hurt us that we love,
> We lay our sleeping lives within their arms."

"And if the stranger would yet learn in what spirit it was that the dominion of Venice was begun, let him ascend the highest tier of the stern ledges that sweep round the altar of Torcello, and strive to feel in himself the strength of heart that was kindled within them when first within the shelter of its knitted walls, amidst the murmur of the waste of waves, and the beating of the wings of the sea-birds round the rock that was strange to them, rose that ancient hymn in the power of their gathered voices:—

> "The sea is His and He made it,
> And His hands prepared the dry land."

Mabel's:—

> "Leave to the nightingale her shady wood,
> A privacy of glorious light is thine;
> Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
> Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
> Type of the wise who soar but never roam,
> True to the kindred points of heaven and home!"

"When a noble act is done—perchance in a scene of great natural beauty; when Leonidas and his three hundred martyrs

consume one day in dying, and the sun and moon come each and look at them once in the steep defile of Thermopylæ; when Arnold Winkelried, in the high Alps, under the shadow of the avalanche, gathers in his breast the sheaf of Austrian spears to break the line for his comrades;—are not these heroes entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed?"

Euphame's:—

> "Safe-guarded by immortal charms,
> She clasps her heaven in folded arms;
> And—star-like over tempest—knows
> Bright, unassailable repose."[1]

"While the winds of departing summer scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip gold, far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen spot rests, star-like, on the stone; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years."

Mark's:—

> "The garlands wither on your brow,
> Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
> Upon Death's purple altar now,
> See where the victor victim bleeds;
> All heads must come
> To the cold tomb;
> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

"Happy are they whom privacy makes innocent, who deal so with men in this world that they are not afraid to meet them in the next, who when they die make no commotion

[1] The lines on the Sistine Madonna were written, if I am not mistaken, by Thomas Woolner, sculptor and poet,—a man whose gifts, both in art and letters, have been insufficiently appreciated.

among the dead, and are not touched with that poetical taunt of Isaiah."

My own :—

> "'Twas the last watch of night
> Except what brings the morning quite,
> When the armed angel, conscience clear,
> His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
> And gazes on the earth he guards,—
> Safe one night more through all its wards,—
> Till God relieve him at his post."

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

Mowbray's paper was not forthcoming. "But I'll tell you what," he said; "my host at Derreen gave me a copy of verses, and, as a particular favour, and on condition that Madge hands over the prize, I'll read them to you before we go."

"Your host at Derreen? You don't mean to say that Mr Froude——"

"Hush! hush! No names, if you please, and, as you insist, no politics either. But Hobbes' text—'Words are wise men's counters—they do but reckon with them; but they are the money of fools'—belongs to no party in particular; and in a garrulous age Tory and Radical alike may lay it advantageously to heart. That text is the *motive* of the poem."[1]

[1] These stirring lines were given to me by Mr Froude, and he sanctioned their publication. His verses, like his drawings, however, were only a holiday recreation.—S.

ROMSDAL FIORD.

So this, then, was the Rover's nest,
And here the chiefs were bred
Who broke the drowsing Saxon's rest,
And scared him in his bed.

The north wind blew, the ship sped fast,
Loud cheered the Corsair crew,
And wild and free above the mast
Aslauga's raven flew.

The raven still o'er Romsdal's peak
Is soaring as of yore,
But Rolf the Ganger's battle-shriek
Calm Romsdal hears no more.

Long ages now beneath the soil
The ganger has been lying—
In Romsdal's bay his quiet toil
The fisherman is plying.

With time and tide we change and change,
Yet still the world is young;
Still free the proudest spirits range,
The prize is for the strong.

And though it be a glorious thing
In parliaments to shine,—
Though orators be modern kings
And only not divine;

Yet men will still be ruled by men,
And talk will have its day,
And other Rolfs will come again
To sweep the rogues away.

* * *

The evening had fallen ere we returned; and as we went down the main street we found the Revivalists at their work. A mob of sailors in front of "The Polar Bear" — whose huge paws and gleaming teeth were visible through the open window—listened stolidly to the refrain of a hymn which was partly stirring and partly grotesque,—a refrain which might have sounded prosaically profane from other lips, but which here and in this environment did not seem unbecoming.

> "If each of you will do your best,
> God Almighty will do the rest,"

the evangelist shouted; and the audience, in rude chorus, made reply:—

> "If each of us will do our best,
> God Almighty will do the rest."

III.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE DEAN.

WINTER EVENINGS AT BALMAWHAPPLE.

BUT when the October mists came down into the valley we had to quit the hillside, and listen to graver discourse at our Institute.

It was a great day for Balmawhapple when the Institute was "inaugurated." Dr Evergreen was our first President, and it was at his instance that Mark consented to deliver the opening series of lectures,—a series of lectures entitled *Apologetics*. The Tories were under a cloud at the time; the "stupid party" were treated with playful derision by political moralists and satirists; nor did Dryden, Pope, and St John fare better. A renowned man of letters had visited us shortly before the inauguration, and had made Mark and Pat very indignant by maintaining that the suave and decorous Addison was a better man and a much greater writer than Swift. "We must pay him off," Pat said when they had been discussing this detestable heresy; and thus the lecture on the Great Dean came to be written. It was, I think, the most popular of the series, and was

fully reported in the *Tomahawk* at the time. But the *Tomahawk* has been long out of print; and it has occurred to me that the last word on Swift has still to be said. Whether Mark's Apology will be accepted as valid I cannot say. But it was regarded as a challenge as well as a protest,—the reply of Bohemia to the Philistines in general and to Corbie in particular, who, on behalf of the High and Dry, had taken possession of the only public hall in Balmawhapple. The Infant Institute, I may add, made headway rapidly; and when it came to be known that the proceedings were closed each week with a solemn recitation of *The twa Corbies* by the Celt in full undress (the fine refrain "Whar sall we twa dine the day?" being apparently irresistible), a community which, like the Skye terrier, "just never can get eneuch o' fechtin'," began to regard us with cordiality, if not with enthusiasm.

AN APOLOGY FOR THE DEAN.

In the controversy which Swift's life and character have provoked, it has been extremely difficult hitherto to arrive at any quite satisfactory conclusion. Biographical criticism, like Biblical, is a progressive science. The critical method, which we have brought to comparative perfection, was almost unknown to our forefathers. Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* is one of the best books of the time, for his arbitrary dogmatism was controlled and informed by an admirable common-sense; but even Johnson often misleads. I do not speak of his criticism of poetry, for the canon of taste has changed since his day—as it may change again; but the genuine spirit of inquiry is conspicuous by its absence. Even

the lives of the men who might almost be called contemporary are treated as if the gossip of the club and the tittle-tattle of the coffee-house were the only available sources of information. Thus, until Walter Scott's memoirs were published, the real Swift was almost unknown. The growth of the Swift legend was indeed unusually rapid; and if an exacter criticism had not been brought to bear upon it in time, there is no saying to what proportions it might not have attained. The great Dean of St Patrick's was becoming a grotesque and gigantic shadow. Scott was not a critic in the modern sense of the word; but his judgment, upon the whole, was sound, and his large humanity enabled him to read into the story much that a stricter scrutiny has since approved. The creative sympathy of genius is seldom at fault; for it works in obedience to the larger laws which govern human conduct, and if its methods are sometimes unscientific, its conclusions are generally just.

Scott has been followed by diligent students, and their researches may be considered exhaustive. Much new matter has been recovered; much that was irrelevant has been set aside; and I think that a portrait, credible and consistent in its main lines, may now be constructed. After all deductions have been made, Jonathan Swift remains a great and imposing personality,—as unique in that century as Benjamin Disraeli has been in ours.

The Dean himself is to some extent responsible for the gross caricature which has been commonly accepted as a faithful portrait by his countrymen. The intense force of his genius gave a vital energy to the merest trifles. His casual sayings have branded themselves upon the language. *Only a woman's hair—die like a poisoned rat in a hole—I am what I am—ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit,*—these letters of fire may be read through the darkness which has engulfed so much.[1] But a true and complete estimate of

[1] It is the same quality in Burns that brings some of his lines home to us with such incomparable force :—

"The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, oh."

a man's disposition and temper cannot be constructed out of scattered and isolated phrases. We must take these for what they are worth,—compare them, weigh them, find out their proper place and relative value in the narrative. The subtler lights and shades of character are necessarily missed in a sketch which busies itself exclusively with the occasional outburst—however vivid and impressive—of passion or remorse. Mr Thackeray seldom hurts our sense of the becoming; but his slight and unconscientious treatment of one of the greatest satirists of the world is, it must be sorrowfully admitted, a well-nigh unpardonable offence.

The leading events of Swift's life fall naturally into four main divisions: 1st, His school and college life; 2d, His residence with Sir William Temple; 3d, His London career, with its social, literary, and political triumphs; 4th, His Irish banishment. He was born in 1667; he died in 1745: so that his life may be said to cover nearly the whole period between the Restoration of Charles II. and the last Jacobite rebellion.

Oliver Cromwell had been only a few years in his grave when Jonathan Swift was born. Swift was an Irishman, in so far as the place of birth determines nationality; but except for the accident that he was born in Dublin, he was, by extraction and temperament, an Englishman. He came of a good Hereford stock, and he was proud of his ancestry. "My birth, although from a family not undistinguished in its time, is many degrees inferior to yours," he says to Bolingbroke—an admission which he might safely make, for St John had a strain of Tudor blood in his veins. The Dean's grandfather had been vicar of Goodrich, and had been distinguished during the Civil War for the heartiness and obstinacy of his loyalty. But loyalty was a losing game in England at the time. So it came about that several of the vicar's sons were forced to cross the Irish Channel, and try their luck in the Irish capital. The eldest, Godwin, through his connection with the Ormond family, was fairly successful; but the younger brother, Jonathan, when he married Abigail Erick, had still his fortune to make. He died a year or two afterwards, leaving his widow wellnigh penniless.

So that when Jonathan the second made his appearance in this bad world on the last day of November 1667, the outlook was by no means bright.

The widow contrived, however, to struggle on hopefully, and indeed remained to the end a bright, keen, thrifty, uncomplaining, capable sort of woman, much regarded by her son. In course of time she was able to get away from Dublin to her native country, where the Ericks had been known more or less since the days of that Eadric the forester from whom they claimed descent, and settled herself in Leicester, where she seems to have been well esteemed, and to have led the easy, blameless, unexciting life of a provincial town for many years. Her son had become famous before she died; but he was always loyal and affectionate to the cheery old lady, though their relations perhaps were never so intimate and endearing as those which united his mother to Pope,—

> "Whose filial piety excels
> Whatever Grecian story tells."

But he frequently went to see her,—walking the whole way, as was his habit; and on her death he recorded his sorrow in words so direct and simple that they cling to the memory: "*I have now lost my barrier between me and death.* God grant I may live to be as well prepared for it as I confidently believe her to have been. If the way to heaven be through piety, truth, justice, and charity, she is there."

Swift was thus cast upon the charity of his friends from his earliest infancy. When barely a year old, indeed, he was secretly taken to Whitehaven by his nurse, who belonged to that part of the country, and who could not bring herself to part from her charge. The little fellow appears to have thriven in that homely companionship. He remained with her for three years; and before he was brought back to Ireland, he could read, he tells us, any chapter of the Bible. Soon after his return to Dublin he was sent by his uncle Godwin to the grammar-school at Kilkenny, — the famous academy where Swift and Congreve and Berkeley received their early training. From Kilkenny the lad went to Trinity

College,—but his university career was undistinguished: he failed to accommodate himself to the traditional course of study, and it was with some difficulty that he obtained his degree. The sense of dependence pressed heavily upon him; he was moody and ill at ease—at war with the world, which had treated him scurvily, as he thought; and more than once he threatened to break into open revolt.

The Celtic rising of 1688 drove him, with a host of English fugitives, across the Channel—not unwillingly, we may believe. He joined his mother at Leicester; but before the close of 1689, he had obtained a post in the household of Sir William Temple. Sir William was living at Moor Park, near Farnham, in Surrey—a wild and romantic district even now, and which two centuries ago was a natural wilderness of heath and furze. In the centre of this wilderness Sir William had created a sort of Dutch paradise,—had planted his tulips, had dug his canals, had filled his fish-pond. The somewhat ponderous affability of the retired diplomatist was looked upon as rather old-fashioned, even by his contemporaries; and it is not difficult to believe that the relations between him and the raw and inexperienced Irish secretary must have been, at first at least, a trifle strained and difficult. But I am rather inclined to think that the residence with Temple was not the least happy period of Swift's life. He was in his early manhood; he spent much of his time in the open air; he had a plentiful store of books to fall back upon during rainy weather; the first promptings of genius and ambition were making themselves felt; he saw on occasion the great men who were moving the world; and after some inevitable misunderstandings he became indispensable to Temple, who "often trusted him," as he says, "with affairs of great importance." Then there was little Esther Johnson,—the delicate pupil who had already found a soft place in her master's heart, and whose childish prattle has been immortalised in words that are as fresh and sweet to-day as the day they were written. If it is true that *A Tale of a Tub* as well as *The Battle of the Books* was composed at Moor Park, the stories of his vulgar servitude and wearing misery are finally disposed of. The glow, the

animation, the brightness of the narrative, are characteristic of a period of fine and true happiness,—the happiness of the creative intellect in its earliest and least mechanical exercise.

When Swift left Moor Park in 1699, his education was complete. He was fitted by nature to play a great part in great affairs; and besides his unique natural gifts, he was now in every sense a man of culture and accomplishment. The discipline at Moor Park had been altogether salutary; and we have no reason to suppose that he felt himself degraded by the position which he had occupied and the duties he had discharged. A bitter and dreary childhood had been succeeded by years of dependence and privation; but at Moor Park, for the first time, he entered a secure haven, where, released from the stress of the storm, he had leisure to look about him, and to prepare himself for action.

It was not for some years after Temple's death that Swift became a noticeable figure in the metropolis. He was mostly in Ireland. He had become a clergyman before he finally left Moor Park; and he now held one or two inconsiderable livings in the Irish Church. The congregations were small; the duties were light; and he had a good deal of spare time on his hands. All his life he was a great walker (Mr Leslie Stephen, himself an eminent mountaineer, is ready to fraternise with this possible member of the Alpine Club),—the sound mind in the sound body being with Swift largely dependent upon constant and even violent exercise. At this period—indeed during his whole career, but more especially at this time—these long solitary rambles are a noticeable feature in Swift's life. He walks from London to Leicester, from Leicester to Holyhead, from Dublin to Laracor,—sleeping at roadside taverns, hobnobbing with wandering tinkers and incurious rustics, watching the men at their work, the women at their cottage-doors. He had a great liking for this kind of life, and he loved the country after a fashion of his own: he recalls through the smoke of London the willows of Laracor, and when he is too moody in spirit to consort with his fellow-mortals, he goes down to the vicarage and shuts himself up in his garden.

It was in London, however, that his true life was passed. There the great game was being played in which he longed to join. He soon acquired celebrity,—celebrity that in one sense cost him dear. From the day that *A Tale of a Tub* was published, he was a famous man. But it was a fame that rather scandalised Queen Anne and the orthodox school of Churchmen; and Swift could never get himself made a bishop, —a dignity which he mainly coveted, it is probable, because it implied secular and political as well as spiritual lordship, There is no doubt that Swift was a sincere believer in what he held to be the main truths of Christianity;[1] but his ridicule was terribly keen, and the mere trappings of religion fared ill at his hands. There is no saying now how far his destructive logic might have been carried; there seems indeed to be a general consent among experts that it would have spared little. For my own part, I am not prepared to admit that the corruptions of religion—superstition and fanaticism —cannot be assailed except by the sceptic or the unbeliever. Swift did not attack the Church of England; but *that*, it is said, was only an accident. "Martin is not ridiculed; but with the attacks on Peter and John before us, it is impossible not to see that the same sort of things might be said of him as are said of them, and with the same sort of justice. What a chapter Swift might have written on the way in which Martin made his fortune by bribing the lawyers to divorce the Squire when he wanted to marry his wife's maid; how he might have revelled in description of the skill with which Martin forged a new will in thirty-nine clauses, and tried to trip up Peter, and actually did crop Jack's ears, because they each preferred their own forgery to his!" Well, but suppose Swift had said all this,—would he have said anything more than Pusey, Keble, and a crowd of Church of England dignitaries, have been saying now for many years past, without any suspicion of

[1] The prayers composed by Swift for Mrs Esther Johnson on her death-bed are very interesting in this connection, and should be read attentively. They seem to show, along with much else, that whatever speculative difficulties he may have experienced, he had accepted Christianity, as a rule of life and faith, with sincere and even intense conviction.

irreligion, or scepticism, or even of dangerous logical insight? In short, the substance of religion is independent of its accidents, which are often mean and grotesque; and the mean and the grotesque, in whatever shape, are fit subjects for satire,—which in the hands of a Cervantes, a Rabelais, an Erasmus, or a Swift, may undoubtedly become the most effective of all weapons in the cause of truth and common-sense. "*A Tale of a Tub*," Sir Walter Scott remarked very truly, "succeeded in rendering the High Church party most important services; for what is so important to a party in Britain as to gain the laughers to their side?" Mr Leslie Stephen, with unlooked-for and unaccustomed timidity, replies, —"The condition of having the laughers on your side is to be on the side of the laughers. Advocates of any serious cause feel that there is danger in accepting such an alliance." But Erasmus, who contrived to get the laughers on his side, had nearly as much to do with the reformation of ecclesiastical abuses in the sixteenth century as Luther or Calvin had. Swift's ridicule may have had a wider sweep, and may have involved even graver issues; but I do not see that it was *destructive*—that is, inimical to and inconsistent with a rational conception of Christianity—in the sense at least that David Hume's was destructive.

Addison's Travels were published in 1705, and he sent a copy to Swift with these words written upon the fly-leaf: "To Dr Jonathan Swift, The most Agreeable Companion, the Truest Friend, and the Greatest Genius of his Age, This Book is presented by his most Humble Servant, the Author." So that even thus early Swift's literary pre-eminence must have been freely recognised,—at least among the Whigs, of whom Addison was the mouthpiece. Swift at this time was held to be a Whig; but in truth he cared little for party. He had, indeed, a passionate and deeply-rooted love of liberty,—

> "Better we all were in our graves,
> Than live in slavery to slaves,"—

but the right divine of the oligarchy to govern England was a claim that could not evoke much enthusiasm. The principles

for which Hampden died on the field and Sidney on the scaffold were getting somewhat threadbare; and Swift was too clear-sighted to be in favour of popular rule. "The people is a lying sort of beast, and I think in Leicester above all other parts that ever I was in." At Moor Park, however, he had been under the roof of a statesman who was closely identified with the Revolution Settlement. The king himself had been a not unfrequent visitor; and it was natural that Swift, when he went out into the world, should take with him the politics of his patron. But they always sat loosely upon him. He did not love to see personal resentment mix with public affairs. So he said at a later period of life; and his earliest pamphlet was an earnest and spirited protest against the bitterness of faction. It recommended him to the Whig chiefs, who were then in the minority, and who were ready to welcome an ally who could prove from classical antiquity that their impeachment was a blunder. But when the victories of Marlborough had restored them to office, it cannot be said that Somers and Halifax exerted themselves very strenuously in behalf of their *protégé*. So late as the spring of 1709 he was able to tell the latter, that the copy of the *Poésies Chrétiennes* which he had begged of him on parting was the only favour he ever received from him or his party. There were obstacles in the way, no doubt; but it is difficult to suppose that if they had pressed his claims, they could not have made him an Irish bishop or an English dean. The rewards of letters in that age were splendid; and Swift's fame was rivalled only by Addison's. But the truth is, that there was from the first little sympathy between the oligarchy which governed England and this strong and trenchant intellect. Swift, moreover, was an ardent Churchman, who hated fanaticism and the fanatical sects; whereas the Whigs were lukewarm Churchmen, and rather addicted to Dissent. Macaulay says that when Harley and St John succeeded in displacing Godolphin, Swift "ratted." The charge appears to me to be unfounded. Swift had shaken the dust of Whiggery off his feet before the prosecution of Sacheverell had been commenced. The alienation was even then virtually if not nominally com-

plete. The leaders of the party had treated him badly, and were ready, he believed, to treat the Church badly if they dared. So that for some time before the Tories returned to office in 1710, he had been slowly but surely drifting into Toryism. Harley and St John were resolved to have him at any price,—he was the only man they feared; but they would hardly have ventured to approach him if his Whiggery had been very pronounced. The unconventional habits of the new Ministers were delightful to one who detested convention. They were weighted with great affairs; but he always found them, he declared, as easy and disengaged as schoolboys on a holiday. He was charmed by the easy familiarity of the Lord Treasurer; he was captivated by the adventurous genius of the Secretary;[1] and affection and admiration completed what the *sæva indignatio* may have begun. The ill-concealed antagonisms, the long-suppressed resentments, burst out with full force in *The Examiner*. Nowhere have the narrow traditions of the Whigs been more trenchantly exposed. "They impose a hundred tests; they narrow the terms of communion; they prononuce nine parts in ten of the country heretics, and shut them out of the pale of their Church. These very men, who talk so much of a comprehension in religion among us, how come they to allow so little of it in politics, which is their sole religion?" "They come," he exclaims in another place—"they come with the spirits of shopkeepers to frame rules for the administration of kingdoms; as if they thought the whole art of government consisted in the importation of nutmegs and the curing of herrings. But God be thanked," he adds, "they and their schemes are vanished, and their place shall know them no more." This is not the language of a deserter who, from interested motives, has gone over to the enemy: there is, on the contrary, the energy of entire conviction.

[1] "I think Mr St John the greatest young man I ever knew: wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning, and an excellent taste; the best orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good nature, and good manners; generous, and a despiser of money." —*Swift to Stella.*

From 1710 to 1714 St John and Harley were in office. These were Swift's golden years. He enjoyed the consciousness of power; and now he had the substance of it, if not the show. He was by nature a ruler of men; and now his authority was acknowledged and undisputed. It must be confessed—as even Dr Johnson is forced to confess—that during these years Swift formed the political opinions of the English nation.

He was still in his prime. When Harley became Lord Treasurer, Swift had not completed his forty-third year, and his bodily and mental vigour were unimpaired. The man who had hitherto led a life of penury and dependence, had found himself of a sudden in possession of a most wonderful weapon—the sword of sharpness or the coat of darkness of the fairy tale—which made him a match for the greatest and the strongest. It was an intoxicating position; but upon the whole, he bore himself not ignobly. That there was always a certain masterfulness about him need not be doubted; but the roughness of his manner and the brusqueness of his humour have certainly been exaggerated. The reports come to us from those who saw him in later and evil days, when he was suffering from bodily pain and the irritability of incipient madness. But in 1710 the "imperious and moody exile" was the most delightful company in the world. The "conjured spirit" had been exorcised by the spell of congenial work, and its owner was bright, ardent, and unwearied in the pursuit of business and pleasure. Swift had unquestionably that personal charm which is so potent in public life. Men were drawn to him as by a magnet: for women—for more than one woman at least—he had an irresistible attraction. He was not tall; but his figure was certainly not "ungainly," and his face was at once powerful and refined. There was a delicate curve of scorn about the lips: though he was never known to laugh, his eyes were bright with mirth and mockery,—"azure as the heavens," says Pope, "and with a charming archness in them." Poor Vanessa found that there was something awful in them besides; but that was later. Altogether he must have been, so far as we

can figure him now, a very noticeable man,—the blue eyes shining archly under the black and bushy eyebrows — the massive forehead—the dimpled chin—the aquiline nose—the easy and confident address—the flow of ready mother-wit—the force of a most trenchant logic: except St John, there was probably no man in England at the time who, taken all round, was quite a match for the famous Irish vicar.

The death of Queen Anne was nearly as mortal a blow to Swift as to St John. It meant banishment for both. Yet the great qualities of the men were accentuated by evil fortune. "What a world is this, and how does fortune banter us!" St John exclaimed on the day he fell; and a week later he wrote to Swift, — "Adieu; love me, and love me better, because after a greater blow than most men ever felt I keep up my spirit—am neither dejected at what is past, nor apprehensive at what is to come. *Mea virtute me involvo.*" "Swift," said Arbuthnot, "keeps up his noble spirit; and though like a man knocked down, you may behold him still with a stern countenance, and aiming a blow at his adversaries."

Swift returned to Ireland in 1714. He had been appointed to the Deanery of St Patrick's by his Tory friends; and he applied himself, on his return, with zeal and assiduity to the duties of his charge. But though he bore himself stoutly, he was in truth a soured and disappointed man. The company of great friends had been scattered. He was remote from St John, Pope, and Gay. He detested Ireland,—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hell*," he had said to Oxford not long before. But the irony of fate had been too strong for him, and the rest of his life was to be spent among a people whom he despised. He came back under a cloud of unpopularity. He was mobbed more than once in the streets of Dublin. But nature had made him a ruler of men—in Ireland as elsewhere. Soon he rose to be its foremost citizen. The English Whigs had treated Ireland with gross injustice; and the wrongs of Ireland was a ready theme for the patriot and the satirist. The Irish people were not ungrateful. "Come over to us," he had once written in his grand way to Addison, "and we will raise an army, and make you king

of Ireland." He himself for many years was its virtual ruler. "When they ask me," said the accomplished Carteret, who had been Lord-Lieutenant, "how I governed Ireland, I say that I pleased Dr Swift." Walpole would have been glad more than once to punish the audacious Churchman, but the risk was too great. During the prosecution of the printer of the *Drapier Letters*, the popular determination found appropriate expression in a well-known passage of Holy Writ: "Shall JONATHAN die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued JONATHAN, that he died not." And when, at a later period, exasperated by a peculiarly bitter taunt, the Minister threatened to arrest the Dean, he was dissuaded by prudent friends. The messengers of the law would require to be protected by the military—could he spare ten thousand men for the purpose? "Had I held up my little finger," Swift said to Walpole's ally, the Primate Boulter, who had been expostulating with him on his violence—"had I held up my little finger, they would have torn you to pieces."[1] Bonfires blazed on his birthday. In every town of Ireland that he visited, he was received "as a sovereign prince." When he went from Dublin to the provinces, it was like a royal progress. On his return in 1727 from the last visit he paid to England, the vessel in which he crossed the Channel was signalled in Dublin Bay. "The Corporation met the ship in wherries, the quays were decked with bunting, the bells were rung, and the city received in gala fashion her most beloved citizen."

But all was unavailing. The gloomy shadows gathered more closely round him. Vanessa was dead; Stella was dead; one by one the great friends had dropped away. He was tortured by a profound misanthropy—the misanthropy of the man who sees too clearly and feels too keenly. For many

[1] On another occasion, a great crowd having assembled to witness an eclipse of the sun, Swift sent round the bellman to intimate that the eclipse had been postponed by the Dean's orders, and the crowd forthwith dispersed.

years before his death he read on his birthday that chapter of Job in which the patriarch curses the day on which it was said in his father's house that a man child was born. *Gulliver* is one of the great books of the world; but the hopeless rage against the race of mortals in the closing chapters is almost too terrible. For many years Swift was one of the most wretched of men. The gloom never lightened—the clouds never broke. It must have been almost a relief when total darkness came—if such it was. But that is the worst of madness,—we cannot tell if the unconsciousness, the oblivion, is absolute. Behind the veil the tortured spirit may prey upon itself. He had asked to be taken away from the evil to come; but his prayer was not granted. He would have rejoiced exceedingly to find the grave; but he was forced to drink the cup to the dregs. "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me" (Job iii. 25). During the last four years of his life this famous wit, this prodigious intellect, was utterly prostrated. Only a broken sentence came at long intervals from his lips. "Go, go!" "Poor old man!" "I am what I am." The picture is darker than any he has drawn,—it is a more bitter commentary on the irony of human life than anything that Gulliver witnessed in all his travels. The end came on the 19th of October 1745.

Such is a brief sketch of the chief incidents of Swift's life,—brief, but sufficient perhaps to enable us to follow with sympathy and understanding some of the questions on which controversy has arisen. "Without sympathy," as Mr Craik has well said, in his valuable memoir, "few passages of Swift's life are fairly to be judged." There are a good many side issues that come up incidentally for judgment; but the main controversy, out of which the others emerge, is concerned with the relations which the Dean maintained with Stella and Vanessa.

If we examine with any care the indictment that has been prepared by Jeffrey, Macaulay, Thackeray, and others, we find that the charges against Swift may be stated somewhat thus: He was parsimonious and avaricious, a self-seeker and a cynic, brutal to the weak and abject to the strong, a factious Church-

man, a faithless politician, coarse in language and overbearing in manner. Some of these allegations have been disposed of by what has been already said: that there was an essential consistency, for instance, in his political opinions, that he did not "rat" in any base or vulgar sense, seems to me to be incontestable; and it will be found, I think, that most of the other charges rest on an equally slender basis of fact, on equally palpable misconstructions. Indeed, the more we examine the Dean's life, the more obvious does it become that his vices leant to virtue's side, and that the greatness of his nature asserted itself strongly and unequivocally in his very weaknesses.

One initial difficulty there is;—Swift had a habit of putting his worst foot foremost. He detested hypocritical pretence of every kind; and in speaking of himself he often went to the other extreme. A subtle vein of self-mockery runs through his letters, which incapacity and dulness may easily misconstrue. Pope understood it; Bolingbroke understood it; but the solemn badinage of his own actions and motives in which he liked to indulge, when taken as a serious element by serious biographers, has been apt to lead them astray. Swift, in short, was a singularly reticent man, who spoke as little as possible about his deeper convictions, and who, when taxed with amiability, or kind-heartedness, or generosity, or piety, preferred to reply with an ambiguous jest.

The Dean's alleged meanness in money matters is easily explained. The iron had entered into his soul. He had known at school and college what penury meant; and he deliberately resolved that by no act of his own would he again expose himself to the miseries of dependence. But he was not avaricious,—from a very early period he gave away one-tenth of his narrow income in charity. He saved, as some one has said, not that he might be rich, but that he might be liberal. Such thrift cannot be condemned; on the contrary, it is virtue of a high order—the virtue which the strenuous Roman extolled. *Magnum vectigal est parsimonia.* He went out of his way to help others. His temper was naturally generous. It may be said, quite truly, that he valued power mainly because it en-

abled him to push the fortunes of his friends. He excused himself indeed in his characteristic fashion. To help his friends was to him so much of a pleasure that it could not be a virtue.

The charge that he was ready to push his own fortunes by any means however base, seems to me to be capable of even more emphatic refutation. Thackeray says that Swift was abject to a lord. The truth is that no man was ever more independent. The moment that Harley hurt his sense of self-respect by an injudicious gift, he broke with him. The Treasurer had taken an unpardonable liberty, and must apologise. "If we let these great Ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them," he wrote to Stella. He recognised true greatness cordially wherever he found it, and real kindesss subdued him at once. But the mere trappings of greatness—the stars and garters and ribbons—had no effect upon his imagination :—

> "Where titles give no right or power,
> And peerage is a withered flower."

He loved Oxford; he loved Bolingbroke; but he did not love them better than he loved Pope and Gay and Arbuthnot. He left Somers and Halifax when he thought they were playing the Church false; but the Tory chiefs who had been kind to him, though one was in exile and the other in the Tower, were never mentioned by him without emotion. He offered to share Oxford's imprisonment; and nothing would induce him to bow the knee to Walpole. He was anxious, indeed, to obtain promotion; he would have been well pleased if his friends had made him a bishop; but the anxiety was quite natural. If there had been any show of neglect, if the men for whom he had fought so gallantly had affected to underrate his services and to overlook his claims, his self-respect would have been wounded. The feeling was precisely similar to that of the soldier who fails to receive the ribbon or the medal which he has earned. But Swift was not *greedy* either of riches or of fame,—so long as he was able to keep the wolf from the door, the most modest competence was all that

he asked. He had none of the irritable vanity of the author; all his works were published anonymously; and he manifested a curious indifference to that posthumous reputation—"the echo of a hollow vault"—which is so eagerly and vainly prized by aspiring mortals. Nor did he give a thought to the money value of his work,—Pope, Mrs Barber, the booksellers, might have it, and welcome. What he really valued was the excitement of the campaign: in the ardour of the fight he sought and found compensation. "A person of great honour in Ireland used to tell me that my mind was like a conjured spirit, that would do mischief if I would not give it employment." And he says elsewhere,—"I myself was never very miserable while my thoughts were in a ferment, for I imagine a dead calm is the troublesomest part of our voyage through the world." These and similar avowals are very characteristic. The cool poetic woodland was not for this man. He could not go and lie down on the grass, and listen to the birds, and be happy like his innocent rustics. One may pity him, but censure surely is stupidly unjust. Not only were his faculties in finest working order at the supreme and critical juncture, when the fortune of battle was poised in the balance, but the noise of the guns and the shouts of the combatants drove away the evil spirit which haunted him. Absorbed in the great game, he forgot himself and the misery which at times was wellnigh intolerable. For all his life a dark shadow hung over him, and only when drinking "delight of battle with his peers" might he escape into the sunshine. It must never be forgotten that Swift suffered not merely from almost constant bodily discomfort, but from those dismal forebodings of mental decay which are even more trying than the reality.

We need not wonder that such a man should have been cynical. The profound melancholy of his later years was unrelieved by any break of light; but even in his gayest time the gloom must have been often excessive. The scorn of fools,—

> "Hated by fools and fools to hate,
> Be that my motto and my fate,"

is the burden of his earliest as of his latest poetry.

"My hate, whose lash just heaven has long decreed
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed!"

Alas! it hurt himself as much as, or even more than, the fools and sinners; so that at the end, when his hand had lost its cunning, as he thought, and the curtain was about to drop, he entreated Pope to give them one more lash at his request. "Life is not a farce," he adds, "it is a ridiculous tragedy, which is the worst kind of composition;" and then (it belongs to the same period, and certainly shows no failure of power) he proceeds to draw that tremendous picture of the day of judgment, which, if he had left nothing more, would alone prove to us that Swift's intense satirical imagination was of the highest order:—

"While each pale sinner hung his head,
Jove, nodding, shook the heavens and said,—
'Offending race of human kind,
By reason, nature, learning, blind,
You who through frailty step'd aside,
And you who never fell—through pride;
You who in different sects were shamm'd,
And come to see each other damn'd
(So some folks told you, but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you),
The world's mad business now is o'er,
And I resent these pranks no more.
I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools!—Go, go, you're *bit.*'"

Strange as it may appear to some, the man who wrote these terrible lines was a man whose heart was intensely sensitive, whose affections were morbidly acute, who could not bear to see his friends in pain. His cynicism melted into pity at a word. "I hate life," he exclaims, when he hears that Lady Ashburnham is dead,—"I hate life, when I think it exposed to such accidents; and to see so many wretches burdening the earth, when such as her die, makes me think God did never intend life to be a blessing." Little Harrison, in whom he had interested himself, is taken dangerously ill, and he has not the courage to knock at the "poor lad's" door to inquire. "I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the

door; my mind misgave me. I knocked, and his man in tears told me his master was dead an hour before. Think what grief this is to me! I did not dine with Lord Treasurer, or anywhere else, but got a bit of meat towards evening." When the letter came telling him that Gay was dead, he knew by instinct—"an impulse foreboding some misfortune"—what it contained, and could not open it for days. And when Stella was ill, his anguish was greater than he could bear. "What am I to do in this world? I am able to hold up my sorry head no longer."

And yet at times—it cannot be denied—Swift could be simply brutal. When his passion was roused he was merciless. He struck out like a blind man—in a sort of frantic rage. He raved—he stormed—he lost self-control—he was taken possession of by his devil. The demoniac element was at times strong in Swift: somewhere or other in that mighty mind there was a congenital flaw which no medicine could heal. The lamentable coarseness of much that he wrote is likewise symptomatic of disease. But, as I have said, it is unfair to judge him by the incidents of his closing years. The profound misanthropy grew upon him. At first it was clearness of vision,—at last it was bitterness of soul. But it did not overpower him till he had passed middle life, till his ambition had been foiled, till he had been driven into exile, till Stella was dead, till he was tortured by almost constant pain, till the shadows of a yet deeper darkness were closing round him.

The story of Swift's relations with Stella and Vanessa is one of those somewhat mysterious episodes in literary history which continue to baffle criticism. The undisputed facts are briefly these: That Swift became acquainted with Esther Johnson (Stella) at Sir William Temple's; that he directed the girl's studies; that a romantic friendship sprang up between them; that soon after Sir William's death she went, on Swift's advice, to reside in Ireland, where she had a small estate, and where living was relatively cheaper than in England; that though they always lived apart, the early attachment became closer

and more intimate; that about 1708 he was introduced to the Vanhomrigh family in London; that Hester Vanhomrigh (Vanessa) fell violently in love with him; that she followed him to Ireland; that she died in 1723, soon after a passionate scene with the man she loved; and that Stella died in 1728, and was buried in the cathedral,—close to the grave where the Dean was afterwards laid. These are the bare facts, which have been very variously construed by critics, and of which I now proceed to offer the explanation which appears to fit them most nearly. But, in doing so, it is necessary to dismiss at the outset the common assumption that relations of close friendship between a man and woman are abnormal and unaccountable unless they end in marriage. What I assert is, that the devotion of Swift to Esther Johnson was the devotion of friendship, not of love; and that from this point of view only does the riddle admit of even approximate solution.

Swift, as we have seen, had resolved early in life that no temptation would induce him to barter his independence. With the object of securing a modest competence, he practised the most rigid economy. He had no fortune of his own, and his beggarly Irish livings afforded him at most a bare subsistence. A heavy burden of debt—more than a thousand pounds—attached to the deanery on his appointment. Thus he was growing old before, with the views which he entertained, he was in a position to marry. And he was not a man to whom "love in a cottage" could have offered any attractions. "He is covetous as hell, and ambitious as the Prince of it," he said of Marlborough. Swift was not mercenary as the Duke was mercenary; but the last infirmity of noble minds was probably his ruling passion. The oracle of a country town, tied to a dull and exacting wife, he would have fretted himself to death in a year. He needed the pressure of action to prevent him from growing gloomy and morose. Nor was mere irritability, or even the *sæva indignatio*, the worst that he had to apprehend. His health was indifferent; he suffered much from deafness and giddiness,—

caused, it is asserted, by some early imprudence, a surfeit of ripe fruit or the like, but more or less closely connected, it is probable, with the mental disease which seems to have run in the family,—his uncle Godwin having died in a madhouse. "I shall be like that tree," he is reported to have said many years before his own death, pointing to an elm whose upper branches had been withered by lightning; "I shall die at the top." Even in early manhood he had confessed that he was of a "cold temper"; and he spoke of love—the absurd passion of play-books and romances—only to ridicule it. His opinion of marriage, in so far as he himself was interested, may be gathered from a letter written when he was five-and-twenty: "The very ordinary observations I made, without going half a mile from the university, have taught me experience enough not to think of marriage till I settle my fortune in the world, which I am sure will not be in some years; and even then I am so hard to please myself, that *I suppose I shall put it off to the next world.*" This may have been said partly in jest; but a man so situated, and with such antecedents, may very reasonably have asked himself whether he was entitled to marry. Friendship, on the other hand, was a noble emotion; he never wearies of singing its praise. And he acted up to his persuasion: if Swift was a bitter foe, he was at least a constant and magnanimous friend.

Yet, by some curious perversity, the man to whom love was a byword was forced to sound the deeps and to explore the mysteries of passion.

One of Swift's resolutions, recorded in the curious paper of 1699, "When I come to be old," was, "not to be fond of children, or let them come near me hardly." Esther Johnson, the only child who up to that time had come very close to him, was then just leaving her childhood behind her—she was seventeen years old. The delicate girl had matured or was maturing into a bright and charming woman. It is admitted on all hands that Stella was worthy of Swift's—indeed of any man's—regard. She had great good sense; her conversation was keen and sprightly; and though latterly inclining to stout-

ness, her figure was then extremely fine. The face was somewhat pale; but the pallor served to heighten the effect of her brilliantly dark eyes and unusually black hair. "Hair of a raven black," says Mrs Delaney; "her hair was blacker than a raven," says Swift. In society she was much esteemed; she had a touch of Addison's courteous and caressing manner, though later on, among her Irish friends, she rose to be a sort of queen, and became possibly a little peremptory and dictatorial. But she seems at all times (in spite of a brief fit of jealous passion now and again) to have been a true, honest, sound-hearted, modest woman. She herself attributes her superiority to the common foibles of her sex to Swift's early influence; and in one of the latest birthday poems he sent her, he does ample justice to her candour, her generosity, and her courage:—

"Your generous boldness to defend
An innocent and absent friend;
That courage which can make you just
To merit humbled in the dust;
The detestation you express
For vice in all its glittering dress;
That patience under tort'ring pain,
Where stubborn Stoics would complain:
Must these like empty shadows pass,
Or forms reflected from a glass?"

There can be no doubt that for Stella, Swift had a great compassion, a true tenderness. The innocent child had been, as it were, thrown upon his care; she grew up to girlhood at his side; he was her guardian, her schoolmaster, her nearest friend. But so far as he was concerned, there never was any thought of love between them,—a schoolmaster might address a favourite pupil, a father a beloved child, in precisely the same language that Swift addressed to Stella. It was friendship—friendship of the closest and most endearing character, but friendship only—that united them. His tone throughout, from first to last, was perfectly consistent:—

"Thou, Stella, wert no longer young,
When first for thee my harp I strung,

> Without one word of Cupid's darts,
> Of killing eyes or bleeding hearts;
> With friendship and esteem possest,
> I ne'er admitted love a guest."[1]

This was the language that he held to Tisdale in 1704, soon after Esther had gone to Ireland; this was the language he held to Stopford when she was dying. If he had ever thought of marriage, he would have chosen Stella: but "his fortunes and his humour" had put matrimony out of the question; and his experience had been, that violent friendship was as much engaging as, and more lasting than, violent love. Every care was taken to make the nature of the relation clear to the world; and in point of fact, no scandal came of it.

The "little language" in which so many of the letters and journals are written, seems to me to point to the same conclusion. Swift dwells upon Esther's charming babyhood with the sweetness and tenderness of parental reminiscence. That innocent babble—the babble of our children before they have quite mastered the difficulties of speech—had a perennial charm for him, as—through him—it has for us. "I assure zu it um velly late now; but zis goes to-morrow. Nite, darling rogues." He has as many pet names for Stella as a fond father has for a pet daughter. She is Saucebox, and Sluttakins, and dear roguish impudent pretty MD, and politic Madame Poppet with her two eggs a-penny. How lightly, how delicately touched! *That* is the gayer mood; the more sombre is hardly less striking. In his darkest hours, her pure devotion to him is like light from heaven. She is his better angel,—the saint in the little niche overhead who intercedes for him. "Much better. Thank God and MD's prayers." "Giddy fit and swimming in head. MD and God help me." Nothing can be more touching. Some critics maintain that Swift never wrote poetry. It would be truer, we think, to affirm that whenever he uses the poetical form to express (sometimes to hide) intense feeling, he writes better poetry than any of his contemporaries. When, for instance, he urges

[1] Written in 1720—three or four years after the alleged marriage.

Stella—who had come from her own sickbed to nurse him in his sickness—not to injure her health, the lines seem to me to reach a very high altitude indeed:—

> "Best pattern of true friends, beware;
> You pay too dearly for your care,
> If, while your tenderness secures
> My life, it must endanger yours;
> For such a fool was never found
> Who pulled a palace to the ground,
> Only to have the ruins made
> Materials for a house decayed."

How did Stella accept this lifelong friendship, this playful homage, this tender reverence? What did she think of it? It seems to me that a great deal of quite unnecessary pity has been wasted on Esther Johnson. It may be that Swift did not recognise the extent of the sacrifice he demanded; but in truth, was the sacrifice so hard? Is there any proof that Stella was an unwilling victim; or, indeed, a victim at all? She mixed freely in society; she occupied a quite assured position; she was the comforter and confidant of the greatest man of the age. Is there any reason whatever to hold that she was unhappy? On the contrary, did she not declare to the last that she had been amply repaid?

> "Long be the day that gave you birth
> Sacred to friendship, wit, and mirth;
> Late dying, may you cast a shred
> Of your rich mantle o'er my head;
> To bear with dignity my sorrow,
> One day alone, then die to-morrow."

Vanessa (Hester Vanhomrigh) was a woman cast in quite a different mould. Her vehement and unruly nature had never been disciplined; and when her passion was roused, she was careless of her good name. There can, I think, be little doubt that Swift was for some time really interested in her. She was an apt and docile pupil; and if not strictly handsome, she appears to have possessed a certain power of fascination,—the "strong toil of grace," which is often more potent than mere beauty. It cannot be said, indeed, that Swift was in love with

Hester; but she certainly charmed his fancy and appealed successfully to his sympathies. Stella was absent in Dublin; and the Dean was a man who enjoyed the society of women who were pretty and witty and accomplished, and who accepted with entire submission his despotic and whimsical decrees. Vanessa was such a woman; and he does not, for some time at least, appear to have appreciated the almost tropical passion and vehemence of her nature—dangerous and devastating as a thunderstorm in the tropics;—appears, on the contrary, to have been in utter ignorance of what was coming, till she threw herself into his arms. He had had no serious thought; but the acuteness of the crisis into which their intimacy had suddenly developed, alarmed and disquieted him. Here was a flood-tide of passion of which he had had no experience —fierce, uncontrollable, intolerant of prudential restraint. "Can't we touch these bubbles, then, but they break?" some one asks in one of Robert Browning's plays; and Swift regarded the situation with the same uneasiness and perplexity. He was sorely dismayed—utterly put about—when he discovered how matters stood. It is easy to say that he should have left her at once, and avoided any further intimacy. It is easy to say this; but all the same, the situation in any light was extremely embarrassing. He may possibly for the moment have been rather flattered by her preference, as most men would be by the attentions of a pretty and attractive girl; and he may have thought, upon the whole, that it was best to temporise. By gentle raillery, by sportive remonstrance, he would show her how foolish she had been in losing her heart to a man "who understood not what was love," and who, though caressed by Ministers of State, was old enough to be her father. But poor Vanessa was far too much in earnest to accept his playful advice. She was peremptory and she was abject by turns. "Sometimes you strike me with that prodigious awe, I tremble with fear; at other times a charming compassion shows through your countenance, which revives my soul." He must marry her, or she would die. And she did die. It was a hard fate. Another man might have been free to woo her; but to Swift

such a union was, of course, impossible. Stella stood between them; and behind Stella that gloomy phantom of mental and bodily disease which had haunted him all his life. He was not ungrateful to either of these women; but such a return would have been worse than ingratitude.

Mr Craik is of opinion that there is enough direct evidence to show that Swift was married to Esther Johnson in 1716. I hold, on the contrary, not only that the direct evidence of marriage is insufficient, but that it can be established with reasonable certainty (in so far, at least, as a negative is capable of proof) that no marriage took place.

I have already described so fully the character of the relations between them, that it is only now necessary to say that what may be called the circumstantial evidence—the evidence of facts and circumstances—is distinctly adverse. But in confirmation of what has been already advanced, I may here remark that, besides the letters and poems addressed to herself (where friendship to the exclusion of love is invariably insisted on), he wrote much about her. In these papers the same tone is preserved;—she is a dear friend—not a wife. One of them was composed, like Carlyle's remarkable account of his father, in very solemn circumstances,—it was written mainly during the hours that elapsed between the day she died and the day she was buried. "This day, being Sunday, Jan. 28, 1727-28, about eight o'clock at night a servant brought me a note with an account of the death of the truest, most virtuous and valuable *friend* that I, or perhaps any other person, was ever blessed with." "This is the night of her funeral," he adds two days later, "which my sickness will not suffer me to attend. It is now nine at night; and I am removed into another apartment that I may not see the light in the church, which is just over against the window of my bed-chamber." No record was ever penned in circumstances more calculated to make a deep impression on the mind, and to induce the writer to speak with the most perfect frankness, sincerity, and unreserve; but here, as elsewhere, it is the irreparable loss of her "friendship" that is deplored. Not a word of marriage. Then there is no proof that Stella at any time asserted that she was his wife,—the

stories of the meeting with Vanessa, and of the death-bed declaration, being manifest inventions. Mr Craik fairly admits that the latter of these is incredible; yet the evidence which he discards in connection with the declaration is almost precisely identical with that which he accepts in connection with the marriage. Nor is there any evidence to show that they were held to be married persons during their lives,—they had both been dead and buried for years before the rumour of their union obtained publicity. There may be in some contemporary lampoon an allusion to the alleged ceremony: I have not met with it—nor, so far as I know, has it been met with by any of the biographers. Nor can any plausible motive for the marriage be assigned. There was no scandal to silence; the relations between them, which had subsisted for nearly twenty years, appear to have been sufficiently understood. But assuming that there had been scandal, how was it to be silenced by a ceremony, the secret of which, during life and after death, was to be jealously guarded? Was it performed to satisfy Stella? But there is no proof that she was dissatisfied,—she had cheerfully acquiesced in, had loyally accepted, the relation as it stood. It could not have been for the satisfaction of her conscience; her conscience was in no way involved: it was never asserted, even by bitterest partisans, that the connection was immoral. Can it be supposed that for some reason or other (to prevent, for instance, any risk of subsequent misconstruction) it was done at the Dean's desire? But if the story is true that it was the Dean himself who insisted that the secret should never be published, what good did he expect it to effect? how could it avail, either directly or indirectly, to avert possible misconstructions? If a ceremony did take place, I am thus entitled to maintain that it was *an utterly unreasonable and unaccountable act—opposed to all the probabilities of the case.* Still, if it were proved by (let me say) an entry in a register, the marriage "lines," a letter from Stella, a letter from Swift, a certificate under the bishop's hand—anything approaching either legal or moral proof—we might be bound to disregard the antecedent improbabilities. Nay, even if a friend like Dr Delaney

had said plainly that he had the information from Swift himself, then (subject to observation on the too frequent misunderstandings of verbal confidences) it might be reasonable to accept it. But the direct evidence does not amount even to this. It consists of a passage in Lord Orrery's *Remarks* (much that Lord Orrery said about Swift must be accepted with reserve), where, after stating in a loose incidental way that Stella was Swift's concealed but undoubted wife, he goes on,—"*If my informations are right*, she was married to Dr Swift in the year 1716, by Dr Ashe, then Bishop of Clogher." On this Dr Delaney, in his *Observations*, remarks,—"Your lordship's account of the marriage is, *I am satisfied*, true." Mr Monck Mason's contention that this is a statement of opinion or belief only, is vigorously combated by Mr Craik. Mr Craik argues that the words "I am satisfied" apply not to the fact of a marriage, which was "undoubted," but to the circumstances of the ceremony. Mr Craik's argument does not appear to me to be successful. 1st, If the ceremony did not take place *then*, it did not take place at all. The belief in any ceremony rests exclusively upon the allegation that a ceremony was performed in the garden of the deanery in 1716; and if that allegation is not somehow substantiated, the case for the marriage must break down. So that it is really of no consequence to which of Lord Orrery's statements Dr Delaney's words apply. 2d, The words "I am satisfied" are unequivocal, and clearly imply that the writer was led to his conclusion by the evidence submitted to him;—that is to say, Dr Delaney's was only inferential and circumstantial belief—not direct knowledge. He had not received his information from headquarters—from Swift or from Stella; he was putting this and that together, and drawing an inference; and as he nowhere asserts that he had recovered or was in possession of any really direct evidence, Mr Mason's conclusion, that even in the case of so familiar an intimate as Dr Delaney the marriage was matter of opinion or conjecture only, seems to be justified.

Lord Orrery's *Remarks* were published in 1752, seven years after Swift's death; and it was not till 1789 that the story re-

ceived any further corroboration. In that year Mr George Monck Berkeley asserted in his *Literary Relics* that "Swift and Stella were married by the Bishop of Clogher, who himself related the circumstances to Bishop Berkeley, by whose relict the story was communicated to me." This bit of evidence certainly comes to us in a very circuitous and roundabout fashion. Mr Berkeley was told by Bishop Berkeley's widow, who had it from her husband, who had it from Bishop Ashe. Any one familiar with the proceedings of courts of law knows that evidence of this kind is of no value whatever. The gossip is handed down from one to another,—often in perfect good faith,—yet he who builds upon it builds upon the sand. And when closely examined, it is seen that the narrative is in itself highly suspicious, and open to serious observation. The ceremony was celebrated in 1716; Berkeley was abroad at the time, and did not return till after Bishop Ashe's death, which took place in 1717. Mr Craik insists that when it is stated that Bishop Ashe "*related* the circumstances to Bishop Berkeley," it is not implied that he did it "by word of mouth." But is there the least likelihood, from what we know of the Bishop, that he would have been guilty of so grave an indiscretion? It cannot be doubted that he had been bound over to inviolable secrecy; and though such a secret might be incautiously betrayed or accidentally ooze out during familiar talk, is it conceivable that a man of honour and prudence could have deliberately, and in cold blood, made it—within a few weeks or months—the subject of a letter to an absent friend?

This is really the whole evidence of the slightest relevancy that has been recovered,—the loose gossip of Sheridan (of whom it will be recollected Dr Johnson said, "Why, sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we see him now. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in nature") being very naturally pooh-poohed by the biographers in general, and even by Mr Craik. On the other hand, all those who were closely connected with Swift and Stella in their latter years—Dr Lyon,

Mrs Dingley, Mrs Brent, Mrs Ridgeway, and others—deny that any ceremony took place; and almost the last writing which Stella subscribed opens with the significant words,—"I, *Esther Johnson*, of the city of Dublin, *spinster*." It is maintained, indeed, that these words are of no consequence, seeing that she had bound herself not to disclose that she was a married woman. Still, there is this to be said, that *if* she was married, the introduction of the word "spinster" was a quite unnecessary falsehood,—the testatrix being quite sufficiently described as "Esther Johnson, of the city of Dublin." And when we consider that this can have been only one (though the last) of a long succession of humiliating embarrassments, the question again suggests itself with irresistible force, Why should they have loaded their lives with such a burden of deceit? Where are we to look for the motive that will in any measure account for it? Upon the whole, it seems to me almost inevitable that some such story as Lord Orrery's (however unfounded) should have got abroad. The relations of Swift to Stella were certainly exceptional, and not easily intelligible to the outside world; yet Stella's character was irreproachable, and calumny itself did not venture to assail her. What more natural than that the surmise of a secret union should have been entertained by many, should have been whispered about among their friends even during Swift's life, and should after his death have gradually assumed substance and shape?

After all is said, a certain amount of mystery and ambiguity must attach to the connection,—as to much else in the Dean's life. He survived Stella for nearly twenty years; yet those who assert that a marriage took place, search the records of all these years in vain for any avowal, however slight. "Only a woman's hair"—scrawled on the envelope in which a tress of the raven-black hair was preserved—affords a slender cue to conjecture, and is as enigmatical as the rest. Only a woman's hair—only the remembrance of the irrevocable past—only the joy, the sorrow, the devotion of a lifetime, only that—nothing more.

"Pudor et Justitiæ soror
Incorrupta Fides, nudaque Veritas." [1]

Whatever interpretation each of us may be disposed to give them, we shall all admit that there must have been something transcendent in the genius and the despair which could invest these four quite commonplace words with an immortality of passion.

And this—the most vivid of the Dean's many vivid sayings—leads me, in conclusion, to add a word or two on Swift's literary faculty. These, however, must be very brief; and were it not that a vigorous effort has been recently made to show that, judged by his writings, Swift was not a great, but "essentially a small, and in some respects a bad man," might at this time of day have been altogether dispensed with. For there is "finality" in literature, if not in politics. The writer who undertakes to demonstrate that Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Shakespeare, and Rabelais, and Swift were essentially small men, cannot be treated seriously. To say that he is airing a paradox is to put it very mildly; and indeed, the offence might properly be described in much sharper language. A scientific writer who in this year of our Lord attacks the law of gravitation is guilty of a scientific impertinence which all scientific men whose time is of value are entitled to resent. Swift's position in letters is equally assured, and as little matter for argument. *A Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver's Travels*, the argument against abolishing Christianity, the verses on poetry and on his own death, are among the imperishable possessions of the world. The entry has been duly recorded in the National Register, and cannot now be impeached. And "the clash of the country" is not in this case a mere vague general impression, but is instructed by the evidence of the most skilful experts. To take the most recent. Scott, Macaulay, Froude, and Leslie Stephen—each in his own department—have ac-

[1] "Honour, truth, liberality, good-nature, and modesty were the virtues she chiefly possessed and most valued in her acquaintance. It was not safe nor prudent in her presence to offend in the least word against modesty. She was the most disinterested mortal I ever knew or heard of."—*The character of Mrs Johnson by Swift.*

knowledged the supremacy of Swift. Scott regards him as the painter of character, Macaulay as the literary artist, Froude as the politician, Leslie Stephen as the moralist and the philosopher. Scott has pointed out that Lemuel Gulliver the traveller, Isaac Bickerstaff the astrologer, the Frenchman who writes the new Journey to Paris, Mrs Harris, Mary the cook-maid, the grave projector who proposes a plan for relieving the poor by eating their children, and the vehement Whig politician who remonstrates against the enormities of the Dublin signs, are all persons as distinct from each other as from the Dean himself, and in all their surroundings absolutely true to the life.[1] Mr Froude remarks that Swift, who was in the best and noblest sense an Irish patriot, poured out tract after tract denouncing Irish misgovernment, each of them composed with supreme literary power, a just and burning indignation showing through the most finished irony. "In these tracts, in colours which will never fade, lies the picture of Ireland, as England, half in ignorance, half in wilful despair of her amendment, had willed that she should be."[2] Mr Leslie Stephen, after admitting that Swift is the keenest satirist as well as the acutest critic in the English language, adds that his imagination was fervid enough to give such forcible utterance to his feelings as has scarcely been rivalled in our literature.[3] Lord Macaulay's testimony is even more valuable. Macaulay disliked Swift with his habitual energy of dislike. It must be confessed that the complex characters where heroism and weakness are subtly interwoven—Bacon, Dryden, Swift—did not lend themselves readily to the manipulation of that brilliant master.[4] Yet in spite of his repugnance to the man, his admiration of the mag-

[1] *Memoirs of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, p. 439.
[2] *The English in Ireland.* By J. A. Froude. Vol. i. pp. 501-503.
[3] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 209, vol. ii. p. 375.
[4] Addison was his literary hero; but surely, in spite of exquisite urbanity and a charming style, Addison, both as man and writer, has been prodigiously overrated by Macaulay. The others had sounded depths which his plummet could not reach, had scaled heights on which he had never adventured. This, to be sure, may have been his attraction for Macaulay, to whom the difficult subtleties of the imagination and the ardent aspirations of the spiritual life were enigmatical and antipathetic,—a riddle and a by-word.

nificent faculty of the satirist is emphatic and unstinted. Under that plain garb and ungainly deportment were concealed, he tells us, some of the choicest gifts that have ever been bestowed on the children of men,—rare powers of observation; brilliant wit; grotesque invention; humour of the most austere flavour, yet exquisitely delicious; eloquence singularly pure, manly, and perspicuous.[1] I need not multiply authorities. It must now be conceded, for all practical purposes, that the consent of the learned world to Swift's intellectual pre-eminence has been deliberately and finally given.

It is asserted by the same critic that Swift's reputation has been gained "by a less degree of effort than that of almost any other writer,"—his writings, in point of *length*, being altogether insignificant. To this curious complaint I might be content to reply in Mr Leslie Stephen's words: "A modern journalist who could prove that he had written as little in six months would deserve a testimonial." Those who hold that language was given us to conceal our thoughts may reckon "verbosity" a virtue; but the great books of the world are not to be measured by their *size*. Hume's *Essay on Miracles*, which may be said to have revolutionised the whole course of modern thought, is compressed into some twenty pages. *A Tale of a Tub* is shorter than a Budget speech which will be forgotten to-morrow: but then—how far-reaching is the argument; the interest—how world-wide; the scorn—how consummate! Brief as Swift is, he makes it abundantly clear, before he is done, that there are no limits to his capacity. He has looked all round our globe—as from another star. It is true that with the most lucid intelligence he united the most lurid scorn. Though he saw them as from a remote planet, he hated the pigmies—the little odious vermin—with the intensity of a next-door neighbour. Yet this keenness of feeling was in a measure perhaps the secret of his power,—it gave that amazing air of reality to his narrative which makes us feel, when we return from Brobdingnag, that human beings are ridiculously and unaccountably small. Swift was a great master of the idiomatic—

[1] *History of England*, vol. iv. p. 369.

one of the greatest; but his intellectual ludicity was not less noticeable than his verbal. His eye was indeed *too* keen, *too* penetrating: he did not see through shams and plausibilities only; he saw through the essential decencies of life as well. Thus he spoke with appalling plainness of many things which nature has wisely hidden; and he became at times in consequence outrageously coarse.

Swift, it is said, never laughed; but when he unbent himself intellectually, he was, I think, at his best. The serious biographer complains of the rough horse-play of his humour—of his weakness for puns and practical jokes. The puns, however, were often very fair; and the humorous perception that could meet William's favourite *Recepit non rapuit*, with the apt retort, The receiver is as bad as the thief;—or could apply on the instant to the lady whose mantua had swept down a Cremona fiddle, *Mantua, væ miseræ nimium vicina Cremonæ!* —must have been nimble and adroit. Even the practical joking was good in its way. The dearly beloved Roger is probably apocryphal,—borrowed from some older jest-book; but the praying and fasting story, as told by Sir Walter, is certainly very comical, and seems to be authentic.[1] Mr Bickerstaff's controversy with Partridge the almanack-maker is, however, Swift's highest achievement in this line. His mirth (when not moody and ferocious) was of the gayest kind,—the freest and finest play of the mind. It is not mere trifling; there is strenuous logic as well as deft wit: so that

[1] Scott's *Life of Swift*, p. 381. The whole note is worth quoting, as containing some characteristic details of manner, &c. "There is another well-attested anecdote, communicated by the late Mr William Waller of Allanstown, near Kells, to Mr Theophilus Swift. Mr Waller, while a youth, was riding near his father's house, when he met a gentleman on horseback reading. A little surprised, he asked the servant, who followed him at some distance, where they came from? 'From the Black Lion,' answered the man. 'And where are you going?' 'To heaven, I believe,' rejoined the servant, 'for my master's praying and I am fasting.' On further inquiry it proved that the Dean, who was then going to Laracor, had rebuked the man for presenting him in the morning with dirty boots. 'Were they clean,' answered the fellow, 'they would soon be dirty again.' 'And if you eat your breakfast,' retorted the Dean, 'you will be hungry again, so you shall proceed without it,' which circumstance gave rise to the man's *bon-mot*."

even Partridge has his serious side. Whately's Historic Doubts regarding Napoleon Buonaparte are now nearly forgotten; but they suggest to us what may have been in Swift's mind when he assured the unlucky astrologer that logically he was dead (if not buried), and that he need not think to persuade the world that he was still alive. The futility of human testimony upon the plainest matter-of-fact has never been more ludicrously yet vividly exposed.

The grave conduct of an absurd proposition is of course one of the most striking characteristics of Swift's style; but the unaffected simplicity and stolid unconsciousness with which he looks the reader in the face when relating the most astonishing fictions, is, it seems to me, an even higher reach of his art. It is quite impossible to doubt the good faith of the narrator; and when we are told that "the author was so distinguished for his veracity, that it became a sort of proverb among his neighbours at Redriff, when any one affirmed a thing, that it was as true as if Mr Gulliver had spoken it," we are not surprised at the seaman who swore that he knew Mr Gulliver very well, but that he lived at Wapping, not at Rotherhithe. How admirable is the parenthetical, "being little for her age," in the account of Glumdalclitch—"She was very good-natured, and not above forty feet high, being little for her age"; or the description of the queen's dwarf—"Nothing angered and mortified me so much as the queen's dwarf, who being of the lowest stature that was ever in that country (for I verily think he was not full thirty feet high), became so insolent at seeing a creature so much beneath him, that he would always affect to swagger and look big as he passed by me in the queen's ante-chamber"! One cannot believe that Swift was so unutterably miserable when he was engaged on *Gulliver*, or that he wrote the "travels"—the earlier voyages at least—not to amuse the world, but to vex it. This consummate artist was a great satirist as well as a great story-teller; but it is the art of the delightful story-teller, not of the wicked satirist, that makes Gulliver immortal.

Swift's verse, like his prose, was mainly remarkable for its resolute homeliness; but when the scorn or the indignation

or the pity becomes intense, it sometimes attains, as we have seen, a very high level indeed. The *Jolly Beggars* of Burns is scarcely superior in idiomatic pith and picturesqueness to the opening stanzas of the *Rhapsody on Poetry*:—

> " Not empire to the rising sun,
> By valour, conduct, fortune won ;
> Not highest wisdom in debates
> For framing laws to govern States ;
> Not skill in sciences profound
> So large to grasp the circle round,—
> Such heavenly influence require
> As how to strike the muses' lyre.
>
> Not beggar's brat on bulk begot ;
> Not bastard of a pedlar Scot ;
> Not boy brought up to cleaning shoes,
> The spawn of Bridewell or the stews ;
> Not infants dropt, the spurious pledges
> Of gipsies litt'ring under hedges,—
> Are so disqualified by fate
> To rise in Church, or Law, or State,
> As he whom Phœbus in his ire
> Hath blasted with poetic fire."

Yet the impeachment of Swift as the *writer* has, after all, a basis of fact. His influence was largely personal. He was greater than his books. It is easy to take up one of his pamphlets now, and criticise the style, which is sometimes loose and slovenly, at our leisure. *But it did its work.* It struck home. *That*, after all, is the true standard by which the Dean should be judged. He was a ruler of men, and he knew how to rule. If he had been bred to politics, if he had occupied a recognised place, not in the Church, but in the House of Commons, he would have been one of our greatest statesmen. The sheer personal ascendancy of his character was as marked in political as in private life. Friend and foe alike admitted that his influence, when fairly exerted, was irresistible. He was one of those potent elemental forces which occasionally appear in the world, and which, when happily circumstanced —when not chained as Prometheus was, or tortured as Swift was—revolutionise society. The unfriendly Johnson, as we

have seen, was forced to confess that for several years Swift formed the political opinions of the English nation; and Carteret frankly admitted that he had succeeded in governing Ireland because he pleased Dr Swift. "Dr Swift had commanded him," said Lord Rivers, "and he durst not refuse it." And Lord Bathurst remarked, that by an hour's work in his study an Irish parson had often "made three kingdoms drunk at once." I cannot be induced to believe by any criticism, however trenchant, that the man who did all this was not only "bad" but "small."

* * *

It is difficult in a lecture addressed to a popular audience to be absolutely just, or to preserve that moderation which was approved by the Apostle; and Mowbray declared, *more suo*, that he was not to be beguiled by the persuasive arts of the special pleader. For his part he had no belief in Lucrezia Borgia, or Guy Fawkes, or Jonathan Swift. But the rest of us were satisfied that the Dean had been too harshly assailed by hostile critics, and that (to say the least) a verdict of "Not Proven" might be honestly returned.

LAST WORDS.

AND now one last word—before I put away the pen for good.[1]

Another high festival of our people—the only holy day, may I say? that Scotsmen keep—has dawned; and Mark (though growing old and grey and a trifle weary at times like the rest of us) is still able to shoulder his gun.

The thick mist that hung over the moors in the early morning has melted away in the sunshine, and a gentle breeze shakes the heather-bells and dimples the blue sea. The coveys are small and scarce, for the June thunderstorms thinned out the delicate young birds with tender gizzards; but the old fellows are in splendid feather, and when they rise look as plump

[1] One other "last word" must find its place in a footnote. At page 145 of Volume One there is a striking description of a blue heron—"blue in every feather as a summer sky at morning"—perched in a fissure of the precipice,—the fissure being "exactly like a niche carved on purpose to hold a relic or a little statue or a picture of a saint." I find that by some mischance or misadventure I omitted to mention that for this vivid Northumbrian reminiscence I am indebted to Mr A. C. Swinburne.

and black as capercailzie. Juno treads gingerly through the heather, for she knows how wideawake these patriarchs are, and drops like a stone at her points. What a picture! Every limb is rigid; the eager head has been chiselled in marble,—the dilated nostril alone quivering as it sniffs the breeze. Once she looks round cautiously to see if we are within hail; then she rises and creeps forward step by step towards the hidden foe, who waits behind the clump of tufted fern. She trembles with the excitement of the chase; she pants with suppressed emotion; we can see the beating of her heart through her ribs. So-ho! it is an old cock, the father of the hillside, and a snap-shot —for he has risen, crafty old rogue that he is, forty yards off—brings him down with a *thud* upon the heather.

And so advancing, we reach at length the Mid-day Rest, by the well where the blaeberries grow. A narrow glen, like that where Ossian sleeps his last sleep, and yet not unlovely in its loneliness. I know not indeed where, away from our own moorland, you can find its marrow. The bright red and green of the blaeberries, the vivid crimson of the bell-heath and the chaster purple of the ling, form a fitting setting for the grey lichen-covered boulders that crop out through the encircling moss. And then the meek seclusion of the spot, unvisited all the year save by the flying clouds, and the solitary old cock who comes to drink at the crystal spring in the live rock, which wells

up with the same tireless serenity alike in the bitter winter frosts and the gracious summer dawns!

> "And sweeter far than the sound of the bells,
> Is the music that sleeps all the year in these dells,
> Till the hounds go by and wake it."

We had been silent for a space, and then he turned to me.

"Dick," he said, "it is good for us to be here. The summer clouds drift lightly by, as they drifted when we were boys, and it is still a brave and goodly world. There are those among us who inquire dubiously whether it is worth their while to have been born? And at times one is half inclined to agree with them. We pursue a phantom which constantly eludes our grasp. The curtain drops before the play is well begun. But to lie on a hillside among the bracken while the lark and her song melt into 'the infinite azure,' — Dick, on a day like this, the mere joy of living is ample justification, and more than adequate reward."

We were silent for a little; then he added—"You have not forgotten, I daresay, Coleridge's great lines? The world is very good to-day, goodly as at the beginning; but there must be something behind, some force mightier than gravitation, claiming kindred with our spirits, which animates and informs." Then he repeated the words which are to be found in one of those miraculous fragments now wellnigh forgotten:—

"Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees;
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to Love compose,
In humble trust mine eyelids close,
With reverential resignation,
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication;
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, everywhere,
Eternal strength and wisdom are."

THE END.

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