

CHAP. XXXI.

EAST TARBERT AND LOCH-FYNE HERRINGS.

Tarbert; meaning of the Word. — Scott's Account. — The Legend of Tarbert. — A Blackleg Transaction. — Fables and Facts. — Shakespeare's Donalbain. — The Norwegian Dynasty. — Sodor and Man. — The Bishop of Cantire. — The Tarbert Canal Company, Limited. — A Chain of Forts. — Paul Jones the Pirate. — Tarbert Castle. — The Key of Cantire. — The Eastern Loch; its wild Character. — Tarbert Town. — The Capital of Herringdom. — Statistics of the Fishery. — Phosphorescence of the Herring. — Superstitions of the Fishermen. — Old Form of Prayer on putting to Sea. — The King of the Herrings. — Folk-lore of the Herring. — Things not generally known anent the Herring. — A cleanly Lodging. — The Merry Dancers.

TARBERT is a common name in Scotland. It denotes an isthmus; the word being framed (according to late etymologists) from the Gaelic *Tár*, "to drag or carry," and *beart*, "goods of all kinds;" but Pennant says, that the name Tarbert, or Tarbat as it is often written, is from *Tarruing*, "to draw," and *Bata*, "a boat." "Boat-carrying," indeed, seems the meaning of the word; because over these narrow necks of land between two sea or fresh-water lochs, the inhabitants were accustomed to drag their boats. These Scotch Tarberts

therefore, are similar to the "carrying-places" of North America, the "portages" of Canada, and the Diolkoi of the Greeks; and even at the present day, especially during the herring-season, the fishermen of this Tarbert on Loch Fyne frequently haul their boats across the isthmus, which is barely a mile in width at its narrowest point. Sir Walter Scott's reference to this overland transit of vessels, will be familiar to the readers of *the Lord of the Isles* :—

“ Ever the breeze blows merrily,
 But the galley ploughs no more the sea,
 Lest, rounding wild Cantire, they meet
 The southern foeman's watchful fleet,
 They held unwonted way;
 Up Tarbat's western lake they bore,
 Then dragg'd their bark the isthmus o'er,
 As far as Kilmaconnel's shore,
 Upon the eastern bay.
 It was a wondrous sight to see
 Topmast and pennon glitter free,
 High raised above the greenwood tree,
 As on dry land the galley moves
 By cliff, and copse, and alder groves.
 Deep import from that selcouth sign,
 Did many a mountain-seer divine;
 For ancient legends told the Gael,
 That when a royal bark should sail
 O'er Kilmaconnel moss,
 Old Albyn should in fight prevail,
 And every foe should faint and quail
 Before her silver Cross.”

Scott's "Kilmaconnel" is the Kilcalmonell of Can-

tire, separated by a small stream from the parish of South Knapdale, which lies north of the isthmus. "It is not very long since," says Pennant, "that vessels of nine or ten tons were drawn by horses out of the West loch into that of the East, to avoid the dangers of the Mull of Cantire, so dreaded and so little known was the navigation round that promontory. It is the opinion of many that these little isthmuses so frequently styled *Tarbat* in North Britain, took their name from the above circumstance; *Tarruing* signifying to draw, and *Bata*, a boat. This too might be called, by way of pre-eminence *the Tarbat*, from a very singular circumstance related by Torsœus."*

This legend has been well told by Macculloch, and as he puts it in a new light, I shall do best by quoting his description. "There has been a tale so currently told respecting Loch Tarbet, or rather about the Tarbet itself, that it has been not only generally believed, but reprinted so often, as almost to have taken its rank among historical facts. Pennant, first of the tourists, borrowed it from Scottish history (or fable) and the rest, as usual, have followed him. The story is, that Donald Bane, who had taken refuge in the Western Islands after the death of Duncan, ceded these isles to Magnus the Barefoot †, on consideration of his receiving the aid

* Voyage to the Hebrides, p. 167.

† *Berfætta*, or "Bareleg." For which, if the story had been true,

of Norway against the family of Malcolm. Magnus, by this contract, was to have all the islands; and the definition of island (according to the law of the wolf versus the lamb, it would appear) being whatever could be circumnavigated, the cunning Norwegian caused his boat to be drawn across the Tarbet, thus including Cantire within his contract, by a trick worthy of Dido and her counsellors. Now, the whole of this must be an egregious fable. Even the Scottish portion of Donald Bane's history is very obscure; but nothing except the greatest ignorance of the state and history of Scotland at that period, could have given admission to this fiction; when the islands actually belonged to Magnus and to Norway, and neither to Scotland nor to Donald Bane. There is a puerility about the story, independently of this, which should have been sufficient to condemn it; a gross fraud practised against him, who, if he had the power to grant, must have also pos-

“blackleg” might have been substituted. As says Miss Sinclair, who briefly refers to this legend, “What would the Jockey Club have said to this rather black-leg transaction?” — *Scotland and the Scotch*, chap. ii. Mr. J. J. A. Worsae, in his “Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England and Ireland,” says, that Magnus, after acquiring the sovereignty of the Isles, adopted the dress of the people. “They went about the streets in Norway with bare legs, and wore short coats and cloaks, whence Magnus was called by his men, Barfod, or Barbeen (barefoot or barelegs), says the Icelandic historian, Snorro Sturleson, who, as is well known, lived in the first half of the thirteenth century.”

sessed that of withholding, and who could not have suffered himself to be thus cheated. It cannot now be discovered at what period the Norwegian chiefs became proprietors or kings on the mainland; whether before Somerlid or how long; but assuredly Cantire could not have been obtained in any manner from him who had it not to give; who was apparently a banished man as well as a rebel, and who, if ever he did bring forces from the Isles against the family of Malcolm, must have done so as a suitor and a beggar, by influencing those powers, whose equal or superior interest it was to fall on Scotland when in an enfeebled state. This piece of history must in future be ranked with King Athirco and with the embassy which Ptolemy Philadelphus sent to King Reutha.”*

The Donald Bane here is Shakspeare's Donalbain, one of the sons of Duncan, who was Thane of the Isles and Western Highlands, and who was murdered at Inverness, by his cousin-german Macbeth, somewhere about the year 1045. On the usurpation of Macbeth, Donald Bane fled “to Ireland,” says Shakspeare †, and he is said to have invaded Scotland, with the aid of the Norwegian power, at the death of his brother Malcolm; thus usurping a government of which the legal

* Highlands and Western Isles, vol. ii. pp. 84, 85; also vol. iii. pp. 37, 38.

† Macbeth, Act ii. scene 3.

line of heirs were minors. The subjugation of Cantire by Magnus, is supposed to have been in the year 1098; but the chronology, like the history of this period, is very confused and uncertain. Magnus resided at the English court for a twelvemonth, and was highly esteemed by King Henry the First. He was a pattern king in every way; "and there is abundant reason," says Macculloch, "for supposing that the condition of the Western Isles was far superior, as a nation, during the Norwegian dynasty, to what it ever was afterwards. . . . It was under the Scottish government, and in the hands of the chiefs who followed the Norwegian secession, that they became that barbarous people which we afterwards know them during the contests of the clans. It need scarcely be remarked that the Celts of the Isles and Cantire had thus been long a conquered people under a foreign yoke; amalgamating, however, with their conquerors, if we can indeed grant them this; but, as being the majority in numbers, communicating to them their own language, as the French in Normandy, and the Saxons in England, under similar circumstances, did successively to their Norman brethren."*

In the days of Magnus, and down to the time of Alexander III., the history of the Western Isles was that of the Isle of Mann, where, indeed, was the seat of

* Highlands and Western Isles, vol. iii. p. 39.

government. Without dwelling upon the boat-carrying legend of Magnus the Barefoot, we have previously in these pages seen that Cantire was long reckoned as an island. The peninsula was classed with Bute, Arran, and Islay and Jura and their satellites; and they were called by the general name of "the Southern Isles." Their old connection with the Isle of Mann is denoted to us, up to this very day, in the title of the Bishop of Sodor and Mann, for the word *Sodorenses* means "the Southern Isles." But the Bishop of Sodor and Man ceased to be the Bishop of Cantire in the reign of Edward I., when the peninsula was transferred to the episcopal jurisdiction of the Bishop of Argyle and the Isles.*

* Professor Munch, of Christiana (whose work, "Chronica Regum Manniæ et Insularum," has been already referred to in the first chapter of this book, as noticed in the "Saturday Review"), has invented the new term of *Sudreys*, for the Western Islands. He derives the word from the Norwegian *Sudreyjar*, which was Latinised into *Sodorenses*. He thinks "Sodor" is a "ridiculous addition" to the style of the modern Bishop of Man. Upon which the "Saturday Review" observes, "We do not know that there is any harm in the retention of a title which connects the see with its ancient dignity. It is rather curious that the very same islands figure to this day in the name of another diocese, that of Argyle and 'the Isles.' We do not know whether the transfer was made at the time when the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Man ceased over the Sodors." (Vol. x. p. 564.) In Dasent's "Story of Burnt Njal," the Hebrides are frequently spoken of as "the Southern Isles." "He was a South Islander by stock; that is, he came from what we call the Western Isles, or Hebrides. The old appellation still lingers in 'Sodor (*i. e.* the South Isles) and Man.'" (Vol. i. p. 30.)

It has long been in contemplation to cut a canal across the isthmus which should connect the two lochs, and open up an easy and rapid communication with Glasgow and other places, and save vessels the long and dangerous passage round the Mull of Cantire.

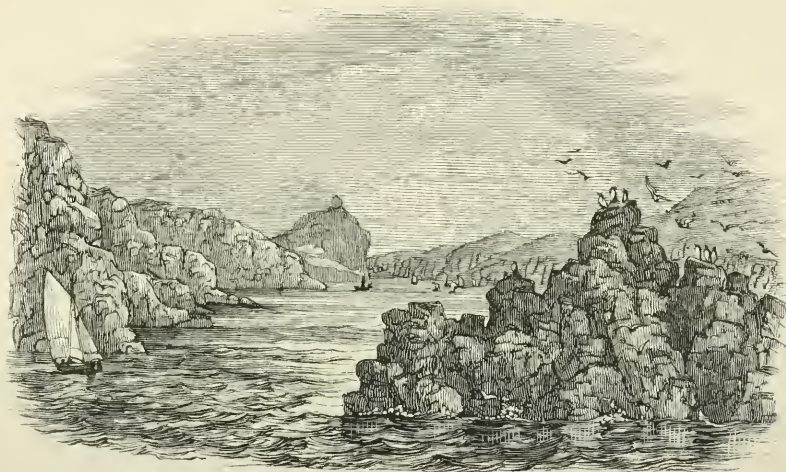
And elsewhere it is said, "Kari gave his word to do that, and then they fared with him a-sea-rozing. They harried south about Anglesea, and all the southern isles. Thence they held on to Cantire, and landed there, and fought with the landmen, and got thence much goods, and so fared to their ships." (Vol. ii. p. 39.) The author of the "Statistical Account of Iona," gives the history of the title, and the date of its limitation to the Isle of Mann. "While the Hebrides were under the Norwegian domination, they divided these islands into two districts, called Nordureys and Sudereys; the first embracing all the islands to the north, and the other all those which lie to the south of the promontory of Ardnamurchan. But the whole two divisions of islands belonged to the diocese of the Bishop of Ebude, and his cathedral and residence being in the island of Man, one of the Suderays, he was from thence styled *Episcopus Sodorensis*; hence the origin of the title of Sodor: and when the Isle of Man was, in the reign of Edward I. of England, reduced under the English government, the bishopric of Sodor was preserved, but its limits being circumscribed to that single island, its bishops assumed and bore the united title of Sodor and Man. All the other Western Islands remaining under the government of Scotland were then erected into a separate diocese, called the Bishoprick of the Isles. The bishops usually resided at Iona, and the great church belonging to the abbey served as the cathedral of the diocese. There has been great diversity of opinion concerning the ancient Sodor from which the bishops of the Isle of Man still derived their title, some supposing that it was the name of a town there, so late as the fifteenth century, and others that the town in Iona was the ancient Sodor. It is now generally conceded that the foregoing account is correct, according to Torffœus, the Danish historian, and explained by Dr. Macpherson" (pp. 325, 326).

Such a canal would considerably diminish the voyage of the Glasgow steamers to Islay, Oban, and Skye, and would be the means of connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the inland seas of Scotland at an important point; while it would be an improvement on the Crinan Canal, for, although the route is shorter by that way, yet it is made virtually longer in point of time by the fifteen locks, which hinder a vessel's progress in its nine mile passage. There are, however, difficulties in the way of the Tarbert Canal, and it has been thought that the ground is too high for the construction of a canal, except at an expense that would not be justified by the results. Others think that its objects are superseded by the Crinan Canal, which conveys the navigation of the Clyde in a direct line to the Hebrides. Others, again, would prefer a railroad across the Tarbert Isthmus, and are of opinion that it would be better and more remunerative than a canal. In the meantime, nothing is done; and those who wish to avoid "rounding wild Cantire," are compelled to realise the full signification of Tarbert, and carry their goods across the isthmus.

It was once well protected. The vitrified fort that we saw on the summit of Dunskeig hill, at the entrance of West Loch Tarbert, was but one of a chain of forts that defended Cantire, and which were continued up to the head of the western loch, and thence across the

isthmus to Tarbert Castle on the eastern loch, and from thence to Skipness. There was a fort half-way across the isthmus, where there is a large cairn and a hamlet, named from it Cairnban. Near to here is the road to Inverary. At the head of the western loch is a pier, built for the accommodation of a steamer which maintains a weekly communication between Tarbert and Islay. In 1778, Paul Jones, the pirate, attacked the Tarbert packet and plundered it. Major Campbell of Islay was on board of her, with a large fortune of gold and valuables acquired in India, from whence he was returning to end his days in Islay; and he had safely reached the Sound of Islay, and was close to home, when the pirate attacked the vessel and robbed Major Campbell of all his property.

Of Tarbert Castle, there are the remains of a square tower and some crumbling walls. They stand in a strong position on the summit of a lofty and precipitous rock, that commands the entrance of the eastern loch, and also the approach to Cantire by way of the isthmus. Its position made it the key of Cantire, and made it one of the most important strongholds on the coast; and its strength was in accordance with its position. Some think that it was built by Robert Bruce; though, according to others, he only strengthened and increased it. At any rate, it was here that he held his court in 1326; and here that the Lords of the Isles held many



EAST LOCH TARBERT, ON LOCH FYNE, CANTIRE.

a revel. James II. stayed here; and, in 1685, it was the rendezvous of the luckless Argyle and the Duke of Monmouth. It is said to have been supplied with water from the other side of the loch, conveyed under the harbour by pipes, laid down in a submarine passage.

The eastern loch, on which the castle looks down, is but a small one, barely a mile long; but it is very remarkable, both in itself and in the contrast that it presents to the western loch. The soft outlines and wooded shores of the western loch contrast very forcibly with the stern wildness and ruggedness of the eastern loch; and Lord Teignmouth has very happily compared the two Tarbert lochs to paintings by Claude and Salvator Rosa.* “It is a curious and singularly safe landlocked natural harbour,” says one describer, “and is entered by so narrow and circling a passage between low ridges of naked rock, that a steamer in sailing through it, appears to a stranger to be irretrievably launched against the crag.” “On the northern side of the entrance of the harbour,” says Pennant, “the rocks are of a most grotesque form; vast fragments piled on each other; the faces contorted and undulated in such figures as if created by fusion of matter after some intense heat; yet did not appear to me a *lava*, or any suspicion of having been the recrement of a volcano.” †

* Scotland, vol. i. p. 26.

† Hebrides, p. 165.

“The rude outworks of its rocks,” says Lord Teignmouth, “apparently barring access; the overhanging keep of its ruined castle; the village, and the innumerable fishing-boats choking up every nook and crevice, form a scene singularly picturesque, the effect of which is heightened by the method in which the fishermen hang their nets.”

Tarbert, however, is something more than a “village.” It is a town, containing two churches (established and free) a bank, two inns, several whisky shops, and a few tolerable shops. The town is built on the three sides of a square, containing the harbour, the fourth side of the square being occupied by the narrow approach to the harbour from Loch Fyne. The quay, therefore, is the chief street, and the three rows of white houses are mirrored in the waters of the harbour, and are looked down upon by the old Castle ruins on the summit of the steep rock. The ground rises on either side of the harbour, so that the street leading into Tarbert from Cantire, is down a steep descent. A great stone block is built in the centre of the harbour, having steps at its side, and poles on which nets are hung to dry, while boats are moored alongside. There are other poles on the southern side of the harbour, and a profuse array of black and rusty-looking nets. Over against them, under the Castle Rock, is the steam-boat pier, with the offices for the harbour-master, and

a refreshment room for passengers. Altogether, as Macculloch says, "The village and bay of Loch Tarbert form a very singular spot, wild alike and unexpected."

But Tarbert (East Tarbert, as it is more correctly called) is chiefly noticeable, as being the chief seat of



EAST TARBERT, CANTIRE.

the Loch Fyne herring-fishery, and as Loch Fyne herrings (or "Glasgow bailies," as Sam Slick calls them) take precedence over all other herrings, Tarbert may fairly be called the capital of Herringdom. It is impossible to pass an hour in the town during the months of August and September, without being keenly alive

to the fact that it is the herring season. The fish is to be met with everywhere, fresh or dried, in boxes and out of boxes; and down at the chief quay, where the steam-packets receive their burdens, we see large blocks and piles of herring-boxes reaching much higher than the Tarbert houses. These boxes are branded in various ways, to denote their several proprietors; and as vermilion is the colour in the greatest esteem, the pictorial effect of the aggregate of boxes and barrels, is something that is quite Owen-Jonesish. It is a curious sight, and one that makes itself very perceptible to the sense of smell. The modern Highland herring-woman is greatly addicted to drams of whisky, and doubtless it was so in Hogarth's time; but the English vendor of herrings he has represented as a beer drinker. We see her in the "Beer Street" picture, with a pot of beer in her hand, perusing "A new ballad on the herring-fishery."

Loch Fyne is the favourite rendezvous of the herring family, and its shores, during the season, swarm with shoals to a much greater extent than any other portion of the Scottish coast. As many as twenty thousand barrels of Loch Fyne herrings have been cured within a year. In each barrel there are from five hundred to eight hundred herrings, according to their size; and the price of a barrel is twenty-five shillings. The Loch Fyne fishermen denote the vastness of the herring

shoals, by saying that the component parts of the loch are, one part water and two parts fish. It would scarcely be possible to tell with accuracy the number of boats employed in the fishery, for in one single bay of Loch Fyne as many as five or six hundred boats will be employed during the season, and eighty barrels of fish have been taken in one night by the boats of a single vessel. Despite these large statistics, however, the numbers now are less than they were a few years ago. It is feared that the shoals are decreasing, but sanguine fishermen ascribe the decrease of numbers to accidental occurrences, and pin their faith on the prolific powers of the fish. Gulls and gannets skimming over the water and darting at the fish, signify their arrival, and denote the whereabouts of the shoals; which are also followed by cod-fish, dog-fish, haddocks, and other fishy cannibals. As shoals of shrimps have been observed to float in a glittering coral mass, so the herring shoals, when near the surface, exhibit the most brilliant colours, and by night, present a phosphorescent appearance. "The darkness of the night," says Maxwell, "increased the scaly brilliancy which the phosphoric properties of these beautiful fish produce. They glowed with a living light, which the imagination could not create, and the pencil never imitate" — not even the pencil of Mr. Hunt, who, in last year's Old Water Colour Exhibition, showed us the herring that he had

so wonderfully painted for Mr. Ruskin. "The shades of gold and silvery gems were rich beyond description, and much as I had heard of phosphoric splendour before, every idea I had formed fell infinitely short of its reality."*

It is by night that the herrings are chiefly caught, dark, breezy nights being the best for this purpose, and from the end of August to Christmas being the best season. "The nets are cast at sun-set, and always on the right side of the boat, in conformity to the supposed injunction of our Saviour to St. Peter. The time of sailing is also governed by many superstitious notions, but a cloudy evening is the best omen. Immediately afterwards, if the weather permit, the fishermen light their fire and cook their supper, consisting of fish, potatoes, oat-cake, molasses, or porridge. But, on stormy nights they fast, being unable to cook their provisions, relieving their fatigue by whisky; and on their return in the morning, invariably receive two drams each from the purchaser of their fish. Cold and hungry, they are often affected by the spirits, and sustain the habitual excitement by repairing to the public-house, thus acquiring habits of intoxication. There are no less than twenty public-houses in Tarbert, which must be partly attributed to its being a great thoroughfare. The superintendent of the distillery of West

* Wild Sports of the West, Letter xxxviii.

Tarbert informed me that the fishermen carried out whisky to sea, observing emphatically, "Sir, the Tarbert man must have his dram, let the world sink or swim." *

Whisky and piety go together in Scotland, therefore it may not surprise us when we are told that these dram-drinking fishermen "after supper, not unfrequently kneel down to prayer, and sing a hymn, and when at home, adopt the same rule." It is to be hoped that their devotions are sincere, and that the domestic worship which they are said to conduct on board their boats in such a praiseworthy manner, is not marred by the infusion of any other spirit than the right one. Martin, in his "Western Islands," gives the "Form of Prayer used by many of the islanders at sea after their sails are hoisted," taken from the Irish Liturgy, "composed by Mr. John Kerswell, afterwards Bishop of Argyle, printed in the year 1566, and dedicated to the Earl of Argyle." He first gives the Gaelic form, and then the English translation, which is as follows:—

"The Manner of blessing the Ship when they put to Sea.

"The Steersman says: Let us bless our ship.

"The Answer by all the Crew. God the Father bless her.

"Steersman. Let us bless our ship.

* Lord Teignmouth's "Scotland," vol. ii. p. 371.

“*Answer.* Jesus Christ bless her.

“*Steersman.* Let us bless our ship.

“*Answer.* The Holy Ghost bless her.

“*Steersman.* What do you fear, since God the Father is with you?

“*Answer.* We do not fear anything.

“*Steersman.* What do you fear, since God the Son is with you?

“*Answer.* We do not fear anything.

“*Steersman.* What are you afraid of, since God the Holy Ghost is with you?

“*Answer.* We do not fear anything.

“*Steersman.* God the Father Almighty, for the love of Jesus Christ His Son, by the comfort of the Holy Ghost the one God, who miraculously brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea, and brought Jonas to land out of the belly of the whale, and the Apostle Paul and his ship to safety from the troubled raging sea, and from the violence of a tempestuous storm; deliver, sanctify, bless and conduct us peaceably, calmly, and comfortably through the sea to our harbour, according to His divine will; which we beg, saying, *Our Father, &c.*”

This same Martin, who collected many of the western Highland traditions of a century and a half ago, has somewhat to tell of the folk-lore of the herring. He says that the fishermen believed the herring-shoals to be led by “a big herring almost double the size of any

of its kind," who was called the king of the herrings, and who was followed by the shoal whithersoever he went. Mr. Campbell refers to this Gaelic story in his "Popular Tales of the West Highlands," and says it has its "counterpart in Grimm. I heard it from my landlady at Port Erin, and I met two Manksmen afterwards who knew it. The fish all gathered once to choose a king; and the fluke, him that has the red spots on him, stayed at home to make himself pretty, putting on his red spots to see if he would be king; and he was too late, for when he came the herring was king of the sea. So the fluke curled his mouth on one side, and said: 'A simple fish like the herring king of the sea!' and his mouth has been to one side ever since."*

Pennant further says: "It is a general observation, all Scotland over, that if a quarrel happen on the coast where herring is caught, and that blood be drawn violently, then the herring go away from the coast without returning during that season. This, they say, has been observed in all past ages as well as at present, but this I relate only as a common tradition, and submit it to the judgment of the learned." On these herring-quarrels I may again quote from Mr. Campbell. "I maintain that there is chronic war in every part of her Majesty's dominions. Not long ago a dispute arose

* Vol. i.; introduction, p. lv.

about a manner of catching herrings. One set of men caught them with drift nets, another with drag-nets, and one party declared that the other violated the law; blood got up, and at last a whole fleet of fishing-boats left their ground, and sailed twenty miles down to attack the rival fleet in form: A gun-boat joined the party, and peace was preserved; but it was more the result of a calm which enabled the light row-boats to escape from the heavier sailing fleet. Both parties spoke the same language, and, on any subject but herrings, they would have backed each other through the world.”* Let me here also quote, from another recent author, an anecdote *à propos* to the subject:— One of the most eccentric clergymen of the latter part of the last century was the Rev. Peter Glas, minister of Crail. His pulpit language was broad Scotch, and his expressions, even in devotion, were particularly simple. Many of his parishioners being fishermen, he usually prayed specially for their welfare. One day, using the expression, “May the boats be filled wi’ herring up to the very tow-holes” (spaces for the oars), a fisherman lustily called out, “Na, no’ that far, sir, or we wad a’ be sunk.” †

Although Pennant has been shown, by Yarrell and modern zoologists, to be wrong in his opinion that the

* Vol. i. p. cxxviii.

† Dr. Roger’s “Familiar Illustrations of Scottish Character.”

herrings annually migrate from the Arctic regions, yet his account of the Loch Fyne herring fishery is very interesting and worthy of notice; and, after the lapse of a century, most of his remarks hold good, and are applicable at the present day.* I do not desire, however, to quote them here, or to detail the past and present history of the herring fishery, yet would I snatch from this history a few remarkable facts, which may be among those "things not generally known" to that otherwise well-informed personage, the constant reader.

More than a thousand years ago, then, the fame of these Loch Fyne herrings had spread far beyond Tarbert and the adjacent coasts, for in the year 836 the Netherlanders came to Loch Fyne to purchase the salted herrings. They were as cannie as the Scots, and they learnt the art and took up the trade of herring-curing. And they must have made the most of their knowledge as years went on, for in 1603 Sir Walter Raleigh speaks of the Dutch selling to other nations, herrings that amounted in value to a million and a half of money; and, from first to last, employing two hundred thousand men in the herring trade, all these men being employed, and all these fish being caught on the coasts of Scotland, and notably in Loch Fyne. And what were the Scotchmen

* See his "Tour in Scotland" (1769), pp. 190, 191; "Voyage to the Hebrides" (1772), pp. 317, 325. See also "Penny Magazine," vol. vi. p. 63.

about, that they should permit this million and a half of money to be drifted from their own shores to the Netherlands? It is true that, as Professor Cosmo Innes shows *, Loch Fyne herrings were appreciated in Scotland in 1590, and that a Loch Fyne tenant of Lord Breadaldane paid a portion of his rent in herrings; but, on the whole, the herring-fisheries were neglected for the whale-fishery, and, in the presence of the monsters of the deep, they made light of the little herring. It was a sad lack of Scotch second-sight, and a mistake that a century of years could not overget. The Dutch were wiser in their generation, and in Holland the herring was a mightier fish than the whale. It formed the foundation of many a fortune and many a house; so much so, that at length the saying that "Amsterdam was built on herring bones" passed into a proverb, much in the same way that it was said in England that "London Bridge was built on woolsacks." Of such great importance, too, was the invention of pickled herrings considered, that a monarch did not consider it beneath his dignity to pay the last honours to the inventor; and thus it happened that, in the year 1536, the Emperor Charles the Fifth erected a magnificent tomb to the memory of one Beukles, a Dutchman, as a real benefactor to his country, in that he had invented the pickled herring. But why the term "pickle her-

* Sketches of Early Scottish History, pp. 255, 376, 386.

ring" should come to signify a merry Andrew, I leave to etymologists and root-hunters to decide.

It is bad policy to harp too long upon one string, however agreeable its notes may be; and men in general find that the most successful executants are those who have more than one string to their bow. For the lack of this knowledge, the Dutch soon awoke to the discovery that their one tune was not always to remain their fortune. They had thrown over the whale for the herring; but had coquetted too long with the delicate little beauty, and now the whale threw *them* over; and when once they had lost their whale fishery, they were unable to regain it. So they did what they could in taking the Scotch herring-fishery out of the hands of the Scotchmen, who were not only whalers, but wailers also, and when too late, bemoaned the loss of what they had carelessly allowed to slip through their fingers. James the Third endeavoured somewhat to benefit the fishery; but his immediate successors did little in the cause; and Hans Heavistern the Dutchman was a cannier man than Sandie MacAlpine, the Loch Fyne Highlander.

Seeing that herrings form the staple commodity of East Tarbert, we are by no means surprised to see a dish-full of them (beautifully cooked) brought up with our tea, in company with the usual Scotch accompaniments of preserves and cakes. After our "canter

through Cantire," and our long drive through the appetising Highland air, we are grateful to Mrs. Mac Arthur for her temptingly-spread tea-table; and above all, for the unspeakable comfort of a cleanly lodging, and a night's rest undisturbed by the obtrusive liveliness of industrious fleas. I think it is Christopher North, who speaks of the dangerous power placed in the hands of a chambermaid of a naturally witty and cruel disposition, by committing to her the charge of the blankets; and how, by a wicked selection, she could envelope her victim in vermin, and after a night of one of the plagues of Egypt, cause him to rise in the morning tattooed from head to foot.

But fleas and their final cause, *videlicet* scratching, — considered by many Scotch philosophers to be so salutary in its effect — did not trouble us in Mrs. MacArthur's cleanly lodging on that night — our last night in Cantire; so that from first to last, — from our classical egg even unto our apple, — we had nothing to grumble at, and no tourist grievance over which to snarl. On that night too, at East Tarbert, we saw "the Northern Lights;" and it was the only night during our tour in Scotland on which we observed them. We afterwards learnt from the newspapers that the Aurora was generally visible on that evening, and in less northern localities. It was a beautifully calm and clear night, and the gleams of

pale yellow light, here and there tinged with rose, flashed and flickered in the sky with such rapidity, that I could easily understand why these beautiful meteors were locally known as “the Merry Dancers;” and why Sir Walter Scott says of the Monk of Melrose:—

“The monk gazed long on the lovely moon,
Then into the night he looked forth;
And red and bright the streamers light
Were *dancing* in the glowing north.”